

# Salespeople Motivation and Job Satisfaction: Evaluation of Female Salespeople in Saudi Arabia

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## Abstract

In Saudi Arabia, sales force positions have been totally occupied by men until recently. The Saudi Government has taken a number of promising legislative steps to promote women's employment in the retail industry, especially in department stores that specialize in women's goods. Saudi women are now entering such positions, and they need encouragement and support in order to retain their place in the labor market and to reduce their high rate of unemployment. At this early stage of Saudi female employment in the sales force, this study aims to support them by evaluating the level of work motivation and job satisfaction in their workplace. Utilizing the Herzberg model, data was collected from 280 female salespeople. The results show that Saudi female salespeople are not well motivated at work, and they have a low contentment with the working environment. It is therefore recommended that the companies hiring female salespeople take the issue of job satisfaction and work motivation seriously by giving women more responsibilities, ameliorating the conditions of advancement and growth, increasing the number of training programs, and improving the work conditions as well as increasing salaries.

**Keywords:** work motivation, Saudi female salespeople, job satisfaction, responsibilities, advancement and growth, trainings, work conditions, salaries

## 1. Introduction

Motivation and job satisfaction have been deeply investigated in the literature; numerous behavioral and organizational studies considered these issues as some of the most critical indicators for employees' retention (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2001; Victor, 2014). Motivation is the psychological process that drives behaviors and pushes people to perform (Lock & Lethan, 2004; Pinder, 1998). Job satisfaction is the influential feeling an employee has towards his/her position which is influenced by various factors like promotion, salary, decision making participation, training, and staff welfare (Smith et al., 1969). Herzberg (1959) first investigated employees' motivation and job satisfaction, and he the motivation-hygiene factor's theory. In 1966, he empirically identified two types of factors. The first ones are considered intrinsic to the job and affect motivation directly. The second type of factors is extrinsic and could either eliminate or encourage employees' complaints about working conditions. The Herzberg theory has become one of the most well-known and used theories to explain motivation and job satisfaction (Jaafar & Zainal, 2006; Maidani, 1991; Nelson & Quick, 2003).

The rate of unemployment in Saudi Arabia is extremely high, especially among young Saudi females; more than 37% of young Saudi women are currently unemployed (The Economist, 2014). The Saudi Arabian Government has imposed a number of favorable legislative steps to reduce the rate of female unemployment by opening different sectors for them to work in, such as department stores that specialize in women goods and services (Al-Takhifi. Fahad, Assistant Deputy Minister of Development, 2014).

At this early stage of Saudi females working in the retail sector, it is important to measure their motivation and job satisfaction for a number of reasons. First, the results of such measurement could provide considerable recommendations, which if implemented correctly, could reduce the rate of unemployed females by retaining the current employees and encouraging new ones to enter this sector. Second, the recommendations will assist employers by reducing the turnover rate and increasing the female salespeople's performance. In addition, this

measurement could contribute to literature of female sellers. The purpose of this study is to examine the levels of motivation and job satisfaction of female salespeople in Saudi Arabia.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Work Motivation and Its Theories

Motivation is a Latin concept derived from the word *movere*, which means “to move”. In this case, it refers to the mobilization of goal-oriented behavior (Wikipedia, 2010). In fact, there are many definitions for this concept. For instance, work motivation is defined as the set and the use of internal and external stimulus that shapes the work-related behavior and determines its direction, intensity and duration (Pinder, 1998). Hence, Luthans (1998) perceives it as the process that mobilizes, arouses, directs and reinforces behavior, while Nelson and Quick (2003) defines it as a group of steps that arouse and sustain goal-directed behavior. Interestingly, Herzberg (1982) explains motivation by his theory, based on satisfying a need. For Herzberg, an unsatisfied need creates tension and an unbalanced state. All behavior is therefore motivated by satisfying needs. Consequently the lack or the absence of motivation causes a worker’s to perform poorly because this worker doesn’t have goal to attain. Also absenteeism, truancy, laziness, and idleness are symptoms that show a lack of motivation and negatively influence a firm’s performance and competitive advantage.

