

Exploring the Gender Disparities in the Impact of Communication Skills on Job Satisfaction

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Abstract: Gender stereotypes are often discussed as potential explanations for disparities observed in communication, job satisfaction, and the treatment of individuals within workplace environments. This study aims to investigate the persistence of such gender differences and explore existing literature explanations. Utilizing an online questionnaire, 96 participants from diverse professional backgrounds in China were recruited for this research. The results indicate that by holding communication skill levels constant, female employees exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction. These findings underscore a significant gender disparity in how communication skills influence job satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of adopting gender-sensitive approaches to enhance workplace satisfaction and ensure equitable opportunities for all employees. Future research should delve deeper into the underlying factors contributing to these disparities and develop strategies to improve communication effectiveness and job satisfaction across diverse workforce demographics.

Keywords: Gender disparities, Communication skills, Job satisfaction

1. Introduction

Social psychologists have demonstrated a keen interest in exploring the psychological factors contributing to social inequality. Significant attention has been directed towards the issue of unfair treatment within workplace settings, particularly regarding the debate over the relative impacts of several factors. Among all, research has increasingly centered on the role of gender. In this paper, the presented study aims to examine how subtle gender differences in communication skills may affect employee job satisfaction in the workplace.

Gender disparities in communication skills have been demonstrated in previous literatures. Female physicians typically demonstrate higher levels of empathy and utilize more positive language when engaging with patients [1]. Similarly, the study carried out by Holm and Aspegren [2] indicated that female students often exhibit superior communication competencies in training courses in communication skills. These gender differences in communication skilled performance within medical contexts lend support to the idea that females may possess heightened linguistic proficiency for internal communication. This may be explained by Guadagno and Cialdini's [3] position that these early differences in communication style stem from gender-based expectations regarding social roles. However, some researchers contend that these differences can be attributed to social role theory, which posits that behavioral discrepancies between genders often arise from the societal roles assigned to men and women across various cultures [4]. Therefore, analyses of gender disparities in

communication styles should incorporate socio-environmental factors for a comprehensive understanding.

Another aspect examined in this study is job satisfaction. Job satisfaction defined by H. M. Weiss [5], refers to an individual's overall evaluative judgment regarding their job. In the study carried out by Muskat and Reitsamer [6] on Generation Y (Gen-Y) employees, gender differences were observed in job satisfaction and quality of work life, with variations influenced by perceived job security, appreciation, and decision-making opportunities. This gender paradox in job satisfaction can be partially explained by Eagly's [7] gender role social expectation theory, which emphasizes how societal norms and expectations shape and perpetuate traditional gender roles. Such social roles may manifest in the workplace, with women and men attributing different values to intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, consequently affecting their levels of job satisfaction [8]. However, diverse perspectives persist and continue to be investigated. For instance, studies examining the gender paradox in job satisfaction across different regions yield varying outcomes. A comparative analysis by Hauret and Williams [9] demonstrates this uncertainty. They found that women reported higher job satisfaction levels than men using the European Household Community Panel (ECHP) data. However, an International Social Survey Program (ISSP) study using an ordered Probit model in 1997 found no significant gender difference in job satisfaction. This highlights the complexity of understanding gender differences in job satisfaction and underscores the need for further research considering contextual and methodological factors.

There is also a growing amount of research on communication skill levels and job satisfaction. Given the observed gender disparities in both communication skill levels and job satisfaction, it becomes pertinent to undertake a more specific exploration of gender differences in the workplace. This study employs a quantitative methodology with Chinese participants to examine both communication skill levels and job satisfaction. The hypothesis proposed is H0: "With similar levels of communication skills, female employees will exhibit higher job satisfaction than male employees."

2. Method

2.1. Participants

A total of 136 participants were recruited through an online questionnaire performed by the WJX platform. Of these, 40 participants were excluded due to their responses to each statement points to the same degree. The final sample ($N = 96$) ranged in age from 20 to 58 years ($M_{age} = 35.2$, $SD_{age} = 9.21$; 60.4% female). All participants had work experience and had an average of 12.1 years of experience.

2.2. Ethical Statement

Informed consent and debrief forms were designed for participants' engagement. Before enrolment, all participants provided signed informed consent which included a comprehensive information sheet outlining the questionnaire's purpose and emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation. Participants were assured that their responses would be presented anonymously and that they had the right to withdraw and quit participation at any stage.

