

Original Article

Job Satisfaction of Lower-Ranking Officers serving at the Financial Department of the Hellenic Armed Forces

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Abstract

Background: Job satisfaction is a multidimensional concept, related to emotional states deriving from the working environment of each individual. Numerous surveys have been conducted investigating employees' percept of job satisfaction.

Objectives: To investigate the level and the determining factors of job satisfaction of lower-ranking officers (Second Lieutenant up to Captain and equivalent) serving at the Financial Department of all three branches of the Hellenic Armed Forces (Army-Navy-Air Force).

Methodology: The reference population was 599 lower-ranking officers (men 73.2%, women 26.7%) serving at the Financial Department of the Hellenic Armed Forces. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire which was subjected to a construct validity test before its distribution. The data analysis was conducted with IBM SPSS v.20 and the statistical methods used were descriptive statistics, absolute and relative frequencies, Spearman correlations and Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion.

Results: The study revealed that the majority of lower-ranking officers serving at the Financial Department of the Hellenic Armed Forces perceive their job satisfaction as of an average quality as far as building infrastructure and behavior of their colleagues is concerned and of low quality when it comes to the behavior of the Command.

Conclusions: There are numerous factors affecting the perception of job satisfaction of lower-ranking officers serving at the Financial Department of the Hellenic Armed Forces. Cooperation and communication among colleagues, working conditions, the behavior of the Command and career options seem to be the most significant. However, there is room for improvement to all these factors in order for their job satisfaction to be increased.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Armed Forces, Lower-Ranking Officers, working environment, career opportunities, career choice.

Introduction

The interest in investigating job satisfaction started to grow at the dawn of the 20th century. The usage of employee anonymous surveys in order to measure their job satisfaction became commonplace in the 1930s (Latham & Budworth, 2007).

Over the years many definitions were used to describe the term job satisfaction. The two most widespread definitions describe job satisfaction as “the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one’s job values” (Locke, 1976) and “the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs” (Spector, 1997). Hulin and Judge (2003) noted that job satisfaction includes multidimensional psychological responses to an individual’s job. According to Kaliski (2007) the key ingredient that leads to recognition, economic benefits and career development which finally engender a feeling of fulfillment is no other than job satisfaction. Job satisfaction has also been stated as “a sense of inner fulfillment and pride achieved when performing a particular job. Job satisfaction occurs when an employee feels he has accomplished something having importance and value worth recognition; sense of job” (Wicker, 2011). The online Business Dictionary defines job satisfaction as the contentment (or lack of it) arising out of interplay of employee’s positive and negative feelings toward his or her work (Business Dictionary, 2015). The sense of achieving something important makes the employees feel useful creating a strong bond between them and their job (Armstrong, 2006). This sense of satisfaction motivates the employees, leading them to be more productive, innovative and loyal to their job. Job satisfaction can also be seen in perspective of its relationship with other significant factors affecting individual’s quality of life such as stress at work, interaction between personal life and professional obligations and general well-being (Tomazevic, et al, 2014).

We conducted this study in order to measure the level of overall job satisfaction of lower-ranking officers serving at the Financial Department of the Hellenic Armed Forces as well as to outline the factors which need to be improved in order to increase this satisfaction.

It must be outlined that military personnel faces some serious challenges in its working environment affecting its job satisfaction. Needless to say that lower-ranking officers serving at the Financial Department of the Hellenic Armed Forces also have to deal with these challenges. Working conditions may vary a lot between different branches of armed forces. Officers serving in warships not only must become familiar in working in narrow spaces but they also must get used to be absent from their permanent residence especially when they take part in long-month operations. Furthermore, frequent permutations may have a great impact in personal and social life of the officers. This fickle working environment makes measuring their job satisfaction a very tricky task and requires taking into consideration multiple factors.

Research questions

The main research questions for this study were which is the level of job satisfaction of the lower-ranking officers serving at the Financial Department of the Hellenic Armed Forces and which are its main determining factors.

