

## **Employee Motivational Factors and Job Satisfaction: A Conceptual Study**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between employee motivational factors and job satisfaction among pet shops in Shanghai, China. The fast economic and social progress in China, along with the rapid growth of urbanization, has led to a growing awareness of independence among residents of cities. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the number of individuals who prefer to keep pets for the purpose of getting emotional support. The rapid expansion of the pet industry in China may lead to job dissatisfaction among employees in this sector due to increased work demands and potential issues related to the treatment and welfare of pets, which can be emotionally challenging. Therefore, this paper attempts to explore the influence of motivational factors on job satisfaction among employees of pet shops in Shanghai, China. Some of the issues being highlighted in the literature previously associated with the pet industry in China are related to antiquated motivational factors, conventional pet shop management, job dissatisfaction, and inefficiency of human resource management. Thus, this paper will discuss the main problems faced by pet shops in Shanghai related to motivational factors in their human resource practices and management.

**Keywords:** employee motivational factors; job satisfaction; pet shops; china

## 1. Introduction

Over the past three decades, China's pet industry has undergone significant development and change. Starting from a strict ban on pet ownership before 1994, the pet industry in China has gone through different phases of germination, development, and rapid growth, with a significant increase in pet ownership and a shift in the perception of pets as family members (Eurasia International Statistics, 2014). The market potential of the pet economy has reached at least RMB 200 billion (Beijing Centre for Human and Animal Environmental Protection Education, 2019). Per capita pet consumption has grown significantly, with China's pet consumption market size rising sharply from RMB 14 billion to RMB 206.5 billion from 2010 to 2020, at a compound annual growth rate of 30.9% (Beijing Center for Human and Animal Environmental Protection Education, 2019). The pet economy is booming, driven by factors such as accelerating urbanisation, an ageing population and an increasing number of singles seeking companionship through pet ownership. The industry has attracted significant financial investment and diversification with various companies entering the market (Pet Research Institute, 2018).

There are 4,285 pet shops in Shanghai, China in 2023, and the market is fragmented, dominated by small private shops that need to face escalation issues such as staff management (Dai, 2023). Diversification of breeders has forced a gradual increase in demand for pets, while the pressure of urban life and the phenomenon of living alone have fueled the rapid development of the pet industry (Yang, 2022), however, the pet shop industry has management challenges in terms of employee training, salary structure, and working environment, as well as a shortage of pet practitioners. Employee compensation structure is relatively homogeneous and lacks intrinsic mental incentives (Huang, 2023), whilst there are problems with the working environment and the relationship between employees, with irregular working hours affecting the work-life balance of employees (Liu, 2022). Pet shop employees are often required to work collaboratively to complete tasks together, and due to busy schedules, pet shops often experience problems with teamwork and miscommunication, which can lead to inefficiencies and poor customer service (Huang, 2022). Most importantly, there is a lack of high-quality practitioners in Chinese pet shops, which makes the medical and care aspects of the pet shop business less comprehensive, with a range of problems, such as poor service quality, opaque pricing, unclear qualifications of doctors, and a shortage of professionals, which affects the standardisation and institutionalisation of pet shops (Liu, 2018). Finally, the lack of spiritual incentives, managers do not pay attention to the special characteristics of employees seeking more self-fulfillment and team recognition, and employees valuing personal development opportunities and self-worth realisation. Managers implement little motivation at the spiritual level, which reduces employees' happiness and sense of achievement affecting their motivation and satisfaction (Cui, 2022).

Therefore, Managers of the pet shops in Shanghai, China should pay more attention to the intrinsic needs and spiritual motivation of their employees and develop targeted strategies to achieve better development and employee satisfaction. This study attempts to answer the following questions What are the factors that affect employee satisfaction in Chinese Shanghai pet shops? Therefore, this paper aims to identify the factors influencing employee satisfaction in Shanghai pet shops in China. This study has used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory to address these questions in the following way, this paper is divided into four parts.

