

Employees' Satisfaction with Pay: The Case of UK Fast Food Restaurant Employees

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KEY WORDS

Pay satisfaction, retailing, and fast food restaurants employees.

ABSTRACT

The issue of pay satisfaction has for a long time been the centre of numerous investigations by researchers. However there are no studies relating to pay level satisfaction of the UK fast food restaurants employees. This study investigates pay level satisfaction among the UK large "high volume" fast food and small "low" volume fast food stores employees. Using questionnaire methodology, the study found that fifty-seven percent of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with their pay. The result of the three-ways analysis of variance (ANOVA) also revealed that female employees also expressed more satisfaction with their pay than their male counterparts. When job position was compared in relation to pay, the result reveals that while store staffs are generally unhappy with their pay, senior managers are most unhappy.

INTRODUCTION

Pay system have long been known to influence employee's level of job performance, satisfaction and withdrawal behaviour (Armstrong, 1998). On the organisation part, this is been predicted on the size of the job, market forces for the component of the job, and organisation's philosophy of pay. Traditionally, the challenge for pay specialists has been to objectively develop and manage the pay system, both within the organisations as well as between organisations so that it supports the company's purpose, is cost effective and is acceptable by the workforce in terms of pay satisfaction. Pay level satisfaction or satisfaction with salary amount, is the perceived discrepancy between the salaries an individual receives and that he or she feels he or she should receive (Appelbaum and Mackenzie, 1996; Bordia and Blau). For any employee, this can represent the most critical facet when compare with other indices of job satisfaction for example, the work itself, co-workers, supervision and job security (Lock, 1969). As noted by (Armstrong, 1998; Yousef, 2000 and Allen and Kilmann, 2001) pay satisfaction or dissatisfaction can lead to strings of employee's behavioural consequences, i.e., extra-role behaviour, union activities, and intention to turnover.

RETAIL EMPLOYMENT AND PERCEPTION OF PAY

Retail employment accounts for about 2.6 million people or about 9 per cent of all employment in the UK. However, a significant proportion of people employed in retailing are working part-time. Retailing also has a high proportion of female employees and many of these women work part-time. There are also a significant number of people self-employed in running the large number of small retail businesses. Selling is the retailer's main function and is the most important function in fast food retailing backed up with high standard and quality desired by customers and consistent with the image of the store. Trainees are recruited and trained focusing on developing selling skills. However, according to Omar, 1999 and McGoldrick 2003), these trainees often leaves their fast food chains for reasons including relocation, dislike of job, work schedule, acceptance of a better paying job, and long hours of work. Other negative aspects of fast food retailing jobs include, extremely busy hours, which often lead to physical exertion and routine. Helliker, (1995) observed that these problems might have increased in recent years because retail cost pressures have frequently led to reductions in overhead cost and the ranks of salaried managers. Also Helliker (1995) reported that among store managers, workweeks averaged 60 hours and often reached 80 hours; and noting that in spite of these negative encounters fast food managers face few intellectual challenges.

In terms of loyalty, retail employees tend to have little loyalty toward their employers and retailing has become almost a place to work between 'real' jobs. According to Newman and Cullen (2002) only 31 per cent of college graduates employed in retailing described their job as using their education. They also described fast food retailing as 'a chance to exercise leadership' and 'take responsibility', but not as a place to exercise initiative or to work autonomously. The fast food industry has prevailed in the UK since the eighteen century as an outlet where the working classes and other customers alike could easily purchase inexpensive prepared foods. However, the changing operational nature and characteristics of the entire retail industry meant that the fast food industry also have to innovate structurally and people's management wise in order to improve its working environment.

Workplace experiences (WPE) could be defined as a combination of three constructs including (i) job characteristics (salary, workweek, feedback, participation, autonomy, variety, and control); (ii) psychological outcomes (job satisfaction, job burnout, organisational commitment and turnover, and (iii) role stress (overload and conflict). Collectively, these three constructs provide a holistic picture of the UK fast food work environment. However, the concern in this study is on pay referent comparison and pay level satisfaction of high volume and low volume fast food store employees in the UK. For the last several decades, the growing integration of the economy into a single, huge marketplace has increased the intensity of competition in the world market to cut costs and increase profits in a wide range of service industries (Hill, 1994). Only the most efficient and best-managed organisations can survive. Money, benefits, and many different forms of compensation have been used in retailing to attract, retain, and motivate employees and achieve organisational goals in the UK and around the world

(Chiu et al, 2001; Chui et al, 2002; Lazear, 1998; Armstrong, 1998; Rynes and Gerhart, 2000).

