

Job Satisfaction among Staff Members in an International School

Kritthaporn Wongthaworn¹, Usaporn Sucaromana²

This study attempted to investigate levels of job satisfaction among staff members in an international school. The differences between job satisfaction and demographic characteristics, such as gender and position level, were also explored and compared with the previous findings. A questionnaire following the theoretical framework of Herzberg's two-factor theory was developed to collect the data. The theory focused on both motivator and hygiene factors. The motivator factors are comprised of the following six components: (a) achievement, (b) recognition, (c) the work itself, (d) responsibility, (e) advancement, and (f) personal growth. The hygiene factors are comprised of the following six components: (a) relationship with peers, (b) salary, (c) work conditions, (d) relationship with supervisor(s), (e) company policy, and (f) supervision. Staff members of the international school were highly satisfied with their jobs, except for the aspects of salary and work conditions. In addition, gender appears to have a significant impact on the respondents' level of satisfaction. There were significant differences between gender in the following aspects: recognition, relationship with peers, work conditions, company policy, and supervision; whereas there was no significant difference regarding position levels in all aspects. These findings are not in accordance with prior studies and can be particularly useful for providing a comparative understanding of job satisfaction.

Keywords: job satisfaction, international school, motivator factors, hygiene factors

The number of international schools in Thailand has recently increased as there is a growing demand from parents who put a high priority on education and are aware of the importance of bilingual education (Pratoomrat, 2008). Since 1991, the number of international schools in Thailand grew from 5% to 91%, due to the fact that the government changed its policy and allowed Thai children to enroll in international schools (Purnariksha, 2005). In 2007, there were more than 93 international schools, employing over 2,500 teachers and more than 26,000 students (Sangthongkam, 2007). The number of international schools has grown since then to 118 (Education Living, 2010). This rapid growth has led to a highly competitive business among international schools and, as a consequence, these schools need to listen to both the opinions of the parents and rely on strategic management (both internal and external factors) to remain competitive in a highly-competitive market (Pratoomrat, 2008). To cater to the demands of the parents, who can be referred to as the schools' clients, the schools' management needs to improve the quality of their staff, school environment, and learning systems.

Accordingly, international schools also require capable and experienced staff that can perform their duties efficiently and effectively. Most studies have indicated that job satisfaction positively affects employee work performance and organizational commitment, and negatively influences employee turnover (Intaphase, 2007; Spector, 1997). According to Spector (1997), job satisfaction regards one's feelings or state-of-mind about the nature of their work, and can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as the quality of one's relationship with their immediate supervisor and upper management, the physical qualities of their working environment, and the degree of fulfillment that they find in their work. In other words, job satisfaction is how people feel about different aspects of their work. Previously, job satisfaction was approached by some researchers from a perspective that focused on the

¹ M.A. Candidate of Business English for International Communication, Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand
– e-mail: angel_reserved@hotmail.com

² Research Advisors from Department of Western Languages, Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand

employees' level of fulfillment indicating whether or not the job meets the employees' physical and psychological needs based on the aspects provided by work, such as pay (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Therefore, it is necessary to probe into this matter through a careful study, in the hope of achieving the following objectives.

The objectives of this study were to investigate the level of job satisfaction among staff members at the international school, and to compare the job satisfaction of the staff members based on gender and position level. In response to the objectives of the study, two research questions were proposed:

1. What is the level of job satisfaction of the staff members at the international school?
2. Is there any significant difference between the job satisfaction of the staff members based on gender and position?

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been considered in a variety of ways, and has been extensively defined by numerous psychologists, theorists and researchers. Porter (1962) defined the term *job satisfaction* as a uni-dimensional construct, since one generally feels either satisfied or dissatisfied with one's job. However, Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969) argued that job satisfaction is multidimensional, and that one may be more or less satisfied with their job and work conditions such as their relationship with their supervisor(s), salary and work conditions. Similarly, Spector (1997) defined job satisfaction as how people feel about their jobs and the extent to which people like (experience satisfaction) or dislike (experience dissatisfaction) their jobs.

