

Qualitative Analysis of English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' Job Satisfaction in Ningxia, China

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Abstract

Job satisfaction is the positive expressive feedback and attitudes workers have toward their jobs. It is viewed as a very significant issue within all types of establishments. But there is limited research exploring job satisfaction in the educational context, and as such, there is a deficiency in the understanding of the issues that particularly affect university English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' perceptions about their job satisfaction. Therefore, this study explored, within the precinct of Herzberg (1959) theory, the EFL teachers job satisfaction in Ningxia, China. A purposive sampling design was used to select 10 informants chosen from Ningxia in China while series of in-depth interviews were conducted and data analyzed thematically using NVIVO software. The study analysis, assessed job satisfaction through multiple facets that revealed job satisfaction as depending basically upon what the university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers in Ningxia, China gets from their job. Thus, it is recommended that the management of university where English as a Foreign Language are taught should set in motion strategies to sustain the current situation. Similarly, future researchers should extent the focus of job satisfaction research to low socioeconomic countries in relation to intrinsic values.

Keywords: Job satisfaction; Qualitative; EFL; Teachers; Ningxia.

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is a vital factor that affects a worker. Not only will Job satisfaction have effect on the workers, it is also capable of affecting the entire organization. Workforces are the basis of an organization, therefore a study on their job satisfaction may provide valuable insight in determining how some organizations become successful (Occhipinti *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, it is important to gain an understanding of the motivating factors which have direct impact on job satisfaction among EFL teacher in Ningxia, China. This is imperative because scholars (Pandey and Chairungruang, 2020; Taheri *et al.*, 2020) have indicated that motivational factors have effect on job satisfaction. Also, according to Dicke *et al.* (2020), job satisfaction is significant for teachers' well-being which is vital for high stressed works such as teaching. Similarly, Karamanis *et al.* (2019) noted that Job satisfaction can be influenced by diverse factors which are limited to outward factors termed hygiene factors in the Herzberg model. However, according to Baroudi *et al.* (2022) despite the abundance of literature in North America and Europe, this issue has received little consideration in some Asia and middle-eastern countries. Further to that, there is limited research exploring job satisfaction in the educational context, and as such, there is a deficiency in the understanding of the factors that influence teachers' perceptions about their job satisfaction. As such, it is imperative for school leaders to ensure that teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic needs are provided for and that the work environment is both motivating and helpful to strong and positive teacher performance. Likewise, Ibnian (2016) noted that job satisfaction is crucial for long-term growth in any education system hence, the significance of this study lies in filling the gap in the factors that provide job satisfaction to EFL Teachers. In view of this, the study examines qualitatively the English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' Job Satisfaction in Ningxia, China.

2. Job Satisfaction

This section reviews related literature on the past studies of job satisfaction, including coworkers, working environment, work policy, salary, promotion, recognition, supervision, working condition, etc.

2.1. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction as defined by Faragher *et al.* (2005) is the positive expressive feedback and attitudes workers have toward their jobs. It is viewed as a very significant issue within all types of establishments for the reason that whenever workers' needs are met the level of production surges indicating job satisfaction (Baroudi *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, job satisfaction largely denotes the condition of being satisfied with a specific work, its environment, and its settings (Zhang, 2022; Zhu, 2013). Teacher job satisfaction in this respect apply to teachers' emotional reactions to their teaching role (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2015). As put forward by Zeinabadi (2010), teacher job satisfaction has to do with in what manner positively a specific teacher weighs his or her work condition.

Job satisfaction is a very broad concept which has been a significant subject for years. Its importance is connected to work being fundamental to society and also to many people lives. Within educational contexts, job satisfaction is the teachers' perceptions about the situation within which they are working, as well as their bond with the setting (Baroudi *et al.*, 2022; Zembylas and Papanastasiou, 2004). Hence, job satisfaction is a fundamental factor that school need to measure and understand in order to sustain a productive and satisfied faculty (Mertler, 2002). Doing so, the quality of teaching and school proficiency will be enhanced (Amoli and Youran, 2014) and students' performance will increase (Akiri, 2014; Chamundeswari, 2013).

Therefore, the consent among researchers is that the factors influencing job satisfaction may be extrinsic such as remuneration, working conditions, teaching equipment and resources, and job security; or intrinsic such as self-growth, motivation, self-efficacy, and autonomy to name a few (Baroudi *et al.*, 2022). In view of this, the paper's findings provide insights about the issues that influence teachers' job satisfaction.

2.2. Coworkers

Studies underline the importance of coworker supportiveness and its influence on job satisfaction (Pandey and Chairunguang, 2020). Coworkers' relationship can be defined in several ways and according to different theories. For example, to social network theory, relationship with colleagues happens in a network where people are dots and relationships are lines. Solid lines connect people who have a strong relationship and dashed lines connect pairs of people who have a weak relationship. Coworkers' relationships include rapport and connections with colleagues and other staff on a personal and professional level. Barth (2006), asserted that the quality of an institution and achievement of both students and teachers are affected by relationships among staff members at the institution more than anything else and that toxic relationships at work are likely to be greatly Working environment damaging to teachers' job satisfaction. When there are positive relationships among coworkers, work environment becomes trustful and supportive, hence a great motivator for teachers (Jitpraneechai, 2019).