Organisations' reward systems involve both monetary compensation and non-monetary rewards. Further, under monetary compensation, there are direct compensation and indirect compensation (benefits). In this study, we focus on monetary compensation in organisations. In fast food retailing, pay level is related to two objectives in compensation (i) controlling labour costs; and (ii) attracting, retaining, and motivating employees.

ASPECTS OF JOB SATISFACTION IN RETAILING

Pay constitutes a major part of overall level of worker's job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction. It is also one of the elements incorporated in both the original and the revised Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Rhoads, et al., 2002). The other elements included in the (JDI), are satisfaction with the work itself, satisfaction with promotion, co-workers and supervision.

As Harris and Ogbonna (1998) have found, pay constitutes a substantial and often the major cost in managing fast food organisation. It also represents a common denominator in retail organisational decision-making. Therefore, from the consideration of the fast food employers (cost) and employees (benefit), pay play a very important role in their daily activities. It is therefore imperative that pay satisfaction in the UK fast food retailing deserves investigations. Within the UK fast retail work environment for example, Brockbank and Airey (1994), found that of all the elements of job satisfaction, (i.e. job security, pleasant colleagues, pay, good boss, efficient organisation, fringe benefits, interesting job, authority, promotion, responsibilities; freedom from close supervision and pleasant working conditions, workers were most dissatisfied with their pay and promotions. This could be based on the fact that these two elements cannot be separated from each other as promotion leads to pay increase. It is therefore necessary to know more about the relevance and importance of pay to workers before retail management can be sure of influencing decisions about pay through personnel policies and procedures.

Food retailing has increasingly become a more dynamic and rapidly changing industry in the British economy. Its employment strategy built heavily around part-timers most especially female labour workforce flexibility (Sparks, 1992; Dex et-al., 1999 and Storey et-al., 2002). This situation became inevitable as the industry strive hard to adapt to the changing business environment. Researchers in the past have investigated various aspect of job satisfaction, it is imperative however, that satisfaction with pay deserves additional study for two main reasons. Pay plays a major part in overall level of worker's job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction. It is also one of the elements incorporated in both the original and the revised Job Descriptive Index (Rhoads, et al., 2002). The others been satisfaction with the work itself, satisfaction with promotion, co-workers, supervision, fringe benefits and security.

Pay constitutes a substantial and often the major cost in managing any organisation and it represents a common denominator in organisation decision-making

(Harris and Ogbonna, 1998). Thus, from the consideration of fast food employers (cost) and employees (benefit), pay satisfaction in the UK fast food deserves investigations. Within the UK food retail work environment for example, it was found that of the eight elements of job satisfaction, workers were most dissatisfied with their pay and promotions (Brockbank and Airey, 1994). The explanation for this could be based on the notion that these two elements cannot be completely separated from each other as promotion leads to pay increase. It is therefore necessary to know more about the determination and importance of pay to workers before retail management can be sure of influencing decisions about pay through personnel policies and procedures.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

With numerous studies of pay comparisons and pay level satisfaction among public and private sector workers, the case on relative level of employee satisfaction with pay in the UK fast food retail sector is not common. This study therefore, throws further light by empirically evaluating pay level satisfaction among the UK fast food employees. The main objectives of the study are threefold:

- To establish if differences exist in pay level satisfaction among supermarket employees;
- To determine if pay level satisfaction is related to supermarket employees' demographic profile; and
- To evaluate the possibility that pay level satisfaction is associated with position and/or experience within the supermarket hierarchy.

In order to achieve these objectives, a three way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the data collected from the supermarket employees, following the literature reviewing process.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Within the UK fast food environment, employee work experiences could centre on three variables related to:

- Job characteristics (including salary, wages, workweek, feedback, participation, autonomy, variety, and control);
- Psychological outcomes (i.e. job satisfaction, job burnout, organisational commitment and turnover); and
- Role stress (for example, overloads and conflict).