In addition, job satisfaction can be referred to as the positive or negative feelings and attitudes that are held regarding a job. Job satisfaction can be defined as an employees' level of satisfaction with both their job and working environment. In conclusion, job satisfaction is concerned with an employee's positive and negative feelings, and attitude towards a job resulting from the variety of the factors which can influence an individual.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

The two-factor theory was introduced by Herzberg with Mausner and Snyderman in 1959, based on the interviews of 200 accountants and engineers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which were conducted to develop a better understanding of employees' attitudes and motivations. They also determined which factors in an employee's working environment caused satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Two sets of factors have resulted from these interviews. The first set involves achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and personal growth. These factors are all intrinsic aspects of the work or elements of the work. These data represent sources of satisfaction and can also be used to explain and predict behavior. These aspects that are called *Motivator Factors* are necessary to create job satisfaction and motivate employees to improve their job performance (Herzberg, et al, 1959). If these factors can be achieved, a high level of job satisfaction among employees is possible. However, if these conditions are not met, it will lead to indifference rather than dissatisfaction among employees (Herzberg, et al, 1959).

The other set involves work conditions, which includes factors such as relationship with peers, salary, work conditions, relationship with supervisor(s), company policy, and

supervision. They are all extrinsic aspects or elements of the job and are called *Hygiene Factors* that can be described as sources of dissatisfaction. Hygiene factors are actions taken to remove sources of dissatisfaction from the environment, just as sanitation removes any potential threats to health from the physical environment (Herzberg, et al, 1959). When any of these factors are deficient, employees are likely to be dissatisfied and to express their displeasure. Even though hygiene factors cannot motivate job satisfaction, they are necessary and unavoidable conditions (Herzberg, et al, 1959). Figure 1 explains the model of Herzberg's two-factor theory.

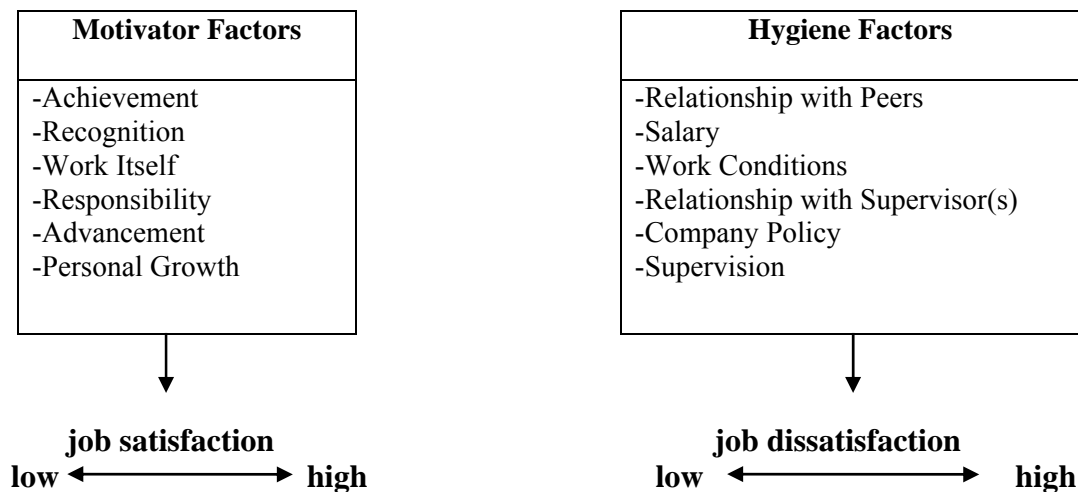


Figure 1. Herzberg's Two-factor Theory

According to Herzberg's two-factor theory, the motivator factors are related to job content and the hygiene factors are related to job context. These factors influence levels of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The motivator factors include achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and personal growth. According to Herzberg, et al. (1959), achievement is defined as an employee's attitude toward success, including job completion, competence in problem solving, and the results of their work. Recognition is the extent of acknowledgement or approval of one's achievement by both supervisor(s) and peers. The definition also includes negative recognition, such as acts of criticism or blame (Herzberg, et al, 1959).