The introductory section outlines and briefly discusses Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. The next section explores the variables under study including payment, working environment, career interests, training and development, and working relationships. The third section introduces the conceptual framework and concludes with a summary of the paper.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory**

Psychologist Abraham Maslow developed Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (HNT) in 1943, which categorises human needs into five levels: physiological needs, safety needs, emotional and belonging needs, respect needs and self-actualisation needs (Anderson, 2014). This theory is the basis for companies to implement progressive motivation strategies. In order to increase employee motivation and satisfaction, companies should adjust their management practices and optimise their systems based on this theory to ensure that compensation and performance appraisal systems meet actual management needs (Fallatah, 2018). When employees' low-level needs, such as economic security, are satisfied, their work motivation will shift to higher-level psychological needs. Creating a positive work environment and interpersonal relationships satisfy social and respect needs, while providing training, promotion opportunities and completing work tasks satisfy self-actualisation needs (Bai, 2020). Applying Maslow's theory is critical in the pet shop industry as employees in this field often lack social respect, which highlights the importance of meeting their unique needs to improve service quality (Shen, 2021).

### **2.2 Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is the result of employees' own interpretations based on job-related factors (work environment, work relationships, etc.) and subjectively referenced to a job characteristics framework. Specific to the emotional response of the employee in the frame of reference, which is a very subjective attitude, there are gaps between individuals and different reflections of satisfaction when doing the same job, so this definition is more subjective and can have an impact on employee satisfaction (Sha, 2021).

### **2.3 Payment**

Payment is the process of paying the company's employees, including tracking hours worked, calculating employee wages, and distributing payments through direct deposit to employee bank accounts or cheques (Ken, 2022).

Employee compensation holds a crucial position in an employee's life, signifying not only the company's recognition of their work but also serving as the foundation for their material survival and social activities. The level of compensation, quality of benefits, and fairness of compensation directly impact an employee's sense of equity and psychological satisfaction, subsequently shaping their work attitudes and emotions (Liu, 2006). Compensation design should align closely with the company's strategy, meet the requirements of a market economy, and continually evolve to attract and retain talent, enhance work efficiency, and drive economic performance. Employee-friendly compensation contributes to reducing employee turnover rates, boosting a sense of responsibility, and, in turn, promoting the sustainable development of the company (Chow, 1983; Filbeck, 2003; Rob, 2011; Edmans, 2011).

## **2.4 Working Environment**

The working environment is the actual physical and social space in which employees perform their work and the factors that influence their work experience and work outcomes (Eppler 2004).

Employees often select jobs based on the working environment, which encompasses factors such as workplace conditions, interpersonal dynamics, and organisational culture (Hou, 2019). The quality of the work environment significantly impacts employee satisfaction, motivation, and productivity (Wang, 2018). Job characteristics, job outcomes, and the degree of autonomy all play crucial roles in how the work environment influences employee performance and motivation (Frijda, 1986; Mitchel, 1973; Withey, 2005). Additionally, a supportive work climate that meets employees' intrinsic and social needs is essential for engagement and performance (Amin, 2021). Factors like lighting, noise, ventilation, and layout also contribute to productivity (Chevalier, 2004; Vijayakumar, 2012). The work environment's role in employee success is underscored by its impact on motivation and overall effectiveness (Hameed & Amjad, 2009; Aisha, 2013). Job characteristics, enrichment, and growth potential further drive motivation and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Cumming, 1988).

## **2.5 Career Interests**

Career interests are based on six basic types of vocational interests: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, aggressive, and traditional. The degree to which an individual's career interest type matches the work environment is important for career satisfaction and success. Individuals are more likely to be satisfied and successful when their career interests match the demands and values of the work environment (Holland, 1997).

Career interests are multifaceted and different scholars have offered different perspectives. They can be viewed as endogenous motivations for activities (Dewe, 2004), where preferences for particular work activities or environments influence behaviour and work output (Iddekinge, 2011), or as specific tendencies and dispositions of individuals to learn or engage in certain activities (Liu, 2000). Career interests research is crucial for understanding and improving employee satisfaction (Li, 2003).

## **2.6 Training and development**

Training and development are educational activities within an organisation that aim to improve the performance of an individual or team at work. These programmes usually involve improving the knowledge and skills of workers and instilling greater motivation to improve job performance (Yang, 2022).

In the realm of employee training and development, continuous programs play a pivotal role in honing employees' skills and competencies, contributing to an organization's competitiveness (Hassan, 2015; Roy, 2021). Such competent employees enhance productivity, service quality, process efficiency, and customer satisfaction, ultimately bolstering the organization's performance (Malik, 2020). These programs yield both tangible results, like increased production and resource optimisation, and intangible ones, such as elevated self-esteem and morale (Tang, 2014; Kakar, 2017). Effective training is described as the systematic acquisition of knowledge, competencies, and attitudes necessary for effective job performance

(Bibi, 2018; Ahmed, 2020). Additionally, offering advancement opportunities, training, and career planning empowers employees to chart their career paths and fosters a sense of self-worth, enhancing their commitment to the organization (Huang, 2020).

