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# The impact of education on attitudes of female government employees

The impact of education

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**Abstract** This study investigates the relationship of education (level and field) on job satisfaction among Kuwaiti women employees (KWE) in the Kuwaiti public government sector (KGS). This study differs from previous investigations of job satisfaction in two principle ways: in taking into account education (level and field) in the public sector work setting; in using a quantitative test for testing some demographic factors that have not been measured in previous researches and studies, especially in a very important sector which is the KGS in a rapidly industrializing Middle Eastern country. Broader characteristics, especially education field and level, is of substantial importance in predicting and affecting job satisfaction. Implications, limitations and lines of future research are discussed.

## Introduction

Job satisfaction has been found to significantly affect job performance, absenteeism, turnover, and psychological distress (Andrisani, 1978; Davis, 1992; Spector, 1997, p. 55). Thus, as an antecedent condition, job satisfaction influences women's job-related performance and commitment, which, in turn, affects women's occupational attainment (Felmlee, 1995). Job satisfaction can also be viewed as the consequence of factors that impinge on it, such as the work environment and the reward structure offered on the job, as well as the family obligations of the employee (Andrisani, 1978; Davis, 1992). For instance, research on employed women has demonstrated that job characteristics such as supervisor and co-worker support, pay and benefits increase women's job satisfaction as well as their attachment to their employer and the labour force in general (DeSai and Waite, 1991; Greenberger *et al.*, 1989).

Job satisfaction is an attitudinal variable and can be considered as a global feeling about the job or as a related constellation of attitudes about various aspects or facets of the job. The global approach is used when the overall or bottom-line attitude is of interest; for example, if one wishes to determine the effects of people liking or disliking their jobs. The facet approach is used to find out which parts of the job produce satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This can be very useful for organizations that wish to identify areas of dissatisfaction on which they can improve. Sometimes both approaches can be used to get a complete picture of employee job satisfaction (Spector, 1997, p. 2).

Job satisfaction is simply how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike



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(dissatisfaction) their jobs (Spector, 1997, p. 2). Locke (1976), the motivation theorist, has proposed a widely accepted definition of job satisfaction as "a pleasurable positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences".

Milburne and Francis (1961) further view satisfaction as a valuable source of information for managers: job satisfaction is an indication of how individuals feel about their jobs when their expectations are compared to what is actually received from different facets of the work situation. Job satisfaction is important in theory and in practice. From a practical point of view, knowledge of job satisfaction can help future administrators to understand how to motivate their subordinates to increase productivity.

In addition, job satisfaction is important, because dissatisfied workers are prone to excessive turnover and absenteeism. Understanding job satisfaction may thus be linked to performance, organizational productivity and other issues, including labour turnover (Dickter *et al.*, 1996; Lee *et al.*, 1999; Melamed *et al.*, 1995; Sekoran and Jauch, 1978, p. 44).

### Literature review

Job satisfaction is an attitudinal variable that can be a diagnostic indicator of how a person is doing in one of the major domains of his or her life. Job dissatisfaction suggests that a problem exists either in the job or the person. Many organizational conditions can lead to poor job attitudes. Also, sometimes events and factors outside of work can have negative effects on job satisfaction. These can include personal problems and personality of the individual. Job satisfaction, on the other hand, indicates good work adjustment and positive well-being. Again, both work and non-work factors contribute to good job satisfaction (Spector, 1997, p. 72).

Job satisfaction can be approached by identifying related underlying and motivational theories. These theories can be grouped into two categories: content theories and process theories (Carlisle, 1982, p. 411; Chung, 1977, p. 14; Dyer *et al.*, 1990, p. 422). Content theories provide an account of the factors influencing job satisfaction. Included in the content category are: need-fulfilment theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory. Content theories attempt to specify the particular needs or values which must be satisfied or attained (respectively) for an employee to be satisfied with a given job. In the second category are: equity theory and valence theory. The process theories provide an account of how variables such as employees' needs and expectations interact with job environmental characteristics to produce worker satisfaction (Bennett, 1994, p. 104; Hopkins, 1983, p. 9).

Process theories attempt to specify the types or classes of variables (need, values, expectations and perceptions) considered causally relevant to satisfaction, as well as how these variables combine to determine job satisfaction (Locke, 1976). All variables in a given work situation are

considered because of the significant relationship they have with each other (Bennett, 1994, p. 104).

There are important reasons why we should be concerned with job satisfaction, which can be classified according to the focus on the employee or the organization. First, the humanitarian perspective is that people deserve to be treated fairly and with respect. Job satisfaction is, to some extent, a reflection of good treatment. It also can be considered as an indicator of emotional well-being or psychological health. Second, the utilitarian perspective is that job satisfaction can lead to behaviour by employees that affects organizational functioning.

There are important implications of employee feelings, which can lead to both positive and negative behaviour. Job satisfaction can be a reflection of organizational functioning. Differences among organizational units in job satisfaction can be diagnostic of potential trouble spots (Spector, 1997, p. 2).

### **Theoretical frameworks of job satisfaction and education (level and field)**

Several theoretical perspectives lend credence to the proposition that we can expect significant relationships between demographic characteristics and job satisfaction. Among them is the expectations perspective.

