

## The Relationship Between Basic Psychological Needs in the Workplace and Job Satisfaction: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective <sup>1\*</sup>

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### Abstract

The conducted research aimed to determine the relationship between basic psychological needs (BPN) in workplace and job satisfaction. More precisely, we wanted to examine whether job satisfaction can be predicted based on dimensions of BPN. Also, we examined the relationship between job satisfaction and sociodemographic variables (gender, education level, employment status, years of service with the current employer, workplace model and sector/industry, age, years of service, years of work experience and salary). To achieve this goal, a new psychological measurement instrument constructed for the purposes of the author's master's thesis was applied. The research was conducted on a sample of 226 participants. The results of the study confirmed that all three BPNS (the need for autonomy, the need for competence/structure, and the need for relatedness) have a positive, statistically significant, and strong correlation with job satisfaction. Furthermore, the obtained results show that job satisfaction can be predicted based on these BPNs. The findings also indicate that job satisfaction is in weak positive correlations with age, years of service, years of work experience and salary. The research also confirmed that the metric characteristics of the applied measurement instrument are satisfactory.

**Keywords:** self-determination theory, job satisfaction, need for autonomy, need for competence, need for relatedness

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## **The Relationship Between Basic Psychological Needs in the Workplace and Job Satisfaction: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective**

Two of the three basic clusters of individual differences, intelligence and personality traits, are significantly biologically predetermined and, as such, represent givens that are difficult to change (Plomin, 2018). Therefore, organizational efforts to maximize or at least improve individual performance in the workplace must necessarily focus on motivation as the only cluster of individual differences significantly susceptible to organizational influences (Đuranović, 2021). Given the known, significant limitations of extrinsic motivation, it is logical for organizations to question whether it is possible to influence intrinsic motivation to improve work efficiency of an individual. One of the possible answers to this question is offered by self-determination theory, so the aim of this paper is to investigate the relationship between this theory and job satisfaction, which in turn significantly contributes to work efficiency, and to check the metric characteristics of the applied psychological measurement instrument.

### **Self-Determination Theory**

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is classified as a macro theory, providing a broad framework for studying human motivation and personality as a whole, as well as social development and overall psychological functioning and well-being. Deci and Ryan (1985) authors of SDT proposed a taxonomy of motivations and three sub-theories: the theory of basic psychological needs, the theory of cognitive evaluation, and the theory of organismic integration .

Sub-theory of Basic Psychological Needs (BPNT) refers on three basic psychological needs that motivate the self to initiate behavior (though self-determination is not only determined by the level of fulfillment of basic psychological needs): the need for autonomy, the need for competence, and the need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to BPNT, the satisfaction or frustration of autonomy, competence, and relatedness affects both motivation and the growth and development of the individual. This subsequently influences their behavior and results in their overall sense of (dis)satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Sub-theory of Cognitive Evaluation (CET) describes a taxonomy of different motivations based on the degree of their internalization (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to CET, intrinsic, autonomous, or internal motivation is a natural, inherent drive of individuals for continual growth and development. This motivation stems from the innate psychological needs of each individual and does not have an external goal such as a reward for the activity. It provides an explanation of the phenomenon known as “motivational crowding out,” which describes how external factors or environmental influences can affect and impact intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Sub-theory of Organismic Integration (OIT) provides the explanation of various ways of regulating controlled, i.e. extrinsically motivated behavior (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Extrinsic/controlled/external motivation refers to motivation that originates from external sources that encourage/stimulate, or discourage/de-stimulate certain types of behavior. OIT identifies four distinct types of extrinsic motivation based on their degree of autonomy. Starting from the lowest degree of autonomy they are: (a) externally regulated behavior, (b) introjected regulation, (c) regulation through identification, and (d) integrated regulation. According to OIT, extrinsically motivated behaviors can be integrated into the self, but for this integration to occur, the environment must ensure that the individual feels autonomous, competent, and related. This concept, the concept of autonomous extrinsic motivation (AEM), i.e., the explanation of transformation of extrinsic into intrinsic motivation, is the key innovation brought by SDT. This means that the environment determines whether a behavior will be externally regulated, introjected, a result of identification, or full integration into the self (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

## Job Satisfaction

There are different definitions of the term job satisfaction (JS), but what most authors (Locke, 1976) agree on is that JS is a complex measure of worker satisfaction with their job (Spector, 1997). Therefore, job satisfaction can be defined as a complex attitude that includes certain assumptions and beliefs about the job, as well as an evaluation of the job (Hulin, & Judge, 2003). Like any attitude, job satisfaction is a complex phenomenon that encompasses three basic components:

- *cognitive* - consists of thoughts and beliefs about the object of the attitude (the job), formed based on what a person believes they know about it;
- *affective* - consists of feelings for the attitude object (the job), and is expressed through the range of emotions one might have towards it;
- *conative* - is the inclination toward certain behaviors or actions in relation to the attitude object (the job), as a consequence of the interaction between the previous two components (Hulin, & Judge, 2003).

Given that job satisfaction is a complex attitude, employees can be satisfied with some aspects of their job while simultaneously being dissatisfied with others. That means that job satisfaction is a multidimensional psychological response of an individual to their job (Hulin, & Judge, 2003).

Taking the complexity of the job satisfaction construct, it is clear that there are some difficulties associated with measuring it. There are two approaches to the operationalization of job satisfaction: the holistic approach, according to which job satisfaction is perceived as a unidimensional construct that represents a general attitude of a person towards their job, and the facet approach, according to which job satisfaction is seen through multiple aspects, treating it as a multidimensional construct (Spector, 1997).