## **2.7 Working Relationships**

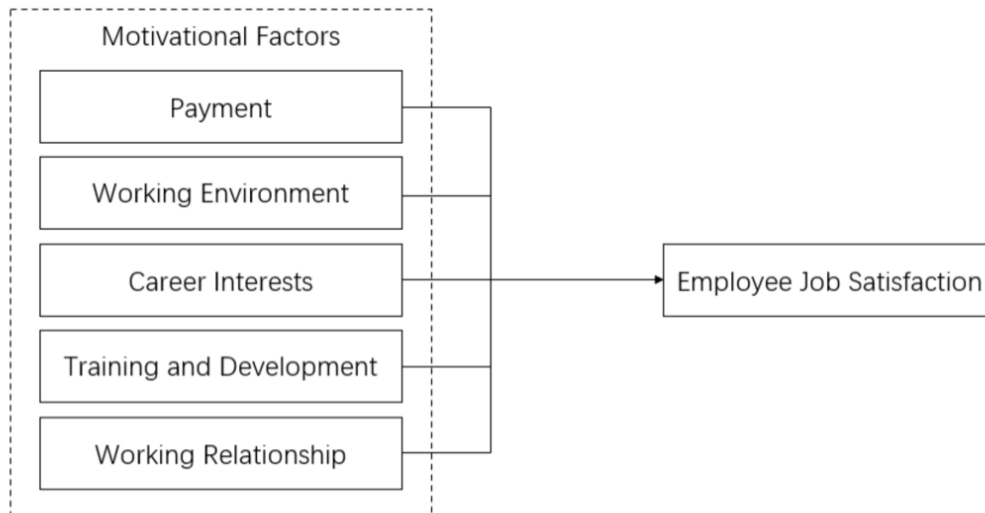
Working relationships refer to the interactions and exchanges between individuals within an organization. They encompass communication, cooperation, and connections among employees, supervisors, subordinates, and other organizational members (Harrison 2008).

Working relationships within an organization significantly influence employee satisfaction and job performance (Adams, 1963; Allen, 2003). Mutual support among colleagues is vital for fostering a positive work environment and enhancing job satisfaction. Collaborative and cooperative relationships among employees not only boost work efficiency but also contribute to a conducive atmosphere, promoting better employee-company interactions (Liu, 2022). Therefore, optimizing job satisfaction should involve fostering supportive colleague relationships to create an overall satisfying work environment.

## **3. Conceptual Framework**

Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual framework based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, which provides an effective theoretical foundation to help us understand employee job satisfaction. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, employees' payment, working environment, and working relationship play a key role in influencing employees' job satisfaction. This framework also integrates other key variables such as career interest and vocational training and development, which are also critical to employee job satisfaction. By combining Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory with these specific variables, we can build a solid foundation for researching the influences on employee job satisfaction and help to comprehensively analyse the employee motivational factors that affect job satisfaction.

The framework in Figure 1 shown the pet shop managers policy makers and practitioners to better understand employees' behavioural intentions and job satisfaction, providing an effective tool for developing targeted measures and management plans. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory is a widely used social psychological theory, and this theory has a wide range of applications for explaining people's motivations and behaviours, as well as in the fields of organisational management and psychology. This research has provided valuable insights that have thereby contributed to employee happiness and satisfaction. This integrated approach helps to increase employee loyalty and active engagement and performance, which is critical to the long-term success of managing pet shops in Shanghai, China.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework

The suggested measurement items and sources are shown in Table 1. This study's measurement items were derived from previous studies (Li, 2021; Wang, 2022). A five-point Likert scale was employed for all variables, ranging from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree.” Job satisfaction, payment, working environment, career interest, training & development, and working relationships are the variables to be considered. These measures are thought to respond to the study objectives of examining the relationship between employee motivational factors and job satisfaction in Shanghai, China.