2.3. Working Environment

The working environment is the key concerning success of an organization, but many establishments fail to understand the importance of work environment (Taheri *et al.*, 2020). Generally, the working environment has two dimensions. The first one is the physical condition of the working place and the second one is the social condition (Skalli *et al.*, 2008). According to Taheri *et al.* (2020) the worst organizational challenges come from those organizations that give a lesser amount of importance to the working environment. Therefore, a working environment gives consideration to job security, employee's safety, motivating facilities, and keeping good understanding among the coworkers and supervisors.

Working environment has become one of the most vital demands of the employees. Hence, providing healthier working environment is also the main concern of institutions. More importantly, a better working environment guarantees perfect output of the result (Taheri *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, it is considered that, if employees are not satisfied with the rights, working environment, behaviors of coworkers, and supervisors in decision making then they detached from the organizations (Spector, 1997). A large number of studies has already been made to grasp the role of the working environment. Over time it gains more importance to study the impact of different levels of working environment with job satisfaction.

2.4. Work policy

Work policies and measures are the process of how all employees, irrespective of job designation, are projected to conduct themselves. Work policies are generally established by a establishment's human resources (HR) section and circulated to all staffs in the form of a handbook. The work policies offer guidance, consistency, accountability, proficiency, and precision on how an organization function.

If the staff are contented with work policies, they will be effortlessly managed, very devoted, and goal oriented. According to Usop *et al.* (2013), work policies relate to how the organization wants to handle key aspects of workers' activities in order to achieve organizational human resource objectives. Therefore, work policies should be able to keep the right steadiness among staff, expand quality, develop teams and output through rewarding employees, promoting and developing them for effective services.

2.5. Salary

Salary is the fixed once-a-month payment by an employer to an employee. Studies have established that remuneration is a substantial factor that affect teachers' job satisfaction (Bryant, 2012). In a similar vein, Mengistu (2012), noted that salary is undeniably a noteworthy factor in determining the level of teachers' job satisfaction.

Similarly, Ahmad *et al.* (2019) examined factors that determined teachers' perception of job satisfaction resolved that salary was a major determining factor to teacher's satisfaction.

2.6. Promotion

According to Bohlander (2001), promotion policy is the procedures through which an establishment can uplift staffs from their present positions to higher positions of service within an organization. This policy aims at gratifying staffs for their past performances and reassuring them to continue their effort toward the progress and development of the organization. Establishments that have adequate space for promotion tend to foster job satisfaction (Muhammad and Akhter, 2010) than those that do not give such prospects. Danish and Usman (2010) noted that impartial promotional probabilities according to employee's capability makes worker more faithful to their work and become a source of relevant workability for the employers in form of increased efficiencies and job satisfaction.

2.7. Recognition

Previous studies have come up with numerous factors of teachers' job satisfaction. Recognition is defined as the decision made about a person's input towards work performance and personal commitment expressed in different ways such as formally or informally (Mertler, 2016). Usop *et al.* (2013), specified that recognition was a substantial and effective, desirable factor that bring about job satisfaction. So, absence of recognition could hamper teachers from using their abilities in realizing the expected school goals. However, Ahmad *et al.* (2019) concluded that recognition emerged as an important factor for teachers' job satisfaction. It can, therefore, be concluded that recognition plays an important role in shaping the level of job satisfaction among teachers.

2.8. Supervision

There are numerous explanations of the term supervision. However, in general one can say that supervision is the action carried out by supervisors to superintend over the output and growth of staffs who report directly to the supervisors. Rapport with supervisor is defined as a relationship between a worker and his boss. Supervisor and coworkers play an important role in worker satisfaction level when the supervisor provides high goal clarity and space and the coworker are cooperative.

2.9. Working Condition

Working conditions refer to an extrinsic factor that positively or negatively impacts insights of staffs about their jobs. The conditions can either cause satisfaction or dissatisfaction on the job. Working conditions may include working hours, the environment under which work is executed, such as indoor work and outdoor work as well as air conditioning and none among other situations. Amin (2015) and Iqbal *et al.* (2016) revealed that working conditions played an important role in teachers' job satisfaction. In view of this, studies have shown varying effects of working conditions on teachers' job satisfaction, and can be considered as the core determinant

3. Theoretical Framework: Herzberg's Theory

Herzberg (1959), theory is the theoretical framework of this study because it represents the model of motivational factors and employees' needs that bring about job satisfaction. Herzberg (1959), projected that impetus for job satisfaction bear a resemblance to an internal self-charging battery. For an employee to become motivated, the energy or yearning to change must move and originate from inside. Herzberg hypothesized that motivators are internal drives, not external enticements (Herzberg, 1959). Therefore, Herzberg (1959) established a two-dimensional model of variables influencing individuals' job satisfaction. As such, they viewed that the stimuli were features that improved a person's job and emphasized five factors in particular that were strong determinants of job satisfaction: accomplishment, acknowledgment, the work itself, the chance to take responsibility, and opportunities for advancement. These motivators, which were considered as satisfiers. It is also significant when studying workers' satisfaction toward their job to look into both intrinsic job characteristics such as recognition, supervision, job policy, achievement, and the work itself; and extrinsic job features like salary, status, coworkers and working conditions all of which are explored in this study.

