

Very satisfied with current job

Miettinen, Arto

Statistics Finland, Work Research Unit

Työpajankatu 13-15

Helsinki 00022, Finland

E-mail:arto.miettinen@stat.fi

Job satisfaction is one of the most researched phenomena of working life. It is seen to influence productivity, job inputs, absences and staff turnover. Primarily job satisfaction is acknowledged as a clear predictor of personal well-being and willingness to change jobs. It is conceivable that the employer benefits from more satisfied employees: an employee satisfied with his/her job is more productive, and lower willingness to change jobs can create savings from the cost of training new employees. It is also important that employees feel happy at work. This has been noted also at EU level in the strategies on the 'Quality of work' and 'Better jobs'.

The aim of this article is to explore which of the factors increasing and decreasing job satisfaction affect wage and salary earners' experiences of the overall job satisfaction, according to the data in the Quality of Work Life Survey 2008 (collected by Statistics Finland). The topic is examined with regard to variables operationalised on the basis of Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, and the internal (motivation) and external (hygiene) factors of work are looked at separately.

Introduction: Definitions of job satisfaction

Definitions of job satisfaction range from the very general to those anchored tightly to specific theories. Locke's theory on job satisfaction can be regarded as a general theory. It is based on a person's expectations about his/her job, i.e. a positive or negative view of the work. Herzberg's Two Factor Theory on the motivational factors increasing job satisfaction and the hygiene factors decreasing it is a good example of the latter kind. According to some views, the most important issue when examining job satisfaction is to pay attention to the different definitions of "job" (position, pay, other external factors) and "work" (content of work, duties and tasks, other factors related to the performance of the work itself) (see Rose 2001). One view is that individual characteristics and job/organisational characteristics should be tackled separately when examining job satisfaction (Spector 1997). In this sense, the defining of job satisfaction requires that also the work itself is defined accurately.

This article focuses on the Herzberg Two Factor Theory. Even though Herzberg does not question the concept of work, or work itself, in his theory, his division into internal motivation factors and external hygiene factors is practical – with stronger emphasis on the importance of the content of the work.

Why should we study job satisfaction?

Job satisfaction is seen as a clear predictor of personal well-being (Diaz-Serrano & Vieira 2005) and willingness to change jobs (Gazioglu & Tansel 2003). It is also seen to influence productivity, job inputs, absences and staff turnover. It is conceivable that the employer benefits from more satisfied employees: lower willingness to change jobs can create savings from the cost of training new employees and an employee satisfied with his/her job is more productive (Nguyen et al. 2003). Importance of job satisfaction has been also noted at EU level in the strategies on the quality of work and better jobs (COM 2001, COM 2003).

Job satisfaction and policy

In the past few years employment strategies of the European Union have focused on the improvement of the quality of work and the creation of better jobs. The EU Commission has listed a total of 31 indicators

which are meant to assist in the defining of quality of work or in creating gauges for high quality work. One of these indicators is satisfaction with one's own work in one's current job (COM 2003).

At the same time discussions on the relationship of job satisfaction and quality of work have not resulted in a consensus. Some researchers find job satisfaction a good indicator of quality of work (Diaz-Serrano & Vieira 2005) while others have made the opposite conclusions (Llorente & Macias 2003).

The latest EU Commission report (COM 2003) on job satisfaction states that no significant changes have taken place in job satisfaction in the late 1990s, even though the employment situation in the labour market improved clearly during the same period. In fact, a downward trend has been observed in job satisfaction in Great Britain and Germany (Green & Tsitsianis 2005, Clark 2005). As workplaces become more white-collar, the amount of routine work decreases and the general pay level rises the opposite development could be expected. One solution to the paradox could be in the changes of the value placed on different aspects of work. Improved benefits and a higher pay level may be overshadowed by other factors, which may be related to the content of the work (Green & Tsitsianis 2005).

The problems of studying job satisfaction

The above-mentioned paradox can be seen to be linked to the problem of studying job satisfaction itself. According to Michael Rose (2001, 31-34), job satisfaction can be studied with one general question about job satisfaction when we are interested in the work itself and use the variable in question mainly as a general indicator. A single proposition, however, often gives an overly unidimensional picture of the phenomenon, which is easy to misinterpret. If, however, we are targeting the various aspects of work behind the single proposition, job satisfaction must be studied with the help of separate propositions on the intrinsic facets related to the content of the work and the extrinsic facets related to external factors.