Since job satisfaction typically reflects an overall affective response to work,

this research adopted a holistic approach to its operationalization to capture a general dimension that reflects overall job contentment. Taking this approach and treating JS as an ‘single-faceted’ construct contribute to simplifying the measurement process, and therefore enhancing interpretability by providing a more clear and straightforward measure of how satisfied individuals are with their job.

The connection between BPN as defined by SDT and job satisfaction was previously established through multiple research (Brunelle & Fortin, 2012; Decker & Van Quaquebeke, 2014; Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013; Takahashi et al., 2014; Đuranović, 2021). Researchers have shown that when employees experience high levels of autonomy, competence/structure and relatedness in their workplaces, they are more likely to report greater job satisfaction. Conversely, a lack of fulfillment in these areas can lead to dissatisfaction, highlighting the significant impact of BPN on job-related outcomes. For example, Brunelle and Fortin (2012) found that fulfilling BPNs significantly predicts job satisfaction and that employees who perceive their needs as met, tend to report higher job satisfaction and overall well-being in their work environment. Fernandez and Moldogaziev (2013) examined the effect of BPN fulfillment on job satisfaction in the public sector and concluded that meeting employees’ basic psychological needs positively effect their job satisfaction and commitment to their organization, reinforcing the role of SDT in understanding employee motivation. Decker and Van Quaquebeke (2014) conducted research investigating the importance of autonomy in enhancing job satisfaction. Results showed that when employees feel autonomous in their roles, they are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction. Also, in their longitudinal study that took place from 2004-2013, Takahashi et al. (2014) found that job satisfaction is closely related to the fulfillment of BPN, confirming strong linear correlation between the job satisfaction ratio and the degree of self-determination. Authors pointed out that occupation and rank tend to determine the band of fluctuation with respect to the degree of self-determination indicating that the relationship could be influenced by contextual factors. Strong correlation between BPN and job satisfaction was also confirmed by the study Đuranović (2021).

In previous research the relationship between sociodemographic variables and job satisfaction has also been explored (Clark, 1997; Đuranović, 2021; Kautonen et al., 2013; Ng & Feldman, 2010; Spector, 1997). Ng and Feldman (2010) based on the results of meta-analysis concluded that chronological age is associated with more favorable job attitudes, though the strength of this relationship is weak to moderate, highlighting the need for further research and theoretical development in this area. Similarly, Spector (1997) found mixed results when it comes to relationship between gender and job satisfaction pointing out that more research is needed to understand the underlying reasons for observable differences in how men and women experience job satisfaction and how that manifests in various work environments. Clark (1997) also investigated relationship of gender but also education with job satisfaction, and came to the conclusion that education alone does not determine satisfaction. Kautonen et al. (2013) conducted a study of the relationship between employment status and job satisfaction. Based on the results author indicated that there was a link between general employment status and job satisfaction, but emphasized that the study did not address the specific implications of varying employment types, calling for additional

studies to explore these specific areas more thoroughly. Đuranović examined the relationship between sociodemographic variables and job satisfaction in 2021, and the results of the research showed that the respondents were equally satisfied with their jobs regardless of gender, age, education, type of employment (temporary or permanent), years of work experience, years of employment, and years with their current employer.

The goal of present research is to contribute to the understanding of how BPN in the organizational context and sociodemographic variables predict job satisfaction. Therefore, the primary aim of this research is to examine the relationship between the BPNs in the workplace and JS among employees i.e. answer following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between the basic psychological needs in the workplace, as defined by self-determination theory, and job satisfaction among employees?

2. Can job satisfaction be predicted based on the basic psychological needs in the workplace, as defined by self-determination theory?

3. What are the socio-demographic correlates of job satisfaction among employees?

The research will also test the psychometric characteristics of the applied instrument.

## Method

### Sample and Procedure

The sample in this study was of a convenient nature and included 226 actively employed respondents. All necessary data was collected online. The questionnaires were created in Google Forms and distributed via various social media and online communication channels (LinkedIn, Facebook, Viber, Telegram, Discord). Participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous. Complete overview of socio-demographic characteristics of the sample is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Characteristics of the Research Sample*

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	140	61.9
Male	86	38.1
<b>Education</b>		
Primary	1	0.4
Secondary	31	13.7
Higher	14	6.2

University	94	41.6
Master's	73	32.3
Postgraduate	5	2.2
Doctorate	8	3.5
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Permanent Full and Part-time	191	84.5
Temporary Full-time and Part-time	35	15.5
<b>Workplace model*</b>		
On-site	141	62.4
Hybrid	52	23.0
Remote	33	14.6
<b>Sector**</b>		
Primary	33	14.6
Secondary	33	14.6
Tertiary	160	70.8
<b>Salary</b>		
Below average	37	16.4
Average	64	28.3
Above average	125	55.3

*Note.* \*Workplace model: On-site - meaning they perform their job duties at a designated physical location, such as an office or facility; Remotely - online; Hybrid - combining both on-site and remote(online) work. \*\*The primary (extractive) sector included: agriculture, hunting, fishing, forestry, mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction, etc.; the secondary (production) sector included: production and construction (residential, commercial, infrastructural, industrial, renovation and remodeling, etc.); while the tertiary (service) sector is made up of: trade (retail, wholesale, e-commerce), tourism and hospitality, financial services, health and social protection, educational, research and cultural activities, information technology and telecommunications , media and entertainment industry, printing and publishing, sports, legal, marketing and other consulting services, transport and logistics, communal services (production and distribution of thermal energy, water and sewage services, waste management and recycling services, etc.), government and public services (ministries, army, police, etc.), non-profit organizations (charities, foundations, non-governmental organizations, etc.).

