


# Emirati women's experience of job satisfaction: Comparative effects of intrinsic and extrinsic factors

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Living and working in a patriarchal culture that encourages modesty, female Emirati employees might face unique challenges such as a male-dominated work environment, higher emotional labour and lack of role models to follow. These challenges potentially shape Emirati women's job-related attitudes and values in a way distinct from that of Western women. Thus, rather than relying on the results of studies conducted in Western countries, researchers should collect data from Emirati women to gain a more accurate understanding of their job attitudes. Consequently, this study examines the effects of some intrinsic and extrinsic factors on Emirati women's job satisfaction. The factors include pay, promotion opportunities, job security, job difficulty, job content quality and interpersonal relations. The results of a hierarchical regression analysis based on data obtained from 364 female Emirati employees indicate that pay and promotion opportunities do not have significant effects, whereas job security, job content quality and interpersonal relations have significant positive effects, and job difficulty has a significant negative effect on Emirati women's job satisfaction. The results further indicate that intrinsic factors explained 10% of variance in job satisfaction above and beyond the extrinsic factors and promotion opportunities. The article discussed the possible meaning of these findings in the context of working in a male-dominated work environment and living in a culture that encourages and values modesty.

## Introduction

Working adults spend more hours at work than anywhere else when they are awake. Therefore, it is important for them to increase the amount of perceived positive experiences (e.g. satisfaction, achievement, self-worth and friendship) and to decrease the amount of perceived negative experiences (e.g. stress, anxiety, burnout, fatigue and boredom) at work. This is because positive work experiences promote employees' physical and psychological well-being, while negative work experiences impair it not only at work but also at home (Frone 2015). Among the various positive work experiences and attitudes (e.g. organisational commitment, perceived organisational support, employee engagement), job satisfaction has been one of the most frequently measured and studied experiences and attitudes in organisational behaviour (Zeffane, Ibrahim & Al Mehairi 2008) and industrial and organisational psychology research (Judge et al. 2001).

Job satisfaction indicates a positive emotional state based on employees' appraisals of their job situation (Acker 1999). Meta-analytic studies indicate that an increase in job satisfaction is associated with better mental and physical health (Faragher, Cass & Cooper 2005), higher task performance (Fried et al. 2008) and organisational citizenship behaviour (Organ & Ryan 1995), lower absenteeism (Scott & Taylor 1985) and turnover (Carsten & Spector 1987) and fewer counterproductive work behaviours (Dalal 2005). Considering these meta-analytic findings, managers can better monitor their employees' job satisfaction levels and design jobs and work settings that facilitate employees' job satisfaction. To achieve this goal, managers need to have knowledge about the factors affecting job satisfaction. Therefore, this article aims to compare the effects of some intrinsic and extrinsic factors on Emirati women's job satisfaction and to understand which factors are relatively more important for them. This understanding will provide insights for managers working in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and to some degree, for managers working in the other Arabian Gulf countries (e.g. Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman) to facilitate their female employees' job satisfaction.

## Background and literature review

### Women's employment in the United Arab Emirates

According to the *Global Gender Gap Report 2015* (Schwab et al. 2015), the female-to-male labour force participation ratio in the UAE is 0.51 and this ranks the UAE as 128th out of 145 countries.

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This ratio is much higher for developed countries such as Norway (0.95), Germany (0.87) and Canada (0.91). The reasons for low female participation in the UAE labour force are mostly cultural (Gallant & Pounder 2008). Abdulla (2006) pointed out that family is considered as the primary socio-economic unit in the Arab world and females (wives, mothers or sisters) are primarily responsible for taking care of their families' well-being. This cultural norm precludes Emirati women from entering the job market. Abdulla also indicated the 'modesty code' and preference for public sector jobs as the other important reasons for low female participation in the UAE workforce. The modesty code promotes the segregation of men and women to protect family honour, and this cultural norm restricts Emirati women to applying for jobs (e.g. teaching) mostly performed by women. In addition to that, Emirati women are reluctant to apply for private sector jobs and tend to restrict themselves to government jobs that are less demanding and that provide more flexibility and better salary and benefits (Nelson 2004).

Although Emirati women's participation in the workforce is low and cultural norms endorse this low participation, there are two UAE government programmes that encourage female Emirati citizens to participate in the workforce. These programmes include Emiratisation and economic diversification. Emiratisation is a labour market policy that aims to increase the ratio of Emiratis to expatriates in the public and private sector workforces. Considering that 92% of Emirati working-age males actively participate in the workforce, the success of the Emiratisation programme mainly depends on increasing the low ratio of Emirati women in the workforce. Thus, to achieve this goal, the UAE government has been actively encouraging women to work and has passed laws preventing discrimination based on gender (Charles 2014).