Herzberg's Two Factor Theory on job satisfaction

In light of the above it can be suggested that when pondering the changes in the value attached to various aspects of work, the solution can be found on the basis of Herzberg's Two Factor Theory. Herzberg's (1959) Two Factor Theory is the most known and studied western theory about job satisfaction (Pöyhönen 1987, 130). It looks at job satisfaction from the viewpoint of a theory of needs. The theory aims to clarify the importance of various aspects of work and working environment to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

The theory sees job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction as factors on separate scales. The opposite of satisfaction is not dissatisfaction but a lack of satisfaction. An employee experiences job dissatisfaction if hygiene factors are bad, but even at their very best, hygiene factors cannot create job satisfaction. At most, they can lead to a neutral stance. (Herzberg 1959, 107, 111)

Hygiene factors relate to the external circumstances surrounding the actual working. According to Herzberg the factors that need to be in order if we wish to eliminate job dissatisfaction include:

- Pay
- Interpersonal relations
- Work planning and quality of technical supervision
- Company policies and administration
- Working conditions
- Demands on work stemming from private life
- External symbols of status of work
- Job security

In contrast, job satisfaction results from factors related to the work itself, not to the external circumstances. In Herzberg's theory (1959, 114) the preconditions of job satisfaction are called motivation factors. Motivation factors relate to an individual's need to realise him/herself through work. They are:

- Valuing of job performance and recognition of achievement
- Possibilities of being competent and successful at work
- Possibilities of advancement
- Responsibility
- Interest in the job and tasks
- Possibilities of personal growth at work

Motivation factors relate to the fulfilment of higher needs such as the need to realise oneself through one's work (Herzberg 1959, 116). If no motivation factors are present at a workplace, hygiene factors must be in impeccable order for the work to be even tolerable.

Survey aims and methodology

The aim of this article is to examine, in light of the above-mentioned problems associated with job satisfaction research, which of the factors increasing (F8_1 – F8_19) and decreasing (F7_1 – F7_19) job satisfaction affect the respondents experience of the general proposition measuring job satisfaction (A10A). In this manner we can reach the various aspects of work behind the single proposition, as we examine the propositions related to the content of the work and those related to external factors separately (see Lehto & Sutela 2009).

The respondents were divided into two groups on the basis of their responses to the general question about job satisfaction "How satisfied are you with your current job?". The two groups were the very satisfied (A10A=1) and the others (A10=2, 3, 4 or 5). In this article this division into groups functions as the determining variable of experienced job satisfaction. Various 1) personal factors and factors related to one's position in the labour market and 2) factors related to the properties of the work and personal relationships at the work place are examined as explanatory variables. Those who reported to be "very satisfied" made up 25 per cent of the whole sample, 64 per cent were "rather satisfied" and 11 per cent were "rather or very unsatisfied" or answered "difficult to say". In the logical model presented later in this article, motivation factors as described in Herzberg's theory but describing the current working life were operationalised from the quality of work life survey propositions. For description of the data and questionnaire, see Lehto & Sutela 2009. Table 1 lists the operationalised variables and their reclassifications, concerning motivation factors.

Table 1. Operationalised variables and reclassification of variables, motivation factors

Herzberg: 'Possibility of growth':

B34 Opportunities receiving training to improve professional skills in current workplace (1=1; 2,3=2)

Herzberg: 'Advancement':

B37 Advancement opportunities in current workplace (1=1; 2,3=2)

Herzberg: 'increased opportunities for self-development':

B40 Opportunities for self-development in current workplace (1=1; 2,3=2)

Herzberg: 'Responsibility':

C15L My superior delegates responsibility to the subordinates (1,2=1; 3,4,5=2)

Herzberg: 'Recognition':**B32C Do you feel to that you are a valued member of the work community (1,2=1; 3,4=2)****Herzberg: 'work itself' – here 'opinion on ones work':****F6 Do you regard your current work important and significant (1=1; 2=2; 3,4=3)****Results****Persons very satisfied with their current job as seen in the data of the Quality of Work Life Survey 2008**

As table 2 shows, high levels of job satisfaction are more often found among the older age groups, upper white-collar employees as well as fixed-term employees. Differences in these variables between the groups are statistically significant. When looking at gender, education and sector, the slightly larger numbers of very satisfied women and employees with a basic education degree are not statistically significantly different from the comparison groups.

