



SATISFACTION AS THE MODERATOR BETWEEN DISCRIMINATION AND STRESS AT WORK

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ABSTRACT

Job satisfaction refers to the positive emotions an employee gets from various aspects of their work. Work-related stress is the stress caused because of one's job. Work discrimination is the perception of being treated unfairly at work. Job satisfaction has the chance of being protective against work-related stress caused by discrimination at work. An online survey was developed in Google forms to test the hypothesis that job satisfaction moderated the relationship between work discrimination and work stress among Nepalese employees. A snowball sample of 278 employees working in various professions was made in the first three months of 2022. Moderation analysis was done and the results showed that high and average but low levels of job satisfaction were protective against the work stress caused by discrimination at work. One-fourth of employees were found to have job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was significantly negatively associated with discrimination and stress at work. The conclusion is that the employers should try to increase job satisfaction of the employees in workplaces where there is more discrimination to protect employees against negative consequences of work-related stress. In the future, studies focused on specific occupations can be carried out to test the same hypothesis.

Keywords: Prejudice - job satisfaction - work discrimination - work-related stress - moderation

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction is the satisfaction with one's work. It is a positive feeling come from evaluation about characteristics of one's job (Robbins & Judge, 2017). In Nepal, one-third to two-third of medical professionals are satisfied with their jobs (Chaulagain & Khadka 2012, Sapkota *et al.* 2019, G. K. Shrestha & Singh 2010). The designation, years of experience,

education, service type, and monthly income are some factors responsible for the job satisfaction of university teachers (Shrestha 2019) and civil engineers (Bhatta *et al.* 2018). Job support component of job satisfaction is the function of gender in school teachers (Mondal *et al.* 2011). The age group may affect its job role component. Involvement in decision-making and the availability of required resources may increase job satisfaction (Sapkota *et al.* 2019). Training, working environment, and growth opportunities are helpful for bankers' job satisfaction (Neupane 2019). Job satisfaction is significantly different because of belonging to a private or public organization (Chapagain 2021). Personality traits like extraversion and conscientiousness predict job satisfaction in employees of civil service (Subedi 2019). Among bankers, rewards are a source of satisfaction for those in lower ranks, and training and job security are a source of satisfaction for those in higher ranks (Pantha 2020). Among doctors, old age, being male, and being in the job for more than five years affect satisfaction at work (Bhattacharjee *et al.* 2016). (I)NGO employees working under transformational leaders also are satisfied (Acharya & Shrestha 2013). Being male, higher rank, and working in the office (not site) are associated with job satisfaction in engineers (Paudel *et al.* 2019). Job satisfaction can have consequences on task performance, citizenship behaviors, absenteeism, and turnover. For example, it significantly predicts turnover intention (Yukongdi & Shrestha 2020).

Work-related stress (or work/job stress) is the stress caused due to an employee's job or work (Adhikari 2020). In other words, it is an unpleasant reaction of the body in response to environmental demands (Robbins & Judge 2017). Gender made difference in the physical stress of school teachers (Mondal *et al.* 2011). Nearly half of all teachers may be stressed in Nepal (DKayastha & Kayastha 2012). Almost all nurses and executive officers in Nepal are stressed at work (Gurung *et al.* 2020, Kayastha *et al.* 2012, Mehta & Singh 2014). Half of working women may be stressed because of work (Ojha *et al.* 2020). Lack of training and cooperation (Lee *et al.* 2017) are also responsible.

Legally, discrimination is prohibited in the workplace in Nepal (Gurung *et al.* 2005, Rohwerder 2020). Work discrimination (or discrimination at work) is the perception of being treated unfairly at the workplace. Still, many facets of discrimination like policies unfair to a group of people, sexual harassment, intimidation, mockery, insults,

exclusion, and incivility (Robbins & Judge 2017) exist at workplaces globally and likely in Nepal also. Unfair discrimination may occur on any basis of workforce diversity like age, sex, gender, religion, cultural identity, ethnicity, caste, language, disability, intellectual/physical abilities, tenure, values, personality, and work preferences. Women face various forms of discrimination in the workplace (Rijal & Wasti 2018). Rural Nepali women have fewer opportunities for employment and they are paid less for the same job (Yamamoto *et al.* 2019). Women are less likely to be hired as permanent employees (Coyle *et al.* 2014) and face harassment, and feel insecure. Their family members may pressurize to refrain from working. Transgenders have to face stigma. Dalits may not be entered into white-collar jobs (Gurung *et al.* 2005) and hence are obligated to practice traditional occupations like blacksmiths and sweepers. People with disability also face discrimination in various regards like low employment opportunities, inaccessible workplaces, and unequal pay (Prasai & Pant 2018). Discrimination has negative consequences on task performance. For example, gender-based discrimination during selection and promotion is significantly and negatively associated with task performance (Nepal & Lertjanyakit 2019). Work incivility has a negative impact on job satisfaction (Chen & Wang 2019). Gender-based discrimination at work reduces job satisfaction (Kim *et al.* 2013). Perceived discrimination at work is bad for health but this effect is moderated by job satisfaction (Di Marco *et al.* 2016).