From the definitions above, we conclude that motivation is a temporal behavior state because it is related to a person that can be at one time motivated and become de-motivated in another time. For this reason individual motivation in an organizational setting must be sustained after it has been effectively activated (Mawolli et al., 2011).

Hence, due to the importance of motivation in the workplace, there have been many attempts to explain it by presenting theories. Those motivational theories are divided into two main categories:

- *Content motivation theories*: These theories try to explain why people are motivated differently and in different work settings. Within this type of theory there theories (Maslow, 1954; McClelland, 1965; Alderfer, 1972) and the job content theory (Herzberg, 1966; Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Concerning the needs theory, a person is motivated to do some action if he directly or indirectly satisfies a specific need by doing that action. In contrast, job content theories focus on the aspect related to the job content as a source of satisfaction and work motivation. Particularly, Herzberg (1966) presented his two dimensions (motivation–hygiene) motivation theory. The motivators include achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement and growth, while the hygiene factors contain company policy and administration, supervision, relation with supervisor, working conditions, personal life, salary, and relationship with subordinates, status, and security. The motivators are considered intrinsic to the job and directly affect motivation. Conversely, the hygienic factors are extrinsic and it could either eliminate or encourage employees’ complaints about working conditions.
- *Process or cognitive motivation theories*: Cognitive development motivation tries to explain how people initiate, sustain, and terminate work motivation (Cadona, Lawrence, & Espejo, 2003). Many theories belong to this category, such as Vroom’s expectancy theory, Adam’s Equity Theory (1963), Locke’s Goal setting theory (1968), and Skinner’s Reinforcement Theory (Anonymous, 2002).

Many other theories such as incentive theories, broad theories, outcome theories, and drive-reduction theories have tried to understand how to motivate people to perform their best while reaching the firm’s goals ...

Interestingly, Herzberg’s theory has become ones of the most known and used theory to explain motivation and job satisfaction. For instance, Maidani investigated this theory in 1991. Maidani created a comparative study of the Herzberg theory in the private and non- private sectors and found that public sector employees appreciated extrinsic or hygienic factors significantly more than the private-sector employees. In 2006, Jaafar and Zainal confirmed empirically that hygienic factors can increase satisfaction if handled properly and can only dissatisfy if they are absent. Nelson and Quick (2003) noted also that the motivators are more important than the hygienic factors because they directly influence an employee’s motivation and performance. Those researches added that hygienic factors support the motivators without having any influence on the employees’ motivation. Consequently we will use this Herzberg model to investigate Saudi female salespeople’s motivation, which is very important for a company’s performance and its competitive advantage.

### 2.2 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an employee’s emotional state resulting from the appraisal of his/her job and his/her attitude towards it. Weiss (2004) suggests that people form their attitudes towards their jobs by taking into account feelings, beliefs and behaviors. Job satisfaction also refers to one’s positive attitude about his/her assigned tasks (Choi & Lee, 2011). Maslow (1970) argued that satisfying a person’s needs is crucial in determining job

satisfaction. The needs presented in Maslow's hierarchy identify the basic need of hunger, protection against danger and threat, satisfactory association with others, belonging to groups, giving and receiving friendship and affection, need for self-respect, achievement, competence and confidence, deserved respect of others, status, recognition, dignity and appreciation as well as need for achievement. Hence people in an organization need encouragement to achieve their personal goals while they focus their efforts on attaining organizational objectives (McGregor, 1960). Herzberg presented in his model the hygienic factors that are called extrinsic. Those factors could either eliminate or encourage employees' dissatisfaction about working conditions.

It is therefore necessary that employers take the matter of job satisfaction seriously because satisfied employees have higher levels of performance and an increased loyalty to the company. Therefore, we will use Herzberg's Scale of motivation—job satisfaction to evaluate Saudi women's job satisfaction.