The aim of the economic diversification programme is to decrease the UAE's overreliance on the oil industry and increase the relative contributions of the other sectors (e.g. manufacturing, service and finance) to economic development. Moving the UAE from a very rich, oil-based, rentier economy (see Herb 2009) to a well-diversified developed economy, requires moving the workforce from industry to the service sector, which will create a labour market structure that reinforces the supply and demand of female labour. In this regard, the current economic diversification programme in the UAE has the potential to increase women's participation in the workforce.

In addition to the Emiratisation and economic diversification programmes, another factor that will contribute to the potential increase in the ratio of Emirati women who actively engage in the labour market is the relatively large ratio of female-to-male university graduates in the UAE. The UAE's Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs (2008) reported that more than 70% of the university graduates in the UAE are women. As the Emiratisation and economic diversification programmes become successful, these educated women will inevitably become the main source of the UAE labour force.

Although these programmes facilitate Emirati women's participation in the workforce, there are some cultural challenges that substantially affect the quality of their work lives. Firstly, Emirati women need to overcome strong gender roles that constrict women to household tasks and taking care of their immediate and extended family (Metcalf 2007). Before participation in the workforce, Emirati women might have to argue their family members into easing their opposition to women working outside the home (Marmenout & Lirio 2014). Secondly, the patriarchal culture may cause Emirati women to avoid seeking social support from their family members when they face difficulties associated with work-family conflict. This is because – as one of the participants in Marmenout's (2009) study pointed out – their family members might simply answer them by telling them to stay at home. In addition to these challenges, Emirati women lack role models in the business world, other than teachers (Madsen 2009). This enables them to explore new roles but requires them to face the difficulties of being a pioneer.

Despite these cultural barriers, Emiratisation, economic diversification and various affirmative action programmes (e.g. Ro'Ya, and Business Women's Council; Bulsara et al. 2014; Hodgson 2014) have resulted in a steady increase in the women's labour force participation rate from 31% in 1995 to 37% in 2005, and to 42% in 2015 (World Bank 2016). As Emirati women's participation in the labour force increases, learning about their work-life experience gains importance, yet there are very few quantitative studies on the experience of working Emirati women. Thus, this study aims to reduce this research gap by providing quantitative analyses of how some extrinsic and intrinsic factors affect Emirati women's job satisfaction.

## Extrinsic and intrinsic factors

Organisational research has long identified two broad categories of job-related factors, extrinsic and intrinsic, that affect employees' job satisfaction (Herzberg, Snyderman & Mausner 1966). Intrinsic factors pertain to the job task an employee performs. In other words, employees experience intrinsic factors when they are performing job tasks. These intrinsic factors include variables such as autonomy, responsibility, opportunity to use one's skills and abilities, job difficulty and interesting work. Extrinsic factors refer to factors external to the task itself and usually constitute the context in which the job is performed. These extrinsic factors include variables such as pay, job security, job status and physical work environment.

I will examine the effects of two extrinsic factors (salary and job security), three intrinsic factors (job difficulty, job content quality and interpersonal contact) and promotion opportunities on Emirati women's job satisfaction. Although some studies have identified promotion opportunities as an extrinsic factor (e.g. Kim, McCleary & Kaufman 2010; Tyson & Pongruengphant 2004), others have identified it as an intrinsic factor (e.g. Castro & Martins 2010; Mau, Ellsworth

& Hawley 2008). Promotion can be considered either intrinsic or extrinsic based on the perceptions employees hold. Promotion is an intrinsic factor if employees perceive promotion as an opportunity to have much more challenging and interesting work and to achieve their potential; and promotion is an extrinsic factor if employees perceive it as an opportunity to increase their bonuses, salaries and perks (Hurlbert 1991). Not having information about the subjects' perception of promotion, promotion opportunities is not classified as either an intrinsic or an extrinsic factor.

Selection of the variables of salary, job security, job difficulty, job content quality, interpersonal contact and promotion opportunity was based on the study by Clark (1998). He analysed the effects of these variables on female and male employees' job satisfaction in eight countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Studying the effects of variables included in Clark's study will allow comparison between the results of the current study and that of Clark. This comparison will provide valuable information to better understand Emirati women's work-life experience.

As discussed previously, Emirati women face some unique challenges in their work life (e.g. a highly male-dominated work environment, the cultural requirement of modesty and lack of models to follow). The experience of these challenges may profoundly affect Emirati women's perception of their job. Therefore, generalising research findings obtained from working women in developed Western countries to working Emirati women may not result in an accurate understanding of factors affecting Emirati women's job satisfaction. This does not necessarily suggest that Emirati women's experience of job satisfaction will be very different from that of women working in developed Western countries. Nevertheless, considering the challenges they experience in their work life, this suggests that exploring the effects of these factors on Emirati women's job satisfaction is a worthwhile endeavour.

