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# Examining the Effects of Employee Empowerment, Teamwork, and Employee Training on Job Satisfaction

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**Abstract**

Building job satisfaction is undoubtedly one of the objectives for any organization. This study is designed to test the effects of employee empowerment, teamwork, and employee training on job satisfaction in higher education sector. The data were collected from 242 employees of public universities in northern Malaysia using an online survey. The collected data were analysed using structural equation modelling on AMOS. The findings indicated that employee empowerment has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction. It was also found that teamwork has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction. Finally, the findings revealed that employee training has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction.

*Keywords:* Employee empowerment; employee training, higher education sector; job satisfaction; teamwork,.

## 1. Introduction

Organizations of all types are aware that their employees are the most important resources for them. However, in order to make these resources operate well at their maximum capacities, strengths, and to be committed at workplace, it is necessary to frequently examine their satisfaction about working in their organizations and to continuously motivate them to achieve organizational goals. Past research found that job satisfaction and well-being had direct effects on organizational performance and they consequently lead to greater success opportunities (Singh, 2012). According to George and Jones (2008), job satisfaction can be evaluated through employees' feelings and beliefs

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about their present jobs. Job satisfaction is a key tool that leads to favourable work attitude. Particularly, satisfied employees are likely to be more creative, flexible, innovative, and loyal (Mohammed & Eleswed, 2013). Therefore, organizations should invest in developing programs or activities that can influence the job satisfaction of their employees. It is believed that through higher levels of job satisfaction, an organizational performance can be enlarged on the long term.

Job satisfaction is a widely researched topic that captured the attentions of several researchers from various disciplines (Luthans, 2005). The increasing number of researches on this topic shows its significance. Moreover, job satisfaction is one of the key variables that affect organizational success, and it is necessary to pay a close attention to it in order to avoid negative impacts on organizational performance (Bakotić & Babić, 2013). Particularly, the satisfaction and motivation of employees to work effectively is very important for organizations to sustain themselves and stay competitive. Job satisfaction can be evaluated based on job characteristics and an employee's feelings about his or her job. Satisfied employees tend to show positive attitude in their work and are likely to be more productive. According to Mohammed and Eleswed (2013), when employees are satisfied with their jobs, they will become more loyal and committed to the organization.

Previous studies indicated that job satisfaction can be affected by several factors such as employee empowerment and teamwork. Randolph (1995) referred employee empowerment to the transfer of power from the management to the employees. Empowered people in any organization will usually nurture their competencies to perform their duties well as expected by applying their knowledge and skills (Jacquiline, 2014). Similarly, teamwork refers to employees' actions that are brought together to accomplish a particular objective or goal, taking into consideration the placement of organizational interests as a top priority (Chukwudi, 2014). Teamwork is indeed vital to ensure effective operation of an organization. Through teamwork, each member will have the opportunity to enhance his or her skills, knowledge and abilities by working with others in teams (Fröbel & Marchington, 2005). Previous researches also demonstrated that job satisfaction can be influenced by training. According to Landale (1999), training focuses on employee's learning in order to develop necessary skills and acquire useful knowledge.

The review of literature indicates that there are limited studies that examined the effects of employee empowerment, teamwork, and employee training on job satisfaction in higher education sector. Moreover, the majority of past studies on this topic were conducted in western countries and only few were done in Asian context and Middle East. Therefore, this study aims to contribute the body of knowledge and provide useful suggestions for practitioners by examining the link between the aforementioned variables with empirical evidence from Malaysia. The next section starts with the literature review about variables. Proceeded by is the methodology that is adopted for data collection, and then it ends with the results, discussion, and conclusion.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Job satisfaction

Previous literature highlights the significance of job satisfaction as one of the key variables that affect organizational success, and therefore, it is important to regularly study this topic to assess employees' perceptions about their jobs. Job satisfaction is a result of employees' evaluations of job's characteristics. It was defined in prior research as an employee's feeling about his or her jobs and its related aspects (Hedge & Borman, 2012). According to Saif and Saleh, 2013), job satisfaction is the degree to which an employee acts positively or negatively toward his or her job. It can be assessed based on the perception of an employee about the job in terms of the received wages related to job performance and working environment (Black & Steers, 1994). Cranny et al. (1992) revealed that job satisfaction can be defined as the affective reactions of an employee toward his job by comparing the desired outcomes with the perceived ones.