## Variables and Instruments

Variables used in the research:

- 1) Sociodemographic variables - independent variables that included: gender, education level, age, employment status, years of service; years of work experience, years of service with current employer, workplace model, industry/sector, salary level, salary satisfaction;
- 2) Basic psychological needs - predictor variables representing three BPN in workplace (support of need for autonomy (PA), support of need for

competence/structure (PS), and support of need for relatedness (PU));

3) Job satisfaction - criterion variable.

**Workplace Basic Psychological Needs Support Assessment (W-BPNSA, Đuranović, 2021)**, an instrument related to BPN as defined by SDT. Instrument contains three subscales to operationalize support of need for autonomy (PA), support of need for competence/structure (PS) and support of need for relatedness (PU) at the respondent's current workplace (Đuranović, 2021). Three subscales consists of 45, 39 and 46 items, respectively. Respondents rated their agreement with each item on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represents complete disagreement and 5 complete agreement. The scores on the scales were obtained by summing all the items that constitute a specific need. Since all items were formulated in a positive direction, a higher score on each subscale indicates a greater expression of the respective need. The complete overview of this instrument is presented in the appendix.

**An instrument related to job satisfaction (Đuranović, 2021)**, that assessed JS through three identical statements, "I am satisfied with my job," with responses formatted in different ways: on a 1-5 Likert scale (to allow respondents to express varying degrees of satisfaction with nuanced options, providing a range of responses that can capture subtleties in feelings and opinions.), a 1-100 scale (to offer a continuous scale for greater granularity, enabling respondents to indicate their satisfaction with a precise score; this level of detail can reveal more nuanced differences in satisfaction levels, making it useful for analyses that require fine distinctions), and a binary Yes/No scale (designed to simplifies responses and directly capture the respondents' subjective assessment of their satisfaction without introducing ambiguity). The straightforward nature of the statement makes it easy for respondents to understand and answer honestly, and providing different response formats (Likert scale, 1-100 scale, and binary Yes/No scale) allows for a comprehensive analysis of how varying scales may influence the distribution of responses and ensure robustness in measuring the construct across different methods. This variety also ensures that the findings are not dependent on a single response format, enhancing the reliability and validity of the measurement.

The research within which a psychological measurement instrument used in this study was constructed, was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved a pilot study to verify the metric characteristics of the measurement instrument, which, after appropriate corrections, was used in the main study during the second phase. Data for both phases was collected online.

The questionnaire was based on the author's personal understanding of SDT and previous work experience. The formulation and selection of the items used in the questionnaire were done independently by the author, under the mentorship of Prof. Dr. Jasmina Nedeljković. Initially, the questionnaire consisted of 248 questions across 5 parts, with the first part focusing on demographic data and the remaining parts covering the three subscales (PA, PS, PU), with 79 statements each, and JS, examined through 3 questions, in the exactly the same manner as in this study.

In the pilot study, 46 respondents participated, and the instrument's reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, indicating satisfactory reliability,

overall and for each subscale (Đuranović, 2021). The pilot study demonstrated that each scale has high reliability (.89 – PA; .86 - PS; .89 - PU), indicating a strong correlation between individual items. The overall scale also showed a very high reliability coefficient, close to 1 (.95 - total), suggesting that the three scales are interconnected and collectively provide reliable results.

Further inspection revealed that reliability could be enhanced by removing certain items. This led to the deletion of repetitive or less reliable items, resulting in the final questionnaire form with 45, 39, and 46 items for PA, PS, and PU, respectively. This refined questionnaire was used in the second phase of the study with 162 participants, where the metric characteristics were confirmed to have improved reliability as measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient (.96 – PA; .97 - PS; .98 – PU and .99 - total).

To verify the reliability of the questionnaire on the sample used in this study, the Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) reliability coefficient was examined for all subscales, as well as for the overall scale.

**Table 2.**

*Reliability of the Questionnaire and its Subscales on the Sample Used in This Research*

	Number of items	$\alpha$ coefficient
Support of autonomy (PA)	45	.96
Support of competence/structure (PS)	39	.97
Support of relatedness (PU)	46	.98
Total scale	130	.99

Each scale demonstrates high reliability, with coefficients near 1, indicating a strong correlation between individual items. The overall scale also shows a very high reliability coefficient, suggesting that the three scales are interconnected and collectively provide reliable results.

Based on these results and comparative analysis of these results with the reliability verification of the measurement instrument on the initial sample (showing almost identical results) confirms that the scales are reliable and valid for basic psychological needs.

## Statistical analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Statistics 26) was used for data entry and analysis. Statistical methods included descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics described the sample and provided descriptive indicators of the variables. Inferential statistics answered the research questions using:

- Correlation Techniques: Pearson correlation coefficient (PCC) for the relationship between BPNs as defined by SDT and job satisfaction; Spearman correlation coefficient (SCC) for socio-demographic correlates of job satisfaction.
- Multivariate Regression Analysis: Multiple linear regression (MLR) to determine if job satisfaction can be predicted based on BPNs as defined by SDT.

To check the reliability of the measurement instrument, Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was used to assess internal consistency. The standard significance level of  $p < .05$  was applied for all statistical tests.