Moreover, work itself is related to the intrinsic aspects of the job, which means the job or the set of tasks that comprise a job. The degree of work can range from routine to varied, creative to repetitive, or easy to difficult (Herzberg, et al, 1959). Responsibility is related to the level of authority that a person is given to perform a job without supervision or to perform a new type of job given without formal coaching. In addition, advancement refers to an actual or perceived change in a person's status or position in the hierarchy of an organization. Employees will be more highly motivated to do their jobs if they feel they have a good future with the organization (Herzberg, et al, 1959). Personal growth is a psychological function that drives an individual to continue to develop their potential and grow as a person.

On the other hand, hygiene factors, such as relationship with peers, salary, work conditions, relationship with supervisor(s), company policy, and supervision are extrinsic aspects or elements of the work. Relationship with peers is concerned with situations where interactions between individuals take place. Allowing employees time for socialization, such

as over lunch or during breaks, helps to develop a sense of camaraderie among the staff and improves teamwork (Herzberg, et al, 1959).

Salary includes all remuneration received for a job, including direct income, such as wages or salary, bonuses, commissions, and indirect income, such as benefits and rewards as well as benefits given to an employee in addition to a salary (e.g. a company car, company discounts on club memberships or company products). Although salary is not a motivator for employees, they expect to be paid equitably. If employees feel they are not, they will become dissatisfied. Work conditions refer to the physical conditions of a job and the facilities, including appropriate air circulation, lighting, tools, space and other environmental factors (Herzberg, et al, 1959). Relationship with supervisor(s) is concerned with situations in which interactions between supervisor(s) and employees take place. Allowing supervisor(s) and employees time for socialization, such as over lunch or during breaks, helps to create positive work environment and can also improve teamwork (Herzberg, et al, 1959). Company policy refers to how effectively a company is managed. Supervision involves the competence or incompetence of the supervisor(s) and the perceived fairness or unfairness of the supervision.

To sum up, Herzberg, et al. (1959)'s two-factor theory provides a perspective on levels of job satisfaction. The theory implicates motivator factors as well as hygiene factors. Motivator factors are necessary to motivate employees to improve their performance. These factors are a result of intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, the hygiene factors are necessary to ensure that employees do not become dissatisfied. These factors do not lead to higher levels of motivation, but there is dissatisfaction without them.

Previous Research on Job Satisfaction in Thailand

As the concept of job satisfaction has attracted a great deal of attention, many studies have been conducted and have found that job satisfaction is related to job performance. Sornprasith (1998) studied job satisfaction of private vocational education school teachers in Nontaburi province. The purposes of the study were (a) to investigate the level of job satisfaction of teachers in private vocational schools in Nontaburi province, and (b) to compare the levels of job satisfaction of teachers according to gender, age, education, work experience, salary, and work conditions. The findings indicated that level of job satisfaction among private vocational school teachers was at a moderate level. When comparing levels of job satisfaction of teachers by gender, age, education, work experience, salary, and work conditions, it was revealed that there was no significant difference among those of differing genders, ages, and salary levels; however, there was significant difference ($p < .05$) among those with different levels of education, work experience and work conditions.

Similarly, Prayoon (1997) studied the level of job satisfaction among distance education tutors in Chiangmai province. The purpose of this research was to investigate their job satisfaction in terms of achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, interpersonal relations, salary, and work conditions. The main findings were that the tutors experienced job satisfaction as a whole at a high level, except the aspect of salary, which was only rated at a moderate level. When comparing levels of satisfaction by gender, there was no statistically significant difference. When considering levels of satisfaction by aspect, it was found that recognition and the work itself had statistically significant differences. It was also found that there were statistically significant differences in the aspects of recognition and the work itself at the level of .05.

In addition, Reansuwan (2004) also studied the level of job satisfaction. Reansuwan focused on eight aspects of job satisfaction: achievement, recognition, work conditions, company policy, supervision, interpersonal relations, security, and payment, and compared levels of job satisfaction based on differences such as gender, age, status, education level, position, experience period and salary among employees at the head office of Thai Petrochemical Industry PLC. The results revealed that the overall satisfaction level of the employees was rated at a moderate level. There was no statistically significant difference overall and by aspect, except for that of job achievement, for which there was significant difference ($p < .05$) between male and female employees. However, there was a statistically significant difference overall, at a level of .01, regarding the job satisfaction of employees of different age groups and different levels of status. There was also statistically significant difference overall at a level of .01, regarding the job satisfaction of employees with different positions in the company, except in the aspect of payment.