Collectively, these variables provide a fair picture of the grocery retail work environment. Retail marketing literature (for example, Commins and Preston, 1997; Kent and Omar, 2003) posited that trainees left the retail chains for reasons including relocation, dislike of job, work schedule, acceptance of a better paying jobs, and long hours" Similarly (Gush, 1996 and Kent and Omar, 2003) also identified the negative aspects of retailing jobs, as "long hours, selling lulls, physical exertion and routine". As implied by (Crosson 1995 and Helliker 1995 and Broadbridge, 2003) such problem might

have increased in recent years because, retail cost pressures have frequently led to reductions in the ranks of salaried managers. Thus, among store managers, workweeks averaged 60 hours and often reached 80 hours. Retailing has become a place to work between 'real' jobs". Only 31 per cent of college graduates employed in retailing described their job as utilising their education. According to these workers (Gush, 1996 and McGoldrick, 2002) retailing is "a chance to exercise leadership" and "take responsibility", but not as a place to exercise initiative or to work autonomously.

Herzberg (1966, pp. 72) has classified pay as a "hygiene factor" in the work environment. The work maintained that pay could only lead to feelings of dissatisfaction, but not to satisfaction. Writers like (Porter 1961 and Locke 1969) has also stressed that satisfaction is a function of the employee's comparison of what exists on his or her job with what he or she seeks on the job. Thus pay satisfaction happens when existing pay corresponds to, or is greater than, desired pay. Similarly, dissatisfaction occurs when existing pay is less than the desired pay (Kovach, 1993 and Weiseberg, 1994). Graham and Messner (1998), similarly view pay satisfaction, as a continuum possessing that is likely to produce both positive and negative values.

While some researchers (Rogers et-al., 1994; Berkhoff, 1996 and Williams, 1998) reported that pay satisfaction is positively related to organisational level, others report that when pay level is controlled, pay satisfaction will be negatively related to organisational level. This is because employees will compare both the absolute and relative pay to decide whether or not they are been fairly paid. For example Graham and Messner, (1998) implied that compensation policies and amounts influences level of absenteeism, employee turnover decisions, and workers' decision on their productivity. This therefore, (Weisberg, 1994 and Abbott, 2001), means that pay satisfaction is not only an issue of financial adequacy, but can also be that of psychological adequacy.

There have been various literatures outlining the impact of work environment on employees' psychological outcomes for example, (job satisfaction, stress, burnout, turnover, and commitment (Kelloway and Barling, 1991; Singh, et al., 1996). Others like (Weisberg 1994 and Ducharme and Martin, 2000) has also suggest a strong relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction and the effect that emotional exhaustion could have on employees. Similarly, research focused on the retail context has documented the impact of the work environment on the psychological outcomes of retail employees (Harris and Ogbonna 1998). However, no reported studies have studied the psychological outcomes of fast food store managers vis-à-vis other marketers. Gush (1996) found differences between the needs and expectations of retailers and their college-graduate employees. He reported that graduates in store-based positions seek more autonomy and decision-making authority than that provided them. Other research (Commins and Preston 1997; Walter and Rands 1999 and Ko and Kincade, 1997) work outcome on the retail work environment, suggest that if work environment is less supportive, highly routine, less challenging, and underused the skills of employees, then the psychological outcomes of retail store managers (but not corporate ones) would likely be less positive than those associated with other marketing-related careers.

Indeed, it is important to recognise that pay is as psychological as much as been economic phenomenon. Lee and Martin (1996) study found that employees' loss of high-tier status possibly explained their pay dissatisfaction when they changed from high-tier to low-tier jobs. This is despite the fact that their pay was increased in the low-tier jobs. Similarly in a study by Oshagbemi (1997), overall job satisfaction was positively and significantly related to rank but not gender or age. Directors were most satisfied with their overall jobs followed by senior managers, and supervisors in that order. Hence the objective of this study is to explore the pattern, if any, between pay satisfaction and rank, gender and/or age. Kovach (1993) surveyed employees in manufacturing jobs across a number of industrial organisations in the USA to determine levels of pay and benefits and satisfaction level with each. He noticed, among other things, that in the area of pay, workers in private organisations received higher absolute levels and were more satisfied with their monetary compensation compared with workers in public organisations. In the area of benefits, however, the relationship reverses with public sector employees receiving more and indicating a higher level of satisfaction.