Examined by age group, very satisfied men mostly belong to the oldest age group aged 55 to 64, and very satisfied women are also among the 55 to 64-year-olds. However, in the logistic regression model presented later (table 3) the age variable does not explain belonging to the group "very satisfied", but rather it is explained by various variables connected with the working community, whose influence does not change when the model is standardised along age and other background variables (level of education, type of employment relationship, employer sector). It can be suggested that the differences between age groups may in part be explained by the gap between the expectations young people have of work and the real situation (Llorente & Macias 2003).

Table 2. Very satisfied with current job in 2008, A10A=1, % salary earners.

	All	Men	Women
Gender	%	%	%
Men	(24)		
Women	(26)		
Age			
15-24	26	27	26
25-34	23	22	24
35-44	24	24	25
45-54	24	21	25
55-64	30	29	31
Socioeconomics			
White-collar upper	28	27	29
White-collar lower	26	26	26
Blue-collar	22	20	25
Education			
Basic	29	24	34
Secondary	24	24	24

Lower tertiary	25	22	27
Upper tertiary	26	28	26
Employment relationship			
Permanent	24	23	25
Fixed-term	32	30	32
Sector			
State	27	30	24
Municipality	26	24	26
Private	25	24	27

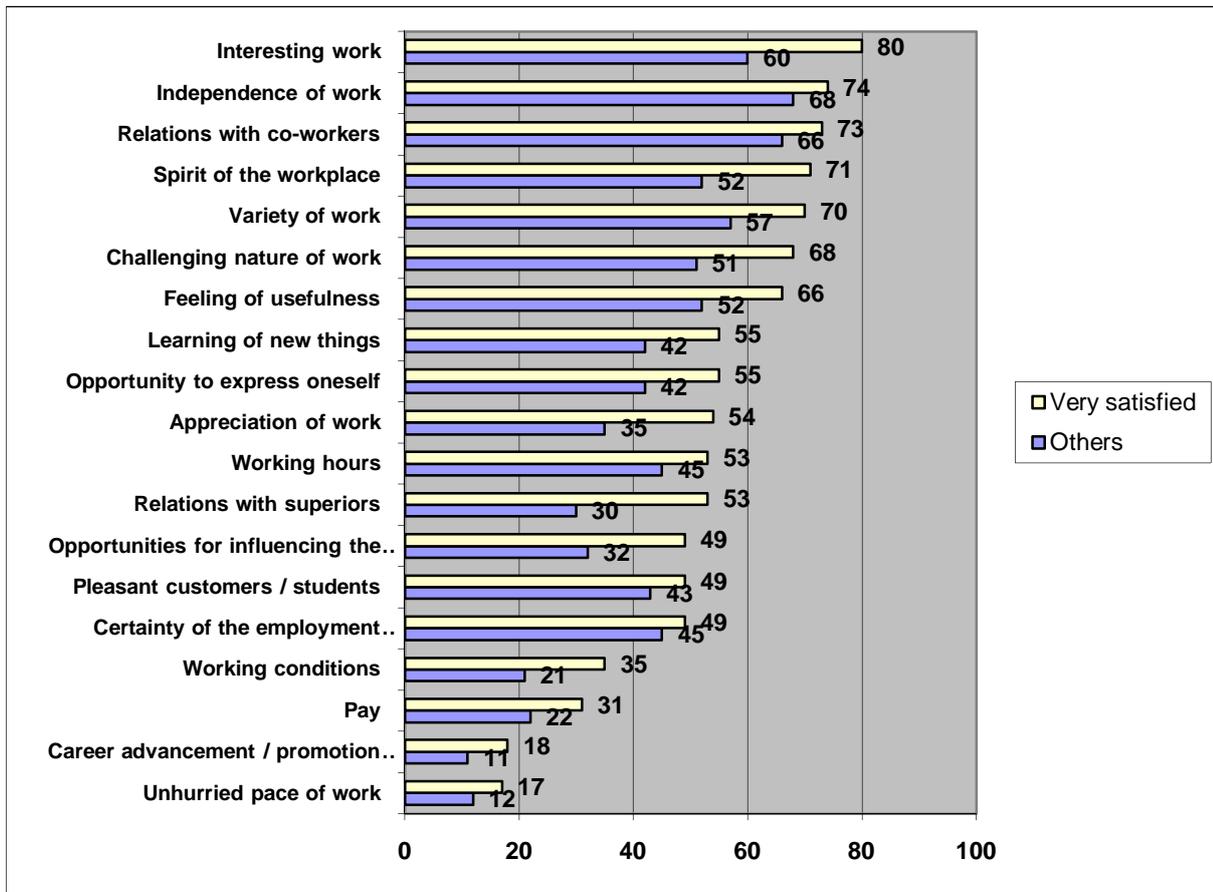
Source: FQWLS 2008

Factors increasing job satisfaction

As can be seen from figure 1, the differences between the very satisfied and the others strongly resemble the motivation factors mentioned in Herzberg's theory. The most common factors contributing to job satisfaction in the group of the very satisfied are how interesting the work is, how independent it is, how much variety it offers, relations with co-workers, the atmosphere of the workplace and how challenging the work is. On the other hand the results conflict slightly with Herzberg's views. "Relations with co-workers", which Herzberg classified as a hygiene factor, is the third most common factor contributing to job satisfaction in the group of the very satisfied. The difference with the group "others" for this variable is 7 percentage points (73% vs. 66%), and the difference is statistically significant.

The factors increasing job satisfaction in the group of the very satisfied generally do not differ significantly by gender. Only the factor "relations with co-workers" is mentioned more often by women (women 75% vs. men 71%, difference almost statistically significant). It should also be mentioned that the seventh most common variable "feeling of usefulness" is found to increase job satisfaction more commonly by women (71 %) than men (60 %), and the difference is statistically very significant. Since men and women view the variables differently, the results will be given by gender in the logistical model (table 3) presented below.

Figure 1. Factors that make current job more enjoyable among very satisfied and others, FQWLS 2008, %.

