Gauging Job Satisfaction in the Indian Oil and Gas Sector

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Abstract -- **Job dissatisfaction breeds behaviour that is cause of concern for organizations. Earlier studies aimed to equip managers to come up with better dynamics to improve the satisfaction level in an organization. A motivated workforce is the prerequisite for transformation leading to changing landscape. Any industry needs engaged workforce to lead the change. Employee perception is an important checkpoint communicating their level of engagement and positive outlook.**

Oil and Gas organizations are riding a wave of change. The instability in price caused this sector unpredictability in terms of job security. This study explores the gap between the expectation of the employees and actual working conditions in the oil and gas sector organizations in India.

Global average score for India in job satisfaction is below average, the present study finds out the satisfaction through perception based study of oil and gas professionals in India. SERVQUAL is used to find out the level of satisfaction in the oil and gas sector employees in the country.

Keywords: Job satisfaction and performance, Employees engagement, Talent management, Self-esteem, Organisational goals, SERVQUAL

I. INTRODUCTION

DUE to the fluctuation in oil prices, Oil and gas organizations are going through transformations globally. The yoyo effect calls for redefining the parameters of efficiency and effectiveness. Add to that, ongoing energy disruption where economies across the globe are investing in alternate sources of energy. The oil and gas industry is standing at the threshold of change. When the oil prices moved down oil and gas organizations had to align to the changing business strategy. The reduced oil prices translated to traditional HR methods like downsizing. In a study, it was revealed that 440,000 jobs were lost in oil and gas sector during the downturn [1].

Studies have proved that post-retrenchment, employees remained in the system tend to perceive the organization as unfair and exhibit a decline in loyalty, job insecurity, and, anxiety, depression, and generally low morale [2, 3]. Downsizing as a practice, therefore, has a negative impact on job satisfaction and long-term human capital strategy. To align the business strategy with the human resource strategy,

it is imperative that the internal stakeholders are motivated and engaged, as a means to ensure the organizational success.

The Gallup study (2006) finds out that the job satisfaction level in India is lower than the global average. 13% of the global workforce reported engaged, and only 9% of the Indians reported engaged; 31% of the workers in India are actively disengaged according to the study. The studies statistically relate the loss of an employee to the business loss [5]. Another study stated that India needs to engage its workforce to sustain recovery so that more and more people are employable [6].

A study by the Mercer group in 2017 reveals 34% of the people will leave organization in a year's time while majority of people working in organizations are actively looking for changing their present job (70%). The people who are not looking to leave (34%) are not energised to perform in the organization [7].

The knowledge of job dissatisfaction should be a good measure for a practicing manager to incorporate / evaluate the current engagement techniques in the organization. We found no specific study in the oil and gas sector in India of the current satisfaction level and its implication.

II. THE JOB SATISFACTION CONSTRUCT

Job satisfaction is an important work-related attitude. Studies have proved relation between attitudes (of job satisfaction), involvement, and performance [8]. There are many definitions for job satisfaction. The definition by Locke covers the concept well [9], who defined job satisfaction as "... a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences". The satisfaction relates to not what the employees do but "... how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs" [10]. Furthermore, satisfaction is the level of variance between the workers' expectation and experience. Herzberg *et.al.* [11,12] identified factors responsible for job satisfaction such as supportive colleagues, conducive working conditions, mentally challenging work, and equitable rewards.

III. JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK BEHAVIOUR

Low job satisfaction affects firms in various ways. There is

a high cost associated with accidents, absenteeism, turnover, and deviant workplace behaviour. In addition to the loss of the employee, there is loss of the implicit knowledge that he or she takes with him or her as the employment contract ends [13]. Heather Boushey and Sarah Jane Glynn in a study reveal significant business cost of replacing employees in an organization. The average internal cost of turnover ranges from a minimum of one-year pay to a maximum of two years' salary. Researchers state that the highly skilled jobs cost 213% of the year compensation to the company. This study cited 11 research papers over a 15 years period [14].