Wiwajanasirin (2006) investigated the job satisfaction and compared the aspects of gender, age, position, educational level, work experience, length of service, and job function of ground staff at Thai Airways International PLC. The results revealed that the levels of job satisfaction among the ground staff were at a moderate overall level. The aspects of differences in terms of gender, age, and educational level had different levels of overall job satisfaction, with no statistically significant deviations. The members of the ground staff that had different levels of overall job satisfaction, with a statistically significant difference at level .01, were those who differed in terms of length of service. The ground staff with different job positions experienced different levels of job satisfaction, at a statistically significant level of .01. The ground staff with different job functions also had different levels of job satisfaction, with a statistically significant difference at a level of .01.

Methodology

A quantitative research design was deemed suitable for this study. The population of this study consisted of the staff members at the international school. A total of 72 questionnaires were distributed, and 54 completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher. This gave a response rate of 75%. Therefore, the participants consisted of 54 Thai staff members (23 males and 31 females) currently working at the international school. The staff members are Thai natives, and range from department heads to general staff. Of the total participants, 20 (37%) were between 31-40 years old, 18 (33.3%) were between 21-30 years old, 12 (22.2%) were 41-50 years old, and the remaining four (7.4%) were 51 years or older. Approximately 80% of participants were subordinates, and of the total participants, 21 (38.9%) held bachelor's degrees, while 15 (27.8%) held master's degrees or higher, and 18 (33.3%) held high school diplomas or had no degrees. In addition, they were informed that their identity would remain anonymous, and that their participation was voluntary. No incentive was offered for participation.

To investigate the level of job satisfaction among staff members at the international school, this study used a questionnaire that was developed from Herzberg's two-factor theory in order to collect the data. The questions allowed participants to share their thoughts and feelings based on their perceived level of job satisfaction. The questionnaire consisted of two main sections. The first section included demographic information, in which the participants were asked to provide their personal background information, such as gender and position level. The second part allowed the participants to select the most appropriate answer according to their level of job satisfaction.

Thirty-three questions were asked, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from the lowest (1) to the highest (5). All items were positive. Each item in the questionnaire was designed to measure the level of job satisfaction of the staff at a private international school. A score of 1 represents the lowest level of job satisfaction, 2 represents a low level of job satisfaction, 3 represents an average level of job satisfaction, 4 represents a high level of job satisfaction, and 5 represents the highest level of job satisfaction. In addition, the reliability, as measured by the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient, was at an acceptable level of .92.

To describe the levels of job satisfaction at a private international school, descriptive statistical techniques comprised of the means (\bar{x}), and standard deviations (SD) were used. In order to compare the levels of job satisfaction among the staff members by gender and position, T-test was employed to determine the differences between job satisfaction and the selected independent variables of this study.

Results

The data obtained from the participants provided a set of demographic features. The participants consisted of 23 (42.59%) males, and 31 (57.41%) females. Of the total participants, 11 (20.37%) were supervisor(s), and 43 (79.63%) were subordinate(s). To investigate the level of job satisfaction among staff at a particular private international school, Table 1 presents the mean score of levels of job satisfaction (motivator factors). To elicit the findings, the following scale was applied to this study. The criteria and meaning of the rating scale is presented as follows:

- Rating of 4.51 - 5.00 reflects that the staff members were extremely satisfied.
- Rating of 3.51 - 4.50 reflects that the staff members were highly satisfied.
- Rating of 2.51 - 3.50 reflects that the staff members were moderately satisfied.
- Rating of 1.51 - 2.50 reflects that the staff members were slightly satisfied.
- Rating of 1.00 - 1.50 reflects that the staff members were rarely satisfied.