Job satisfaction is an important element that comes from employee's working experience and encompasses several of factors such as the nature of job, payment or salary, level of stress, working environment, team members, superiors, and workload (Bakotić & Babić, 2013). The significance of job satisfaction prevails as a critical factor that may influence a number of key organizational outcomes (Rae, 2013). For example, high levels of job satisfaction have been associated with increased job performance (Karatepe, 2012) and organisational commitment (Paillé, 2011). Certain researchers suggested that employers benefit when they have high levels of job satisfaction because it is

assumed to be necessary for increasing their productivity, enhancing the creativity, and ensuring their commitment to the organization (Syptak, Marsland, & Ulmer, 1999).

## 2.2. Employee empowerment

Recently, employee empowerment has appeared in a wide array of literature to be an important factor for organizations as global competition and high technological changes have urged them to make necessary changes in the way they adopt to manage their employees. Employee empowerment occurs when an employee tends to share his information, enhances his intellectual capability to gain autonomy while making decisions (Karim & Rehman, 2012). Wellins (1991) asserted that an organization which focuses on employee empowerment would be able to maintain its survival on the long term. Empowerment encompasses the sharing of power between top management and the lower levels (Khan, Tariq, Hamayoun, & Bhutta, 2014). Employees who feel empowered are usually those who perceive and gain power to cope with situations, events, or individuals using their skills and knowledge (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Empowerment is an effective strategy whereby an organization uses it to improve the capabilities and responsibilities of its employees, because it is accepted that if an employees is empowered, he will be more efficient in performing his tasks (Saifullah, Alam, Zafar, & Humayon, 2015).

In highly competitive marketplaces, the idea toward employee empowerment has become very fundamental to stay competitive, productive, and obtain sustainable competitive advantage over other industry players. It is believed that employees should be given the opportunities to exhibit empowerment practices because by empowering them, an organisation can develop a work environment that may affect their commitment. This as a result would help such organization to survive, nurture its business, stand in front of competitors, and face any challenges with confidence that may appear to economic globalisation (Sahoo, Behera, & Tripathy, 2010). The main objective of employee empowerment is to reduce the gap between the management and employees by increasing the authority, responsibility, and building organizational commitment (Handy, 1993; Spreitzer, 1996). In many organizations, empowerment is widely used to enhance the level of motivation among employees, allow them to take appropriate decisions when needed, and to use their skills and knowledge to react to changing market situations (Khan et al., 2014). Therefore, empowerment as a fundamental management practice should be utilized by managers to improve organizational performance (Karim & Rehman, 2012).

Previous studies reported that employee empowerment had positive effect on job satisfaction (Chang, Shih, & Lin, 2010; Raza, Mahmood, Owais, & Raza, 2015; Wadhwa & Verghese, 2015). There are several behaviour outcomes that come from empowerment practice such as enhanced organizational commitment, higher job satisfaction, and increased job involvement (Karia & Asaari, 2006). Employee empowerment emphasizes that employees' existence in an organization is highly valued and it can improve organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Ongori, 2008). Mullins and Peacock (1991) demonstrated that empowered employees are perceived to have a higher degree of job satisfaction, organisational loyalty, and increased motivation. Moreover, Kirkman and Rosen (1999) confirmed that empowered employees who obtain high autonomy to make decisions are usually more satisfied with their works, and tend to be committed to their team members and the organization. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is presented:

H1: Employee empowerment has positive effect on job satisfaction.

## 2.3. Teamwork

Teamwork is one the important concepts in organizational behaviour and it has received significant attention from a number of scholars and business practitioners. Previous studies proposed several definitions for teamwork. For instance, Kalisch and Lee (2009) defined the term team as a group of people who support each other to attain a goal. Similarly, Purdy et al. (2010) thought about teamwork as a process of organizing groups amongst employees in order to accomplish certain work. Therefore, teamwork is a sort of mutual and collaborative event that is designed to reach a particular goal (Khuong & Tien, 2013). The benefits of teamwork include improved growth in productivity, particularly, in situations that require a group of members to look for creative ideas for doing certain tasks to achieve

overall organizational goals (Kyzlinková, Dokulilová, & Kroupa, 2007). By adopting teamwork culture, an organization would be able to create an environment that facilitates knowledge sharing among its employees.