Methodology

This research was conducted using a structured questionnaire consisting of two parts. The first one included demographic questions and the second one questions regarding the level of job satisfaction associated with various factors such as working environment, relations with colleagues and the Command, career opportunities, professional benefits and obligations. Before its distribution the questionnaire was subjected to a construct validity test. In order to ensure its consequence and the stability of its results

the test-retest technique was applied (Apostolakis & Stamouli, 2006).

The research was addressed to the 599 lower-ranking officers serving in the Financial Department of the Hellenic Armed Forces. Eighty (80) subjects of this population were selected taking into account the number of the pre-mentioned category of officers serving in each branch of the Hellenic Armed Forces. However, seventy one (71) officers responded constituting the research sample (Table 1).

For the evaluation of the collected data IBM SPSS Statistics v.20 was used. Descriptive Statistics, transform variables, custom tables, absolute (N) and relative (%) frequencies were used (Apostolakis, et al., 2003; Apostolakis & Stamouli, 2007; Apostolakis et al., 2009). Spearman correlations were performed to determine relationships between different factors and the satisfaction of the officers' career choice. Variables normal distribution was checked using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion. Statistical significance level was accepted as $p < 0.05$ for all tests.

Results

The majority (43.3%) of the lower-ranking officers serving at the Financial Department of the Hellenic Armed Forces perceives the building infrastructure (lighting, air conditioning, temperature, soundproofing, comfort/ergonomics, sanitary facilities) of their working environment as of an average quality (Figure 1).

Significant percentage (38.7%) has low degree of job satisfaction as far as the behavior of the Command is concerned, taking into account the equal treatment of staff, the recognition of their offer and the Command's interest in staffs' personal problems (Figure 2).

When it comes to the behavior of their colleagues as far as business cooperation, mutual respect and trust and understanding of their emotions and problems is concerned, the majority (40.5%) of the officers reported average quality of job satisfaction. However, it is noteworthy that significant proportion

(32.7%) rated this aspect of job satisfaction even higher (Figure 3).

The research revealed a strong positive correlation between officers' perception about the prestige of their profession and the satisfaction of their career choice which was statistically significant ($r=0.686$, $p < 0.05$). Both of the pre-mentioned variables, were found to follow normal distribution when Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion was applied. A significant positive medium correlation was found between officers' perception about their career opportunities and the satisfaction of their career choice ($r=0.577$, $p < 0.05$). Once again with the usage of Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion these variables were found to follow the normal distribution.

Discussion

The officers' perception of job satisfaction from their working environment's building infrastructure is of an average level. An ergonomic working environment motivates employees to be more productive and strengthens the feeling of their commitment to their profession. (Jain & Kaur, 2014; Roelofsen, 2002). The economic recession Greece is undergoing since 2010 probably had a negative effect on the standards of working conditions all over the public sector, mainly because of the significant budgetary cuts it had caused. Having also in mind that Armed Forces' primary mission is to ensure national sovereignty, these budgetary cuts affected even more the category of "flexible" expenses like improving building infrastructure and sanitary facilities with negative consequences on officers' job satisfaction from their working environment's building infrastructure.

Significant percentage of the officers seems not to be sufficiently satisfied by the Command's behavior in the terms of fair treatment, recognition of their offer and interest in their personal problems. The satisfaction of the pre-mentioned employees' needs, establish a win-win relationship between them and the Command (Covey, 2004). Otherwise, feelings of disappointment

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the research sample

Branch	Rank	Sex						Total
		Male			Female			
		Single	Married	Divorced	Single	Married	Divorced	
Army	Second Lieutenant (and equivalent)	9			4	1		14
	First Lieutenant (and equivalent)	4			3			7
	Captain (and equivalent)	2	7		2			11
Total		15	7	0	9	1	0	32
Navy	Second Lieutenant (and equivalent)	2			3			5
	First Lieutenant (and equivalent)	6	1		1	1		9
	Captain (and equivalent)	6	10	1		3		20
Total		14	11	1	4	4	0	34
Air Force	Second Lieutenant (and equivalent)				1			1
	First Lieutenant (and equivalent)	1						1
	Captain (and equivalent)	1	2					3
Total		2	2	0	1	0	0	5
Total	Second Lieutenant (and equivalent)	11			8	1		20
	First Lieutenant (and equivalent)	11	1		4	1		17
	Captain (and equivalent)	9	19	1	2	3		34
Total		31	20	1	14	5	0	71

Figure 1: Officers’ perception of job satisfaction depending on the quality of building infrastructure.