#### *Expectations*

Different expectations are likely to be associated with different affective and behavioural responses at work. Employees perceive and evaluate their situation, in part, by virtue of comparisons with others of comparable status, and they are likely to make judgements of comparability using an attribute such as education (Clark *et al.*, 1994; Oldham *et al.*, 1982). Vecchio (1981a,b) suggests that differences in job satisfaction associated with education could be attributed to differences in expectations.

Satisfaction-dissatisfaction will depend, Locke (1976) argues, on whether the deviation from the expectation is in a direction one values or in a direction one disvalues. In addition, education contributes to job satisfaction indirectly by increasing both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, but it diminishes satisfaction by increasing occupational expectations (Arvey *et al.*, 1991).

There are, however, a number of studies which underscore the importance of expectations in understanding job satisfaction. Ostroff (1992) has indicated that giving individuals a more realistic job preview (realistic expectations) of the organization they join and the role they will be playing has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

The results reported by Brush *et al.* (1986) showed that, education interacts with an unmeasured variable (or variables) to facilitate or constrain satisfaction at work. Vecchio (1981a,b) suggests that differences in job satisfaction by education could be attributed to differences in expectations. El-Guindi (1986)

has pointed out that, for the purpose of understanding the dynamics of women's changing roles in the Arab world, it is useful to make a distinction between education and employment.

*Education (level and field) and job satisfaction*

Individual demographic characteristics have been a likely target for sources of variation in job satisfaction. Many such aspects of workers have been studied in relation to job satisfaction. The most frequently studied of these personal characteristics include education level and field.

*Education (level and field)*

Many studies have been done into individual job satisfaction and education in the USA (Boles *et al.*, 2001). There has been an implicit assumption that these studies and research findings can be generalised to women of all countries. This study will provide a quantitative test of this assumption as well as testing demographic factors that have not been measured in previous researches and studies, especially in a very important sector, which is the Kuwaiti Government sector in a rapidly industrialising Middle Eastern country.

Several studies report a relationship between education and satisfaction. This relationship tends to be negative. A meta-analysis was conducted by Brush *et al.* (1986) involving 21 independent studies and over 10,000 employees (there were 11 manufacturing organizations and ten service organizations. Among the ten service organizations, seven were government organizations, two public utilities, and one hospital). The range of correlations across the different studies for each correlate was quite large. Correlations describing the relationship between education and job satisfaction, for example, ranged from a negative  $r = -0.52$  to a positive  $r = 0.20$ .

Ganzach (1998) concluded that intelligence as a direct negative effect of education on job satisfaction is negligible when it is controlled, whereas the indirect positive effect of intelligence and education on job satisfaction is mediated by job complexity, because more intelligent people get better, more interesting, and more challenging jobs. In addition, an indirect positive effect, mediated by job complexity, because more intelligent people get better, more interesting, and more challenging jobs.

Martin and Shehan (1989) found, first: on evidence that contact with educational complex raises expectations for extrinsic or intrinsic such that when these expectations are not met, education actually operates to reduce reported satisfaction with work. They reported that education generally increases worker satisfaction, although not substantially. Second, their analysis suggests that it is inappropriate to assume that the education-job rewards-job satisfaction relationship is different for men and women.

Brush *et al.* (1986) suggested that further research should be directed towards explaining the associations between demographic variables which were not measured in their research (i.e. family, marital status, traditions, and

education) and job satisfaction in private organizations. They concluded that no pattern of significant correlations with job satisfaction was observed for education. Their findings strongly suggest that future studies of job satisfaction should take education into account in private organizations. Service organizations require a more educated workforce, and this could affect the degree of association between education and satisfaction in service, as opposed to manufacturing organizations. For example, education may be negatively associated with satisfaction in manufacturing organisations because education may increase job expectations beyond a level generally attainable in these settings. Service organizations, on the other hand, may be able to meet or even exceed the expectations of highly-educated employees. Education may be positively associated with satisfaction.

Many researchers have found positive relationships between education levels and job satisfaction (Rogers, 1991). Falcon (1991), in her study, found that more educated managers expressed more job satisfaction in both public and private sectors. In a survey that was conducted in four municipalities in the midwestern and southwestern USA, Howard and Frink (1996) found that one would expect that individuals with greater levels of education would experience more growth opportunities than those individuals with lower levels of education. Al-Ajmi (2001) concluded in his study of job satisfaction among managers in the oil industry in Kuwait, that managers with a post-graduate degree were found to be more satisfied than the managers with a high-school diploma in the areas of present pay and job in general.

Again, studies showed no consistent pattern. Vollmer and Kinney (1955) indicated that more educated employees reported dissatisfaction with their jobs. Similar findings were reported by Klien and Maher (1966); their data indicated that college-educated managers were less satisfied with pay than non-college educated managers. These results are somewhat at variance with the studies reviewed by Dortch (1995), Herzberg *et al.* (1957), Jones (1994) and Steel (1991), who found that more educated employees were more satisfied with their jobs than those with less education. In addition, Glenn and Weaver (1982) showed a positive relationship between education and work satisfaction. Still other studies found no relationship between education and work satisfaction (Gordon and Arvey, 1975; King *et al.*, 1982).

### **Kuwaiti literature review (studies in Kuwait)**

Kuwait faces two major issues. First, the danger of depending on non-citizen immigrant labour force for maintaining economic activity and quality of life. Second, dependence on the oil sector for economic development. The resolution for the first issue depends heavily on increasing the level of Kuwaiti participation in the economy, especially women. The resolution for the second issue involves the development of the government sector, currently second in

importance to the oil sector. Therefore, the position of female employment in the government sector is critical to the future development of the Kuwaiti economy.