## Results

The presentation of the results is organized according to the research questions. Before addressing them, descriptive statistics were conducted, and results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.**  
*Descriptive Statistics of Variables*

	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Sk	Ku
Age	226	23	59	39.51	7.29	-0.25	-0.16
Years of Service	226	0	40	13.51	7.39	0.27	-0.12
Years of Work Experience	226	1	40	15.28	7.26	0.14	-0.20
Years of Service with Current Employer	226	0	30	6.95	6.80	1.20	0.42
Support of autonomy (PA)	226	1.67	4.89	3.42	0.80	-0.11	-1.01
Support of competence/ structure (PS)	226	1.67	5.00	3.56	0.80	-0.18	-0.79
Support of relatedness (PU)	226	1.46	5.00	3.65	0.86	-0.42	-0.63

Note. N - number of respondents in the sample; M – arithmetic mean; SD - standard deviation; Sk – Skewness; Ku - Kurtosis

The descriptive indicators show range of scores (from 1.46 to 5 and 1.67 to 5) for each BPN, indicating satisfactory variability in respondents' perceptions of support for PA, PS, and PU at their workplaces. Also, skewness and kurtosis values fall within acceptable ranges and do not indicate significant deviations from the normal distribution of the data, except for a slight positive skew in years of service with the current employer.<sup>†</sup>

**Table 4.**  
*Job Satisfaction - YES/NO*

	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
YES	162	71.7	71.7	71.7
NO	64	28.3	28.3	100.0

Most respondents (71.7%) stated they are satisfied with their job when asked to respond “yes” or “no” to “*I am satisfied with my job.*”

**Table 5.**  
*Job Satisfaction Expressed on a Scale from 1 to 5, and a Scale from 1 to 100*

	N	Min	Max	M	SD	Sk	Ku
Job Satisfaction (1-5)	226	1	5	3.59	1.16	-.58	-.46
Job Satisfaction (1-100)	226	1	100	67.72	26.81	-.98	-.01

Note. N - number of respondents in the sample; M – arithmetic mean; SD - standard deviation; Sk – Skewness; Ku- Kurtosis

This is further confirmed by the distribution of ratings, where most respondents give ratings indicating a moderate to high level of job satisfaction. The value of the normality and distribution indicators does not show deviations, i.e., it indicates a normal distribution.

**What is the relationship between the basic psychological needs in the workplace, as defined by self-determination theory, and job satisfaction among employees?**

To address the research question regarding the relationship between the BPNs as defined by SDT and JS, both numerical assessments of job satisfaction were observed (a 1 to 5 scale and a 1 to 100 scale). Given that the correlation coefficients are very similar for both scales used to assess job satisfaction, the variable of job satisfaction measured on a scale of 1 to 5 was used for all subsequent statistical analyses.

**Table 6.**  
*Correlation between BPNs and Job Satisfaction*

	Job Satisfaction (1-5)	Support of autonomy (PA)	Support of competence/structure (PS)
Job Satisfaction (1-5)			
Support of autonomy (PA)	.71**		
Support of competence/structure (PS)	.66**	.80**	
Support of relatedness (PU)	.66**	.75**	.77**

Note. \*\* The correlation is significant at the  $p < .01$ .

The results show a statistically significant strong positive correlation between all three BPNs and JS, indicating that higher support of BPNs values correspond with higher job satisfaction, and vice versa.

**Can job satisfaction be predicted based on the basic psychological needs in the workplace, as defined by self-determination theory?**

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine if JS (measured on a 1 to 5 scale) can be predicted based on BPNs.

**Table 7.**  
Model Evaluation, Model Significance and *Predictor Coefficients in the Model*

Model	Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity		
	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial Correlation	Tolerance	VIF
Support of autonomy	.41	5.18	.00	.23	0.32	3.15
Support of competence/structure	.15	1.84	.07	.08	0.30	3.35
Support of relatedness	.23	3.12	.00	.14	0.36	2.80

The results indicate that model explains 55% of the variability in job satisfaction, with no autocorrelation of residuals. The presented model is statistically significant, with all BPNs being significant predictors of job satisfaction (though support of competence/structure is borderline statistically significant), and with support for autonomy having the highest positive predictive contribution, followed by relatedness and competence/structure. The collinearity analysis indicates that there is no issue of high collinearity among the predictors, and the variance inflation factors (VIFs) are below the critical value.

**What are the socio-demographic correlates of job satisfaction among employees?**

To answer the research question about socio-demographic correlates of job satisfaction, correlation analysis and ANOVA were conducted.

**Table 8.**  
*Correlation of Job Satisfaction and Sociodemographic Variables*

	Job Satisfaction (1-5)
Gender	.05
Age	.15*
Employment Status	-.07
Years of Service	.16*

Years of Work Experience	.17*
Years of Service with Current Employer	-.03

Note.\*The correlation is significant at the  $p < .05$  significance level.

Age, years of service, years of work experience (based on small correlation coefficients) and salary (based on the small differences in means), show statistically significant but relatively weak correlation with job satisfaction (Table 8).