## Research hypotheses

### Salary

For the majority of employees who work at an 8 am to 5 pm job, pay is the main source of their income. Thus, earning a decent salary is the only way to provide themselves and their families with a decent living standard. A straightforward assumption would thus be that employees with higher salaries are more likely to feel satisfied with their job. However, studies have provided inconclusive findings: some reported a positive association between salary and job satisfaction (e.g. Eker et al. 2004), whereas others reported no association (e.g. Houston, Meyer & Paewai 2006). One study found that there was a high correlation between salary and job satisfaction for public relations employees but none for journalists (Olson 1990). Another study found that the effect of salary on job satisfaction is moderated by gender, the effect being marginally stronger for males (Yang & Wang 2013). Additionally, Kim (2005) found that Korean women working

in the public sector place less value on extrinsic rewards (e.g. pay) than their male co-workers. These results indicate that the relationship between salary and job satisfaction is not generalisable. Not being held primarily responsible for the financial well-being of their families (Shallal 2011), Emirati women may consider pay of secondary importance. Therefore, it was expected that salary would not have a significant effect on Emirati women's overall job satisfaction.

**H1:** Salary will not have an effect on Emirati women's overall job satisfaction.

### Job security

'Job security' refers to employees' perception of whether or not they are going to work for their current organisation in the future. Meta-analytic studies reported a strong correlation between job security and job satisfaction (e.g. Sverke, Hellgren & Näswall 2002). It was also expected to have a positive relationship between job security and job satisfaction in the case of Emirati women. This is because the unemployment rate is higher for economically active Emirati women than Emirati men (FCSA 2010) and because Emirati women mainly prefer to work in the government sector (Shallal 2011), where finding a job has been difficult in recent years (Al Bustani 2013). This suggested that Emirati women would be more satisfied with their job if they perceived that their job was secure and that they did not need to worry about looking for a job in the near future.

**H2:** Perception of job security will have a positive effect on Emirati women's job satisfaction.

### Promotion opportunities

Promotions provide employees with a venue to achieve their potential within the context of their organisations. As a higher-order need, achieving one's potential is one of the main motivational sources that direct our behaviour and shape our perception of self-worth and self-respect (Goldman & Kernis 2002). Living in a relatively conservative country, Emirati women may perceive climbing the corporate ladder as one of the few culturally acceptable paths for achieving their potential. Therefore, it was expected that Emirati women would be more satisfied with their job when they perceived that they had opportunities for advancement. In this regard, it was expected that perceived opportunities for advancement would have a positive effect on Emirati women's job satisfaction.

**H3:** Perceived opportunities for advancement or promotion will have a positive effect on Emirati women's overall job satisfaction.

### Job difficulty

'Job difficulty' can be defined as the degree to which a job requires significant physical or mental effort to be performed (Ivanchevich & Smith 1981). Emotional effort should be incorporated into this definition to have a complete understanding of what job difficulty is. Jobs that include hard physical activity, that have to be performed in dangerous and unhealthy conditions and that cause stress and emotional overload are difficult jobs. Difficulties associated with



emotional overload are especially relevant in the case of women who live in an Islamic society. Syed, Ali and Winstanley (2005) argued that on the one hand, Islamic society requires women to be modest, restrained and secluded, and these requirements lead to induction of shyness, repentance (shame) and remorse (guilt) and suppression of anger, power, pride and pleasure. On the other hand, modern organisation requires employees to be aggressive, dominant, strong and explicit, and these requirements lead to induction of anger, power, pride and pleasure and suppression of shyness, fear and anxiety. These contradictory demands of Islamic society and modern organisation regarding which emotions are appropriate to feel and display, may cause Emirati women to use their cognitive, emotional and psychological resources to constantly regulate their emotions. Excessive use of these resources may result in feelings of exhaustion and stress. Thus, Emirati women may be less satisfied with jobs that demand higher levels of emotional labour.

Studies have reported negative correlations between these adverse work settings (i.e. high emotional labour) and job satisfaction (Pugliesi 1999; Westover 2012). In line with these findings, it was expected that Emirati women who perceived their jobs as difficult would have lower job satisfaction.

**H4:** Perceived job difficulty will have a negative effect on Emirati women's job satisfaction.

### Job content quality

Having a job that is interesting and useful to society and that provides freedom and empowerment, motivates employees to perform better and makes them feel good about their jobs (Thomas & Velthouse 1990). The cross-cultural findings suggest that interesting job has been considered as one of the most important determinants of job satisfaction across cultures (Westover & Taylor 2010). Additionally, higher levels of job autonomy and freedom are associated with lower levels of work-family conflict (Thomas & Ganster 1995). Having discretion in scheduling their work, Emirati women who work independently can be more successful in managing work-family conflicts aggravated by cultural norms. Studies have indicated that these intrinsic job qualities are usually better predictors than are extrinsic qualities (e.g. pay) of job satisfaction (Rosenbach, Dailey & Morgan 1979). This suggests that Emirati women who are experiencing high-quality job content (e.g. autonomy, interesting and useful job) would be more likely to be satisfied with their jobs.