2.3. Materials

An online survey was comprised of 3 parts: an introduction, demographic questions, and 2 different scales measuring workplace communication skills and job satisfaction respectively. The introduction outlined the purpose of the study. Demographic questions were set to gather basic participant information, including age, gender, and years of working experience. The survey comprised 2 types

of items, consisting of 30 statements drawn from designed and previously employed scales. To assess the workplace communication skill level, a self-designed scale was developed through a literature review and personal comprehension of communication skills used in the workplace. After subsequent refinement, the final scale consisted of 10 items that cover communication skills utilized in the workplace with co-workers, leaders, and clients. Cronbach's alpha .92 indicated high internal consistency among the items, suggesting they were interrelated and reliably measured the workplace communication skill levels. Additionally, further validity checks were conducted and showed it has high criterion validity and convergent validity. The remaining 20 items were adopted from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire Short Form [5], aimed at measuring employees' general job satisfaction via intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as satisfaction with the work itself, relationships with colleagues, and opportunities for advancement. A 5-point Likert Scale was employed for both measurement scales (1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Somewhat, 5 = Strongly Agree) to ensure uniformity in participants' responses. An open-ended space was set at the end of the survey for participants to give suggestions and ask questions.

2.4. Procedure

Participants were directed from the disseminated link to a WJX survey. Following signing the informed consent, each participant was required to complete the survey with honesty and offered an optional opportunity to give feedback and suggestions.

3. Results

Prior to analysis, data from 40 participants claimed above were removed. Participants' ratings for each statement were examined using IBM SPSS Statistics [10] and R (V4.3.2, <https://www.r-project.org/>) through RStudio [11] for reverse coding, basic calculations, and cartography.

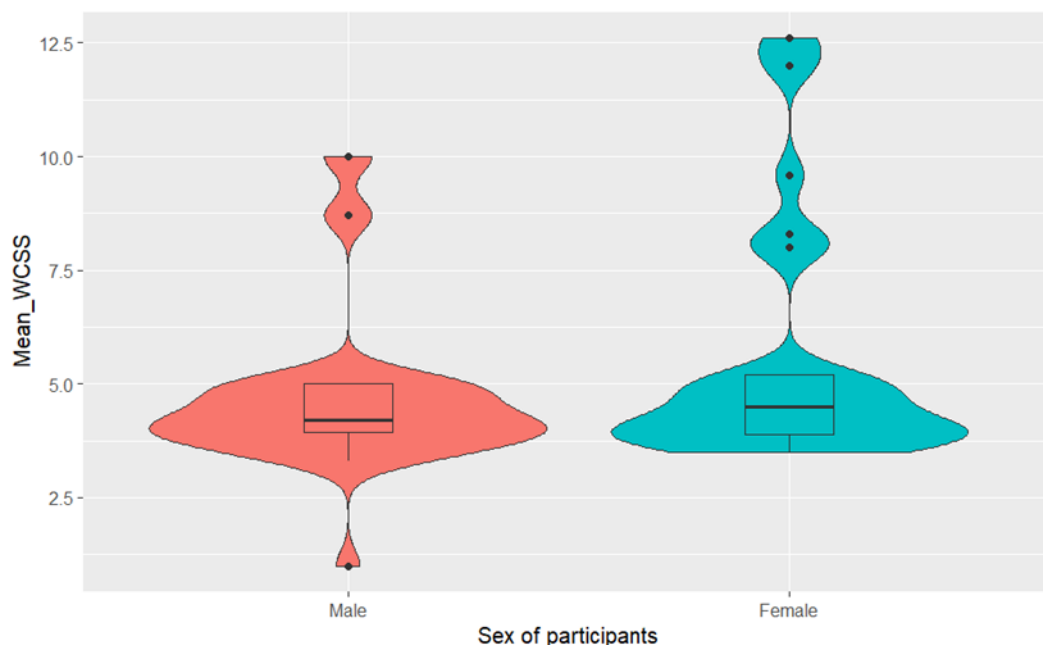


Figure 1: Violin-box plot showing mean WCSS score of different genders: Male (left) and Female (right).



Figure 2: Violin-box plot showing mean MSQ score of different genders: Male (left) and Female (right).

