

The Influence of Qatar Labour Law on Job Satisfaction and Productivity

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Abstract

Job satisfaction is an important factor which determines the productivity of an employee. If the employee is properly motivated and satisfied with their current working conditions, they will do the job to their fullest potential and their productivity will be very high. This research was conducted to determine the effects of Qatar labor laws on the job satisfaction and therefore on the productivity of the expatriate employees. The employees shall be treated fairly and shall be provided with hygiene and motivational factors to exhibit job satisfaction and maximum productivity.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire survey administered to expatriate employees working in the industry. The survey assessed job satisfaction levels, perceived restrictions associated with the labour laws, and factors influencing employee motivation and workplace productivity. The findings indicate that a majority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their employment conditions. Major concerns included limited opportunities for career advancement, lack of regular salary increments, restricted employment mobility, and insufficient compensation benefits. Respondents also indicated that greater labour mobility, fair compensation based on qualifications and experience, and improved employee benefits could significantly enhance job satisfaction and productivity. Although the findings reflect employee perceptions under the sponsorship framework existing at the time of the study, they provide valuable insights into the relationship between labour governance structures and worker motivation in expatriate-dominated labour markets. Understanding these dynamics may assist policymakers and employers in developing employment policies that enhance workforce satisfaction, improve organizational commitment, and strengthen productivity in labour-intensive sectors such as construction.

Keywords: *expatriate labour, sponsorship system, job satisfaction, labour mobility, construction industry, Qatar*

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, Qatar has experienced rapid economic growth and large-scale infrastructure development. The construction industry has been central to this transformation, particularly during periods of significant national investment in infrastructure and urban development projects. A distinctive characteristic of Qatar's labour market is its strong reliance on expatriate workers, who constitute a large majority of the workforce in sectors such as construction, engineering, and project management.

Labour migration in many Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries has traditionally been governed by the sponsorship system, commonly known as the kafala system. Under this system, a migrant worker's legal residency and employment status are linked to a specific employer or sponsor. Historically, employers exercised significant authority over workers' employment mobility, including the ability to approve job changes or exit permits (Lenner & Turner, 2019). Although the system was originally designed to regulate labour migration and ensure workforce stability, it has also generated debate regarding worker autonomy and employment rights.

Employee job satisfaction plays an important role in organizational performance and productivity. Workers who feel valued and fairly treated are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of motivation and commitment. Conversely, dissatisfaction with employment conditions can lead to reduced productivity, decreased work engagement, and higher employee turnover.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Organizational psychology research highlights the importance of both economic and psychological factors in determining employee satisfaction. It was proved beyond any doubt that job satisfaction and employee productivity are interrelated and dissatisfaction will lead to less productivity. According to Mullins (2007), the productivity is the product of ability level and motivation.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that individuals seek to fulfil basic economic and safety needs before pursuing higher-level psychological needs such as recognition and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943).

Two Factor Theory

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory distinguishes between workplace conditions that prevent dissatisfaction (such as salary and job security) and those that actively motivate employees, including recognition and opportunities for professional growth (Herzberg, 1966).

Expectancy Theory

Victor Vroom in his expectancy theory proposes that employees will work hard to earn rewards that they value and that they consider obtainable.

Equity Theory

As stated by Collins (2010), Adams' Equity Theory states that employees seek to maintain equity between the inputs that they bring to a job and the outcomes that they receive from it against the perceived inputs and outcomes of others.

Application of Motivation Theories

In labour-intensive industries such as construction, employee satisfaction is particularly important because productivity often depends on the motivation and engagement of workers. Understanding the factors that influence expatriate employees' perceptions of their employment conditions can therefore provide valuable insights for improving workforce management practices.

According to Halepota (2005), motivation influences the productivity of the workers in the construction sector. When the employees are motivated to feel important and needed by the management, the output of the company can be maximized. An employee that is well motivated is both productive and creative. These motivated employees look for a way to improve their work and offer better quality. Employees must have sufficient motivation to achieve work objectives. Good management can create the feeling of belongingness and job satisfaction in employees and can reduce employee turn-over.

In recent years, Qatar has introduced significant labour reforms aimed at strengthening worker protection and improving labour mobility. These reforms include the removal of the No Objection Certificate (NOC) requirement for job changes, the abolition of exit permits to travel outside of the country, and the introduction of a non-discriminatory minimum wage (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2021). These policy changes represent an important step toward improving labour governance within the country and have attracted attention from international organizations and researchers (Amnesty International, 2020).