A significant different way to look at job satisfaction is linking it to the work behaviours. Employee withdrawal from work exhibits in different behaviour. There have been extensive studies that linked job satisfaction to quitting, however many studies have proved that between job dissatisfaction and quitting there are various intermediary steps. A study by William H. Mobley [15] revealed following steps:

1. Thinking of Quitting
2. Evaluation of expected utility of search and cost of quitting
3. Intention to search for alternatives
4. Search for alternatives
5. Evaluation of alternatives
6. Comparison of alternatives vs present job
7. Intention to quit/stay.

This study talks about the withdrawal behaviour and the analysis done by an employee at each stage and decision point of quitting / not quitting the organization. The study stated that an employee can be at different stage on the process of quitting and therefore a survey data collection on the intentions of quitting and withdrawal will not generate this specific feedback. This study emphasises the need to research more on the withdrawal behaviour of the employees. In a further study, he stated that not all kinds of absenteeism from work must be categorised under withdrawal [16]. There are studies, which link behaviour of the employee over a continuum as a withdrawal [17].

Farrell and Rusbult presented a model where they discussed exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect as responses (ELVN model) to job dissatisfaction [18]. They theorized that employee behaviour on dissatisfaction could be pinned in two dimensions of active/passive and constructive/destructive.

- *Exit*: This kind of behaviour will be directed towards leaving the organization—the specific behavioural incidents include job hunting and resigning.
- *Voice*: This would be the constructive behaviour of trying to improve the conditions by discussions within or outside the hierarchy. It is also exhibited through protests and union activity.

- *Loyalty*: This is a passive behaviour where the employee is hopeful that the conditions will change and there is trust in the management discretion.
- *Neglect*: This is also a passive behaviour, and this involves behaviour that is allowing and sometimes supporting the conditions to get worsen like chronic absence or being late to the office, reduced effort, and high error rate.

Other studies enumerate that a sudden upsurge of absence from work may be one of the best predictions of withdrawals [19]. Mobley, *et al.* stated the dissatisfaction in people elicits the cognitive function of leaving the job [20]. They related the level of job satisfaction to quitting through intermediate steps of intention to search, intention to quit/stay, and then finally quit. Staw stated that an employee might exhibit a voluntary absenteeism as a temporary solution to ward off the reasons of a dissatisfying job [21]. Hammer *et al.* through their research stated that the least resistance available to the worker is absenteeism from work on account of any dissatisfaction. This behaviour is wide and offers the workers a path of least resistance [22].

Porter and Steers found a linkage between overall job satisfaction and turnover [23]. Overall job satisfaction consistently and inversely relates to turnover. In an effort to break down the global concept of job satisfaction, various factors in the work situation were analysed as they related to withdrawal behaviour [23]. Price [24] developed a comprehensive structural model, which identified the background of intent to leave.

The extensive review of the literature proves that the behaviour of a dissatisfied worker is different from a satisfied worker. A dissatisfied worker may exhibit a range of behaviours that are negative for the organization and self or both. The range can be mild like surfing net during office hours and can be grave like substance abuse, taking office supplies home, and stealing from workforce. Satisfied workforces exhibit the behaviour of high job performance, high organizational citizenship behaviour, low absenteeism, and low turnover.

IV. JOB SATISFACTION AND PERFORMANCE

There is a strong debate on the relationship between job satisfaction and performance. Establishing a relationship between job satisfaction and job performance took decades of research. It is therefore important to understand that development for the managers to appreciate the concept and the work behind. The Hawthorne experiments laid the stone for keeping the workers happy for productivity; this research was carried out in 1930s and went on until 1940s. Post Hawthorne, work environment and working conditions were considered important to create the overall satisfaction and thus performance. The Hawthorne studies sparked research in the area of workers' satisfaction and performance [25]. Luthans and Peterson [26] in their research showed that engaged

employees have positive attitude towards their managers, show good performance, and achieve success. In addition, a Gallup study [5] found that engaged employees are more likely to contribute to the organization and take the organization forward. Engaged workforce performs better and are more committed to the organization [27, 28].