**Table 9.**  
*Analysis of Job Satisfaction accross Socio-Demographic Variables*

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F test</i>	<i>p</i>
Education	Category 1 (primary and secondary)	4.0	1.0		
	Category 2 (higher and university)	3.5	1.2	2.05	.13
	Category 3 (master's, postgraduate and doctoral)	3.6	1.2		
Workplace Model	On-site	3.5	1.2		
	Hybrid	3.8	0.9	2.72	.07
	Remote	3.8	1.2		
Sector	Primary	3.7	1.1		
	Secondary	3.7	1.1	0.40	.68
	Tertiary	3.6	1.2		
Salary	Below average	3.1	1.2		
	Average	3.6	1.1	3.80	.02
	Above average	3.7	1.1		

*M* – arithmetic mean; *SD* - standard deviation

According to the Table 9 we can see that there is a statistically significant difference in job satisfaction based on salary, but the magnitude of effect size is small. Namely, Cohen's  $d = 0.1949$  indicates a small to moderate effect size, suggesting that there is some difference between the groups, but it is not particularly large.

**Table 10**  
*Analysis of Group Differences*

Dependent Variable			Mean Difference	Std. Error	<i>p</i>
Job Satisfaction	Below average	Average	-0.46	0.24	.05
		Above average	-0.59	0.22	.01
	Average	Below average	0.46	0.24	.05
		Above average	-0.13	0.18	.45
	Above average	Below average	0.59	0.22	.01
		Average	0.13	0.18	.45

**Post-hoc analysis revealed** a statistically significant difference between the below average salary group and above average salary group as well as between the below average salary and average salary salary groups. These differences indicate that respondents with below-average salaries report lower job satisfaction compared to those with average or above-average salaries. Based on the effect size ( $d = 0.13$ ), we can conclude that the difference between below average and average is not very pronounced. The effect size ( $d = 0.19$ ) indicated that there is small to moderate difference between below average and above average groups. The effect size ( $d = 0.05$ ) indicated that there is very small differences between average and above average salary groups. This confirms that the observed differences between groups contribute only minimally to overall job satisfaction variance.

## Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the basic psychological needs in the workplace, as defined by SDT, and job satisfaction among employed individuals. To achieve this goal, a psychological measuring instrument constructed for the author's master's thesis was applied, so, an important part of this study was the verification of the psychometric characteristics of the applied measuring instrument. Based on high reliability coefficients, it has been confirmed that the applied measurement instrument has satisfactory metric characteristics, almost identical to the metric characteristics of the same instrument in the previous research (Đuranović, 2021).

The results showed a statistically significant, strong positive correlation between satisfaction of all three basic psychological needs in work context and job satisfaction. It was also confirmed that the model including BPNs as predictors statistically significantly predicts job satisfaction, explaining about 55% of the

variance in job satisfaction, with a statistically significant influence of all three BPNs. This confirms that BPNs are not only strongly associated with job satisfaction but also serve as significant predictors of this construct, underscoring their individual and collective importance in understanding and enhancing job satisfaction within organizational contexts. This means that organizations could significantly influence the job satisfaction of their employees through support of autonomy, support of competence/structure, and support of relatedness, indicating the importance of practical integration of strategies that support basic psychological needs in organizational setting. These findings are consistent with findings of multiple other research that established connection between basic psychological needs as described by SDT and job satisfaction/workplace well-being (Brunelle & Fortin, 2012; Decker & Van Quaquebeke, 2014; Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013; Takahashi, Ohkawa & Inamizu, 2014; Author, 2021). While this study adds to the body of knowledge by quantifying the contribution of BPNs in predicting job satisfaction, supporting robust evidence for the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the workplace, the novelty of this research lies in its specific focus on non-Western culture and originality of the used measurement instrument. Namely, much of the existing research and literature has primarily examined these constructs in Western organizational contexts, and this study expands the scope by investigating Serbian speaking population (since the survey was distributed online, there is no direct evidence to confirm that all participants were employed in a specific country or region, only that they were part of a Serbian-speaking demographic). This contribution is particularly valuable as it demonstrates the applicability of SDT principles in diverse cultural and linguistic contexts, reinforcing the theory's universality. Moreover, the study highlights the use of an original psychological measurement instrument developed in the local language, offering unique insights into understanding this theory within a Serbian-speaking working population. Additionally, the analysis of the instrument's items provides actionable guidance for organizations aiming to design workplace interventions that effectively address employees' core psychological needs.

The study also revealed that job satisfaction is not determined by the tested socio-demographic characteristics of employees, or there are weak positive correlation with age, years of service, years of work experience. Also, the results indicate that there are differences in job satisfaction between the groups with different average salaries. Such results are an expected outcome, considering that the research is based on SDT, according to which job satisfaction is determined by the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, which are in this theory understood as universal human needs, so the socio-demographic characteristics of people should not have significant influence in this respect (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). These results are mostly in line with findings of various similar studies (Batz-Barbarich et al., 2018; Clark, 1997; Đuranović, 2021; Faragher et al., 2005; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Judge et al., 2010; Koustelios, 2001; Ng & Feldman, 2010; Solomon et al., 2022).

Ng and Feldman (2010) based on the results of meta-analysis concluded that chronological age is generally associated with more favorable job attitudes, though

the strength of this relationship is weak to moderate, just like seen in this study. Years of service and experience, which in this study also show a statistically significant weak correlation with job satisfaction, may be influenced by chronological age, and, therefore, further investigation is required to better understand this relationship. At the same time, tenure demonstrated no statistically significant correlation with job satisfaction in this study, aligning with the findings of a previous study by Đuranović (2021).