Roberts and Chonko (1994) research work on the relationship of satisfaction with pay and turnover (the intention to seek new jobs) for men and women in retail sales. The study found no difference in the effect that satisfaction with pay had on men and women's intention to turnover. Vest et-al., (1994) investigated the relationship of self-rated performance to pay level satisfaction, among other issues. Self-rated performance exhibited a significant negative relationship with pay satisfaction. This study has explored the relationships between genders; ranks, age and satisfaction with pay in the UK supermarkets and discount food stores.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study selected three fast food organisations (McDonald and Burger King and Kentucky restaurants) all with strong perceived image, quality reputation and sell both national and own-label brands. The selected stores are based in London to enhance similarity in business environment and standard of living. These three leading retailers collectively have the necessary market powers to influence the direction of British grocery retail market and have good pay structure in place.

Data Collection

The data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire personally handed to 1350 employees at their various stores in November 2004, making it about 450 questionnaires for each of the four selected food retail company's stores. Structured response questions and Likert rating scales constituted the main enquiry format. The questionnaire was highly structured to aid data collection and analysis. Each of the questionnaires was measured using scales from 1 to 7. '1' representing extremely dissatisfied to '7' extremely satisfied. Thus '4' on the scale represents 'no opinion', i.e. neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. After four weeks cut-off period, 662 usable

questionnaires were returned (McDonald, 250, Burger King, 210 and Kentucky, 202) representing 49 per cent response rate. The difference in response rate among these stores was not investigated.

In order to investigate pay satisfaction and its relationship with age, gender and rank, a three-way analysis of variance, ANOVA, was carried out. The analysis enables the researcher to examine the individual as well as the joint impact of the independent variables on pay satisfaction. Thus, the direct effects of age, gender and rank on pay satisfaction and all the interactive effects among age, gender and rank were investigated. Descriptive statistics were used to examine different levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with pay. This approach was necessary to ensure the reasonability of the data and to query any snag within the data.

DATA ANALYSIS

A breakdown of the retail employees who responded to the questionnaire is shown in Table 1. The table shows the distribution of respondents' age, gender, position, length of service in present retail company (work experience), and their leadership or management responsibilities. The information contained in Table 1 shows that the retail experiences of the respondents were very wide and covers most areas of fast food retailing functions. The distribution of the length of service spent in retailing shows that respondents included relative newcomers who had spent less than five years (about 52 per cent) to workers who had spent more than 30 years in the industry (about 2 per cent). As would be expected, only a few percentage of workers (almost 19 per cent) fall in between those whose services had been for much longer than ten years within the retail industry.

It was useful to find that 60 per cent of the respondents had not worked for more than five years in their present company. This percentage is about 8 per cent above the corresponding percentage of respondents who had worked in fast food retailing during the same period. The comparison suggests some rates of staff turnover, retirement, or new recruitment necessitated perhaps because of expansion of the industry, which makes about a third of the retail staff relatively new in their present companies. In fact, 87 per cent of the respondents had worked for ten years or less in their present firms.

The corresponding figure for those who had worked in fast food retailing during the same period is 81 per cent. It is possible, however, that these figures would compare favourably with similar figures of the length of service of workers within other employment sectors, especially workers within other private sector organisations. As Table.1 also shows most of the respondents were shop floor workers (about 34 per cent) while 25 per cent were of supervisory rank. The relatively few managerial staff appears to be representative of the percentage of these top officers in the food retail sector. In terms of gender, about 59 per cent of the respondents were females. However, considering the estimated proportion of females in the total population, the percentage of those who responded to the questionnaire can be considered adequate.