**Table 1.** Measurement items and source

No.	Measurement item	Source
	<b>Job Satisfaction:</b>	
JS1	Are you satisfied with the workload?	Li (2021)
JS2	Does your job have high security?	
JS3	Can you give full play to your personal ability at work?	
JS4	Does the pet shop attach great importance to your work?	
JS5	Will your work in the pet shops be replaced by others?	
	<b>Payment:</b>	
P1	Are you satisfied with your current salary?	Li (2021)
P2	Are you satisfied with the welfare of the pet shops? (e.g., shopping vouchers, Holiday gifts, Holiday bonuses)	
P3	Compared with other industries, are you satisfied with your salary?	
P4	Are you satisfied with the current salary system?	
P5	Are you satisfied with the pet shop reward system?	
	<b>Working Environment:</b>	
WE1		Wang (2022)

WE2	Are you satisfied with the working conditions and environment of the pet shops?	
WE3	Are you satisfied with the necessary resource allocation for work?	
WE4	Are you satisfied with the transport facilities and amenities around the pet shops?	
WE5	Are you satisfied with the current work pressure?	
	<b>Career Interest:</b>	
CI1	Does your career interest match your current job?	Li (2021)
CI2	Does the current job meet my interest requirements?	
CI3	Does work make you energetic and challenging?	
CI4	Even if you encounter serious obstacles, will you continue to do your current job?	
	<b>Training and Development:</b>	
TD1	Is the pet shops satisfied with employee training?	Wang (2022)
TD2	Are you satisfied with your current job?	
TD3	Are you satisfied with your personal development?	
TD4	Are you satisfied with the development of the pet shops?	
TD5	Does the pet shops provide you with professional career planning guidance?	
	<b>Working Relationships:</b>	
WR1	Can you get the cooperation and collaboration of colleagues at work?	Li (2021)
WR2	Do you have a very harmonious relationship with your colleagues?	
WR3	Can you solve the work problems between colleagues through communication?	
WR4	Are you satisfied with the leader's attitude towards you and the way you work?	
WR5	Are you satisfied with the decision-making ability and competence of the leader?	

#### 4. Conclusion, Implication, and Recommendation

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of motivational factors on job satisfaction of employees in pet shops in Shanghai, China. Factors that influence employee job satisfaction include compensation, work environment, career interest, training and development, and work relationships. This study contributes to the existing body of research by exploring these factors in the context of employee job satisfaction. The theoretical significance of this study is to explore the relationship between employee motivational factors and job satisfaction in pet shops in Shanghai, China. Through variables such as compensation, work environment, career interest, training and development, and work relationships, this study extends the understanding of the factors underlying employee job satisfaction.

Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory as a framework, this study provides a theoretical framework for examining the relationship between these variables and employee job satisfaction. In addition, this study highlights the importance of considering psychological and work-related factors in influencing individual job satisfaction in the context of human resource management in pet shops. The findings contribute to the broader literature on the pet industry in China by elucidating the correlations between compensation, work environment, career interest, training and development, and work relationships with employee job satisfaction in pet shops in Shanghai, China.

The theoretical implications of this study provide specific insights for the pet shop and retail industry, helping shop owners and managers to better understand employee needs and employee job satisfaction, thereby increasing employee job satisfaction, reducing turnover, and improving service quality. The conceptual framework presented in this study helps to validate the applicability of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory to the pet shop employee population, confirming whether this classic psychological theory holds true in specific cultural and industry contexts. By recognising the importance of compensation, work environment, career interests, training and development, and work relationships, it helps to understand the current status and key issues of employee motivation in pet shops.

This valuable information contributes to the management of pet enterprises and helps them to develop scientific, feasible and effective motivation programmes in terms of remuneration, work environment, career interest, training and development, and interpersonal relationships. Ultimately, this study provides important theoretical and practical references for employee motivation in pet shops, which helps to improve employee job satisfaction and performance and promote the sustainable development of the pet industry.

It is worth noting that this study focuses mainly on conceptual aspects and does not provide empirical evidence to support the application of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, compensation, work environment, career interest, training and development, and work relationships to employee job satisfaction. Further research is needed to validate the correlation between these variables and employee job satisfaction. Nonetheless, the findings of this study have important implications for practitioners and policy makers in the Chinese pet industry and provide insights for future research. Future research should investigate the interactions between motivational factors and variables to gain insights into how they affect the job satisfaction of employees in Shanghai pet shops in China. The use of quantitative methods will help to examine the relationship between employee motivational factors and job satisfaction in greater depth, leading to a personalised approach to meeting employee needs and promoting sustainable development in the pet industry.

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