On a sample of teachers in Greece, Koustelios (2001) found that employment status (permanently or temporarily), is not a significant predictor of job satisfaction. This finding was confirmed in the present study, which examined employees across various sectors, as well as in another study conducted by the same author (Đuranović, 2021). The finding of this study that education does not have a statistically significant effect on job satisfaction, is partially in line with the meta-analysis by Solomon et al. (2022), which found a weak negative effect, suggesting that, while education may play a minor role, its impact on job satisfaction is not substantial. This study's finding fully aligns with studies of Đuranović (2021) and Clark (1997), both of which concluded that education alone does not determine job satisfaction.

The meta-analysis by Gajendran and Harrison (2007) demonstrates that telecommuting has a moderate positive effect on job satisfaction, while findings of this study showed no significant effect of workplace model on job satisfaction. The potential explanation for the discrepancy is that 2007 meta-analysis examined studies from a different economic and technological landscape, where telecommuting was less common and perceived as a privilege. In contrast, the current study, conducted in a post-pandemic environment where remote and hybrid work have become the norm, suggests that employees may no longer see these models as an advantage, potentially reducing their impact on job satisfaction. This means that the impact of workplace models on job satisfaction may depend on external conditions, employee expectations, and even industry-specific factors, which have evolved significantly since earlier research, hence future studies would need to explore these moderating variables.

While the meta-analysis conducted by Faragher et al. (2005) does not directly quantify the correlation between job satisfaction and sector, it suggests that job satisfaction is higher in sectors with better work environments (e.g., tertiary sector) and lower in sectors with more challenging conditions (e.g., primary sector), that is not supported by findings of this study that found no statistically significant differences between sectors and job satisfaction. Several factors may explain this discrepancy in findings. First, the sample used in this study is smaller than those in the referenced meta-analyses, making it more challenging to detect significant differences in job satisfaction across sectors compared to large-scale meta-analytic studies. Additionally, given that data collection in this study was conducted primarily online, it is reasonable to assume that the sample exhibits lower variability than those used in meta-analyses. This is because not all jobs within a sector offer the same working conditions, and the predominantly 'administrative' nature of the roles of likely participants in this study may have contributed to the absence of observable

differences, if any. However, as meta-analyses do not provide direct insight into this specific relationship, further research is necessary to determine the true impact of sector affiliation on job satisfaction.

The results indicated that there are differences between groups with below average salary and with above average salary, as well as between the groups with below average salary and with average salary. Differences showed that respondents with below-average salaries report lower job satisfaction compared to those with average or above-average salaries. A meta-analysis by Judge et al. (2010) revealed that pay level has only a marginal correlation with job satisfaction.

Finally, the findings of this study regarding the relationship between gender and job satisfaction are in line with the results of the meta-analysis conducted by Batz-Barbarich et al. (2018), which found no significant gender differences in job satisfaction, suggesting that gender alone is not a strong determinant of job satisfaction.

Considering the results, employers, especially people who work in human resources, should actively work on establishing organizational culture that supports the satisfaction of employees' basic psychological needs and this should primarily be implemented through adequate educational programs, as supported by research related to this topic (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2014). Namely, numerous studies have confirmed a positive connection between job satisfaction and both employee performance and organizational performance (Bakotić, 2016; Oswald, Proto & Sgroi, 2015; Pushpakumari, 2008). Companies should not only support BPNs for the well-being of their employees but also recognize that doing so is in their own best interest.

Besides providing opportunities for the described practical application, the presented results primarily encourage further research to examine the correlation between BPNs and job satisfaction, as well as further validation and refinement of the applied measurement instrument. Some of the recommendations for the continuation of research efforts based on these findings, and the applied measurement instrument, would be: potential improvement of the operationalization of the construct of job satisfaction (which in this research was treated as a unidimensional phenomenon); identification of other factors that significantly participate in the explanation of the total variance of job satisfaction; conducting a longitudinal study that would track the effects of improving support of BPNs on job satisfaction, and potentially employee productivity; multiple repeated verification of the metric characteristics of the measurement instrument on, first of all qualitatively, but also quantitatively, improved sample(s), reevaluation and possible adaptation of the instrument to the needs of different professions, etc.

Employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to be more engaged and motivated, which directly impacts productivity and the profitability of the company (contributing to the growth of the economy as a whole) (Bakotić, 2016; Oswald et al., 2015; Pushpakumari, 2008). At the same time, programs developed based on these findings can significantly improve job satisfaction. Therefore, the findings of this and similar studies, which help identifying factors that explain the complex phenomenon of job satisfaction, are of exceptional importance, not only for science

and business practices, but should also be of state and public interest.

This study is not without its limitations. First, the sample doesn't adequately represent the parameters of the entire population, which could affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, some categories of socio-demographic variables were not sufficiently represented to facilitate meaningful statistical analysis, necessitating the transformation of certain variables, therefore potentially compromising the validity of the findings and leading to incomplete or misleading interpretations. Furthermore, the questionnaire utilized in this study differs from those employed in any previous research and has been developed relatively recently; thus, further validation and refinement of the measurement instrument are warranted.

## Conclusion

All three BPNs as defined by the SDT are in a positive, statistically significant and intense correlation with job satisfaction. Support of autonomy, support of competence/structure and support of relatedness explain a significant portion of job satisfaction (55%). Job satisfaction can be predicted based on support of autonomy, support of competence/structure and support of relatedness. The greatest contribution to job satisfaction has support of autonomy, followed by support of relatedness, with support of competence/structure having the least contribution to employee satisfaction. Job satisfaction is either not determined by the tested socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, or there are only relatively weak positive correlations between socio-demographic variables with job satisfaction. The applied measurement instrument has satisfactory metric characteristics.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1.