Empirically, a number of studies have examined the impact of motivation and job satisfaction on employees' performance and retention. Bassett-Jones and Lloyd (2005) retested Herzberg's theory to find out whether it supported over time. They analyzed more than 3209 employee responses from different organizations. Their results were consistent with Herzberg's prediction that intrinsic factors are more significant than extrinsic factors in determining job satisfaction. However, Udechukwu (2007) utilized the same theory and concluded that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors were important and each one could influence job satisfaction. Globally, Kanungo (1990), found job characteristics such as challenge, autonomy, recognition, and the nature of work are less important to job satisfaction, while salary, job security, and working conditions are more important, especially in developing countries. Pepe (2010) concluded that satisfaction factors like working conditions, level of supervision, communications, and monetary incentives are the most important and result in more productivity.

### *2.3 Saudi Women and the Job of a Salesperson*

Globally women are relevant newcomers to the retail sales force, which traditionally was occupied almost exclusively by men. However, women are being accepted and are often successful in sales jobs (Schul & Wren 1992). In fact, since the 1990s female salespeople have succeeded in the retail industries. Consequently a large number of female salespeople have entered to the retail sector, and the continuous increase has had an important effect on the sales profession during the last 25 years. (Moncrief, Babakus, Cravens, & Johnston, 2000). Until recently, the sales force in Saudi Arabia has been exclusively composed of men. In 2011 the Saudi government took legislative steps allowing women to work in the retail sector in an effort to reduce the extremely high rate of unemployment among young females. In the last decade there have been studies evaluating salespeople's characteristics, the importance of salespeople, the impact of the seller's gender on sales, the difference between male and female salespeople, and how salespeople and customers evaluate Saudi female salespeople (Fugate, Decker, & Brewer, 1988; Patton & Sardar, 2002; Saudi & Missaoui, 2014). However, there have never been a study evaluating Saudi female salespeople's motivation and job satisfaction using the Herzberg Scale.

### **3. The Methodology**

The Bush and Ortinau (2000) questionnaire was applied, which consists of two parts. The first part measures motivation with six items; the second part measures hygienic factors with 9 items (see Appendix A & B). This survey was translated into the Arabic language. To ensure consistency with the original version, a bilingual business professor from Saudi Arabia translated it from English into Arabic, and then an independent translator translated the subsequent Arabic version back into English. The two versions were compared, and any differences between the two versions were rectified. Finally, the Arabic translation was pretested in selected local stores that employ female salespeople to ensure that the questionnaire is culturally valid. Using the convenience sampling method, 280 Saudi female salespeople working in different retail stores located in the Qassim region of Saudi Arabia were sampled. The study's variables, Motivation (Motiv) and Job satisfaction (JobSatisf), were evaluated by using the 5-point Lickert scale. The interviewees were asked to classify each one of the 6 items of Motiv and each one of the 9 items of JobSatisf on the Lickert scale. The answers were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, grand mean, and deviation). We obtained a single index (in form of mean) for each variable. Any score (mean and/or grand mean) between 1 and 1.99 was considered an indication of very low Motiv and JobSatisf. Scores from 2 to 2.99 indicated low Motiv and JobSatisf; scores between 3 and 3.49 indicated moderate Motiv and JobSatisf. Scores ranging from 3.5 to 3.99 indicated high Motiv and JobSatisf, and finally scores ranging from 4 to 5 were considered very high Motiv and JobSatisf.

## 4. The Findings

### 4.1 Reliability Test

Cronbach's alpha was used to test the scale reliability. It measures the average of measurable items and its correlation. Analysis revealed that motivation scale is reliable by 69% and Job satisfaction scale by 79%. (See Table 1)

Table 1. Reliability coefficients of the research variables

Factor	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Motivation	6	0.69
Job satisfaction	9	0.79

Source: Survey Data (2015).

### 4.2 Motivation of the Saudi Female Salespeople

Analysis revealed the mean scores for each of the six items on the motivation scale. On the five-point scale, the mean score for Achiev is 3.23 (Std. Deviation=1.035), Recogn is 3.05 (Std. Deviation=.895), Interest is 3.09 (Std. Deviation=.855), Responsib is 2.20 (Std. Deviation=.890), Advanc is 2.26 (Std. Deviation=1.030), Persgrow is 2.22 (Std. Deviation=1.145). (See table 2).