Kalisch, Weaver, and Salas (2009) suggested that any teamwork consists of three essential components: involving more than two employees together to achieve a shared goal or objective, having clear and established roles within the team, ensuring that each member of the team understands the roles of all members, and working together through collaboration in order to achieve the stated goal. The advantages of working in team groups makes an organization's working environment enjoyable because teamwork culture can minimize anxiety and enable employees to look for the best ways to perform their jobs effectively and efficiently (Jiang, 2010). As a result, a job which might be possible to perform it by a single person can no longer be completed independently; rather it should be done by different employees in order to observe it from different perspectives (Benrazavi & Silong, 2013). Conversely, the absence of less effective teamwork can lead to undesirable outcomes such as minimized productivity and the lower capability to accomplish the given work on time (Salas, Sims, & Burke, 2005). Therefore, the importance of teamwork on any team should not be underestimated.

Previous studies reported that teamwork had significant positive association with job satisfaction (Khuong & Tien, 2013). Certain scholars also provided evidence that a higher level of teamwork is linked with better employees' satisfaction, which motivates them to put higher efforts at work (Mafini & Pooe, 2013; Nickerson & Nagle, 2005; Sumer & Knight, 2001). Therefore, teamwork among organisational members is necessary to the development of employee job satisfaction that ultimately would directly affect organisational performance. Moreover, effective teamwork can motivate an organization's employees and increase their performance and self-efficacy. The increase in employee motivation and self-efficacy as a result of teamwork can be a source to job satisfaction (Griffin, Patterson and West, 2001). Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is postulated:

H2: Teamwork has positive effect on job satisfaction.

### 2.4. Employee training

Training is a very important aspect nowadays in making the organization profitable. According to Poh and Abd Hamid (2001), training is a key organizational strategy for building sustainable competitive advantage and survival in the current century. It is a process of designing specific learning programs to improve employees' knowledge and skills or assisting them to correct any shortcomings to perform well at the workplace. Wagonhurst (2002) described training as the development of skills in order to achieve certain measurable objectives, and it should lead to favourable changes in the behaviour. Moreover, Buckley and Caple (2000) considered training as a systematic process that aims to help employees learn how to be more productive at the workplace by improving their knowledge, skills or behaviours through beneficial programs. In other words, training is an ongoing process whereby an employee actually gets the necessary knowledge about how to perform well in the organization. Hence, training is very necessary to all employees in order to ensure that they can perform well in their given tasks (Vasudevan, 2014). The main objective of training is to enhance the skill of employees and to prepare them for future responsibilities.

Training is an important composite for increased organizational performance because it reinforces the degree of competences among employees (Bhat, 2013). It can also help employees to master their knowledge and skills, behaviours, and gain a sense of being valued and confident to perform effectively and efficiently to sustain organizational performance. As a result, the investment in employee training can lead to favourable financial standings (Sultana, Irum, Ahmed, & Mehmood, 2012). Conversely, low levels of performance often come from the lack of knowledge among employees towards what they are supposed to do, in what way they can do their jobs, or why they have to do their jobs a certain way. Therefore, training can help employees to deal with performance issues by giving explanations about job details. To ensure the effectiveness of training program, it has to meet the expectations and needs of employees. Particularly, an effective training program indicates that the management provides its employees with precise and truthful information, and communicates the objectives of training as to ensure that such training programs are relevant to their careers.

Employee training is recognized as an important factor that can influence the behaviour of employees. Past studies found that training had positive impact on job satisfaction (Chiang, Back, & Canter, 2005; Khuong & Tien, 2013; Rizwan, Khan, Tariq, Ghaffar, Anjum, & Bajwa, 2012). Vasudevan (2014) also found that training positively and significantly influenced organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Moreover, Adesola, Oyeniyi and Adeyemi

(2013) reported that training and development had positive effects job satisfaction. Further support was provided by Tarasco and Damato (2006) who demonstrated that training plays a significant role in building employee's job satisfaction. Based on the above discussion, it shows that several scholars provided evidence about the positive link between employee training and job satisfaction; therefore, the following hypothesis is presented:

H3: Employee training has positive effect on job satisfaction.