*Part of the Questionnaire Representing the Instrument Related to the BPNs as defined by Self-Determination Theory, i.e., the Part of the Questionnaire That, Using Three Subscales, Operationalizes Support of Autonomy (PA), Support of Competence/Structure (PS) and Support of Relatedness (PU)*

<b>Support of Autonomy - PA</b>
1. The tasks I perform at my workplace are mostly those that interest me.
2. The tasks I perform at my workplace are often those I have chosen myself.
3. I usually choose the way I will carry out the tasks assigned to me.
4. If the nature of the tasks allows, when tasks are delegated by my immediate supervisor, I have the opportunity to choose the tasks I want to work on.
5. If an employee is interested, the company I work for supports horizontal/functional mobility (i.e., changing positions within the company, regardless of previous experience and/or education).
6. If an employee is interested, the company I work for supports and encourages vertical mobility (i.e., advancing up the hierarchical ladder).
7. My supervisor strives to give me freedom of choice regarding which parts of the task I want to work on whenever the nature of the tasks allows.
8. I am independent of other colleagues in performing tasks.
9. I am independent of my supervisor in performing tasks.
10. At all times, I can independently access all the resources necessary for work.
11. I independently decide how many working hours I will work in one day as long as I fulfill the contracted hours during the week.
12. I can take unpaid leave whenever I need it, without any consequences or problems.
13. I have complete freedom to take my lunch break whenever it suits me during the day.

14. Whenever I need it, I can take my annual leave without any consequences or problems.
15. Within the contractually stipulated total number of annual leave days, I independently decide how many days of annual leave I will take.
16. I independently set deadlines for completion of assigned tasks.
17. When deadlines are set for the tasks assigned to me, my opinion and assessment of how much time is needed to complete them are the most important.
18. The deadlines for completing tasks in the company I work for are generally realistic.
19. I am allowed to extend the deadlines for completing tasks without any consequences.
20. Making mistakes that are not reckless is expected and acceptable in the organisation I work for.
21. At work, it is allowed and expected to express both dissatisfaction and satisfaction with assigned tasks.
22. At work, it is allowed and expected to express both dissatisfaction and satisfaction with decisions made by the immediate supervisor.
23. I freely express my views and emotions in front of everyone in the organisation regarding all work and work environment-related matters.
24. A well-done job involves a raise or a bonus in the form of material compensation.
25. My supervisor often surprises me with open verbal praise for a well-done task.
26. My supervisor does not use controlling language.
27. My supervisor strives to look at every problem I face at work from my perspective and makes decisions or finds solutions accordingly.
28. My supervisor addresses me with respect.
29. My supervisor has a democratic leadership style.
30. My supervisor issues work orders in a manner and through a communication style that is appropriate.
31. My supervisor communicates with everyone in the organisation in an appropriate manner, i.e., in a manner suitable for the situation.
32. In the organisation I work for, critical thinking is expected and encouraged.
33. If I point out an oversight, omission, or mistake by anyone in the department, including my supervisor, it is welcomed and accepted with approval.
34. If I suggest a different and/or better way of solving a problem or approaching a task, it is always welcomed and accepted with approval by my supervisor.
35. There are consequences for not completing tasks within the prescribed deadline.
36. Except for the training/education that the employer and/or law prescribes as mandatory for all or some employees, I choose which training/education to attend based on my own interests.
37. I attend training and education in the area(s) that interest me the most.
38. I choose the area(s) in which I will be professionally developing.
39. I determine my own work rhythm.

40. I am rarely interrupted at work by my supervisor.
41. Showing interest in development in areas significant for the work I do is encouraged.
42. As much as the nature of the job allows, I organize my work independently.
43. I am satisfied with the flexibility of my working hours.
44. When the nature of the task allows, I can choose where I will work/perform my tasks from.
45. As much as the nature of the job allows, I independently determine my career goals.

<b>Support of Competence/Structure - PS</b>
1. My supervisor trusts that I will complete the work in the best possible way.
2. If I encounter something I don't know how to do, I always know who to ask for clarification and/or help.
3. At work, I always know exactly what is expected of me.
4. My supervisor always explains the ultimate goal of each task assigned to me.
5. I always understand why I need to do what is assigned to me.
6. Roles, and with them related tasks and expectations from everyone in the organisation I work in, are very clearly defined.
7. The goals set for me at work are always very clear and precise.
8. If I lack some information to successfully complete a task, it is always clear where I can find/get it.
9. My supervisor always verbally expresses satisfaction if (s)he is happy the work I have done.
10. I have been unexpectedly praised by my supervisor several times.
11. I am satisfied with the quality of my work.
12. I consider myself a valuable member of my team and believe I significantly contribute to the quality execution of tasks.
13. I think that most people in the organisation consider me a valuable team member who significantly contributes to the quality execution of tasks.
14. If I receive negative feedback about my work, it is always given constructively.
15. I receive quality training.
16. For every process in the organisation I work in, there is a clear and precise written procedure that is always available to everyone.
17. For every mandatory procedure/rule, the reasonable reasons for necessity of its observance are clearly explained.
18. Upon employment, I received quality onboarding training.
19. I get the opportunity for continuous development in the area(s) of work that interest me.
20. The equipment I work with is very functional and significantly facilitates my work.

21. The company I work for invests a lot in the professional development and growth of all employees who are interested in it.

22. It is clear what work results bring bonuses in the form of material compensation.

23. I believe that most of my colleagues, if they opened their own company, would gladly hire me because of my expertise.