The literature review of work-related studies conducted in Kuwait indicates that there has been no serious theoretical and empirical studies in job satisfaction. With the exception of a few comparative studies focused on Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti employees in the public sector or some studies focused on the private sector in Kuwait (Al-Ajmi, 2001; Al-Otaibi, 1991, 1992; Al-Refaei and Omran, 1992; Metle, 1997, 2001, 2002), most focused on group behaviour in public bureaucracy, banking sector, manpower selection, and training. No comprehensive study, such as this study, dealing and addressing job satisfaction in the public sector in Kuwait has been published to date. Moreover, there was a lack of published materials in management and job satisfaction prior to the discovery of oil in Kuwait. The available references issued after the discovery of oil dealt only with the economic and social conditions following the discovery.

#### Kuwaiti women labour force

The government sector has the highest number of Kuwaiti employees, 74.8 per cent (*Monthly Digest of Statistics*, 2001), whereas the private sector was staffed by non-Kuwaitis – 81.6 per cent (Annual Statistical Abstract, 2000).

In addition, the proportion of Kuwaiti women working in the private sector was 18 per cent in 1995, and the labour force in the public sector of Kuwaiti women to non-Kuwaiti women was 7 per cent (Statistical Glance, Ministry of Planning, 2001) (Table I).

Based on the review of the literature, employees in the developing countries, it is assumed, do not perceive their work as a source of satisfaction and tend to experience various forms of deprivation and withdrawal behaviour, such as laziness, absenteeism, high turnover and general lack of commitment to work. Moreover, workers are not punctual, reflecting in a sense the lack of awareness of the importance of time in their life. Apathy, boredom, due to long hours of work, and unwillingness to carry out official obligations seem to be the norm rather than the exception. As a result of these bad work habits, gross inefficiency is rampant and productivity is very low (Koys, 2001; Miles *et al.*, 1996).

**Table I.**  
Total workforce in the Kuwait Government sector by nationality and gender (2001)

M	Kuwaiti F	=	M	Non-Kuwaiti F	=	M	Total F	=
73,828	64,152	137,980	37,585	14,125	51,710	111,413	78,277	189,690
53.5	46.5	100	72.7	27.3	100	58.7	41.3	100

**Notes:** Kuwaiti women labour force in the public sector to non-Kuwaiti women labour force is 83 per cent  
**Source:** Work Force Statistics in the Public Sector, Ministry of Planning, Kuwait, 2001

Kuwaiti women in general, and especially those employed in the government sector – as a public sector – do not have the role in the workforce to match their qualifications and abilities. Higher levels of job satisfaction among women in the Kuwaiti public sector will not only contribute to accelerating economic development, but will also relieve social and economic problems caused by relying on a migrant labour force. Although Kuwaiti women constitute a high percentage of the Kuwaiti population and a large number of them have the qualifications to fulfil different jobs and levels, there are few Kuwaiti women in the upper levels in the government sector. The review of the literature suggested several researchable hypotheses about the relationship between education level and field and job satisfaction. Thus, the following hypotheses results:

- H1.* It is expected that women who have a low level of education are less satisfied than those who have higher education degrees (i.e. High School Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor, Masters, and PhD).
- H2.* It is expected that women who have a business education background would be more satisfied with their jobs than women who have a non-business education background.

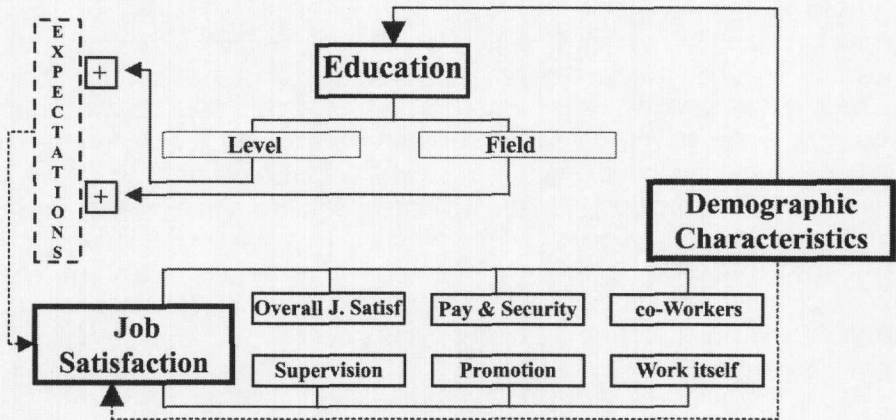
Specifically, the problem dealt with by this study concerns job satisfaction among Kuwaiti females in the Kuwaiti Government sector. Kuwaiti women employees have different features and different career ambitions and there are some underlying forces and factors that affect women's job satisfaction. Specifically, the object of this research is to determine if the level of job satisfaction is associated with education level and field. Thus, the following hypothesis results:

- H3.* Overall, differences and a relationship (positive or negative) are expected between the effects of education level and field in determining job satisfaction (Figure 1).