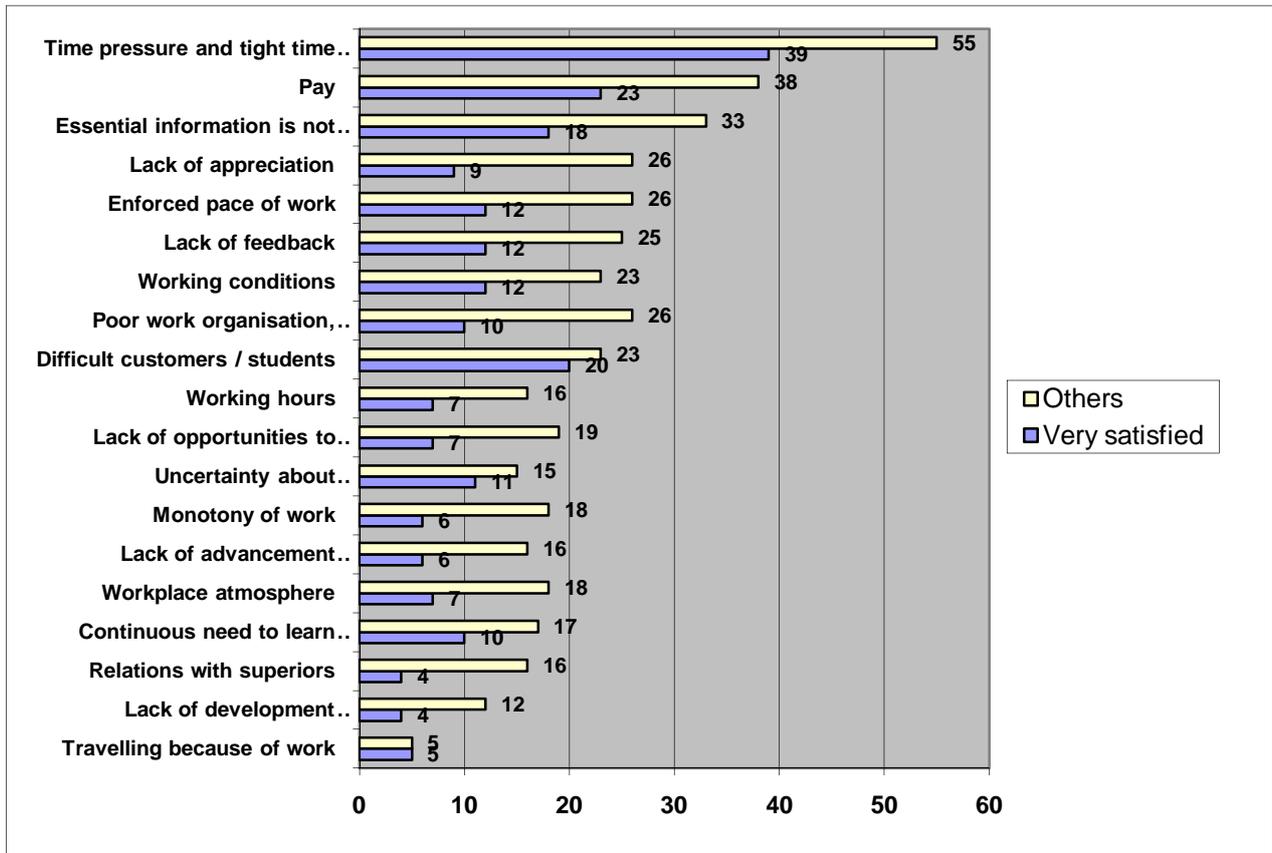


Factors decreasing job satisfaction

The focus in examining factors decreasing job satisfaction is the group “others” (or the not very satisfied). As can be seen from figure 2, the differences between the very satisfied and the others resemble to some extent the hygiene factors mentioned in Herzberg’s theory. Also the variable “lack of appreciation” can be seen to come close to Herzberg’s theory (“external symbols for recognition for work”). The most common factors decreasing job satisfaction, in addition to the above-mentioned variables, in the group “others” are experienced time pressure and tight schedules, pay, essential information is not given in time, enforced pace of work and lack of feedback. The eighth on the list is “poor work organisation”, which could be seen to equal Herzberg's hygiene factor “work planning and quality of technical supervision”. For this variable, the differences between the groups are indeed statistically very significant (24% vs. 9%). Similarly the seventh factor on the list, working conditions, can be seen to match Herzberg’s variable “working conditions”. For this variable, too, the differences between the groups are statistically very significant (27 % vs. 11 %).

On the other hand it could be suggested that the concept “work planning and quality of technical supervision” of Herzberg’s days (1959) would today be replaced by the concepts “time pressure and tight schedules” and “enforced pace of work”. The “company policies and administration” mentioned by Herzberg could today be thought to relate to two relatively widespread problems in today’s organisations, namely “essential information is not given in time” and “lack of feedback”.

Figure 2. Factors that make current job less enjoyable, %. FQWLS 2008.



Factors related to the qualities of work and personal relationships at the workplace

The relationship between very high job satisfaction and various qualities of work and personal relationships are examined with regard to variables operationalised on the basis of Herzberg’s theory. The focus of the examination is on factors that increase job satisfaction (see also table 1).