Just when we thought that we found the holy grail of performance, many researchers have argued that the relationship is spurious and one cannot say that job satisfaction and job performance are related. Brayfield and Crockett [29] showed that average correlation between job performance and job satisfaction is only +0.15. This challenges the relationship between job performance and job satisfaction.

In their famous work "The Motivation to Work," Herzberg *et al.* [30] stated that satisfaction and dissatisfaction factors are different. They underlined two different and independent dimensions (job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction) that account for satisfaction and dissatisfaction, respectively. They also stated that both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are on two different planes. The opposite for job satisfaction is "no job satisfaction" and the opposite for dissatisfaction is "no dissatisfaction." They called the factors leading to job satisfaction the motivational factors and the factors contributing to job dissatisfaction as hygiene factors. The researchers now had two different sets of factors to look at satisfaction and dissatisfaction among the employees and to link it to productivity.

In a meta-analysis, Iaffaldano and Muchinsky [31] found only mild correlation between job satisfaction and performance. Kahn [32] worked on the engaged employee and noted the dimensions of engagement. He defined employee engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". This definition lists all the three very important dimensions of employee engagement:

- Cognitive: what is the employee perspective
- Emotional: what the employees feel
- Physical: how energized is the employee.

Researchers found another variable—self-esteem—to be influencing job performance. Gardner and Pierce [33] stated that employees with high organizational based self-esteem will try to maintain an image of themselves in the organization and therefore will exhibit self-direction and control to achieve organizational goals. The researchers argued that the variable of self-efficacy is important. This implies that competent people feel good about their jobs, and subsequently productivity leads to satisfaction. A research by Timothy *et al.* [34] proved a high correlation between job performance and job satisfaction. This work was a very comprehensive meta-analysis and provided a model with moderating variables for the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance.

V. MEASURING JOB SATISFACTION

Job satisfaction is a work-related attitude. All the job satisfaction surveys measure the workers' attitude towards job to find out the level of job satisfaction. There is a strong case to find the level of job satisfaction. Researchers are able to connect the monetary value to the job dissatisfaction. A research and polling company Gallup suggested in its 2013 report that dissatisfied workers are causing the US economy to lose around $450 to 550 billion in productivity every year [35]; Worldwide only 13% of employees are engaged at work and a bulk of workers (63%) not engaged. In the same survey, it reported that 24% of the workers are actively disengaged. There are different ways to measure job dissatisfaction/satisfaction. The two most widely used approaches are as follows:

Single global rating—the employees respond to one question. For example, for questions such as "considering all aspects of the job how satisfied are you with your job," the answer will be in the Likert scale ranging from 1 (*highly satisfied*) to 5 (*highly dissatisfied*).

Summation score made up of a number of parameters such as nature of work, the supervision, and present pay, and these factors add up to get the job satisfaction score.

The single global rating questions are perception-based. However, it does not ask the relative importance of that factor like the employees' opinions and expectations towards indicator. Therefore, it is hard to use this data for managerial implications. The organizations informed about the overall satisfaction, but it is difficult to create a road map and link it to business results.

VI. RESEARCH GAP

Over the period, many studies have linked the important factor of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction to organizations. The studies directed to equip managers to come up with better dynamics to improve the satisfaction level in the organization. The dissatisfaction is exhibited in various ways like – turnover, accidents, low productivity, absenteeism, and decreased morale in the organization.

Many researchers have put a cost against the employee leaving the organization. An extensive review of the literature shows that an employee may just stay at one level of dissatisfaction and not progress towards quitting for an entire career. Researchers could not agree on one unified progression, there is a strong case that job dissatisfaction breeds the consequent behaviour that are cause of concern for the organization.

A job satisfaction score is precursor to improving the HR programmes. Many organizations are conducting an annual study on measuring job satisfaction with participation from across the world in some of them. These surveys will involve excellent agencies and the results are compiled at the global level.