**H5:** Perceived job content quality will have a positive effect on Emirati women's job satisfaction.

### Interpersonal relations

Most workplaces are not structured, mechanistic places where employees are required to engage only in work-related activities. Workplaces are also social communities where employees develop meaningful friendships with their co-workers and satisfy their socialisation needs (Jian & Jeffres 2008). Quality interpersonal interaction at work has been identified as one of the important sources of job satisfaction

(De Wit, Greer & Jehn 2012; Nathan, Mohrman & Milliman 1991). Emirati women are relatively free from conservative cultural values and norms guiding interpersonal interactions when they are at work (Shallal 2011). Therefore, work provides them with opportunities to socialise with their female colleagues, and to some extent, with their male colleagues. Additionally, they are more likely to feel at ease when they are asking help from and giving help to their co-workers and when they are sharing their ideas with their colleagues if they have good relations with their subordinates, peers and supervisors. Consequently, Emirati women who have good interpersonal interactions at work should be more satisfied with their jobs.

**H6:** Good interpersonal relations at work will have a positive effect on Emirati women's job satisfaction.

## Methodology

### Subjects

I recruited participants through personal contact. Graduate students enrolled in an organisational behaviour course at a university in the UAE shared an online survey link with their co-workers. There were 587 subjects who completed the survey. Of these, 145 subjects were expatriates and 78 were male Emirati employees. Therefore, these 223 subjects were not included in the current analyses. Among the 364 female Emirati employees who participated in the survey, 178 (48.9%) were married. They had 6.3 (SD = 5.7) years of work experience and 4.3 (SD = 4.0) years of tenure in their current organisations. Of these subjects 249 (68.4%) were working in the government sector, 61 (16.8%) in the private sector and 54 (14.8%) in semi-government (semi-private); 180 subjects (49.5%) were working in the service industry, 51 (14.0%) in public administration, 42 (11.5%) in finance, 35 (10.2%) in transportation and the remaining 56 (15.0%) in other industries (e.g. agriculture, manufacturing, construction, mining, energy). Furthermore, 142 subjects (39%) held an entry level position, 103 (28.3%) supervisory, 64 (17.6%) middle-level management and the remaining 55 (15.1%) senior management or upper-level positions. Eighty-four (23.1%) subjects had 12 or fewer years of education, 199 (54.7%) had a bachelor's degree, 76 (20.9%) had a master's degree and the remaining 5 (1.4%) had a doctorate degree. Subjects were not given any incentives for participating in the survey.

### Study design

The design of the study was correlational. Subjects completed a 15-minute online survey with demographic questions at the end. The online survey included 20 questions to assess Emirati women's attitudes toward six specific job characteristics: pay, promotion opportunities, job security, job difficulty, job content and interpersonal relationships (Clark 1998). Perceived pay was measured with two items, namely 'Is your salary high?' and 'How high/low is your salary?' Promotion opportunities were measured with two items, firstly 'Are your opportunities for advancement high?' and secondly 'How high/low are your opportunities

for advancement?' Job security was also measured with two items: 'Is your job secure?' and 'How secure is your job?' The first questions were asked to get information about the percentages of Emirati female employees who thought that they had a high salary, a secure job and good opportunities for advancement. Subjects answered the second questions on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (very low or very insecure) to 5 (very high or very secure). Subjects' answers to these second questions were used in the analyses as the indicators of Emirati women's perceived degree of pay, opportunities for advancement and job security.

## Measures

I used items from the International Social Survey Programme's (ISSP) Work Orientation Survey to measure job difficulty, job content and interpersonal relationships at work (Clark 1998). The survey included six items to measure job difficulty, five items to measure job content quality and two items to measure interpersonal relationships. Sample items for the job difficulty measure included: 'How often do you come home from work exhausted?' and 'How often do you have to do hard physical work?' Subjects answered these questions on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Sample items for the job content quality measure included 'My job is interesting' and 'In my job I can help other people'. Subjects answered these items on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The two items used to measure interpersonal relationships were 'Relations between management and employees' and 'Relations between workmates/colleagues'. Subjects rated these two items on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good). Cronbach's alphas were 0.81 for job difficulty, 0.66 for job content and 0.62 for two-item interpersonal relationship measures.

Overall job satisfaction was measured with a single-item measure on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The item was: 'Overall, I am satisfied with my job'. A one-item measure of overall job satisfaction has long been used in organisational research to assess employees' satisfaction with their jobs (e.g. Alessandri, Borgogni & Latham 2017; Cahill et al. 2015).