Despite these reforms, it remains important to understand expatriate workers' perceptions of employment conditions under earlier regulatory frameworks. Such insights help illustrate the structural challenges faced by migrant workers and highlight the factors that influence job satisfaction and productivity within expatriate-dominated labour markets.

The purpose of this study is therefore to examine expatriate employees' perceptions of the sponsorship system and labour laws in Qatar before the reforms and to identify the factors influencing job satisfaction and productivity in the construction industry.

Research Methodology

Research Design:

This study employed a quantitative survey design to investigate expatriate employees' perceptions of the sponsorship system and its influence on job satisfaction in the construction sector. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data regarding employees' experiences, satisfaction levels, and views on employment conditions.

The survey approach which includes a questionnaire survey had been chosen for this study by considering the advantages and disadvantages of different data collection methods like face to face interviews, telephone interviews, observations, survey methods, experimentation etc. Questionnaires are used to gather data from a large number of respondents within a limited time frame (Naoum, 2007).

Moreover, in the questionnaire survey, there is no interviewer involved to bias the respondent's answers. So, questionnaire survey through e-mail and online response to the given site was the chosen method of data collection.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire consisted of twelve questions organized into three sections.

The first section gathered general background information regarding respondents' work experience within the construction industry. To maintain confidentiality and to encourage honest responses, identifying information such as names, job titles, and company names were not collected.

The second section examined respondents' perceptions of the sponsorship system and labour regulations, focusing on their impact on job satisfaction and employment conditions.

The third section explored factors that respondents believed could improve job satisfaction, including compensation, employment mobility, career advancement opportunities, and employee benefits.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed to expatriate employees working within the construction industry in Qatar. A total of 20 completed responses were obtained and included in the analysis. Although the sample size was relatively small, most respondents had significant work experience in the construction sector and were therefore able to provide informed perspectives on employment conditions. The respondents are asked to indicate their degree of agreement by checking one of five response categories. Likert scale is easy for the researcher to construct and administer and easy for the respondent to understand. The participants can easily represent their views by checking in the appropriate box. (Malhotra, 2006)

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including percentage distributions and comparative interpretation of responses. The analysis focused on identifying patterns related to job satisfaction, perceived restrictions associated with the sponsorship system, and factors influencing employee motivation and productivity.

Data Analysis

Work Experience of Respondents

The majority of respondents had considerable experience in the construction industry. Approximately 35% reported having between 10 and 14 years of experience, while 25% had between 5 and 9 years of experience. Around 15% had 15 to 19 years of experience, and 15% reported between 1 and 4 years of experience. Only 10% of respondents had more than 20 years of experience.

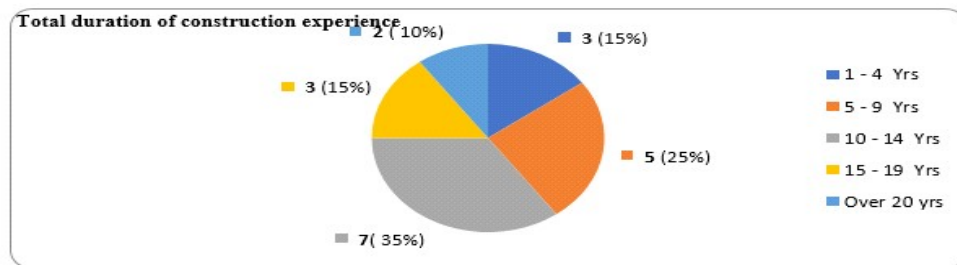


Figure 1 Work Experience

This distribution suggests that most participants possessed substantial industry experience and were capable of providing informed insights regarding employment conditions within the construction sector.

Job Satisfaction Levels

The results indicate that a significant proportion of respondents were dissatisfied with their employment situation. Seventy-five percent reported that they were not satisfied with their current working conditions, while only 15% indicated satisfaction.

