

Social Disconnectedness and Career Advancement

Impact on Performance

Subjects: Behavioral Sciences

Contributor: Saeed A. Al-Haidan, Alaa M. S. Azazz, Ibrahim A. Elshaer

Social connectedness refers to the subjective perception of having strong ties with the social world. Career advancement, which is mainly concerned with job advancement opportunities and growth, is affecting employee satisfaction and performance for those who work in remote areas. Job satisfaction refers to an employee's good attitude or favorable emotion toward the activity performed, which improves the working environment, and thus, contributes to a positive ambiance in the workplace.

Keywords: social disconnectedness ; career advancement ; remote areas ; employees' satisfaction

1. Introduction

Employee satisfaction and performance are essential for any organization in order to meet its intended function as well as meet the stockholder's expectations ^[1]. However, these two terms become extremely important for organizations that operate in very remote areas. There are several definitions for employee satisfaction as well as employee performance, which are very common terms in human resource management (HRM). An employee's satisfaction is defined as how happy an employee is in their current workplace ^[2]. However, what makes the employee satisfied or dissatisfied is not only the nature of the job but also the demand that this job might have on them ^[3]. Employee performance is defined as how well the employee performs in all their assigned tasks and the way they are accomplished ^[2]. In some organizations, the nature of work requires them to operate in remote areas in the energy, healthcare, or other sectors. Remote areas are defined as those locations that are very far from the main cities and could be isolated from nearby communities. These areas usually suffer from a lack of public transportation and/or other major services, such as hotels, supermarkets, and government main offices ^[4]. In Saudi Arabia, there are several sectors that operate in remote areas. There are factors that are influencing employees' satisfaction and performance who are working in remote areas in the Saudi energy sector. According to Herzberg's theory of motivation, there are generally two factors affecting employee satisfaction as well as performance, which are motivating and hygienic factors. The motivator factor is mainly the one that focuses on recognition, achievement, job progress, and responsibility ^[5]. The hygiene factor is mainly the one that focuses on salary, policy, supervision, and working environment ^{[6][7]}. There are factors influencing employees' satisfaction and performance in remote areas of the Saudi energy sector, which are pretty much similar to those for sectors that are operated in remote areas. First, career factors (i.e., career advancement), which are mainly concerned with opportunities and growth, as well as education, where the employee seeks to live near the educational institutes to complete their bachelor, master, or even higher degree, also seeks to work near the main headquarters for career opportunities and growth to progress in their job to reach c-suit positions ^[8]. The second factor is the social factor (i.e., social disconnectedness), where the employees need to socialize with their relatives. It is human nature to desire a similar lifestyle to other employees who are working in main cities ^[9].

2. Social Disconnectedness and Career Advancement Impact on Performance

2.1. Social Disconnectedness

Social connectedness refers to the subjective perception of having strong ties with the social world ^[10]. Based on the primary definition of a "sense of belonging and interpersonal relationships" from the previous research paper introduced by Lee and Robbins ^[10] (p. 338), social connectedness in this paper is defined as "intimacy and a sense of belonging with friends, family, and the community in the home environment while working in remote areas". Hong et al. ^[11] described connectedness as a multidimensional structure that contributes significantly in promoting self-esteem, happiness, and confidence. Social life has an effect on employee satisfaction as well as performance, especially for employees who work

in very remote areas ^[4]. Workers who are socially isolated have poor job performance, since their minds are busy thinking about relatives and friends ^[4]. Additionally, in remote areas, there are limited schools and educational levels for workers' children to pursue their normal education, and this is another factor that effects both job satisfaction as well as job performance ^[12]. Because it satisfies a fundamental human desire for interpersonal relatedness, social connectedness is a significant antecedent of motivation and quality of life ^[13]. Undoubtedly, dysfunctional relationships with people such as family partners can have great negative impacts on physical and mental health ^[14]. Regular contact with family and friends (who are unrelated to the job) is, however, substantially associated with satisfaction and happiness ^[13]. The research on work–family enrichment strengthens this idea, indicating that positive family connectedness may boost affective reactions at work ^[15]. Furthermore, Ref. ^[16] highlighted the negative impact of working in remote areas on staff wellbeing and satisfaction.

There is a strategy currently being studied to overcome the social disconnectedness issue, which is having long annual leave for workers in the energy sector to give them time to socialize with their relatives and friends. However, this has still not been proven successful and remains a social factor influencing employee satisfaction and performance, since the employees have limited opportunity to socialize with their relatives and friends since they are working in very remote areas ^[17]. Moreover, human resource specialists are studying the option of having flexible working hours to encourage people to work in remote areas as well as to overcome this challenge that might impact employee performance ^[18]. Hence, as shown in **Figure 1**, it can be hypothesized that:

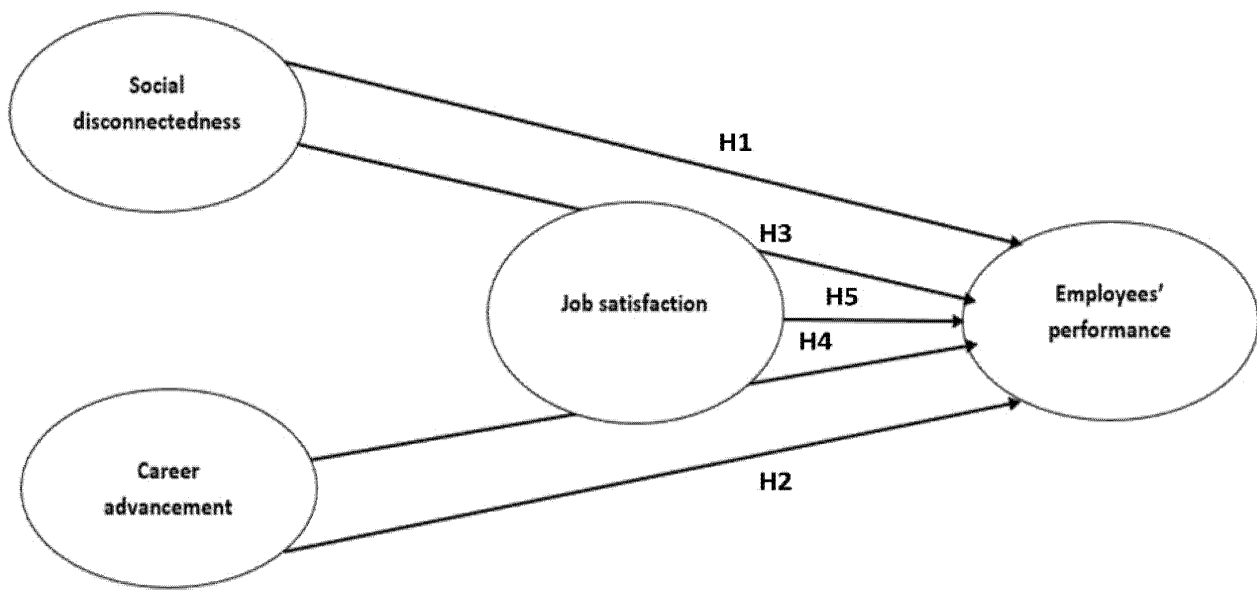


Figure 1. Research framework.

2.2. Career Advancement

Career advancement, which is mainly concerned with job advancement opportunities and growth, is affecting employee satisfaction and performance for those who work in remote areas ^[19]. Workers in remote areas will face challenges in pursuing advanced degrees, whether diploma, bachelor's, master's, or PhD, because they are far from institutional hubs, which are typically located in major cities ^[19]. The study by ^[20] highlighted the shortage and the high turnover rate of the workforce in Australian remote areas and found that the causes might be due to limited career advancement opportunities.

According to ^[21], which was a study of Indian workers in remote areas, advanced degrees and other training and development courses are the main factors for job satisfaction, and hence, they will positively influence job performance. The government and companies in the energy sector introduce a number of strategies to overcome growth issues for workers in remote areas, one of which is open and free access to some libraries to help develop and satisfy the needs of workers who are interested in books and self-learning ^[22]. Additionally, distanced learning is provided by some companies and the government for workers in remote areas to pursue advanced degrees, which will help them to get away from career isolation at remote locations ^[4]. Despite these strategies from the government and companies to overcome growth in remote areas, employees' satisfaction and performance may be negatively impacted since they do not have the same opportunities for growth compared to those who work in main cities ^[3].

On the other hand, career opportunities are an obsession for many workers in remote areas, especially in the energy sector. Usually, employees are looking for career growth to climb the ladder to higher positions, and this would be difficult

to achieve in remote areas ^[43]. This is because there are usually no higher-level jobs in remote areas; they are limited to supervisory level at most, and this is almost always the case in all energy companies that operate in remote areas ^[23]. Therefore, job satisfaction and performance are affected by the limitation of the availability of higher positions and career opportunities, especially for workers who have the ambition to reach the C-suite level or other ward executive level, according to a survey done in the USA for workers in remote areas in the energy sector ^[4]. Several strategies have been made by decision makers in energy sector companies, one of which is to have rotational assignments for high-potential employees to serve in remote areas for certain years. Then, if they pass some leadership tests, they can be moved to headquarters in main cities to pursue leadership positions and achieve career opportunities ^[24]. Despite these strategies from energy companies to overcome growth in remote areas, employee satisfaction and performance are impacted, since the employees have very limited opportunities for promotion as C-suite compared to those who work in main cities ^[12].

2.3. Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

Job satisfaction refers to an employee's good attitude ^{[25][26]} or favorable emotion toward the activity performed ^[27], which improves the working environment, and thus, contributes to a positive ambiance in the workplace ^[28]. This attitude implies an elevated level of employee well-being and is frequently related to a desire to demonstrate greater commitment to the firm ^[29]. A happy employee is less likely to leave the company ^{[30][31]}, putting in significant effort not only to improve integration, but also to represent the company with dignity and pride ^[30]. Job satisfaction is viewed positively as a predictor of employee performance ^[32] or as a component of employee happiness at work ^[33]. This employee mindset ^[34] is critical for human resource managers who recognize that retaining employees and boosting engagement and performance are contingent upon job satisfaction ^{[30][35][36]}.

Employees' satisfaction was found to be able to mitigate the negative impact of social disconnectedness on employees' performance ^[37] and can improve the positive impact of career advancement on employees' performance ^[38]. Employee satisfaction has a magnificent influence on employee performance, where the satisfied employees will be engaged in day-to-day business and will perform better than unsatisfied employees in all business aspects ^[39]. This is in contrast with unsatisfied employees, who are made to do simple jobs even if they are smart and high performing. This is mainly due to less focus on their job because they are not happy, engaged, and aligned with the organization's goals and objectives.

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