## Analyses

I conducted a multivariate outlier analysis and identified 12 subjects as multivariate outliers. The probabilities of their Mahalanobis distance scores were lower than 0.001. Removing these 12 subjects from the data set reduced the sample size to 352. Next, descriptive statistics were computed to describe the sample, to get the distribution of the overall job satisfaction level and to find the percentages of subjects who thought that they had a high salary, a secure job and good opportunities for advancement. To test the hypotheses, hierarchical regression analysis were used by entering control variables (tenure and overall work years) in the first step, extrinsic factors (pay and job security) and promotion in the second step, and intrinsic factors (i.e. job difficulty, job

content and interpersonal relations) in the last step. Using hierarchical regression analysis allowed testing of the effect of intrinsic factors on Emirati women's job satisfaction above and beyond the effect of control and extrinsic factors.

## Results

Table 1 presents the percentages of subjects who rated their pay and advancement opportunities as high, their job as secure and who would like to spend less time on the job. Of the participants, 57.7% rated their pay as high, 47.4% rated their opportunity for advancement as high and 81.8% rated their job as secure. The 1997 data from ISSP indicated that 17.5% of female employees in OECD countries reported high pay, 18.9% indicated good opportunity for advancement and 73.2% indicated having job security (Clark 1998). Significance tests were conducted between the percentages observed in this study and those obtained by Clark (1998). The results indicated that these three percentages for female employees in the UAE are significantly higher than the percentages for female employees in OECD countries. That means female Emirati employees perceived their pay and advancement opportunities as higher and their job more secure than female employees in OECD countries did. However, note that the percentages for OECD countries are based on a survey conducted about 20 years ago. Therefore, readers should keep this information in mind when they are making comparisons between female employees in the UAE and female employees in OECD countries.

Regarding time spent on the job, 66.2% of the subjects indicated that they wanted to spend less time on the job. The corresponding percentage was 24.3% for the female employees in OECD countries (Clark 1998). The significance test for proportions indicated that female employees in the UAE wanted to spend less time on the job than female employees in OECD countries. Compared to women in OECD countries, more women in the UAE reported high pay, good advancement opportunities and job security. Therefore, it was expected that fewer of them would like to spend less time on the job, but this was not the case. One of the reasons for this inconsistency can be attributed to the cultural norms of the UAE, where women are expected to take the primary role in taking care of the well-being of their families. This makes Emirati female employees prone to experiencing higher levels of work-family conflict and may cause them to want to spend less time on the job. Another reason might be related to the 'modesty code'. Female employees might find it hard to comply with this code in a male-dominated work environment and this may make them feel uneasy and want to spend less time on their job (Syed et al. 2005).

**TABLE 1:** The percentages of female Emirati employees who think their salary and advancement opportunities high, their job secure and want to spend less time on the job ( $N = 352$ ).

Questions	Yes (%)	No (%)
Is your salary high?	57.7	42.3
Are your opportunities for advancement high?	47.4	52.6
Is your job secure?	81.8	18.2
Would you like to spend less time at your job?	66.2	33.8

Figure 1 presents the distribution of subjects' ratings of the item 'Overall, I am satisfied with my job'. The results indicated that 158 (45.0%) subjects agreed or strongly agreed that overall they were satisfied with their job. The corresponding percentage for female employees in OECD countries is 39.7% based on 1997 ISSP data. The difference between these percentages (45.0% and 39.7%) is not statistically significant.

Table 2 presents the correlations between study variables. Job satisfaction was not significantly correlated with either the length of overall work experience or tenure. Regarding extrinsic factors, job satisfaction was significantly positively correlated with job security ( $r = 0.31, p < 0.01$ ) and perceived amount of salary ( $r = 0.15, p < 0.01$ ). The results also indicated a positive correlation between job satisfaction and perceived advancement opportunities ( $r = 0.18, p < 0.01$ ). All of the intrinsic factors significantly correlated with job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was significantly negatively correlated with job difficulty ( $r = -0.31, p < 0.05$ ) and significantly positively correlated with job content quality ( $r = 0.26, p < 0.05$ ) and interpersonal relations ( $r = 0.26, p < 0.05$ ). These correlations suggest statistically significant bivariate relationships between overall job satisfaction and each of the six job factors included in the study.

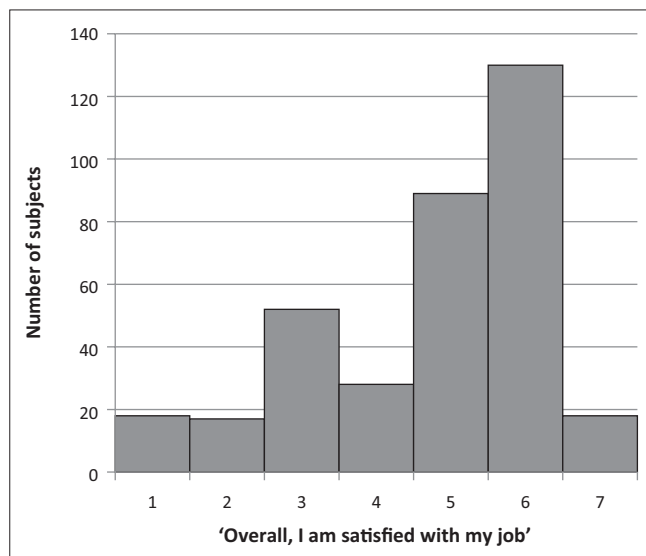


FIGURE 1: Distribution of Emirati women's job satisfaction.