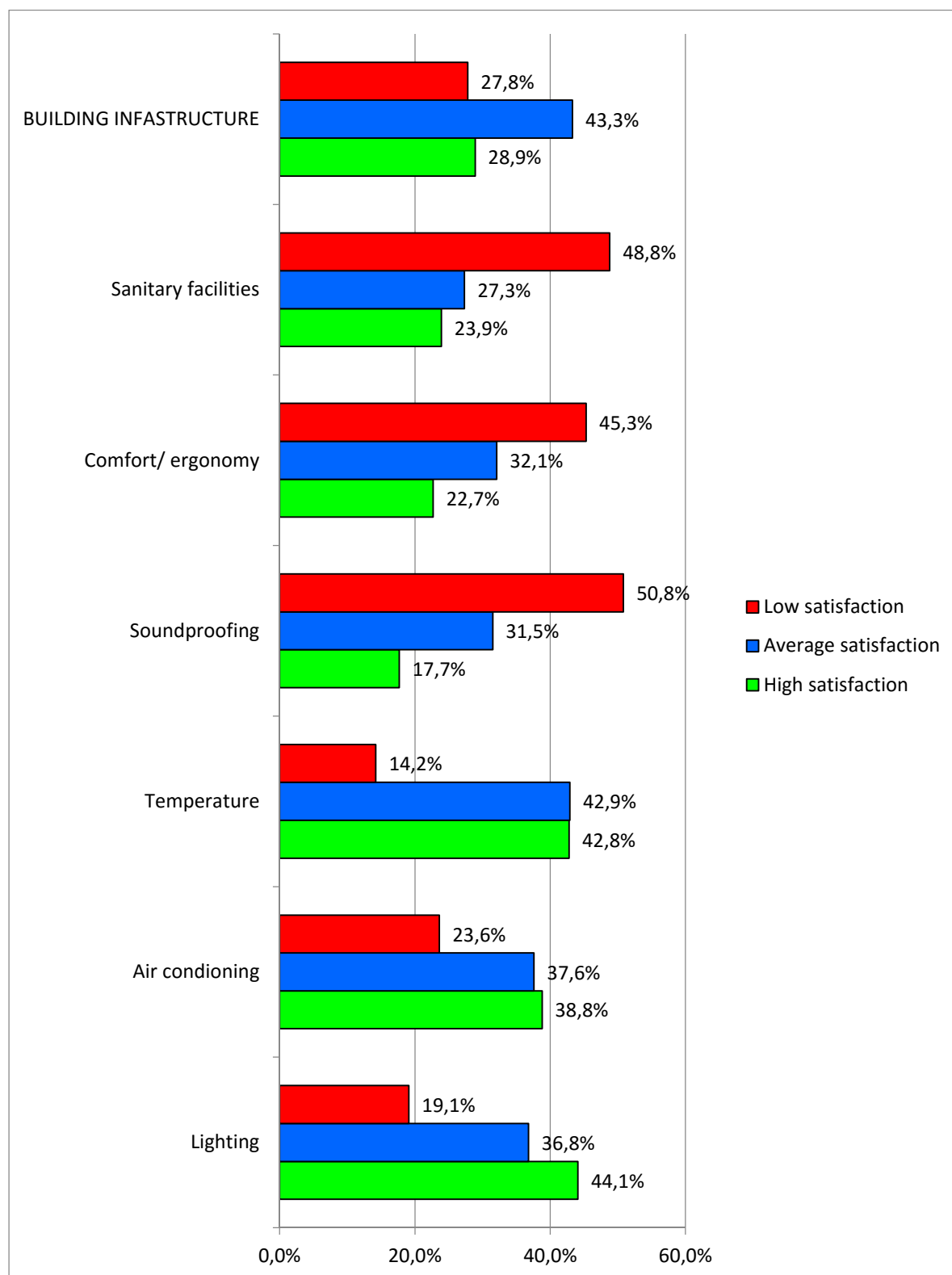


Figure 2: Officers’ perception of job satisfaction depending on the behavior of the Command.