The Kuwaiti Government sector is second only to the oil sector in importance and plays a major role in the domestic economy. Therefore, this study intended to achieve the following:

- (1) It sought to contribute and to assess the effectiveness of the personnel policies in the Kuwaiti ministries. Specifically, to help the decision makers in the Kuwaiti ministries to understand the issue of job satisfaction, incentives and motivations and to bring about optimum alternatives for solving the human problems in their programmes, especially in programmes for developing human resources.
- (2) It aimed to analyse variations in Kuwaiti females' attitudes, feelings and expectations towards their jobs. There have been very few published studies conducted in the area of work behaviour in Kuwait. Also, there

**Figure 1.**  
Hypothetical model of  
the relationship between  
education level and field  
and job satisfaction



are no serious studies to be found on job satisfaction among Kuwait employees (managers and workers) in Kuwait. It is hoped that this study will shed some light on this neglected and important subject.

- (3) It sought to determine women's problems in the work setting and bring about some solutions for these problems.
- (4) It sought to provide policies which would encourage Kuwaiti women to work in different levels and to be satisfied with jobs in the Kuwaiti Government sector.

In short, the importance of this study stems from the following points: it is the first study of its kind in Kuwait; the study deals with Kuwaiti women, since women are increasingly becoming part of Kuwait's human resources.

## Method

### *The sample and the instrument*

The sample is a stratified sample both in the number of the Kuwaiti female employees in the Kuwaiti ministries and in the levels in the ministries organizational structure in each ministry, with greater representation of more senior levels. The views of expatriates (males or females) were excluded in the survey.

For the purpose of this research, a sample of 774 Kuwaiti female employees was drawn from the government ministries in Kuwait. Care was taken to include all the branches in the sample and a fair representation of Kuwaiti female employees at clerical, supervisory and managerial levels from each ministry and each ministry's branch was ensured. Thus, although Kuwaiti female employees were not selected randomly, the sample from each ministry was representative of the population of Kuwaiti female employees in each of the ministries.



*The sample characteristics*

*Kuwaiti women's level of education.* The level of education of the sampled Kuwaiti female employees showed that the largest number of Kuwaiti female employees surveyed possessed university and postgraduate degrees (90 per cent) – 47 per cent of the total population of Kuwaiti females have university and postgraduate degrees – and only 2 per cent of the Kuwaiti female employees surveyed hold an intermediate school certificate or less – 13 per cent of the total population of the Kuwaiti females hold an intermediate school certificate or less. This is mainly due to the fact that there have been more educational opportunities for Kuwaiti females during the past 30 years. Consequently, the number of educationally qualified human resources has increased and more are entering the labour force. Table II presents the features of the sample in relation to their educational level.

*Kuwaiti women's specialization fields.* The most frequent areas of specialization in the sample were fields related to business, accounting, and secretarial administration, 57.4 per cent. On the other hand, 32.8 per cent of Kuwaiti females in the sample have specialized in fields not related at all to business. This is mainly due to the Kuwait ministries' needs for female employees, regardless of their field of specialization. In addition, the education polices in the state of Kuwait are not well planned and do not match the Kuwait public sector's needs especially the needs of the Kuwait Government. Table III presents the features of the sample in relation to their specific fields of study.

*Scope and research technique of the present study.* This study attempts to explore the inter relationships between Kuwaiti women employees and the working environment in a comprehensive manner. Specifically, the work setting for this study is the Kuwaiti public sector, with samples of Kuwaiti women employees in the ministries.

The research setting also influenced the type of research techniques employed. A number of methods were considered to examine the quantitative dimensions of job satisfaction within the government sector – that is, the number of employees, the level of education of employees, etc.

Level of education	Whole Kuwaiti female education level <sup>a</sup>		Frequency	
	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>n</i>	(%)
Intermediate school	8,291	13	15	2
Diploma	25,088	39	55	7
Bachelor	29,007	45	286	37
Postgraduate	1,105	2	410	53
Others	661	1	8	1
Total	64,152	100	774	100

Note: <sup>a</sup>Based on 2001 Census (30 June 2001)

**Table II.**  
The sample  
educational level  
characteristics<sup>a</sup>

**Table III.**  
The sample: fields  
of study  
specialisation field

Education background	Frequency	Per cent
Business administration	121	15.6
Accounting	115	14.9
Finance	22	2.8
Secretarial administration	122	15.8
Computer for management studies	64	8.3
Banking management	36	4.7
Economics	19	2.5
Others	272	35.0
Missing	3	0.4
Total	774	100

*The construction of the questionnaire and its appropriateness to the study.* The construction of the questionnaire and its source are outlined below:

- *Questionnaire construction.* A number of steps were taken in the construction of the questionnaire to ensure that the questions appeared unambiguous to respondents and gave accurate responses. These included the adoption of questions from two successful studies previously conducted in related fields of study.
- *The source of the questionnaire.* In particular, close reference was made to the methods used in the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) modified by Al-Adaily (1981). The MSQ was used to measure subject satisfaction about their job. The study of job satisfaction requires some method of assessment and measurement; an instrument that would collect respondents' perceptions and subjective responses to job satisfaction as it related to their work environment.

Al-Adaily's study of job satisfaction, which is set in Saudi Arabia, deals with Herzberg's two-factor theory in relation to Saudi Government employees (managers and workers). The availability of this study of job satisfaction was considered a welcome addition to the present study. Al-Adaily's study was aimed specifically at Saudi governmental employees (managers and workers) in order to elicit their views on factors affecting their job satisfaction. Thus, in the first instance, the design of this study is the same. Second, although the study was conducted 20 years ago, this was seen as being of particular utility in the present research with regard to the important factors affecting job satisfaction in the Kuwaiti Government environment.