## 3. Methodology

This study is conducted to test the effects of employee empowerment, teamwork, and employee training on organizational commitment among employees in higher education sector. Specifically, the population of the current study includes the administrative and academic staff at the public universities in northern region of Malaysia. To collect the data, an online method was used to distribute the final questionnaire on the respondents through electronic mail. Overall, 870 questionnaires were administered to the respondents during different times of the day. This quantitative method is suitable to examine the relationships between multiple factors and understand how they can influence each other.

The designed questionnaire was developed after referring to several previous studies that included the measurement scales of selected constructs. The dependent variable which is job satisfaction was measured in terms of four items scale which was developed by Sabri, Ilyas, and Amjad (2011). Moreover, to measure employee empowerment, this study used five items and they were taken from Men (2010). A six items scale of teamwork was adapted from Shanahan, Best, Finch, and Sutton (2007) to fit the context of this study. Finally, to measure employee training, six items were developed based on the study of Schmidt (2004). All of the selected measurement scales were reported at acceptable reliability with Cronbach's alpha values higher than 0.70. The questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". To ensure face validity of the final questionnaire, it was sent to three academic experts from public universities to give their suggestions. Then, all corrections were made based on their recommendations.

## 4. Analysis of results

Out of 870 questionnaires being distributed to the respondents, only 242 were returned back and considered usable for data analysis. As shown in Table 1, the demographic analysis reveal that most of the participants are female (73.1%), whereas 65 (26.9%) are male. Therefore, this study shows that most of the respondents are represented by female. The percentage of the largest age group (50%) included those employees who ages ranged between 26 to 35 years, followed by are those whose ages are between 36 and 45 years old (40.5%). Those whose ages between 18 and 25 years old accounted for 7 (2.9%) of the whole population, and 16 (6.6%) belong to the age group of 46 years old and above. In terms of educational qualification, it was found that the highest number of the respondents (79) represented by 32.6% were holders of Bachelor Degree, followed by the holders of Master Degree (30.6%), Diploma (14.9%), while the holders of Doctoral Degree represented 0.8% of total response. Moreover, it is clear in the below table that most of the respondents had more than five years of work experience in their current institutes.

Table 1. Respondents' profile

|  | Category | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 65 | 26.9 |
|  | Female | 177 | 73.1 |
| Age | 25 years or less | 7 | 2.9 |
|  | 26 – 35 years | 121 | 50 |
|  | 36 – 45 years | 98 | 40.5 |
|  | 46 years and above | 16 | 6.6 |
| Qualification | Diploma | 36 | 14.9 |

|                  | Undergraduate                | 79  | 32.6 |
|                  | Master                       | 74  | 30.6 |
|                  | Doctorate                    | 51  | 21.1 |
|                  | Others                       | 2   | 0.8  |
| Work Experience  | Less than 1 year             | 12  | 5    |
|                  | 1 year – 2 years             | 23  | 9.5  |
|                  | Between 2 years and 5 years  | 40  | 16.5 |
|                  | More than 5 years            | 167 | 69   |

Testing the reliability of constructs is very important in any research in order to be able to proceed for further analysis. The most common method to test the reliability of constructs is the Cronbach's alpha. Therefore, this study used the SPSS, version 19 in order to calculate the reliability and make possible conclusions. The findings revealed that the Cronbach's alpha values of all constructs were acceptable as they range between 0.771 and 925. Specifically, employee empowerment had an acceptable reliability value of 0.771 and teamwork was also reported at high reliability (0.925). The other constructs; employee training and job satisfaction also achieved high Cronbach's alpha values of 0.864 and 0.840 respectively. To support the reliability of measures, the composite reliability was calculated and it was found that all constructs exceeded the recommended values of 0.70 as suggested by Pallant (2010). Consequently, the reliability assumptions are satisfied.

In this study, another test called confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in order to establish the construct validity of items in the survey. Confirmatory factor analysis was used instead of exploratory factor analysis because the instrument was obtained from previous studies and it was tested by several researchers for its validity. The main purpose of confirmatory factor analysis is to explain how well a construct is explained by its related items (Hair et al., 2010). Construct validity is considered to be acceptable when the factor loadings exceed the cut-off value and the fit indices of the model are achieved based on the suggestions of Hair et al. (2010). Overall, the results revealed that the factor loadings' values of all items ranged between 0.47 and 0.90. This means that all values are acceptable based on the suggestions of Hair et al. (2010), hence, construct validity is achieved (see Appendix A).