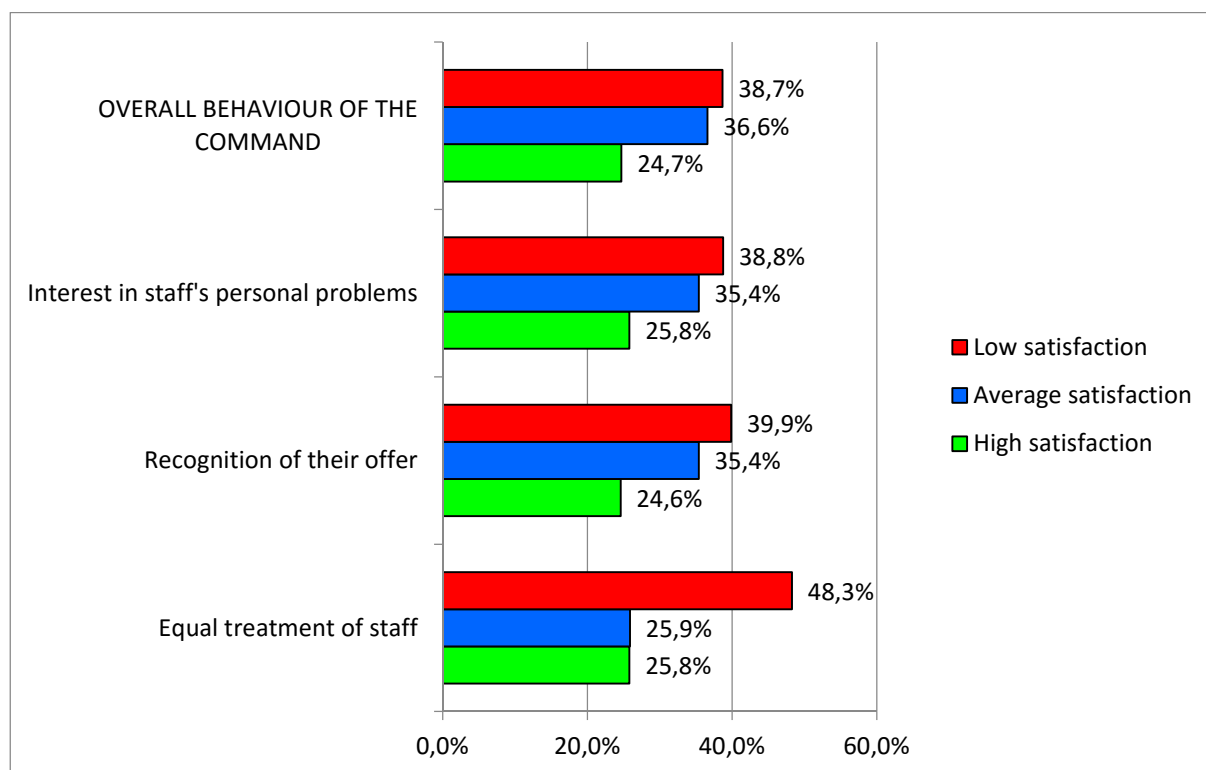
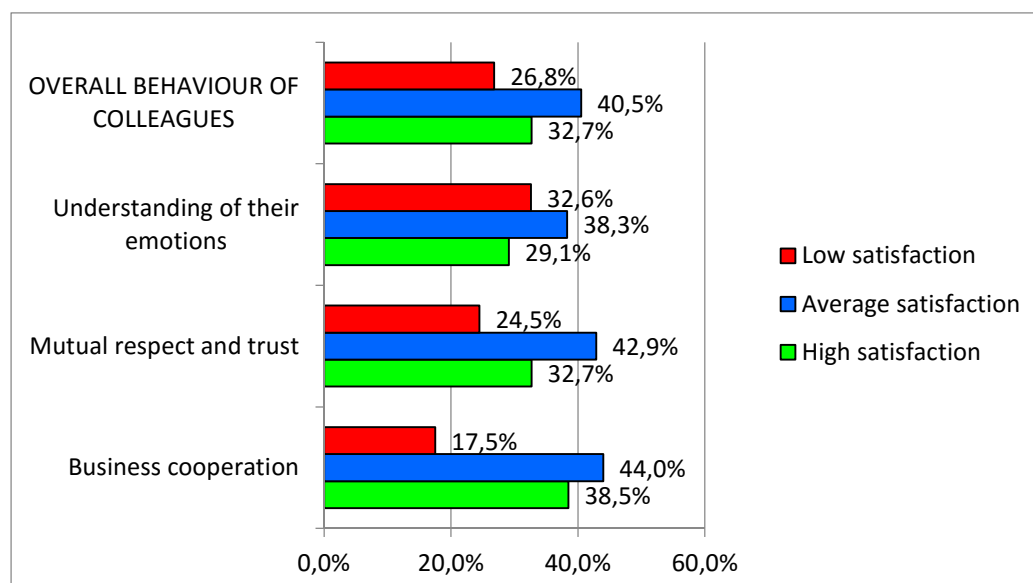