Although the measurement differs, the dimensions of job characteristics used in this study roughly coincide with the concerns expressed in the earlier study by Al-Adaily (1981).

Therefore, it could be argued that there are good reasons for basing the present questionnaire on an appropriately qualified version of Al-Adaily's study. The modifications made to Al-Adaily's study were determined by the

researcher's own knowledge of conditions of the Kuwaiti Government work situation, and the theoretical issues discussed previously.

*Definition of terms*

*Level of education.* Indicates the amount of formal education completed by the respondents.

*Field of education.* Indicates the specialization or the major studied by the respondents, whether they have a business education background or a non-business education background.

*Business education.* By business education the researcher means:

- (1) business administration;
- (2) accounting;
- (3) finance;
- (4) secretarial administration;
- (5) computer for management purposes;
- (6) banking management; and
- (7) economics.

Other fields are classified as non-business education.

*Overall job satisfaction.* A person's affective reaction to his total work role (Lawler, 1973).

*Job satisfaction facets.* A person's feelings towards specific aspects of the work environment (e.g. pay – an employee in the public organizations has the same feelings about pay and security, and related one to another because they treat job security during the working life and after the retirement as important as the payments policies based on the Social Security law, promotional opportunities, supervision style and techniques, the work itself, and co-workers) (Judge and Locke, 1993).

*Data analysis.* Once the data had been gathered and categorised, a frequency distribution, as shown earlier, and Pearson's correlation matrices were computed for all items in each category. Percentages, were computed. In-depth explanation of results, discussion of findings and hypothesis testing for each independent variable with all dependent variables is presented separately. These analyses were accomplished by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows.

Correlation results show that there is an inconsistent negative relationship in terms of the statistical significance between the dependent variable (job satisfaction) and the independent variables of this study. However, it is believed that the correlation is not enough to show the relative importance for each variable. Also, it cannot provide the appropriate means for testing the relationship between the different variables effectively. It is for this reason that the results of contingency coefficient have been considered. The contingency

coefficient is also evidenced to show the strength of the relationships. These statistical techniques are the best techniques for the nature, the objectives and the variables of this study and enable us to evaluate the direct and indirect influence of the different variables. These techniques are also capable of examining clearly the relations between the variables.

For the purpose of the analysis of the three hypotheses, Spearman's correlation coefficient was used for describing the relationship between the variables. In addition, the contingency coefficient was employed to measure the strength of the association between the independent nominal variables and dependent variables. *H1* was tested and not verified using cross-tabulation and Spearman's correlation coefficient. As the attempt to test the hypothesis indicates, Kuwaiti women employees' education level is negatively correlated with overall job satisfaction and with individual job satisfaction facets.

The previous hypotheses were based on the assumption that educated women, and especially those who have more than an intermediate level of education and who have a business education background, expect to achieve their ambitions because they expect that working in the Kuwaiti ministries will match their abilities and their willingness to strive and achieve their expectations.

*H2* and *H3* were tested using the contingency coefficient measure and not verified as well as being found to be not consistent with studies conducted by Campbell *et al.* (1970) and Glenn and Weaver (1982). It was found that Kuwaiti women employees who have a business education background are dissatisfied or more dissatisfied with their jobs in addition to those who have a non-business education background.

The test of these hypotheses provides some interesting results about the differences among Kuwaiti women employees in the Kuwaiti Government sector based on education level and education field in relation to job satisfaction.

### Discussion

At the beginning of the analysis, an exploration of the nature of individual orientations was made. Individuals bring prior orientations and experiences to their jobs that may affect their expectations of, or predisposition to, their work. Without attempting to uncover the antecedents for such expectations, individual orientations are identified and related to perceptions of job satisfaction. Two demographic characteristics were explored – education level and education field.

Contrary to *H1*, it was found from the analysis that there is a negative relationship between education level and job satisfaction. Kuwaiti women employees who have intermediate levels of education are more or less, satisfied with their jobs than those who have higher levels of education. When the level

of education increases, the level of job satisfaction decreases. It is suggested that this is because of the increase in the expectations of Kuwaiti women who have higher level of education. They feel that the jobs in the Kuwaiti ministries have not fulfilled their ambitions and their expectations have not been realized. Therefore, the category with a higher level of education background feel dissatisfied with their jobs in the Kuwaiti ministries.

#### *Education level and job satisfaction*

Table IV shows that there is a strong relationship between the level of education and feeling of satisfaction with pay and security, co-workers, supervision, promotion and with overall job satisfaction. The relationship is also negative and has a stronger association with the dependent variables and is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (co-workers:  $r = -0.070$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result suggests that when the level of education increases, Kuwaiti women employees' feelings of satisfaction with pay and security and promotion decrease, because, when they have higher level of education, expectations of getting higher salaries and higher positions in the senior levels increases, but salaries are not increased and promotions opportunities are less, therefore dissatisfaction with the pay and security and promotions policies is the result. In addition, feelings of satisfaction with co-workers decrease, because, when they have higher level of education, expectations with co-workers are higher, but the familiarity with the employees have not changed, therefore dissatisfaction with co-workers is the result.