Table: 1. Background of Respondents

Age		Percentage
18-30 years		45
31-40		30
41-50		15
51+		10
		100.0
Position (Post)		
Director		5
Senior manager		15
Manager		21
Supervisor		25
Shop floor staff		34
		100.0
Gender		
Male		41
Female		59
Work Experience (years)	Previous	Present
0-5	52	60
6-10	29.	27
11-20	11	8
21-30	5.8	4.6
31+	2.2	2.0
	100.0	100.0

It was observed from the results of the data analysis that 45 per cent of respondents were between 18 and 30 years of age. It is uncertain whether this finding suggests an ageing fast food retail employees or whether the average age of fast food retail employees tends to be higher than the average age of workers in other employment sectors. On the other hand, perhaps this high proportion of ageing retail employee may have connection with the nature of their job contract, i.e full or part-time. About 45 per cent of the respondents held managerial posts as Directors, senior manager, store managers. The percentage of those who held other supervisory posts, such as buyer, area manager, etc. was about 20 per cent. Clearly, the majority of the respondents were not currently in charge of a store. However, it does not follow that this group did not have some administrative assignments, at least on an occasional if not on a regular basis.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table two presents a frequency distribution and some statistics showing satisfaction, dissatisfaction and indifference of grocery retail employees with their pay. It can be seen

that only 30 per cent of employees are satisfied with their pay and this points out the gravity of the problems with pay satisfaction in UK food retail industry.

Table 2: Frequency distribution (Employee responses)

Rating	Frequency	Percentage
1 = Extremely dissatisfied	72	11%
2 = Very dissatisfied	95	14.4%
3 = Dissatisfied	212	32% = 57.4%
4 = Indifferent	86	13% indifference
5 = Satisfied	132	20%
6 = Very satisfied	46	7% satisfied
7 = Extremely satisfied	19	2.9% = 29.9%
Total	662	100.0
Mean	3.49	
Standard deviation	1.87	
Median = mode	3.0	

Over fifty seven per cent of employees indicate that they are dissatisfied, very dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with their pay while about 13 per cent reported indifference. With a mean of only 3.49 and a mode and median of 3, the message from these employees is that they are mainly dissatisfied with their pay. An insight from some of the factors which employees listed as contributing mostly to their dissatisfaction with pay was obtained via content analysis of responses. For example, complaint on salary scale is centre on the procedures for determining salary increases; the inadequacy of the salary levels to enable respondents to have the desired standard of living in London, and retailers' policy towards pay levels. Thus, in a list of factors that contributed to employees' satisfaction and dissatisfaction pay accounted for 3 cent and 6 per cent respectively. This means that pay accounted twice as much more for their dissatisfaction than it did for their satisfaction.

The observation of the responses received from these employees' reveals that female employees are more satisfied with their pay (mean job satisfaction score of 3.752) compared with their male counterparts (mean job satisfaction score of 3.028). Thus, the differences in the satisfaction levels between male and female employees on pay are statistically significant at the 99 per cent confidence level. This means that although both male and female employees are dissatisfied with their pay, men are significantly more dissatisfied compared with the women and reflecting the reality of life.

Table 3: A three-way ANOVA result showing satisfaction with pay

Source	Df	F-value	Pr > F
Age	4	1.093	0.385
Gender	1	6.744	0.006*

Rank	4	5.398	0.001**
Gender x Age	6	2.891	0.007*
Rank x Gender	6	3.848	0.002**
Post x Age	7	2.920	0.005*
Post x Gender x Age	7	1.678	0.105

Notes: * = $p < 0.01$

** = $p \leq 0.001$

It may be that pay and career may be less important to women compared with the men and that may be the reason why the position of female employees is significantly lower than the male employees in the UK fast food sector. For example, in a publication (see Retail Week 12 October, 1998), it was revealed that just seven per cent (7%) of supervisors in the UK fast food are women. This compares with 18 per cent in the USA and 14 per cent in Australia. The above comments perhaps explain the background between gender and satisfaction with pay. Similarly, according to Kinman (1998, p. 17) many women complained about the negative impact of work on their family lives and expressed difficulty in maintaining an appropriate balance between demands of work and the home. The nature of relationships between position and satisfaction with pay is that directors (3.087) and senior managers (3.126) have the lowest mean job satisfaction score followed by store managers (3.204) and supervisors (3.260). This means that directors and senior managers are least satisfied with their pay while store supervisors are relatively satisfied. Satisfaction with pay, therefore, does not relate to position or indeed follow any pattern with position in the company. The observation here is that senior managers are least satisfied with their pay while their actual pay tends to be higher than the pay of supervisors. One reason for this could be the age of senior managers and the corresponding family obligations.