Some descriptive and correlational studies about satisfaction, discrimination, and stress at work are found but the studies verifying if job satisfaction protects against stress caused by discrimination at work are lacking. Some moderation studies deal with other risk factors and outcomes. For example, emotional intelligence can moderate the relationship between risks (like incivility) and outcomes like job satisfaction (Chen & Wang 2019).

This study aimed to test the hypothesis that job satisfaction moderated the relationship between work discrimination and work stress. In other words, the study sought the answer to a question: does satisfaction protect against stress caused by discrimination at work? The answer is expected to contribute to both basic and applied psychologies. A model of stress (Robbins & Judge 2017) presents personal, environmental, and organizational factors as sources of stress in addition to individual differences. In this model, economic, political, and technological uncertainties are

included in environmental factors; task, role, and interpersonal demands are included in organizational factors; family and economic problems are included in personal factors. Individual differences include perception, social support, experience at work and personality traits. Discrimination is both objective and perceived. So, it can be put into individual differences or environmental factors. This model has been taken as the framework for the study.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Participants

A survey was designed in Google Forms for the online survey. The sample of 380 persons was prepared by snowball sample. Among 380, 102 data were rejected. The net sample is 278. The initial contacts shared the link for the online form via social media like Messenger.

There were 278 participants eligible for data analysis. One-third of them (i.e., 94 in number were females $M_{\text{age}}=26.84$ $SD=7.04$) and the rest were males ($M_{\text{age}}=27.56$, $SD=6.11$) Actually, 380 data had been collected but 102 data were rejected because unemployed students and persons working outside Nepal had also filled out the survey. They were excluded during data analysis. More than half of the participants (57.9%) were born outside Kathmandu but nearly three-fourths (73.7%) were working in Kathmandu. In the nature of jobs, there were nine categories- banking, business, engineering, laborers, medical, security, service, teaching, and interns. In the service category, social workers, counselors, civil servants, lawyers, managers, marketers, ride-sharers, receptionists, salesboys, waiters, and similar professionals have been included. Table 1 shows details of other demographic features.

Some questions about participants' perception of their fatness, tallness, complexion, and handsomeness/beauty were asked as a part of the demographic questionnaire. One-fifth of participants (20.5%) perceived themselves to be fat, 13.7% thought themselves thin and the rest thought neither. One-fifth of participants (20.9%) reported to be fair, 5.8% perceived to be dark and the rest reported neither. Nearly one-third of participants (29.9%) reported being tall, 5% reported being dwarf, and the rest reported neither. More than one-fifth of participants (21.6%) considered themselves to be beautiful/handsome, 3.6% of participants considered themselves ugly and the rest (74.8%) reported to be satisfactorily handsome/beautiful.

Measures

Chronic Work Discrimination and Harassment Scale (CWDHS adapted from Bobo & Suh, 2000 and Mcneilly et al., 1996) was used to measure discrimination at work. In it, "Once a week or more" was scored 4, "A few times a month" was scored 3, "A few times a year" was scored 2, "Less than once a year" was scored 1, and "Never" was scored 0 in each item. The total score was found by summing all items. On this scale, there are 12 items, and the range of possible scores is 0-48. The higher scores on this scale mean more perceived discrimination in the workplace. A shorter version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ; University of Minnesota, 1977) was used to measure job satisfaction. The range of scores possible is 20-100 from 20 items. A higher score means more job satisfaction. The work Stress Questionnaire (WSQ; Holmgren et al., 2009) was used to measure work stress. There were 21 items in it with 14 items having two sub-items. The possible range of score is 0 to 63. A higher score in WSQ means more work-related stress. The last three items were reverse scored. Otherwise, "Yes, always" was scored 0, "Yes, rather often" was scored 1, "No, seldom" was scored 2, and "No, never" was scored 3 for the first four items. In the fifth item, the "Yes" option in the first sub-item led to the following sub-item. "No" was scored 0. In the latter, the scoring increased from 0 for "Not stressful" to 3 for "Very stressful". Like with the fifth item, the logic was followed for all items with sub-items. Finally, the total score was calculated by summing all items with the last three items reverse-scored. In this regard, all first sub-items were not necessary for calculating the total score.