Furthermore, Table IV shows there is a strong relationship between the level of education and feeling of satisfaction with supervision. The relationship is also negative and has a stronger association with the dependent variable and is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ( $r = -0.111$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The result suggests that, when the level of education increases, Kuwaiti women employees' feelings of satisfaction with supervision decrease, because, when they have a higher level of education, expectations are higher, but the nature of the supervision and the relationship with the managers are still the same therefore, they feel dissatisfied with supervision. As a result, the above interpretation of the relationship of education level and job satisfaction facets

Dependent variables	Correlation coefficient	Sig. L.
Overall job satisfaction	-0.116	**
Pay and security	-0.084	**
Co-workers	-0.070	*
Supervision	-0.111	**
Promotion	-0.133	**
Work itself	-0.040	N.S.

**Table IV.**  
Spearman's  
correlation  
coefficient between  
education and job  
satisfaction

**Notes:** n.s. = not significant; \* significant at 0.05 level; \*\* significant at 0.01 level

affects negatively and strongly the overall job satisfaction ( $r = -0.116$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

*Education field and job satisfaction*

*Education field and overall job satisfaction.* Table V illustrates the contingency coefficients between the independent variable education field and dependent variables overall job satisfaction and between education field and job satisfaction facets pay and security, co-workers, supervision, promotion and work itself.

The contingency coefficient measures the strength of the association between the independent nominal variables and dependent variables. Although the value of the contingency coefficient is always between 0 and 1, it can never get as high as 1, even for a table showing what seems to be a perfect relationship. For example, if the contingency coefficient is  $>0.2$ , then it will be considered large; if the contingency coefficient is  $<0.2$  it will be considered not particularly large.

It can be seen that the contingency coefficients (in Tables V-X) between the education field and overall job satisfaction and job satisfaction facets, are large

**Table V.**  
Contingency coefficient between education field and overall job satisfaction

Education field	<i>n</i>	<i>N</i>	per cent	JS <sup>a</sup>
Business administration	86	120	72	0
Accounting	85	113	75	0
Finance	18	22	82	0
Secretarial management	85	121	70	0
Computer management	42	64	66	0
Banking management	25	36	69	0
Economics	18	19	95	0
Others	44	272	16	0

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup>Job satisfaction: (-)=Very dissatisfied; (-) = dissatisfied; (0) = do not know; (+) = satisfied; (++) = very satisfied; contingency coefficient = (0.761)

**Table VI.**  
Contingency coefficient between education field and pay and security

Education field	<i>n</i>	<i>N</i>	per cent	JS <sup>a</sup>
Business administration	31	121	26	0
Accounting	66	115	44	0
Finance	9	22	41	0
Secretarial management	70	122	57	0
Computer management	31	64	48	0
Banking management	31	36	86	0
Economics	10	19	53	0
Others	177	272	65	0

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup>Job satisfaction: (-)=Very dissatisfied; (-) = dissatisfied; (0) = do not know; (+) = satisfied; (++) = very satisfied; contingency coefficient = (0.427)

in some cases and small in other cases. If the contingency coefficient between the education field and job satisfaction is large then we conclude that the highest frequency in the cross-tabulation is a real indicator for the association between the education field and job satisfaction.

For example, the contingency coefficient between the education field and overall job satisfaction is 0.761 (large) (Table V). This represents a real

Education field	<i>n</i>	<i>N</i>	per cent	JS <sup>a</sup>
Business administration	58	121	48	+
Accounting	53	115	46	0
Finance	12	22	55	0
Secretarial management	64	122	52	+
Computer management	28	64	44	+
Banking management	18	36	50	+
Economics	10	19	53	+
Others	136	272	50	+

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup>Job satisfaction: (-)=very dissatisfied; (-) = dissatisfied; (0) = do not know; (+) = satisfied; (++) = very satisfied; contingency coefficient = (0.479)

**Table VII.**  
Contingency coefficient between education field and co-workers

Education field	<i>n</i>	<i>N</i>	per cent	JS <sup>a</sup>
Business administration	65	121	54	0
Accounting	68	115	59	0
Finance	10	22	45	0
Secretarial management	56	122	46	0
Computer management	34	64	53	0
Banking management	20	36	56	0
Economics	10	19	53	0
Others	154	272	57	0

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup>Job satisfaction: (-)=very dissatisfied; (-) = dissatisfied; (0) = do not know; (+) = Satisfied; (++) = very satisfied; contingency coefficient = (0.550)

**Table VIII.**  
Contingency coefficient between education field and supervision

Education field	<i>n</i>	<i>N</i>	per cent	JS <sup>a</sup>
Business administration	73	121	60	0
Accounting	53	115	46	0
Finance	13	22	59	0
Secretarial management	50	122	41	0
Computer management	27	64	42	0
Banking management	19	36	53	0
Economics	6	19	32	0
Others	120	272	44	0

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup>Job satisfaction: (-)=very dissatisfied; (-) = dissatisfied; (0) = do not know; (+) = satisfied; (++) = very satisfied; contingency coefficient = (0.380)

**Table IX.**  
Contingency coefficient between education field and promotion

**Table X.**  
Contingency  
coefficient between  
education field and  
work itself

Education field	<i>n</i>	<i>N</i>	per cent	JS <sup>a</sup>
Business administration	66	120	55	0
Accounting	63	113	56	0
Finance	9	22	41	0
Secretarial management	69	121	57	0
Computer management	36	64	56	0
Banking management	16	36	44	0
Economics	10	19	53	0
Others	149	272	55	0

**Notes:** <sup>a</sup>Job satisfaction: (-)=very dissatisfied; (-) = dissatisfied; (0) = do not know; (+) = satisfied; (++) = very satisfied; contingency coefficient = (0.336)

association between the field of education and the overall job satisfaction. In this case, the majority of the respondents are dissatisfied with their jobs in the Kuwaiti ministries and those who are most likely to be dissatisfied with their job have specialised in business fields or related fields. Only a minority of the Kuwaiti women's employees (20 Kuwaiti persons, 8 per cent) are dissatisfied with their jobs in this respect, and those who are dissatisfied are specialized in fields other than business or related fields.