After achieving the reliability and validity of constructs using SPSS and measurement model on AMOS, the following step was to draw the structural model and ensure that a number of fit indices are achieved. As it can be seen from Figure 1, the structural model achieved adequate fit for the data of this study as the Chi-square value is equal to 406.438. Other fit indices were also employed to support the Chi-square (df = 164, GFI = 0.852, AGFI = 0.810, TLI = 0.901, CFI = 915, and RMSEA = 0.078). In sum, the model achieved a good fit for the data and then it was possible to test the hypotheses.
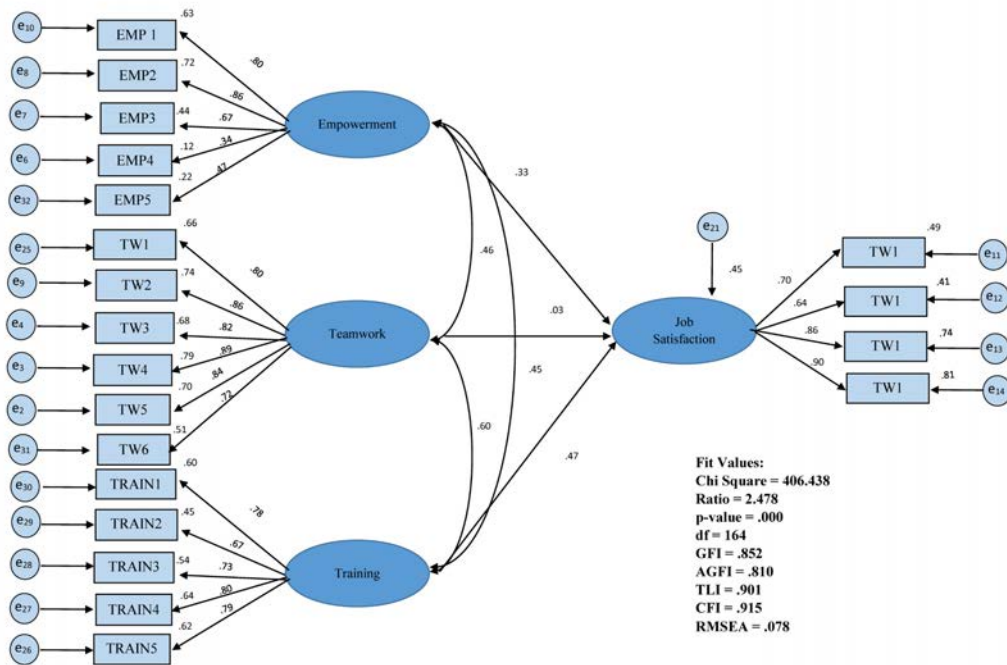
Fig 1. Structural model

The regression results which are presented in Table 2 reveal that employee empowerment has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.333$, t-value = 3.422, $p < 0.05$), therefore, H1 is accepted. The findings also revealed that teamwork has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.031$, t-value = 4.355, $p < 0.05$), hence, H2 is accepted. Finally, the results also indicated that employee training has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.469$, t-value = 5.190, $p < 0.05$), therefore, H3 is confirmed. Overall, the findings reveal employee empowerment, teamwork, and job satisfaction explain 45 percent of total variance in job satisfaction.

Table 2. Research findings

|  | Hypothesized Effect | Std. Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P | Support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1: | Employee empowerment has positive effect on job satisfaction. | 0.333 | 0.248 | 3.422 | *** | Yes |
| H2: | Teamwork has positive effect on job satisfaction. | 0.031 | 0.050 | 4.355 | *** | Yes |
| H3: | Employee training has positive effect on job satisfaction. | 0.469 | 0.062 | 5.190 | *** | Yes |

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed to examine the effects on employee empowerment, teamwork, and employee training on job satisfaction at higher learning institutions in Malaysia. The findings indicated that employee empowerment had a significant positive effect on job satisfaction. A greater support was reported by a number of scholars who found that employee empowerment had positive effect on job satisfaction (Raza et al., 2015; Wadhwa & Verghese, 2015). Saif and Saleh (2013) also confirmed that employee empowerment leads to higher job satisfaction. Since the result has shown that employee job satisfaction is associated with empowerment, it is suggested that nurturing environments that improve the perceptions of empowerment will have positive impact on employees and ultimately, it can enhance organizational effectiveness. Therefore, encouraging employee to feel responsible and authorized to take decisions that are in their capacities should be considered as part or organizational culture and work environment.