Data analysis

The data were downloaded from Google Forms and cleansed in Excel 2019. The Excel file was imported into SPSS 25 to find descriptive statistics and run two moderation models. Model 1 of Process Macro v3.5 (Hayes 2018) was used for moderated regression analysis. In the analysis, 95% confidence intervals (CI) were taken for significance and 10,000 bootstrap samples were considered. Predictors were not mean-centered for analysis.

Table 1: Division of sociodemographic characteristics

Demographic characteristics		f	Percent
Gender	Female	94	33.8
	Male	184	66.2
Occupation	Service	81	28.8
	Teaching	67	24.1
	Engineering	27	9.7
	Intern	27	9.7
	Labor	18	6.5
	Medical	18	6.5
	Security	14	5.0
	Banking	11	4.0
	Business	8	2.5
Smoking	No	190	68.3
	Yes	88	31.7
Alcohol use	No	164	59.0
	Yes	114	41.0
Socioeconomic status	Poor	3	1.1
	Middle Class	251	90.3
	Rich	24	8.6
Vegetarian	No	252	90.6
	Yes	25	9.4
Marital status	No	205	73.7
	Yes	73	26.3
Religion	Buddhism	94	34.6
	Hindu	165	59.4
	Kirat	8	2.9
	Christian	4	1.5
	Atheism	2	0.8

Note. Some demographic questions were not answered by some participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Cronbach's α for work stress (in WSQ with 21 items) in this sample is .87, that for job satisfaction (MSQ with 20 items) is .93 and that for work discrimination (CWDHS with 12 items) is .95. Using the

American norm (University of Minnesota, 1977), more than one-fourth (26.6%) of employees were satisfied at work. The descriptive statistics of the predictors and outcomes are given in Table 2:

Table 2: Descriptives of independent and dependent variables

Variable	Min	Max	M	SD	Q ₁	Md	Q ₃
Job satisfaction	33	100	69.50	13.90	59.00	67.50	79.00
Work stress	0	50	22.93	9.63	16.75	24.00	30.00
Work Discrimination	0	48	20.34	13.46	8.00	23.50	32.00

Note. Min=Minimum value, Max=Maximum value, Q₁= P25 is the first quartile, Md=Median, Q₃=P75 is the third quartile

Table 3 shows the correlations between independent variables and dependent variable. Work discrimination and stress are positively/significantly correlated. Job satisfaction is significantly negatively correlated with both stress and discrimination at work.

Table 3: Correlations between independent and dependent variables

SN	Variable	1	2	3
1	Work Discrimination		-.573**	.360**
2	Job Satisfaction	-.606**		-.410**
3	Work Stress	.361**	-.400**	

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Coefficients below diagonal are bivariate correlations and above diagonal are partial correlations (with covariates age, gender, nature of job number of jobs, Socioeconomic status (SES), smoking, drinking, perceived fatness, vegetarianism, marital status, complexion, tallness, and perceived beauty/handsomeness)

Using t-test for independent means, it was found that job satisfaction, work discrimination, and work-related stress were not the function of gender, smoking, vegetarianism, and marital status. However, alcohol use made significant difference on those variables: $t(276) = -3.53, p < .001$ for work stress, $t=3.58, p < .001$ for job satisfaction, and $t(202.74)=-5.09, p < .001$ for work discrimination. Using one-way ANOVA, it was found that all those variables were not the function of perceived fatness, and perceived beauty/handsomeness. However, they were the functions of complexion, $F(2, 275) = 5.23, p < .01$ for work stress, $F(2, 275) = 3.95, p < .05$ for job satisfaction, and $F(2, 275) = 5.07, p < .01$ for work discrimination. Tallness made a significant difference in workplace discrimination, $F(2, 275) = 4.21, p < .05$. Similarly, the nature of the job made a significant difference in job

satisfaction, $F(8, 262)=2.84, p<.01$, work stress, $F(8, 262)=2.81, p<.01$, and discrimination at work, $F(8, 262)=4.60, p<.01$. It is evident from figure 1 that job satisfaction is more protective for employees facing low to medium levels of discrimination at work than those facing its high level.