Given the nature of change in oil and gas industry, these surveys should be frequent. We found no job satisfaction surveys and research in the Indian oil and gas sector. The global average score for India in job satisfaction is below average, the study finds out the satisfaction through perception based study of oil and gas professionals in India.

SERVQUAL is used to find out the level of satisfaction in the oil and gas sector employees in the country. To the authors' knowledge, there is no study done so far in oil and gas organizations.

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since the sector is going through changes assessing the present level of employee engagement will help in devising HR policy aligned to business. This study used SERVQUAL model to measure employee satisfaction of managers in two major (one public and one private) oil and gas organizations in India. The results are of importance to HRM professionals, as they indicate which aspects of the job the employees want to see improved. It is also interesting to note the differences and similarities of job satisfaction between the employees in a private and a public sector organization.

The aim of this research is to demonstrate in a quantitative way the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction. The SERVQUAL approach was developed by Parsuraman *et al.*(1988) [36] for measuring service quality in the following service quality dimensions:

1. *Tangible:* the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials
2. *Reliability:* the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
3. *Responsiveness:* the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service
4. *Assurance:* the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence

5. *Empathy:* the provision of caring, individualized attention to customer.

Through a set of 22 questions, the questionnaire tries to find out, using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very bad*) to 5 (*very good*), the customers' perception of the firms' performance and customers' own expectations of the performance accepted.

Sampling - In convenience sampling information is collected from the part of representative of a population available to the researchers conveniently [37]. For this research, non-probabilistic sampling was used. We needed response from the managers and therefore employees handling the managerial position participated in the survey.

Development of Questionnaire - A semi-structured questionnaire was developed by having an expert group discussion with the industry (client organizations), taking feedback from academicians and validated by industry experts which were then framed according to five areas of SERVQUAL framework. The questions asked various job condition aspects such as on the dimensions of the SERVQUAL method. India has both private and public organizations in oil and gas, and therefore the sample representatives were from both public and private. The questionnaire was tested on a set of 20 employees in oil and gas organizations. A pilot study was undertaken before the final data collection to ensure that the respondents had a clear understanding of all the questions.

We asked the respondents to fill in the details such as names and job function. However, the respondents stated that an anonymous survey would be a better option, and so appropriate changes were made to the questionnaire.

VIII. DATA COLLECTION

The responses were from employees who are handling technical and managerial responsibilities in two major oil and gas organizations in India. The questionnaire was sent through email with a total of 52 questions. The responses to the questions range from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). A total of 100 (50 from private and 50 from public oil and gas organizations) questionnaires qualified entry into the research. *Perceived Gap in Expectation and Reality:* Tables 2 and 3 show the satisfaction gap in the public sector oil and private oil and gas organizations, respectively.

Table 1 -- DETAILS OF THE DATA COLLECTED

Organization	Gender	No. of employees interviewed	Junior management	Senior management	Average experience (years)
Public Oil Company	Male	28	20	8	20
	Female	22	16	6	15
Private Oil Company	Male	32	22	10	19
	Female	18	14	4	15

Source: authors' own.

Table 2 – PERCEIVED GAP IN PUBLIC OIL AND GAS EMPLOYEES

Factors	Reality	Expectation	Gap
AS (assurance)	3.361905	5	1.638095
EM (empathy)	3.690476	5	1.309524
RE (responsiveness)	3.515873	5	1.484127
RL (reliability)	3.68254	5	1.31746
T (tangibility)	3.511905	5	1.488095

Source: authors' own.

Table 3 -- PERCEIVED GAP IN PRIVATE OIL AND GAS EMPLOYEES

Factors	Reality	Expectation	Gap
AS (assurance)	2.830434783	5	2.169565217
EM (empathy)	2.543478261	5	2.456521739
RE (responsiveness)	2.6	5	2.4
RL(reliability)	2.978623188	5	2.021376812
T (tangibility)	3.44673913	5	1.55326087

Source: authors' own.