We conclude that job satisfaction among Kuwaiti women's employees in the Kuwaiti Government sector is not associated with the field of education. Kuwaiti female employees who have business or related degrees are dissatisfied with their jobs, in addition to those who have non-business degrees.

*Education field and pay and security.* Table VI also shows a large contingency coefficient (0.427) between the education field and the pay and security variable. Kuwaiti women whose degrees are in business or non-business education are dissatisfied with their jobs in terms of pay and security. Kuwaiti women who have other than business education degrees (non-business education) are more likely to be dissatisfied with the level of pay and security of jobs (164 out of 248 Kuwaiti women, 66 per cent).

It is clear from the previous results that business education is not associated with satisfaction with pay and security.

*Education field and satisfaction with co-workers.* From Table VII, it is clear that there is an association between the education field and the level of satisfaction with co-workers (0.479). Respondents with both a business education field and non-business field are likely to be satisfied, but only women who have accounting, finance and education certificates are in the cell "do not know", because they cannot make up their mind whether or not the job gives them what they expected.

*Education field and supervision.* From Table VIII, the contingency coefficient shows an association between the education field and the level of satisfaction with the quality of supervision (0.550). Business and non-business degree holders among Kuwaiti women employees in the Kuwaiti Government sector



are in the cell, "do not know", because they cannot make up their mind whether or not the job gives them what they expected. The likely interpretation for this result is that the Kuwaiti women employees who have a business education are dissatisfied with their supervision level, because they think supervision techniques and the way their supervisors supervise them do not match their expectations. They feel that their supervisors treat them as if they have not had any business education.

*Education field and promotion.* The education field is also associated with the evaluation of promotion. From Table IX, we can see that the association between the education field and the level of satisfaction as regards to promotion among Kuwaiti women employees is large (0.380).

All the respondents are in the cell "do not know" because they cannot make up their mind whether or not the job gives them what they expected. Women employees who have business or non-business education are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the evaluation of promotion in the ministries. There is very weak support for the hypothesis suggesting a positive relationship between the Kuwaiti women who have a business education and the level of satisfaction with promotion.

The interpretation of this result is: Kuwaiti women employees who have business or non-business degrees do not achieve their expectations by getting promotions and an increase in their salaries. The opportunities for advancement in their jobs are not numerous; as a result, women who have business or non-business education are more likely to be "dissatisfied" with the promotion policies.

*Education field and work itself.* In Table X, the contingency coefficient of the relationship between the education field and work itself is also large (0.336), which indicates that there is a strong relationship between the education field and the work itself. On the other hand, all the cells show that employees, whether or not women, who have a business or non-business education, are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their work itself. They are in the cell, "do not know".

This result should be regarded as "dissatisfied", because, at least, women who have a business education should be satisfied with their jobs. The only interpretation for this result is: Kuwaiti women employees are dissatisfied with their jobs in spite of their education background. They are dissatisfied with their work itself. This might be due to ambiguity in the job description in the Kuwaiti ministries or to the fact that the tasks being carried out, the job requirements, do not match the employees' education background.

#### *Limitations*

Perhaps the most serious limitation of this study is the fact that the respondents were female made it hard for the researcher – as a man – to conduct an interview, because they feel ashamed to respond directly to the

researcher. In addition, the nature of the respondents in this study made it hard for the researcher to use more than one question or statement for the same item or subject, because they felt that the questions were repeated. However, some recheck questions were used; for example, about date of birth, used in two occasions.

A broader investigation is required to establish the extent to which the findings of this study match the experiences of other women in different organizational context

I hope this study will open new dimensions for other researchers to carry out more research in the field to crystallize other related issues, which can contribute to the knowledge and to the enhancement of organizational behaviour practices in the developing countries of the third world.

### Conclusion and recommendations

Recent research on job satisfaction has focused on the job itself or the work climate as the primary means of increasing satisfaction. The main argument is that if jobs or work climate are developed to provide a more desirable work environment, an increase in job satisfaction will result. The assumption of this line of argument is, by implication, desired by most employees. In addition, the external environment, i.e. educational background and level, were considered to be unimportant factors for the enhancement of job satisfaction. The results of this research show the importance of educational level for job satisfaction, at least in the Kuwaiti public sector.