The following propositions corresponding to Herzberg’s motivation factors (chosen on the basis of variance analysis) are examined:

- B34 In your current workplace do you have good, fair or poor opportunities for receiving training to improve professional skills
- B37 In your current workplace are your advancement possibilities good, fair or poor
- B40 In your current workplace are your opportunities for self-development good, fair or poor
- C15L My supervisor delegates responsibility to subordinates in a sensible manner
- B32C Do you feel that you are a valued member of the work community
- F6 Do you regard your current work very important and significant

The above-mentioned variables were examined as explanatory variables and very high job satisfaction as the dependent variable. The logistic regression model and odds ratios are presented in table 3.

When examining the adjusted motivation variables operationalised on the basis of Herzberg’s theory, some confirmation is found for it: motivation factors explain very high levels of job satisfaction, if we look at the odds ratios of various variables (see table 3).

Belonging to the group of the very satisfied is most likely for women, who

- 1) regard their current work very important and significant (OR 12.038)
- 2) feel like a valued member of the work community always or often (4.959)
- 3) feel that the responsibility is delegated sensibly to subordinates by superiors (3.391)

Belonging to the group of the very satisfied is most likely for men, who

- 1) find their work very important and significant (OR 13.984)
- 2) find their opportunities for self-development good (3.400)
- 3) feel like a valued member of the work community always or often (3.114)

It is very interesting to see that the factors predicting job satisfaction for men and women are almost in the exact same order with regard to the operationalised motivation factors. Another interesting observation is that the likelihood of belonging to the group of the very satisfied is higher for men than women in all variables, except concerning the variable “responsibility is delegated sensibly to subordinates by superior”.