TABLE 2: Correlations between study variables ( $N = 352$ ).

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Tenure	4.92	3.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Overall work experience	6.08	5.22	0.64**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Salary	3.25	0.69	0.03	0.03	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Job security	3.88	0.91	-0.04	-0.03	0.18**	-	-	-	-	-
5. Promotion opportunities	3.13	1.01	-0.09	-0.04	0.31**	0.28**	-	-	-	-
6. Job difficulty	2.92	0.82	0.06	0.02	-0.06	-0.24**	-0.16**	0.81†	-	-
7. Job content quality	3.77	0.56	0.02	0.06	0.02	0.27**	0.26**	-0.02	0.66 †	-
8. Interpersonal relationships	4.06	0.76	-0.04	0.06	0.13*	0.24**	0.22**	-0.17**	0.34**	0.62†
9. Overall job satisfaction	4.75	1.56	-0.01	0.04	0.15**	0.31**	0.18**	-0.31**	0.26**	0.26**

Note: Tenure and the length of overall work experience were measured in years. Overall job satisfaction was measured on a seven-point Likert scale, and all other variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale.

†, reliability scores for the measures.

\*, correlations that were significant at  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*, correlations that were significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

Although these correlational effect sizes are considered low to moderate in magnitude based on the conventional benchmark proposed by Cohen (1992), a recent meta-analytic study, based on 147 328 correlations, indicated that 67% of correlations reported in applied psychology research were lower than  $|r| = 0.26$  (Bosco et al. 2015). Thus, whereas two of the six hypothesised correlations were fairly low, the correlations of job satisfaction with job security, job difficulty, job content quality and interpersonal relations were equal to or greater than 0.26. That means not only that the hypothesised relationships were all statistically significant but also that they are practically meaningful. Nevertheless, these variables generally do not exist in isolation; they interact with one another and simultaneously affect job outcomes. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the relative effects of these variables on job satisfaction by using hierarchical regression analyses and to use the results of these analyses to test the study hypotheses.

Hierarchical multiple regression results, presented in Table 3, indicate that control variables (work experience and tenure) account for less than 1% of variance in job satisfaction, extrinsic variables and promotion opportunities account for 11% of variance in job satisfaction above and beyond the control variables, and intrinsic factors account for an additional 10% of variance in job satisfaction above and beyond the control variables, promotion opportunities and extrinsic factors. When intrinsic factors were entered in the second step and extrinsic factors and promotion opportunities in the third step in a separate hierarchical regression analysis, intrinsic factors explained 18% of variance in job satisfaction and extrinsic factors, and promotion opportunities explained only 3% of additional variance above and beyond the intrinsic factors. This tentatively suggests that intrinsic factors affect female Emirati employees' job satisfaction more strongly than extrinsic factors do.

The regression results supported five of the six hypotheses. Regarding extrinsic factors, the perceived amount of salary did not have a significant effect on job satisfaction ( $B = 21, p = 0.12$ ; H1 supported), whereas perceived job security had a significant effect on job satisfaction ( $B = 26, p = 0.01$ ; H2 supported). That means that Emirati women who perceived their job as secure reported higher levels of job

**TABLE 3:** Results of hierarchical regression analyses: The impact of extrinsic and intrinsic factors on job satisfaction ( $N = 352$ ).

Model	Variables	Unstandardised coefficients			Standardised coefficients		Model summary	
		<i>B</i>	<i>SE*</i>	<i>p*</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>p</i>
1	(Constant)	4.71	0.14	< 0.01	-	-	-	-
	Tenure	-0.03	0.03	0.40	-0.06	0.37	-	-
	Work experience	0.02	0.02	0.26	0.08	0.26	< 0.01	0.52
2	(Constant)	10.94	0.59	< 0.01	-	-	-	-
	Tenure	-0.02	0.03	0.49	-0.04	0.51	-	-
	Work experience	0.02	0.02	0.22	0.07	0.26	-	-
	Salary	0.18	0.14	0.21	0.08	0.15	-	-
	Job security	0.46	0.10	< 0.01	0.26	< 0.01	-	-
	Promotion opportunities	0.13	0.09	0.15	0.08	0.14	0.11	< 0.01
3	(Constant)	10.69	0.95	0.09	-	-	-	-
	Tenure	-0.01	0.02	0.70	-0.02	0.75	-	-
	Work experience	0.01	0.02	0.45	0.04	0.50	-	-
	Salary	0.21	0.13	0.12	0.09	0.08	-	-
	Job security	0.26	0.10	0.01	0.15	0.01	-	-
	Promotion opportunities	0.01	0.09	0.93	0.01	0.92	-	-
	Job difficulty	-0.47	0.11	< 0.01	-0.25	< 0.01	-	-
	Job content quality	0.49	0.15	< 0.01	0.18	< 0.01	-	-
	Interpersonal relations	0.21	0.10	< 0.05	0.10	0.06	0.21	< 0.01

Note: Dependent variable: overall job satisfaction.