The results indicate that female Saudi Arabian salespeople feel their job achievement is moderately satisfactory, the recognition given to saleswomen at work is moderate, and the work itself is moderately interesting and challenging for the women interviewed. However, the descriptive statistics below indicate a low level of given responsibilities, limited possibilities of advancement and promotion, and low levels of personal growth or skill acquirement. According to respondents, Saudi Arabian female salespeople are not motivated at work (grand mean=2.67).

Table 2. Saudi female salespeople's level of motivation

Attributes	Mean	Std. Deviation
My achievement on the current job is satisfactory ( <b>Achiev</b> )	3.23	1.035
I am given due recognition at work. ( <b>Recogn</b> )	3.05	.895
The work itself is interesting and challenging. ( <b>Interest</b> )	3.09	.855
I am given due responsibilities at work to execute. ( <b>Responsib</b> )	2.20	.890
My advancement (i.e., promotion) in my current job is satisfactory. ( <b>Advanc</b> )	2.26	1.030
Personal growth (i.e., skills acquired through training and development) on my current job is satisfactory ( <b>Persgrow</b> )	2.22	1.145

Source: Survey Data (2015). Grand mean=2.67.

### 4.3 Job Satisfaction of Saudi Female Salespeople

The five-point scale analysis revealed a mean score between 2.06 and 3.83 for the nine items measuring job satisfaction (Grand mean=2.60). This indicates that Saudi women salespeople have a low level of job satisfaction. Concerning the companies' policies and administration, the mean is 2.30 (Std. Deviation=.984), which indicates that the companies where Saudi female salespeople work do not have robust policies or administration. Results also indicate that Saudi women in sales jobs have unsatisfactory supervision (Superv) in the workplace with a mean equal to 2.12 (Std. Deviation=.926). Also, respondents reported that their relationships with their supervisors (Relationship) are very bad (mean=2.06, Std. Deviation=1.016), their working conditions (Workcond) are hazardous (mean=2.32, Std. Deviation=.901), their personal lives (Personlif) have not improved (mean=2.42, Std. Deviation=.932), and Saudi female salespeople are very unsatisfied with their salaries (Salary) (mean=2.01, Std. Deviation=.945). Finally, results show that the relationship between Saudi female sellers and their subordinates (Relatsubor) is moderately cordial (mean=3.24, Std. Deviation=.937), female salespeople's statuses (Status) have moderately improved (mean=3.18, Std. Deviation=.809), and Saudi female salespeople feel that their job security (Jobsecure) is moderately guaranteed (mean=3.83, Std. Deviation=.754). (See Table 3)

Table 3. Saudi female salespeople's levels of job satisfaction

Job Satisfaction (JobSatisf)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Company Policy and administration are robust ( <b>Polandadm</b> )	2.30	0.984
Supervision is satisfactory ( <b>Superv</b> )	2.12	0.926
Relationship with supervisor is cordial ( <b>Relatship</b> )	2.06	1.016
Working Conditions are hazardous ( <b>Workcond</b> )	2.32	0.901
Personal life has improved ( <b>Personlif</b> )	2.42	0.932
Salary is encouraging ( <b>Salary</b> )	2.01	0.945
Relationship with subordinates is cordial ( <b>Relatsubor</b> )	3.24	0.937
Status has improved ( <b>Status</b> )	3.18	0.809
Job Security is guaranteed ( <b>Jobsecure</b> )	3.83	0.754

Source: Survey Data (2015). Grand mean=2.60.

## 5. Discussion of Findings

The research investigated Saudi Arabian female salespeople's motivation and job satisfaction levels in retail stores located in Al Qassim region. Based on the results, we conclude that the salespeople interviewed are unmotivated and unsatisfied in their workplaces. In fact, the low level of motivation is caused by the very few responsibilities given to and executed by Saudi female sales workers, the non-existence of personal growth for the saleswomen and the limited number of trainings. The study found also that the respondents do not have satisfactory opportunities for advancement (promotion) in their current jobs. Also, the research revealed that Saudi female salespeople do not find the sales profession interesting and challenging enough to continue in this kind of job.