The distribution of the mean scores of the scales by gender is shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. From the results of the WCSS data analysis, female participants ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 1.79$) shown average higher communication skill level than male participants ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 2.76$), $t(94) = -1.91$, $p = .06$, 95% CI of the difference = $[-2.65, 4.59]$, $d = .44$. The results indicate that female participants, on average, have higher communication skill levels compared to male participants, with a moderate effect size. Female participants ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.42$) also showed higher job satisfaction than male participants ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 2.72$), $t(94) = -2.14$, $p = .04$, 95% CI of the difference = $[-1.88, 3.92]$, $d = .50$. there is a statistically significant difference in job satisfaction levels between female and male participants, and the effect size suggests a moderate difference in magnitude. With consideration of all the t-test results, it can be inferred that there is a significant gender disparity in the impact of communication skills on job satisfaction, with female participants reporting higher levels of job satisfaction compared to male participants.

To further confirm the results, correlation analysis was conducted, and the results were presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of Means, SDs, and Correlation among variables (N = 96).

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Gender	1.60	.49					
Age	35.2	9.21	-.15				
Work experience	12.1	9.61	-.18	.97**			
WCSS	4.16	.69	-.05	.23*	.22*	(.96)	
MSQ	3.74	.61	-.01	-.13	-.12	.26**	(.96)

Note: Cronbach's alphas for each scale are listed in brackets on the diagonal. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The correlation analysis revealed a strong and statistically significant relationship between WCSS and MSQ ($r = .26$, $p < .01$), providing strong evidence for the presence of a meaningful and reliable

correlation and revealing high criterion validity which refers to how well WCSS corresponds to job satisfaction as an outcome.

4. Discussion

The results reported are in line with the hypothesis and reveal that female employees have relatively higher communication skill levels and job satisfaction compared to male employees. It also suggested that, under similar communication skill levels, female employees also showed higher job satisfaction.

Firstly, our study findings are consistent with existing literature highlighting gender disparities in communication abilities. Consistent with prior research [12], female participants in the study demonstrated significantly higher levels of communication skills. This observation may be attributed to socialization processes and gender role expectations [13] which shape how individuals develop and utilize communication skills in professional contexts. The difference in communication between men and women can also be understood through the lens of differing communication purposes. Research suggests that women often use communication to strengthen social connections and foster relationships, whereas men tend to use language to assert control and achieve tangible outcomes [14]. This inherent difference in communication goals could contribute to disparities in perceived communication effectiveness between genders within workplace settings.

Secondly, the higher job satisfaction observed among female employees, even when accounting for communication skill levels, underscores the intricate relationship between gender dynamics and workplace contentment. These findings are consistent with prior research [6] which suggests that factors like organizational intimacy and trust among colleagues may impact job satisfaction differently for men and women. Another potential explanation for the gender differences in job satisfaction could be linked to the concept of the reference group [9]. This concept posits that relative income, rather than just absolute income, plays a crucial role in determining job satisfaction. In diverse workplace environments where the composition of men and women varies, different treatment and expectations based on gender may contribute to disparities in job satisfaction. Job satisfaction, being multifaceted and influenced by various factors, can be shaped by the social environment within which individuals operate. In workplaces characterized by differing proportions of men and women, varying treatment and expectations based on gender norms may indeed contribute to observed gender differences in job satisfaction levels. Understanding these complex dynamics is essential for addressing gender disparities and promoting equitable workplace environments.

The substantial gender disparity in job satisfaction, especially when considering similar levels of communication skills, emphasizes the necessity for gender-sensitive strategies to enhance workplace satisfaction and promote equitable opportunities. Gender stereotypes and societal expectations likely influence individuals' perceptions of job satisfaction and career fulfilment, contributing to these observed differences. To address these disparities effectively, future research should delve deeper into the underlying mechanisms at play. Exploring additional factors such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and career development opportunities could yield a more comprehensive understanding of why female employees tend to report higher job satisfaction. By examining these contextual elements, researchers can identify specific areas for intervention aimed at fostering gender equity in the workplace. Interventions targeting communication effectiveness and job satisfaction should be tailored to address gender-specific needs and challenges. Implementing strategies that acknowledge and accommodate diverse communication styles and preferences can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive work environment for all employees, regardless of gender. By adopting proactive and nuanced approaches, organizations can strive towards greater gender equality and overall employee satisfaction.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the critical importance of recognizing and addressing gender dynamics in the contexts of communication skills and job satisfaction. By acknowledging and actively mitigating these disparities, organizations can foster more inclusive and supportive environments that enhance the well-being and professional development of all employees, irrespective of gender. Acknowledging gender differences in communication styles and job satisfaction allows organizations to implement strategies that accommodate diverse needs and preferences. This inclusive approach not only promotes equity within the workplace but also contributes to a more positive and fulfilling work environment for employees at all levels.

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