\*, *SE* and *p*-value for unstandardised coefficients are based on 1000 bootstrap samples.

satisfaction than Emirati women who perceived their job as insecure. The results, however, did not support Hypothesis 3; promotion opportunities do not have a significant effect on job satisfaction. All three intrinsic factors (i.e. job difficulty, job content quality and interpersonal relations) had significant effects on Emirati women's job satisfaction. Perceived job difficulty had a significant negative effect ( $B = -0.47$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; H4 supported), perceived job content quality ( $B = 0.49$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; H5 supported) and interpersonal relations ( $B = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; H6 supported) had significant positive effects on job satisfaction. These results suggest that Emirati women who experience quality job content and positive interpersonal relations at work and who perceive their job as less difficult tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction. Table 3 also provides standardised regression weights of intrinsic and extrinsic factors on job satisfaction.

## Discussion

There are numerous factors interacting with one another to affect job satisfaction (Porter, Bigley & Steers 2003). The effects of six of these factors on Emirati women's job satisfaction were explored. Firstly, it was found that perceived salary does not affect Emirati women's job satisfaction. Knowing that Emirati women are not the main breadwinners in their families, expecting a non-significant effect of salary on their job satisfaction. Yet this result contradicts Shallal (2011), who reported a significant effect of income on job satisfaction for Emirati women. However, there are two important differences between this study and Shallal's study: at first the subjects' perceptions of their salaries were measured whereas Shallal directly asked subjects to choose one of the predetermined salary brackets and next, there were fewer subjects (1%) who selected 'very low' to describe their salaries in my study whereas 6% of the subjects chose the lowest category (< 3000) in Shallal's study.

Secondly, it was found that Emirati women's perceptions of job security have a significant positive effect on their job satisfaction. Emirati women are more satisfied with their job if they perceive their job as secure. This finding has confirmed Shallal's (2011) expectation about the importance of job security for Emirati women. Although he did not explore the effect of job security on Emirati women's job satisfaction, he argued that the reasons why Emiratis are not satisfied with their jobs include their perception of poor job security in the private sector and the fear that they may lose their job for any reason. The private sector in the UAE provides 82% of jobs and the public sector provides the remaining 18% (De Bel-Air 2015). Considering Emirati women's unwillingness to seek jobs in the private sector (Nelson 2004) and the limited number of public sector jobs, job security becomes an important motivator for Emirati women. Thus, they feel more satisfied with their jobs and enjoy the financial security and a stable environment for socialisation when they know that their jobs are secure.

Thirdly, it was found that promotion opportunities do not have a statistically significant effect on Emirati women's job satisfaction. The UAE has long advocated women's participation in the workforce and has actively encouraged the female workforce to excel at work and achieve their potential by taking their places in male dominant occupations (Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs 2008). Although this official encouragement may motivate female employees to desire a high level of professional achievement, cultural barriers may discourage them from achieving their professional potential at the expense of not fulfilling family responsibilities. Furthermore, the glass ceiling effect may discourage women from seeking opportunities for advancement. The 'glass ceiling' refers to the invisible barrier that prevents women (and minority employees) from moving up in the organisational hierarchy (Davidson & Cooper 1992).



This effect is observed in almost every economy, from underdeveloped (e.g. Bangladesh; Zafarullah 2000) to developed ones (e.g. Sweden; Albrecht, Bjorklund & Vroman 2001). The male-dominated workforce in the UAE may exacerbate the problem and Emirati women may feel reluctant to move up in the hierarchy if that means they feel alone and isolated up there. Thus, despite the fact that promotion opportunities at work may offer Emirati women chances to achieve their potential, cultural barriers and the male-dominated work environment may dishearten them from seeking promotions. Therefore, they might not consider promotion opportunities as important factors when evaluating their job and their satisfaction with their job.