Concerning the Saudi saleswomen's job satisfaction, the study revealed that the respondents' have low levels of job satisfaction, which is a result of the non-encouraging salaries given to Saudi female salespeople, the negative relationship that those women have with their supervisors and the unsatisfactory job supervision. In particular the respondents reported that company policies and administration are not robust and the work conditions are hazardous. Finally, the research showed that Saudi female salespeople have not improved their personal lives by working in the retail sector.

## 6. Summary and Conclusions

To improve competitive advantage in the market, a company must motivate and satisfy its employees. Therefore, many studies have investigated motivation and job satisfaction in different countries and domains. However, there has never been a study evaluating Saudi female salespeople's motivation and job satisfaction because Saudi women only recently entered the retail sector as employees. This study evaluated the level of Saudi female salespeople's motivation and job satisfaction and found that the levels are low. More specifically, companies give very few responsibilities to their female employees. Those salespeople do not grow or improve their skills, and they don't find the sales job interesting or challenging. It was remarkable that a majority of respondents were unsatisfied with their advancement at work, their current salaries, their supervisors and the work conditions. Fundamentally, this study recommends that Saudi Arabian companies employing female salespeople should foster their female employees' motivation and job satisfaction. Companies need to empower their female salespeople by giving them more responsibilities to execute. Companies also need to increase the number of trainings, which ameliorate the female sellers' condition of advancement and improve growth. Based on these findings, it is highly recommended that companies improve work conditions for Saudi female salespeople and provide professional, flexible supervision of employees. Also, current female salespeople's salaries must be increased.

Consequently, with the actions mentioned above companies can ameliorate the Saudi female salesperson's motivation and job satisfaction, which will ultimately increase the companies' performance and competitive advantage. The generalizability of these results may be limited because the investigation focused on one region of Saudi Arabia, Al Qassim. Another potential limitation of this study is the small size of our sample which does not represent the large population of Saudi female sellers. Also, this study would be complemented by additional studies that evaluate the level of Saudi motivation and job satisfaction using qualitative methods and investigating the effect of motivation and job satisfaction on Saudi female salespeople's performance and on the company's performance.

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## Appendix A.

### Motivation Scale and Job Satisfaction Scale “Herzberg, 1966” Motivation Scale Motivators: 6 Items

1. My achievement on the current job is satisfactory	ما حققته في وظيفتي الحالية من إنجازات مرضي	Achiev
2. I am given due recognition at work	أحصل في عملي على التقدير الذي أستحقه	Recogn
3. The work itself is interesting and challenging	العمل هنا ممتع وفيه تحدي	Intrest
4. I am given due responsibilities at work to execute	أنا مكلف في عملي بمسؤوليات للقيام بها	Responsib
5. My advancement (i.e., promotion) on the current job is satisfactory.	أنا راضي على ما توفره لي وظيفتي الحالية من فرص للترقية .	Advanc
6. Personal growth (i.e., skills acquired through training and development) on the current job is satisfactory.	أنا راضي على النمو الذي أحققه في وظيفتي الحالية ( كمهارات مكتسبة من التدريب و التنمية )	Pergrow

## Appendix B.

### Motivation Scale and Job Satisfaction Scale “Herzberg, 1966” Motivation Scale Hygienic Factors: 9 Items

1. Company Policy and administration are robust	لدى الشركة التي أعمل فيها سياسات وإدارة سليمة	Polandadm
2. Supervision is satisfactory	لدي قدر من الحرية في اتخاذ القرار عند القيام بعملي	Supery
3. Relationship with supervisor is cordial	تربطني علاقة جيدة مع رئيسي في العمل	Relatship
4. Working Conditions are hazardous.	أعمل في ظروف عمل مناسبة تتوفر فيه وسائل الأمان و أدوات العمل و الخدمات الأساسية للعاملين	Workcond
5. Personal life has improved	تشهد حياتي الخاصة تحسنا مستمرا	Personlif
6. Salary is encouraging	أحصل من عملي على أجر كافي ومشجع	Salary
7. Relationship with subordinates is cordial	تربطني علاقة جيدة مع المرؤوسين	Relatsubor
8. Status has improved (Status)	يشهد مركزي الوظيفي تحسنا مستمرا	Status
9. Job Security is guaranteed	أشعر في وظيفتي الحالية بالأمان الوظيفي	Jobsecure

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