Figure 3: Officers’ perception of job satisfaction depending on the behavior of their colleagues.



and frustration may dominate over the employees with possibly negative impact on the performance of their duties (Robbins & Judge, 2011; Farjad & Varnous, 2013). The feeling of the unfair treatment of the officers is partly caused by the diversity of their duties and the fluctuations in staffing among different units. Serving in high demanding and responsible posts or in understaffed units, increases working fatigue and stress causing a feeling of disappointment and unfair treatment which frequently is ascribed to the decisions of the Command. Furthermore, the limited chances for reward in the form of furlough and the absence of any kind of financial reward or bonus, causes a feeling of minimum acknowledgement of their offer and the conscientious performance of their duties to the officers (Borzaga & Tortia, 2006). The Command's strictness in order to maintain staff's high discipline and constant readiness which Armed Forces' mission require, is probably positively connected to the officers' perception of low Command's interest in their personal problems.

The research revealed that officers' job satisfaction as far as their relationships with their colleagues is concerned, ranges in quite high level. Spending at least eight hours a day in the same working place certainly creates strong bonds of solidarity. These bonds become even stronger in a military environment, mainly because of the frequent round the clock shifts and the participation in long-month operations which strengthens the feelings of mutual respect, trust and appreciation among officers. This establishment of satisfying interpersonal relationships increases officers' job satisfaction related to the behavior of their colleagues.

According to the results of this research, the officers' perception about the prestige of their profession is strongly correlated in a positive way to the level of the satisfaction by their career choice.

Military personnel is not only responsible for immunize national sovereignty but its social

service is also significant and continually increasing, especially in recent years where the economic recession led to a major reduction of social spending. The acknowledgement of their social contribution, in association with the continually increasing level of their education and professionalism, make military personnel feel proud about their job. This perception of high prestige of their occupation probably increases their satisfaction by their career choice.

Moreover, officers' perception of their career opportunities is pretty much correlated in a positive way with the satisfaction from their career choice. Employees in professions with many career prospects tend to have higher appreciation of their work than others without such prospects (Hill, 2012). The absence of professional development opportunities makes employees feel trapped in their job and reduces radically the satisfaction of their career choice. On the contrary, being in a job with many career prospects give employees the motivation to be more productive, perceive the utility they gain from their profession as continually increasing and it is more possible to feel happy about their career choice.

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