On an overall score, both the public and private sector oil and gas employees stated that they are satisfied with the organization. In both the organizations, the employees stated that they are working with the best organization. However, a further analysis of the SERVQUAL questions suggested the areas of improvement in both the public and private organizations.

The reality perceived and the reality expected in both the public and private oil and gas organizations using the SERVQUAL showed the following gaps:

- The gap is maximum for public oil and gas employees in the parameter of assurance and tangibility and responsiveness.

- Whereas the highest gap in perceived and expected parameters of private sector oil and gas organizations is in empathy and responsiveness.

IX. IMPLICATIONS: THE PERCEPTION AND REALITY GAP

Public sector oil and gas organization: As discussed, the public sector oil and gas organization scored low in assurance, tangibility and responsiveness.

Assurance is the perception of the employees regarding the courtesy shown towards the employees, and thus trust conveyed and confidence developed. The questions asked were how the employees perceive the treatment of the organization towards them regarding empowerment, respect, value of the feedback, and how much their opinion counts in the organization. The employees in the public sector oil and gas organizations stated that they expect the organization to display more trust and confidence, value feedback, and acknowledge as a valuable resource to the company.

The public sector oil and gas employees also showed gap in their expectation and perception of the tangible factors such as compensation, training, and work schemes and intangible factors such as the organizations' responsiveness towards the employee. This implies that the employees seek a more timely and meaningful feedback from the organization.

Private sector oil and gas organization: Private sector organizations showed the highest perceived gap in the areas of empathy and responsiveness. Empathy is the factor of individual concern that the organization shows towards its employees. Operational support and response to the queries had the maximum gaps and this implies the manager's attention in improving the quality.

Through the study of the perception of expected and reality gap in public sector organization, we found that assurance and empathy are the areas where the managers must pay attention. Job satisfaction can be enhanced in public sector by improving trust and confidence. The tangible factors in public sector showed maximum gap, the managers must either think about increasing the pay package or help the employees understand that the packages are compatible.

In the private sector, the gap in the empathy and responsiveness showed that the managers must work on creating systems and processes that enhance the employees' perception of the organizations concerned with employees and their families'

well-being. A more responsive organization will respond to the employees' need and give feedback for the improvement of the employees.

X. CONCLUSION

The job satisfaction of the private sector organization can be enhanced by the human touch of the management in dealing with employees and their families. Empathy can also be enhanced by perception of a more open and transparent organization. In a formalized setup, it is important that the employees get to feel that the information they need is easily accessible. The vision and mission must be a guiding statement and not just the statements hanging from the wall. The perception of the reward and recognition is important for internal equity. Organization will be more responsive if reward and recognitions are perceived fair. The employees need managers' involvement in terms of their growth and therefore need more feedback.

Job satisfaction and performance influence each other in many ways. The literature review suggests that satisfied workers perform better and that, in turn, people who perform better are more satisfied. There is a need for more study on job satisfaction and its influences on different variables, yet such studies seem to be decreasing [34]. We also recommend that job satisfaction surveys specific to the industry are initiated to gauge the state of job satisfaction among employees.

It is advisable to look at the work behaviour that the employees exhibit to understand the level of employee satisfaction. Research proves that a dissatisfied employee may exhibit behaviours ranging from least resistance to grave misconduct. The least resistant behaviour is not joining work, whereas the other pole may involve serious misconduct and other deviant workplace behaviours.

Authors recommend measuring job satisfaction among the employees regularly though a single question rating which is very popular; a more comprehensive study will have practical implications for the managers. Through SERVQUAL, we are able to find out the specific factors which if enhanced will further improve job satisfaction of the respective organization.

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Limitations and Scope for Further Research: Servequal is the test of the perception and the results are only representative and must not be take in absolute. More important than the test score is the pattern that the scores show. A further research

could include more number of the oil and gas organizations. The sample size of the study can be increased from two organizations and also the number of responses can be increased from 100. Furthermore a longitudinal study on improvements on the mentioned factors and then evaluating the job satisfaction can be done to further understand the concept.

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