Twenty percent ($R^2=0.2051$) variance in work-related stress was explained by independent variables (which were discrimination at work and job satisfaction). Additional 2.26% variance was explained by interaction term, $F(1, 274) = 7.81, p<.01$. The moderation model was significant, $R=.4529, R^2=.2051, F(3, 274)=23.57, p<.001$. So was the interaction term (Work Discrimination X Job satisfaction), $b=0.01, t=2.79, p<.01$. There was significant effect of job satisfaction, $b=-.360, t=-4.84, p<0.001$ and work discrimination, $b=-0.47, t=-2.12, p<0.05$ also. The results showed that job satisfaction moderated the relationship between discrimination and stress at high (83.40), $b=0.26, t=3.93, p<.001$ and average (69.50), $b=0.14, t=2.84, p<.01$ but low (55.61), $t=0.24, p>.05$, levels. Figure 1 also clarifies this conditional effect of the focal predictor. Johnson-Neyman analysis revealed that above 65.04 score of job satisfaction, 55.76% values were significant.

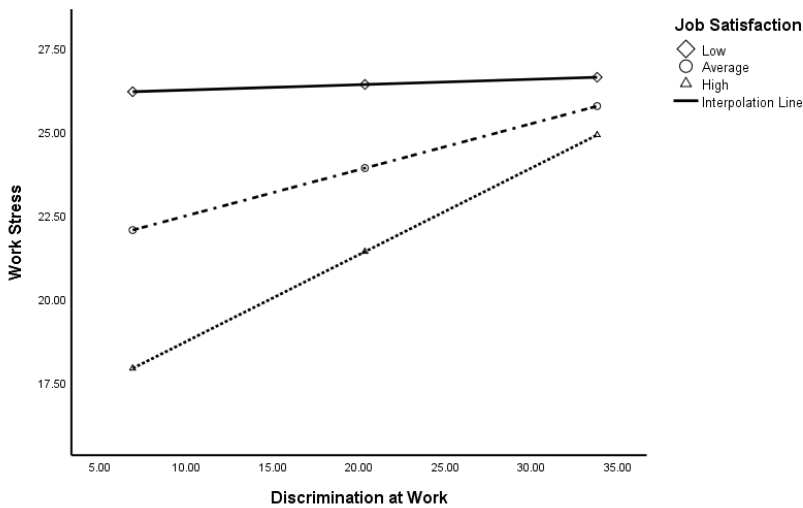


Figure 1. Graphical representation of job satisfaction moderating the relationship between discrimination and stress at work

Another moderation model was also tested with covariates (age, gender, nature of job number of jobs, SES, smoking, drinking, perceived

fatness, vegetarianism, marital status, complexion, tallness, and perceived beauty/handsomeness). It was also significant, $R=0.55$, $R^2=2994$, $F(16, 250) = 6.68$, $p<.001$. The interaction term was significant, $b=0.01$, $t=2.49$, $p<.05$. Additional 1.74% variance was explained by this interaction term, $R^2=0.0174$, $F(1, 250) = 6.22$, $p<.05$. Conditional effects of focal predictor show a similar pattern as the model without controls. Job satisfaction moderated the discrimination-stress relationship at high (83.56), $b=0.26$, $t=3.62$, $p<.001$ and average (69.54), $b=0.14$, $t=2.84$, $p<.01$ but low (55.53), $b=0.04$, $t=0.56$, $p>.05$, levels. Johnson-Neyman analysis showed that 58.43% significant region laid above 64.13 score of job satisfaction.

Table 4: Predictors of work stress. The effect of independent and control variables

Variable	B	SE	95% CI
Constant	56.2194	8.8491	[38.79, 73.65]
Work discrimination	-.3985	.2193	[-0.83, 0.03]
Job satisfaction	-.3458	.0722	[-0.49, -0.20]
Interaction term	.0078	.0031	[0.00, 0.01]
Age	-0.1010	.0968	[-0.29, 0.09]
Gender	-2.5533	1.1789	[-4.88, -0.23]
Nature of job	0.2145	.2030	[-0.19, 0.61]
No. of jobs	-1.7074	1.2146	[-4.10, 0.68]
SES	1.4376	1.8880	[-2.28, 5.16]
Smoking	3.4887	1.4113	[0.71, 6.27]
Drinking alcohol	-0.7111	1.3268	[-3.32, 1.90]
Vegetarianism	-0.2996	1.8617	[-3.96, 3.37]
Marital status	0.7872	1.4251	[-2.01, 3.59]
Complexion	-0.7124	1.0900	[-2.85, 1.43]
Tallness	-1.8529	1.0095	[-3.84, 0.14]
Perceived beauty/handsomeness	0.5606	1.1963	[-1.80, 2.92]
Perceived fatness	-2.9920	.9183	[-4.80, -1.18]

Table 4 shows that job satisfaction, perceived fatness, and gender significantly predicted job stress. Figure 2 clearly shows that job satisfaction is more protective for employees facing low to medium levels of work discrimination than those facing its high level.