24. In the collective I work in, there are clear criteria and boundaries of behavior that apply to all employees.

25. I receive precise instructions on how the tasks I am expected to perform should be carried out, which I must not deviate from.

26. I think that the work in the team I work in is well organized.

27. If someone took over the tasks of anyone from my team, they could very quickly continue where the person whose tasks they took over left off.

28. If I get interested in a certain aspect of work from which I receive tasks more than in others, I will be given the opportunity to develop in that area through training and education.

29. I always have/get clear explanations, instructions, and procedures regarding the tasks assigned to me.

30. I always receive relevant and constructive feedback regarding the tasks I have performed.

31. If I need it, I can always count on the help of my supervisor regarding the tasks assigned to me.

32. The general working conditions in the organisation I work in enable me, if I want to, to achieve the best possible results in the area I work in.

33. The general working conditions in the organisation I work in do not hinder or limit the development of my professional knowledge.

34. My work results depend solely on me.

35. My supervisor controls my work, not me.

36. The tasks assigned to me are always realistic and achievable.

37. The results of the work in the organisation where I work are evaluated on the basis of objective and measurable criteria that are the same for everyone

38. In the organisation where I work, it is known exactly what someone needs to do/achieve in order to advance on the hierarchical ladder

39. For each binding procedure/rule, the consequences of not applying it are clearly explained

**Support of Relatedness - PU**

1. I have good relationship with most colleagues in the team

2. I fully belong to the team in which I work

3. I never feel excluded from the team in which I work

4. I consider many of my colleagues as friends

5. If I face a problem, regardless of whether it is directly related to work or not, I can always count on the help of most of my colleagues

6. Interpersonal relationships in the collective where I work are good
7. From the first working day, I was well received by my supervisor
8. From the first working day, I was well received by my colleagues
9. My colleagues love and respect me
10. My colleagues are happy to cooperate with me
11. I am happy to cooperate with most of my colleagues
12. I socialize with my colleagues outside of work too
13. I feel that I am an important part of the team in which I work
14. I think my colleagues really appreciate my opinion regarding the execution of tasks and work in general
15. My ideas regarding the execution of tasks are often accepted by the team
16. The team in which I work is fulfilling to me
17. I love my colleagues
18. I respect my colleagues
19. In the team where I work, there is mutual respect for all members
20. There is no discrimination in terms of work tasks entrusted to team members for execution, i.e. everyone equally gets both easy and difficult, boring and interesting tasks
21. Everyone in the team has equal access to the resources needed to execute assigned tasks
22. I think that some colleagues believe that there are privileged favorites in the team, but that is not true
23. My colleagues often surprise me with open verbal praise for a job well done
24. I believe that all employees in the team where I work are treated equally
25. In the organisation where I work, communication with everyone, regardless of their position in the business hierarchy, is relaxed and natural
26. I think my supervisor understands me as a person
27. I think my supervisor respects my needs even when they are not directly related to work
28. I think it is important to my supervisor that I feel good
29. If necessary, my supervisor will always provide me with help and support to make me feel better
30. I think that in the organisation where I work there is genuine care about the employees
31. My relationship with my supervisor is based on trust
32. My relationship with colleagues is based on trust
33. My relationship with my supervisor is based on mutual respect
34. I feel good at work
35. Communication in the organisation where I work is pleasant
36. I think my supervisor knows me well
37. I think my supervisor makes an effort to get to know each employee well
38. The team accepts me as I am
39. I have a warm relationship with everyone in the team
40. I have a warm/friendly relationship with my supervisor

41. I think that my supervisor is interested in each employee as a person
42. I feel that our supervisor is a strong support for everyone in the team
43. My supervisor will set aside time for each employee
44. In the team, whenever necessary, we devote time to each other
45. In the team where I work, there are healthy emotions among colleagues
46. I am involved in making decisions concerning work in the team where I work

## Faktori teorije self-determinacije i zadovoljstvo poslom

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### Apstrakt

Sprovedeno istraživanje imalo je za cilj da utvrdi odnos osnovnih psiholoških potreba (OPP) prema teoriji self-determinacije i zadovoljstva poslom, da li se na osnovu OPP može predvideti zadovoljstvo poslom, te proveri sociodemografske korelate zadovoljstva poslom kod zaposlenih. Za ostvarivanje ovog cilja primenjen je psihološki merni instrument konstruisan za potrebe master rada autora ovog istraživanja. Istraživanje je sprovedeno na uzorku od 226 ispitanika. Dobijeni rezultati su potvrdili da su sve tri OPP (podrška autonomiji, podrška strukturi i podrška uključenosti) u pozitivnoj, statistički značajnoj i intenzivnoj korelaciji sa zadovoljstvom poslom, da se na osnovu OPP može predvideti zadovoljstvo poslom, i da zadovoljstvo poslom ili nije determinisano testiranim socio-demografskim karakteristikama zaposlenih (pol, obrazovanje, radni status, godine zaposlenja kod trenutnog poslodavca i sektor/industrija), ili da postoje slabe pozitivne korelacije (starost, radni staž, radno iskustvo, mesto izvršenja radnih obaveza i plata). Istraživanjem je potvrđeno i da su metrijske karakteristike primenjenog mernog instrumenta zadovoljavajuće.

*Ključne reči:* teorija self-determinacije/teorija samoodređenja, zadovoljstvo poslom, podrška autonomiji, podrška strukturi, podrška uključenosti

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