In addition to the variables presented above, very high job satisfaction for women was predicted by good opportunities for self-development in current workplace (OR 2.689), good opportunities of advancement (OR 2.317) and good opportunities of receiving training to increase professional skill (OR 2.167). The order of importance of the variables was slightly different for men. In addition to the variables presented above, very high job satisfaction among men was predicted by an experience of sensibly delegated responsibility among employees (OR 2.804), good opportunities of advancement (OR 2.464) and good opportunities for receiving training to increase professional skill (OR 2.360).

Table 3. Being very satisfied (A10A=1) relative probability as odds ratios (=OR) according to operationalised motivation factors among 15-64 year old men and women

Men	2008	Adjusted ¹
Opportunities for receiving training to improve professional skills		p=.000
Good	2.363 *	2.360 *
Fair / Poor	1.000	1.000
Advancement opportunities in current workplace		p=.000
Good	2.466 *	2.464 *
Fair / Poor	1.000	1.000
Opportunities for self-development in current workplace		p=.000
Good	3.403 *	3.400 *
Fair / Poor	1.000	1.000
Responsibility is delegated sensibly to subordinates by superior		
Totally / to some extent agree	2.804 *	2.804 *
Totally / to some extent disagree	1.000	1.000

**Do you feel that you are valued member
of the work community**

Always / often	3.111 *	3.114 *
Sometimes / never	1.000	1.000

Regardment of current work

Very important and significant	13.984 *	13.984 *
Rather significant	5.011 *	5.011 *
Rather / totally insignificant	1.000	1.000

Women	2008	Adjusted ¹
-------	------	-----------------------

Opportunities for receiving training to p=0.000

improve professional skills

Good	2.167 *	2.167 *
Fair / Poor	1.000	1.000

Advancement opportunities in p=0.000

current workplace

Good	2.317 *	2.317 *
Fair / Poor	1.000	1.000

Opportunities for self-development p=0.000

in current workplace

Good	2.689 *	2.689 *
Fair / Poor	1.000	1.000

**Responsibility is delegated sensibly to
subordinates by superior**

Totally / to some extent agree	3.391 *	3.391 *
Totally / to some extent disagree	1.000	1.000

**Do you feel that you are valued member
of the work community**

Always / often	4.959 *	4.959 *
Sometimes / never	1.000	1.000

Regardment of current work

Very important and significant	12.038 *	12.038 *
Rather significant	4.455 *	4.455 *
Rather / totally insignificant	1.000	1.000

¹ Adjusted by age, education, sector and the term of employment.

* The distinction to the comparison group is statistically significant by a 99 % probability.

Source: FQWLS 2008

Summary

It would appear that the biggest differences in the experience of factors increasing job satisfaction between those who are very satisfied with their current work the other groups have to do with how interesting the job is (80 % vs. 60 %), spirit of the workplace (71 % vs. 52 %) and challenging nature of the

work (68 % vs. 51 %). (Figure 1) When examining the relative differences, also the feeling of usefulness, appreciation of one's work and opportunities to influence one's work seem to vary between the groups. In both groups especially independence of work and relations with co-workers are seen as factors which increase job satisfaction.

The most common factors decreasing job satisfaction in the group "others" were time pressure and tight schedules (55 % vs. 39 %), pay (38 % vs. 23 %) and essential information not being given in time (33 % vs. 18 %). Other factors chipping away at job satisfaction are also more common in the group "others" than in the group "very satisfied", e.g. lack of appreciation (26 % vs. 9 %), enforced pace of work (26 % vs. 12 %) and lack of feedback (25 % vs. 12 %). (Figure 2)

On the basis of this examination, it would therefore seem that, in line with Herzberg's theory, belonging to the group of the very satisfied is not as strongly explained by the lack or rarity of the so called hygiene factors when compared with motivation factors. The list is topped by the factors connected with the work itself, i.e. how interesting and independent the job is and how much variety it offers. Herzberg's theory receives even stronger support when we examine the opposite of enforced pace of work, namely the unhurried pace of work. This factor is found at last position of the list of 19 factors increasing job satisfaction and the differences between the groups are very small (17% vs. 12%). The enforced pace of work chips away at job satisfaction, which cannot be restored by establishing an unhurried pace of work.