Fourthly, job difficulty was found to have a significant negative effect on Emirati women's job satisfaction. About 84% of the subjects worked in the service industry (I included those working in finance, public administration and transportation). One of the main challenges for employees working in the service industry is experiencing a higher level of emotional labour. Emotional labour is defined as the act of regulating your emotions and expressing them in accordance with your organisation's rules and policies (Ashforth & Humphrey 1993). In other words, emotional labour refers to managing the gap between your actual emotions (e.g. being sad) and the emotions you express (e.g. putting a big smile on your face). Analysing subjects' responses to the job difficulty questions, it was found that although only 15% of the subjects reported working in dangerous conditions or physically unhealthy and unpleasant conditions, 53% of subjects reported that they came home from work exhausted or maybe they found their work stressful. Thus, physically hard work or physically unhealthy or dangerous conditions might not be the main reason for Emirati women to feel exhausted and stressed at work. Emotional labour might be the main reason. This is because Emirati women are required not only to comply with their organisations' display rules regarding which emotions to show, but also their cultures' display rules regarding which emotions a woman is allowed to show. This conflict was well addressed by Syed et al. (2005), who discussed the incompatible demands of Islamic society and modern organisations.

Fifthly, job quality was found to have significant positive effects on Emirati women's job satisfaction. Job quality refers to the degree to which a job is interesting and useful to society and provides freedom (working independently) and opportunities to help others. Separate regression analyses were performed to see if all these quality characteristics had a significant effect on Emirati women's job satisfaction. The results indicated that having an interesting job and having freedom were the most important job quality characteristics that affected Emirati women's job satisfaction. Having a job that is useful to society and that also provides opportunities to help others had no significant effect on job satisfaction. It should be noted that the variability in these two job characteristics is low; 86.5% of Emirati women agreed or strongly agreed that their job allowed them to help others

and 83.2% agreed or strongly agreed with having a job that was useful to society. The corresponding percentages for interesting job and independent job were 60.5% and 67%, respectively. The range restriction in the helpfulness and usefulness dimensions of jobs might be the reason why these two job quality aspects did not affect Emirati women's job satisfaction in this study. Nonetheless, in line with the cross-cultural findings (e.g. Westover & Taylor 2010), Emirati women are satisfied with an interesting job. Furthermore, benefiting from the flexibility they provide to manage work-family conflicts aggravated by cultural norms, Emirati women are also satisfied with jobs that provide autonomy and independence.

Finally, it was found that good interpersonal relations have a significant positive effect on Emirati women's job satisfaction. Good interpersonal relations among co-workers and between managers and employees is important to have a positive psychosocial work environment where employees enjoy working and spending time. This might be especially important for Emirati women, who are at an impasse in complying with the contradictory demands of living in an Islamic society and working in a modern organisation (Syed et al. 2005). The experience of having good interpersonal relations and a positive psychosocial climate would provide Emirati women with valuable psychological and emotional supports to overcome this impasse. Thus, Emirati women are more satisfied with jobs that provide good interpersonal relations.

## Conclusions, limitations and future research

This research is one of the few research efforts that quantitatively examined Emirati women's job satisfaction. Thus, it provides researchers and practitioners with some valuable insights regarding the factors affecting Emirati women's job satisfaction. The results highlighted the importance of intrinsic factors in determining job satisfaction among Emirati women. Therefore, practitioners (e.g. managers, supervisors and human resource personnel) working in the UAE need to consider improving intrinsic factors to further enhance Emirati women's job satisfaction. Two intrinsic factors emerged as critical to the achievement of this objective: job content quality and job difficulty. Thus, practitioners need to design jobs and work settings and develop policies and practices to shape Emirati women's perceptions of job content quality and job difficulty.

There are several limitations of this study that need to be considered. One important limitation is the cross-sectional research design, which limits causal inferences. For example, although it sounds theoretically more reasonable to assume that job content quality leads to job satisfaction, the results do not negate the possibility that subjects who are satisfied with their job rate their job as having high content quality. Secondly, interpretation of the results should be limited to working Emirati women. Female expatriates working in the UAE, to some extent, may feel free from cultural norms.



Therefore, their work experience might be significantly different from those of Emirati women. Additionally, some factors (e.g. pay and benefits) might be especially important in influencing expatriates' job satisfaction. The results obtained might therefore not be applicable to female expatriate employees in the UAE. Common method bias is the other important limitation because the subjects provided all the data on the study variables. Readers are advised to keep these limitations in mind when interpreting the results of this study.

Recommendations for future research are, firstly, that future studies may consider using a longitudinal design by measuring independent (i.e. intrinsic and extrinsic factors) and dependent (i.e. job satisfaction) variables at different time points. A longitudinal design would provide a better understanding regarding the direction of association between job satisfaction and some of the factors (e.g. job content quality) included in this study. Secondly, future studies may recruit more female Emirati employees working in industries other than the service industry. This will increase the generalisability of findings across industries. Thirdly, future studies may collect data from both male and female Emirati employees and explore whether these extrinsic and intrinsic factors are equally important for the job satisfaction of Emirati men and women, or if some of these factors are especially important for the job satisfaction of Emirati women. Finally, considering the lack of research on Emirati women's job attitudes, future studies should also focus on the other important job attitudes, which include but are not limited to organisational commitment, turnover intention and employee engagement. Such efforts will provide academicians and practitioners in the UAE with a more complete understanding of Emirati women's job experience.

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### Competing interests

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