Findings in the present study show that there is a relationship between the education level and job satisfaction (Figure 2). The major findings of this research are not consistent with the above assumption. On the whole, a much broader approach to increasing job satisfaction rather than simply improving the internal

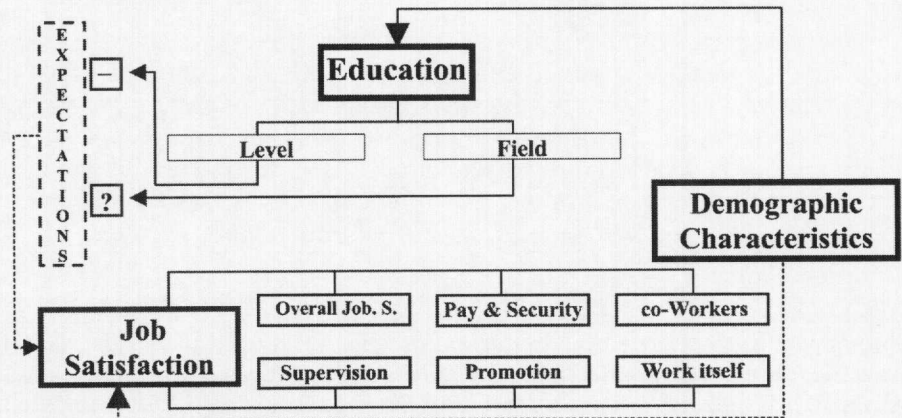


Figure 2. Hypothetical model of the relationship between education level and field and job satisfaction

work environment seems to be warranted. Broader characteristics, especially educational level, are of substantial importance in affecting job satisfaction.

Education was an important factor affecting personal orientations. Although the majority of respondents had gained a university degree or some higher qualification, the relationship between the educational level and satisfaction was found to be slightly inversely related: satisfaction declined as education levels increased. In the present study, it was found that higher education levels tend to decrease workers' levels of job satisfaction. This finding is similar to those of Al-Ajmi (2001), Brush *et al.* (1986), Dortch (1995), Ganzach (1998), Jones (1994), Klien and Maher (1966), Steel (1991) and Vollmer and Kinney (1955). On the other hand, the findings of this study are not consistent with the findings of Falcon (1991); Glenn and Weaver (1982); Howard and Frink (1996); Martin and Shehan (1989), who showed a positive relationship between education and work satisfaction.

Moreover, the educational background (specialization) has been found to have no relationship to the attitudes of the respondents toward job satisfaction. For example, the Kuwaiti women's field of education have indicated that the largest number of Kuwaiti women employees specialized in business or non-business fields are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. This finding is similar to those of Gordon and Arvey (1975) and King, *et al.* (1982). For instance, the largest proportion of Kuwaiti women, which is 68 per cent, have specialized in fields not related at all to business fields, as well as 32 per cent specialized in business fields, it is those who have experienced most job dissatisfaction. In addition, Kuwaiti female employees who have intermediate level of education or less, are more satisfied with their jobs than those who have higher levels of education. Furthermore, Kuwaiti female employees who have been educated in business or related education fields are dissatisfied with their jobs in addition to those who have a non-business education background.

The perception of the Kuwaiti female employees of their job environment indicates that, on the whole, the employees are not pleased with personal considerations provided by their supervisors, and have unfavourable views of their working conditions. On the other hand, the relationships with co-workers are to some degree satisfied. Furthermore, they feel their promotions are to some degree handled unfairly; approximately all the Kuwaiti female employees surveyed felt discriminated against on the basis of either seniority or qualifications.

The educational strategies and policies should meet with the needs of services and products markets, which strengthen the relationship between education and economical growth. The decision makers must be concerned about the development of human resources through education, training and retraining. They must develop their systems and educational programmes to come up with economical and social objectives and to adjust the approaches with the requirements of the different economical sectors, by providing Kuwaiti citizens with the knowledge and skills, which will meet with the Kuwaiti labour

market. The internship programmes offer tremendous potential for improving the relationship between the education and the business community. In addition, to bring about some kind of cooperation with the private and joint sectors to modernize schools and universities' programmes, specializations and education systems.

Furthermore, decision makers should develop education for Kuwaiti women in quantity and quality to come up to the needs of the organization; in quantity, by increasing the number and diversity of business schools, specifically, private business schools. In addition, different institutions should be established and built, especially in those fields where the participation of women is very low and in fields where the need for local manpower is vital. In quality, however, before establishing such schools and institutions, the ministries and the Government should try to use every effort to erase those beliefs against female working and remove the limitations of women working in only certain jobs. The decision makers should persuade students to enter the fields that are necessary for the development of the work setting, which cannot be accomplished without a clear, long-term educational philosophy taking all the previous elements into account.

Regarding education philosophy as one of the solutions, education is one channel to develop and provide human resources. However, without a clear educational plan taking into consideration the present and the future needs of the different sectors, those human resources will offer quantity and no quality or they will flood some fields and leave shortages in other fields, such as business fields. Two programmes both educational in effect, should be implemented to improve the status of women. First, a state-wide programme to educate the public and mould public opinion to a point where the present traditions, customs, and norms, which influence and limit the activities of women, are relegated to the past. The mass media should be employed to help in this effort. Leaders in government, in the public sector, and in education should lend their support. Educated women among the elite groups should contribute their influence, knowledge, and prestige. Such a program may be visionary in the extreme, but it could have a significant impact. The second has to do with the education system itself, which should make it possible for any woman to achieve her potential in the society if she so desires.

This study offers an added factor to be taken into consideration, particularly when examining the effect and relationship of educational background and educational field on females' job satisfaction in the public sector. This factor may influence the level of job satisfaction. In other words, in order to understand the employees' attitudes, we have to consider not only the nature of the job or the individual, but also the environment. In short, this study concludes that education plays a vital role in women's job attitudes in the work setting and introduces results of careful thought, analysis and research in a conscientious effort to explore Kuwaiti women's job satisfaction.

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