If work has an unhurried pace but is not interesting, independent and varying, the work community can only "enjoy" the lack of job dissatisfaction, but will not have joy at work, not to mention a drive to work (see Hakanen 2005). It seems then that, as Herzberg puts it, when the hygiene factors are in order – i.e. working equipment and the environment are in order – we cannot talk of increasing job satisfaction, but only of a neutral view of the situation. Furthermore, if the job offers no factors increasing satisfaction, the hygiene factors must be in perfect order for the work to be tolerable.

In model predicting job satisfaction (table 3), the statistically significant explaining factors are various factors related to the work itself and relationships in the work community. Background factors, such as level of education or type of employment relationship, do not explain the experience of job satisfaction, so the odds ratios predicting job satisfaction do not get much smaller if they are adjusted. This model illustrates the key points of Herzberg's theory: belonging to the group of the very satisfied is explained by the experience that one's work is significant and important, one has opportunities for development in the current workplace as well as the feeling of being a valued member of the work community. These factors can be regarded as key variables concerning the personal well-being of the employee (see Green 2006).

REFERENCES

Clark, Andrew (2005): *Your Money or Your Life: Changing Job Quality in OECD Countries*. British Journal of Industrial Relations. Volume 43, Number 3, pp. 377-400.

Commission of the European Communities (2001): *Employment and social policies: a framework for investing in quality*. Communication from the commission to the council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 313 final. Brussels 2001.

Commission of the European Communities (2003): *Improving quality in work: a review of recent progress*. Communication from the commission to the council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 728 final. Brussels 2003.

Diaz – Serrano, Lluís & Vieira, José A. (2005): *Low-pay higher pay and Job Satisfaction within the European Union*. Empirical evidence from fourteen countries. IZA discussion papers number 1558. Institute for the study of Labor.

Gasioglu, Saziye & Tansel, Aysit (2002): *Job Satisfaction in Britain: Individual and Job Related Factors*. Economic Research Center Working Papers in Economics 03/03.

Green, Francis & Tsitsianis, Nicholas (2005): *An Investigation of National Trends in Job Satisfaction in Britain and Germany*. British Journal of Industrial Relations. Volume 43, Number 3, pp. 401-429.

Green, Francis (2006): *Demanding Work. The paradox of job quality in the affluent economy*. Princeton University

Press.

Herzberg, Frederick. & Mausner, Bernard. & Snyderman, Barbara (1959): *The Motivation to Work*. John Wiley. New York.

Juuti, Pauli (1983): *Työkäyttämisen teoreettinen tausta*. Helsinki.

Juuti, Pauli (1992): *Organisaatiokäyttäytyminen*. Aavaranta-sarja nro 18. Otavan kirjapaino Oy. Keuruu.

Lehto, Anna-Maija & Sutela, Hanna (2009): *Three decades of working conditions. Findings of Finnish Quality of Work Life Surveys 1977-2008*.

Llorente, Rafael & Macías, Enrique (2003): *Job Satisfaction as an Indicator of the Quality of Work*. Departamento de Economía Aplicada. Universidad de Salamanca.

Locke, Edwin A. (1969): *What is Job Satisfaction? Organizational Behavior and Human performance* 4, s. 309-336. In Pöyhönen, Terhi (1975): *Työtyytyväisyys. Teoreettinen tarkastelu. Työterveyslaitoksen tutkimuksia* 114.

Locke, Edwin A. (1976): *Nature and Causes of Job Satisfaction*. In Dunnette, M.D. (Ed.) *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. Rand McNally. Chicago.

Nguyen Anh Ngoc, Taylor Jim & Bradley Steve (2003): *Relative pay and job satisfaction: some new evidence*. Working paper 045. Lancaster University Management School.

Pöyhönen, Terhi (1975): *Työtyytyväisyys. Teoreettinen tarkastelu. Työterveyslaitoksen tutkimuksia* 114.

Pöyhönen, Terhi (1987): *Työtyytyväisyyden rakentuminen*. In Lindström, K & Kalimo, R (Eds.) *Työpsykologia - terveys ja työelämän laatu. Työterveyslaitos*. Helsinki.

Rose, Michael (2001): *Disparate measures in the workplace ... Quantifying overall job satisfaction*. Paper presented at the 2001 British Household Panel Survey Research Conference, 5-7 July 2001, Colchester, UK.

Spector, Paul E. (1997): *Job Satisfaction. Application, assesment, causes and consequences*. Sage. London