Table 1

Level of Job Satisfaction of Staff at a Private International School

Item	Mean	SD	Level
Motivator Factors	3.76	.54	high
Achievement	4.02	.63	high
Recognition	3.77	.54	high
Work Itself	3.80	.68	high
Responsibility	3.69	.83	high
Advancement	3.62	.83	high
Possibility of Growth	3.70	.81	high
Hygiene Factors	3.62	.62	high
Relationship with Peers	3.99	.78	high
Salary	3.24	.76	moderate
Work Conditions	3.44	.78	moderate
Relationship with Supervisor(s)	3.75	.83	high
Company Policy	3.59	.75	high
Supervision	3.73	.69	high
Total Factors	3.69	.54	high

As presented in Table 1, the staff members were highly satisfied with their jobs with $\bar{x} = 3.69$. In addition, the staff members were highly satisfied with both motivator and hygiene factors with $\bar{x} = 3.76$ and $\bar{x} = 3.62$, respectively. However, the results for two aspects, salary and work conditions, were found to be moderate with $\bar{x} = 3.24$ and $\bar{x} = 3.44$, respectively. The highest mean score of motivator factors was achievement with $\bar{x} = 4.02$, while the lowest mean score of motivator factors was advancement with $\bar{x} = 3.62$. The highest mean score of hygiene factors was relationship with peers with $\bar{x} = 3.99$, while the lowest mean score of hygiene factors was salary with $\bar{x} = 3.24$.

Table 2 reports the overall mean score by comparing the levels of job satisfaction among the staff at a private international school in terms of gender.

Table 2

Comparison of Job Satisfaction of the Staff at a Private International School by Gender

Item	Male		Female		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Motivator Factors	3.57	.59	3.91	.45	2.47*
Achievement	3.89	.54	4.11	.68	1.29
Recognition	3.59	.42	3.90	.58	2.21*
Work Itself	3.65	.71	3.90	.64	1.36
Responsibility	3.38	.85	3.92	.61	2.77
Advancement	3.41	.96	3.78	.68	1.70
Possibility of Growth	3.48	.96	3.85	.64	1.70
Hygiene Factors	3.33	.65	3.84	.51	3.29**
Relationship with Peers	3.59	.88	4.28	.55	3.52*
Salary	3.04	.82	3.39	.68	1.68
Work Conditions	3.66	.83	3.66	.68	2.42*
Relationship with Supervisor(s)	3.49	.74	3.94	.86	1.99
Company Policy	3.26	.79	3.84	.63	3.01**
Supervision	3.42	.62	3.97	.66	3.10**
Total Factors	3.45	.58	3.88	.43	3.15**

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$

As presented in Table 2, there are noteworthy scores which indicate significant differences between male and female staff members ($p \leq .01$). The mean score of staff members at the private international school shows that female staff ($\bar{x} = 3.88$) were more satisfied than males ($\bar{x} = 3.45$). Similarly, the overall mean score in terms of motivator factors showed significant difference ($p \leq .05$). The mean scores of staff members in terms of motivator factors shows that females ($\bar{x} = 3.91$) were more satisfied than males ($\bar{x} = 3.57$). However, there were five aspects, achievement, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and possibility of growth, in which there were no significant differences between male and female staff members. The overall mean score in terms of hygiene factors showed a significant difference ($p \leq .01$). Additionally, the mean scores of staff members at a private international school in terms of hygiene factors, shows that females ($\bar{x} = 3.84$) were more satisfied than males ($\bar{x} = 3.33$). However, there were two aspects, salary and relationship with supervisor(s), in which there were no significant differences between male and female staff members.

Table 3 reports the overall mean score by comparing the level of job satisfaction among staff at a private international school in terms of position.

Table 3

Comparison of Job Satisfaction of the Staff at a Private International School by Position

Item	Supervisor(s)		Subordinate(s)		t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Motivator Factors	3.79	.54	3.76	.54	.18
Achievement	3.95	.82	4.03	.58	.38
Recognition	3.73	.61	3.78	.53	.28
Work Itself	4.00	.63	3.74	.69	1.12
Responsibility	3.76	.75	3.67	.78	.32
Advancement	3.64	.75	3.62	.85	.06
Possibility of Growth	3.67	.86	3.70	.80	.11
Hygiene Factors	3.51	.68	3.65	.61	.68
Relationship with Peers	3.61	.87	4.09	.74	1.86
Salary	3.15	.75	3.26	.77	.44
Work Conditions	3.30	.64	3.48	.81	.67
Relationship with Supervisor(s)	3.70	.89	3.76	.83	.22
Company Policy	3.52	.86	3.61	.73	.38
Supervision	3.79	.58	3.72	.72	.28
Total Factors	3.65	.59	3.71	.53	.30

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$

As presented in Table 3, there are scores which indicate no significant differences between supervisor(s) and subordinate(s). Similarly, the overall mean score in terms of motivator factors showed no significant differences. Additionally, the overall mean score in terms of hygiene factors showed no significant differences.