The findings of this study also revealed that teamwork has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction and it is in line with several previous research works (Abdullah et al., 2012; Musriha, 2013). According to Dash, Banerjee, and Mitra (2014), collaborative teamwork among organization's members can increase job satisfaction and employee's performance. Working with teams empowers employees and supports them to develop autonomy, which is the basis for greater job satisfaction and minimum stress (Oso, 2005). Further support was seen in the study of Gallie, Zhou, Felstead, and Green (2009) who found that teamwork had a significant effect on job satisfaction. This means that teamwork can affects the behavioural responses of employees to develop favourable job satisfaction. Based on this result, it is recommended that the management in higher educational institutions should put greater focus on teamwork in order to enhance both employee's knowledge and skills that would be necessary to increase organizational performance.

Finally, this study found that employee training has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction. Most of the previous researches including Leppel, Brucker, and Cochran (2012) and Chiang et al. (2005) considered training as an important and effective tool to successfully accomplish organizational goals and objectives, and reinforcing job satisfaction. Adesola et al. (2013) reported that training and development had positive influence on job satisfaction. Moreover, Gazioglu and Tansel (2002) confirmed the significant positive link between training and job satisfaction. Therefore, it can be concluded that training is an important contributing factor to employee job satisfaction (Tarasco & Damato, 2006). This result provides important suggestions for policy makers to continuously focus on training programs, especially, for the new employee to enhance their knowledge and understanding on how to do the required work efficiently. Such experience would increase their level of motivation and satisfaction.

As with every research, there are some limitations that should be considered in future studies. First, the sample size was not too large to make possible generalizability for the results. Therefore, future studies can examine the variables of this study using larger sample size. Second, the online survey method was utilized for data collection which was the result of low response rate, thus, it is suggested that face to face survey can be very effective in obtaining larger response. Moreover, only three variables were considered to test their effects on job satisfaction, therefore, future research can examine other factors such as communication, job security, and work environment. Finally, the factors were tested in service sector; therefore, it is important to test them in manufacturing context to increase the possibility of generalization.

## Appendix A. Measurement scale of constructs

| Code | Construct/ Item | Factor Loading |
|------|-----------------|----------------|
| | Employee Empowerment (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.771) | |
| EMP1 | I feel competent to perform the tasks required for my position; | 0.47 |
| EMP2 | I am confident about my capabilities and skills to do my job. | 0.84 |
| EMP3 | I have the authority to make the necessary decisions to perform my job well. | 0.66 |
| EMP4 | My manager trusts me to make the appropriate decisions in my job. | 0.85 |
| EMP5 | I have considerable opportunity for interdependence and freedom in how I do my job. | 0.80 |
| | Teamwork (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.925) | |
| TW1 | The team members in my department help each other to get the work done. | 0.81 |
| TW2 | The members in my team feel very close to each other. | 0.86 |
| TW3 | The members of my team really respect each another. | 0.82 |

| TW4 | The members of my team work well together. | 0.89 |
| TW5 | The members of my team encourage each other to succeed when performing the task. | 0.84 |
| TW6 | The members of my team work hard to get things done. | 0.72 |
| | Employee Training (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.864) | |
| TRAIN1 | My department provides learning/training opportunities to meet the changing needs of the workplace | 0.77 |
| TRAIN2 | Training and development are encouraged and rewarded in my department. | 0.67 |
| TRAIN3 | Overall, the on-the-job training I receive is applicable to my job. | 0.74 |
| TRAIN4 | Overall, the training I receive on the job meets my needs. | 0.81 |
| TRAIN5 | Overall, I am satisfied with the amount of training I receive on the job. | 0.79 |
| | Job Satisfaction (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.840) | |
| JS1 | I like doing the things that I do at my workplace. | 0.70 |
| JS2 | I am satisfied with my earning from my current job. | 0.64 |
| JS3 | I am extremely glad that I chose this institution to work for, over other institutions. | 0.86 |
| JS4 | Overall, I am satisfied with my current job. | 0.90 |

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