The observed difference in the level of satisfaction with pay amongst various employment positions (ranks) is statistically significant at the 99.9 per cent confidence level. The difference in pay level satisfaction of employees is an important issue for retail management because performance is usually associated with pay level satisfaction. In this case, while store employees are generally unhappy with their pay, senior managers are most unhappy. This may result in mismanagement and lack of interest to push forward retail-marketing policies. Ideally, a comprehensive review of retail work environment across all positions is a recommended approach.

In terms of the nature of relationships between age and satisfaction with pay, four age groups were identified in the analysis. The mean job satisfaction scores are 3.073, 3.146, 3.325 and 3.434 respectively. It can be observed that the mean job satisfaction scores are very close to one another for all age groups. This means that there are no wide satisfaction variations with the possible exception of employees who were less than 31 years of age and who recorded the lowest mean job satisfaction score on pay satisfaction. There are no statistical differences with respect to age variations relating to pay level satisfaction among these employees. The interactive effects between age and gender and age and position are each significant with respect to pay level satisfaction at 99 per cent

confidence level. This means that although satisfaction with pay is not significant with respect to age alone, it becomes significant when interacted with gender or position, each of which is statistically significant independently.

The explanation is that pay level satisfaction is high enough with gender or position independently that interaction of either gender or position with age continue to be statistically significant. However, the satisfaction level for the interaction of either gender or position with age is at reduced *F values* in each case and at a reduced level of significance for interactions between position and age. The interaction between rank, gender and age is, however, not statistically significant with respect to satisfaction with pay. Overall, pay satisfaction in fast food is largely explained by variations in gender and position but not age.

Differences in perception of pay

Table 4 shows the mean differences in pay-for-performance perception perceived organisational justice, and pay satisfaction for high volume and low volume store employees. The fast food high volume sample reported significantly higher level of perceived instrumentality and expectancy of the company incentive scheme than the low volume store sample. Employees in high volume food stores perceived the procedures in the company as fairer. The assumption about distributive justice and interaction justice, however, did not receive any support. On the other hand the low volume stores respondents were less satisfied with the company incentive scheme than the high volume stores respondents.

Table 4: Mean Differences in Pay Satisfaction, Perceived Justices and Pay-for-Performance Perceptions of Large or high volume and Small or low volume stores

<u>Items</u>	<u>High volume stores</u>	<u>Low volume Stores</u>
Pay level satisfaction	14.62	13.03
Pay raise and Admins satisfaction	18.43	17.21
Pay structure satisfaction	8.42	7.43
Satisfaction with incentive scheme	8.75*	7.82*
Distributive justice (DJ)	8.96	6.34
Procedural justice (PJ)	18.25**	14.56**
Interactional justice (IJ)	17.12	16.98
Instrumentality perception (IP)	8.87*	6.42*
Expectancy perception (EP)	5.98**	5.02**

Key: * = $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$

DISCUSSION

This study has investigated pay level satisfaction among the fast food employees in the UK. The findings from the frequency distribution show clearly that the UK fast food employees are dissatisfied with their pay. Over 57 per cent of the industry employees expressly stated so in the questionnaires. In particular, they complain about the procedures for determining pay increases and the fast food organisation reward policies. The results of three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that female employees are relatively more satisfied with their pay when compared with their male colleagues and that there are no statistical differences with respect to age variations relating to satisfaction with pay among the fast food employees surveyed. When position was examined in relation to pay, senior managers were most dissatisfied followed by store managers, and supervisors in that order. The differences in satisfaction levels of pay with position or gender are statistically significant. The ANOVA results also confirm that the interactions of gender with age, gender and position, and position and age are statistically significant. This demonstrates the high levels of significance between genders and pay level satisfaction and between position and pay satisfaction in the first instance as age and pay satisfaction are not statistically significant.

CONCLUSION

The overall conclusion of the findings is that gender and position are related to employee satisfaction with pay but not age. It is however appropriate to highlight the fact that the relationships found in this study are only associations, not cause-and-effect relationships. For example, finding that female employees are more satisfied with their pay does not imply that gender is the cause of their satisfaction with pay.

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