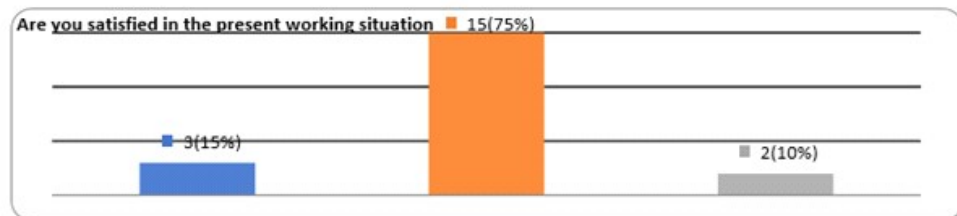


Figure 2 Level of Satisfaction of Employees

When asked whether restrictions associated with the sponsorship system affected their job satisfaction, 95% of respondents agreed that these restrictions had a negative impact. Similarly, 95% believed that they could obtain higher salaries and better benefits if they were able to change employers within Qatar.

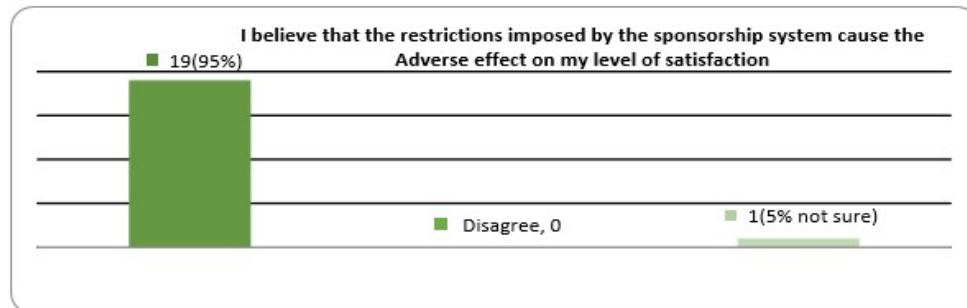


Figure 3 Level of Dissatisfaction

All respondents (100%) also expressed the opinion that the sponsorship system primarily favoured employers rather than employees.

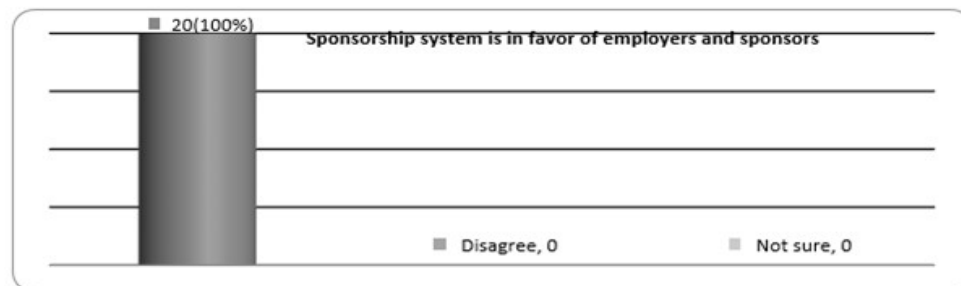


Figure 4 Employees perception about partiality in sponsorship and Labor Law

Sources of Dissatisfaction

Several issues emerged as major contributors to employee dissatisfaction.

The most significant concern was the lack of opportunities for career development, with 90% of respondents indicating high dissatisfaction in this area. Financial factors were also widely reported. Ninety-five percent of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of regular salary increments, while 75% reported dissatisfaction with compensation packages and additional benefits.

Employment mobility represented another important concern. Ninety percent of respondents were dissatisfied with the requirement to obtain a No Objection Certificate to change employers, and 85% were dissatisfied with restrictions on engaging in part-time work.

Concerns regarding job security were also noted, with 60% of respondents reporting dissatisfaction related to employment stability.

Factors That Could Improve Job Satisfaction

Respondents identified several measures that could significantly enhance job satisfaction.

All respondents (100%) indicated that reforming the sponsorship system would positively influence their job satisfaction.

Similarly, 95% believed that the freedom to change jobs after completing their employment contract would significantly improve motivation and satisfaction.

Fair compensation was another important factor. Ninety percent of respondents indicated that salaries aligned with qualifications and experience would improve job satisfaction.