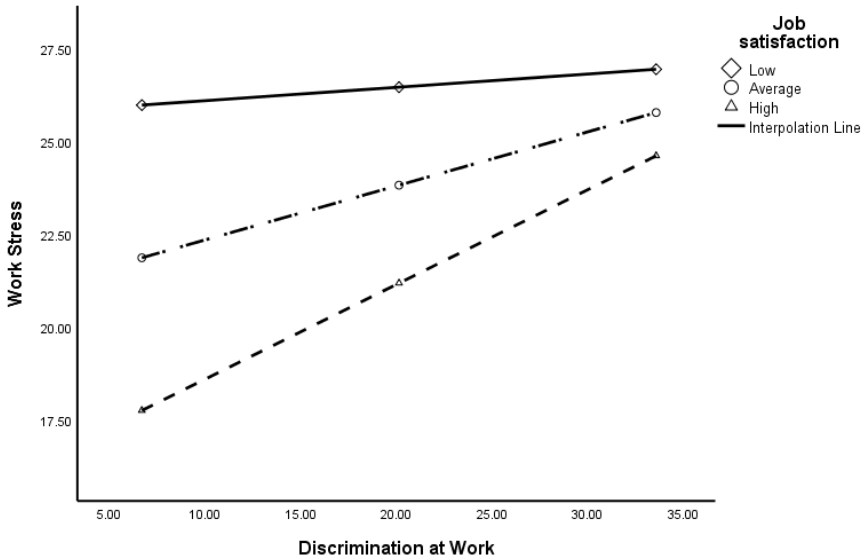


Figure 2: Graphical representation of job satisfaction moderating the relationship between discrimination and stress at work with covariates in the moderated regression model

CONCLUSIONS

The research hypothesis was proved. Job satisfaction protects against work-related stress caused by discrimination at work in two conditions: when it is high and when it is average/medium. Low job satisfaction is not protective. Figures 1 and 2 show that work-related stress is lower when job satisfaction is high rather than average or low. It is lower on average than low job satisfaction. The steep slopes in high and average values of job satisfaction reveal the weakening of the discrimination-stress relationship. The results indicate that low job satisfaction cannot protect against stress caused by discrimination at work. However, average and high levels of job satisfaction are protective against stress caused by discrimination at work. The protective role of job satisfaction is more evident when the work discrimination is low to medium than when it is high. Employers can use the knowledge from this study to decrease work stress caused by discrimination at work. They have to increase the job satisfaction of employees. Theoretically, the findings are helpful to understand discrimination, stress, and satisfaction at the job better. The findings in this study increase the confidence in the model of stress (Robbins & Judge 2017). In addition, it

informs a protective factor to lessen work-related stress caused by work discrimination (an environmental factor or an individual difference).

The job satisfaction among employees in this study was seen as lower than that in previous studies (Mishra & Shrestha 2019, Sapkota *et al.* 2019). Stress has a negative effect on mental health (Rayamajhi 2016). This research also showed that stress decreased satisfaction.

There were some limitations of this study. American norm is not appropriate for the Nepali sample but a short version of MSQ was not found used in Nepal in the past except for one among dentists (Bhagat *et al.*, 2014). It does not state measures of central tendency clearly. Instrument measuring work discrimination mainly focused on ethnicity/race. So, other bases of discrimination have been missed out. Another measure to address all major bases of discrimination is desirable. The current study complies with the past finding that discrimination at work predicts job satisfaction (Singh 2020). The current study had a sample of people of all castes, regions, and educational backgrounds. Future studies can have a complete sample of employees from marginalized communities like Dalits, rural women, and Madheses and test the same hypothesis. The search for other protective factors like job control (Xu & Chopik 2020) is possible in future studies. Thirty percent variance is understood about work stress. Future studies can check what predictors cause the remaining variance in it. They can also test the hypothesis in particular occupations rather than all professionals generically.

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