Discussions

According to the results of this study, staff members were highly satisfied with their jobs, except for the aspects of salary and work conditions. They are moderately satisfied with these two aspects. This result is consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Prayoon (1997), in which the staff members were highly satisfied with their jobs in almost all aspects, except for the aspect of salary that was found to be moderately satisfied. In addition, work conditions are another factor that staff members are moderately satisfied with. The reason may be because of the limited school budget, as it cannot cover what all the staff members need to use for work. Since the staff members may have to share the equipment together that may make their work slower and inflexible.

Comparing male and female staff members, the results of this study showed that there were significant differences. That is, female staff members are more satisfied with their jobs than male staff members in both motivator and hygiene factors. This result is consistent with those of Reansuwan (2004). This may be due to female staff members being more satisfied with school jobs than males, since females had different attitudes towards working in school environment. However, there was no significant difference between position level and job satisfaction. This may be due to supervisors and subordinates being close to each other and

not feeling any distance. However the findings in the research were inconsistent with the study of Wiwajanasirin (2006), where there were significant differences in position levels.

Conclusions

The study was conducted to (a) investigate the level of job satisfaction among staff members at the international school, and (b) to compare the levels of job satisfaction among staff members based on gender and position level. The results showed that staff members at the international school were highly satisfied with their jobs. The staff members were highly satisfied with both motivator and hygiene factors. However, staff members were found to be moderately satisfied regarding the aspects of salary and working conditions. Additionally, the results showed that females were more significantly satisfied than males with both motivator and hygiene factors. However, the aspect of position level indicated no significant differences between supervisor(s) and subordinate(s) when looking at the overall composite data and the data based on separate factors.

References

- Education Living, (2010). *In collaboration with various international schools throughout Thailand*, 45, 60-65.
- Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. B. (1959). *The motivation to work*. New York: Wiley.
- Intaphase, S. (2007). Relationship between job satisfaction and job change of the employees. Thesis. M.A. (Industrial and Organizational Psychology). King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok.
- Porter, L.W. (1962). Job attitudes in management: Perceived deficiencies in need fulfillment as a function of job level. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 46, 375-384.
- Pratoomrat, P. (2008). *Parents' expectations of international pre-school management: A case study of Mulberry House International Pre-School*. Master's Project. M.A. (Business English for International Communication). Bangkok: Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University.
- Prayoon, W. (1997). *A study of job satisfaction of distance education tutors in changwat Chiangmai*. Thesis of M.Ed. in Adult Education. Bangkok: Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University.
- Purnariksha, C. (2005). *Learning Opportunity with Excellence*. Bangkok: BlueMango.
- Reansuwan, P. (2004). *Job satisfaction of employee's working of Thai Petrochemical Industry Public Company Limited at head office*. Master Project. MBA. (Management). Bangkok: Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University.
- Sangthongkam, V. (2007). *Quality of Life. Tips before sending your child to International School*. Retrieved from <http://www.manager.co.th/QOL/ViewNews.aspx?NewsID=9500000034989>
- Smith, P. C., Kendall, L. M., & Hulin, C. L. (1969). *The measurement of satisfaction in work and retirement*. Chicago: Rand McNail.
- Sornprasith, W. (1998). *A study on job satisfaction of private vocational education school teachers in changwat Nontaburi*. Thesis of M.Ed. in Adult Education. Bangkok: Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University.
- Spector, P. E. (1997). *Job satisfaction: application, assessment, cause, and consequences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Wiwajanasirin, S. (2006). *Job satisfaction of ground hostess of Thai Airways International (Public Company Limited)*. Master Project. M.Ed. (Business Education). Bangkok: Graduate School, Srinakarinwirot University.