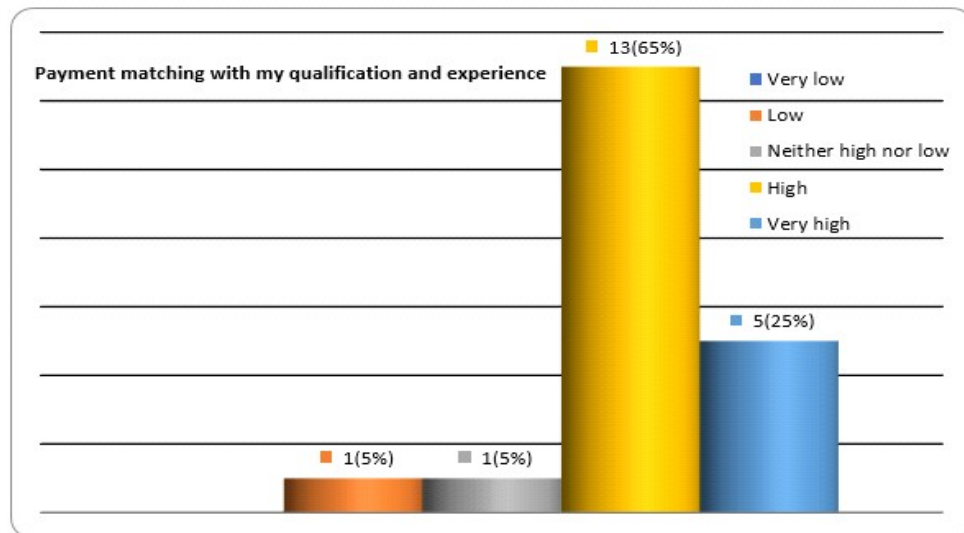


Figure 5 Payment according to qualification and experience

Additional factors included annual paid leave after one year of service (65%) and end-of-service benefits in accordance with labor regulations (55%).

Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study indicate that expatriate employees working in Qatar's construction industry experienced considerable dissatisfaction with their employment conditions under the sponsorship framework existing at the time of the study. Major concerns included limited employment mobility, insufficient career development opportunities, irregular salary increments, and concerns regarding job security.

These findings are consistent with established theories in organizational psychology. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, individuals seek not only economic security but also opportunities for recognition and professional growth (Maslow, 1943). When these needs are not fulfilled, employees may experience dissatisfaction and reduced motivation. The respondents in this study identified limited career development opportunities as one of the most significant factors affecting their job satisfaction.

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory further explains the findings. Herzberg suggests that workplace factors such as salary, job security, and working conditions function as hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily create long-term motivation (Herzberg, 1966). The dissatisfaction reported by respondents regarding salary increments and job security indicates that these hygiene factors were perceived as inadequate.

Another relevant theoretical framework is Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key psychological needs influencing motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Restrictions associated with the sponsorship system, particularly those limiting employment mobility, may reduce employees' sense of autonomy. The respondents' strong preference for greater freedom to change employers suggests that increased autonomy in employment decisions could significantly improve motivation and job satisfaction. Labor mobility is also recognized as an important factor contributing to productivity in labor markets. When workers can move more freely between employers, labour markets tend to allocate skills more efficiently and encourage organizations to provide competitive wages and improved working conditions (OECD, 2020).

Conclusion

In recent years, Qatar has introduced several labour reforms aimed at improving migrant worker protection and labour mobility. These include the removal of the No Objection Certificate requirement, the abolition of exit permits for workers, and the introduction of a minimum wage (International Labour Organization, 2021; World Bank, 2022). These reforms represent important steps toward improving labour governance in the country.

Although the present study reflects employee perceptions under the earlier sponsorship framework, the findings remain valuable for understanding the challenges faced by expatriate workers in the construction sector. Insights from this research may help organizations develop employment practices that improve worker satisfaction, strengthen motivation, and enhance productivity. Every expatriate

employee participated in the survey was looking forward for the replacement of sponsorship system with contract system which would help them to seek better opportunity after completion of the contract with the current employer.

The reformed labour laws ensure that the expatriate workers are working under contract system and they can move from one employer to another after the contract period. This labor law reforms help employee satisfaction and in turn productivity.

Recommendations for further studies

Further studies can be conducted to determine the effect of reformed labour laws which abolishes the main dissatisfaction factors of expatriate employees. Job satisfaction among the expatriate work force will improve the quality and productivity of the construction industry hypothetically. So, further studies can be conducted to quantify the productivity and creativity of satisfied employees.

Declaration of Interest Statement

The author declares that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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