Herzberg's theory basically explains interaction level of peers' influences on employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their job. Herzberg found that the factors influencing job satisfaction were different from those influencing job dissatisfaction; the two cannot be simply treated as opposites. The development of two-factor theory, the "motivation-hygiene" theory to explain the results. This is called the satisfiers "motivators" and the dissatisfiers "hygiene factors". It clearly defines which factors can be classified as hygiene factors and which as motivators. Hygiene factors are: status, security, personal life, salary, work conditions, company policy and administration, relationship with supervisor, relationship with subordinates and relationship with peers.

The study applied qualitative method using in-depth interview approach through purposive sampling design to select 10 informants chosen from Ningxia region in China. The data were analyzed thematically using NVIVO software.

4. Methodology

The study applied qualitative method using in-depth interview approach to explore the EFL Teachers Job Satisfaction in Ningxia, China. This is achieved through purposive sampling design to select 10 informants chosen

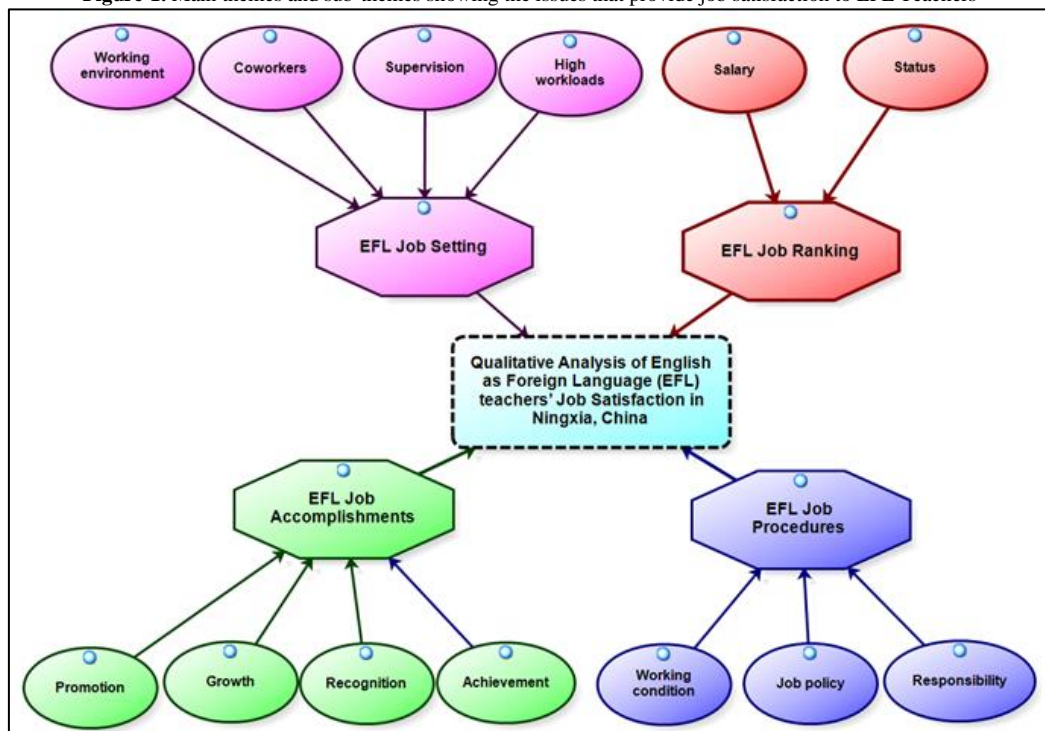
from Ningxia in China. In qualitative research according to Yin (2011), the samples are much more likely to be selected in a deliberate way recognized as purposive sampling.

To achieve the main objective, series of in-depth interviews were conducted and data were analyzed thematically using NVIVO software. Resulting from the interviews was the generation of coding frames consisted with conceptualized elements that explained the perspectives and lived experiences of the EFL Teachers. Then, subcategories were further developed in other to deepen the probing for rigorous and reliable findings in order to meet the terms of trustworthiness, rigorousness, and quality of the data. As stated by Crawford *et al.* (2000) it is important that these are carried out in a thorough and transparent manner.

5. Analysis of Findings and Interpretation

Based on the objective set out for this study, the EFL Teachers were probed about their perceptions on job satisfaction. In line with this, the analysis revealed the contributory factors to job satisfaction. The emerged conceptions which are EFL Job Accomplishments, EFL Job Procedures, EFL Job Ranking, and EFL Job Setting are grouped into themes and sub-themes in line with the thematic analyses approach adopted for this study. Therefore, Figure 1 visualizes all the main themes and sub-themes which answered the aims of the study.

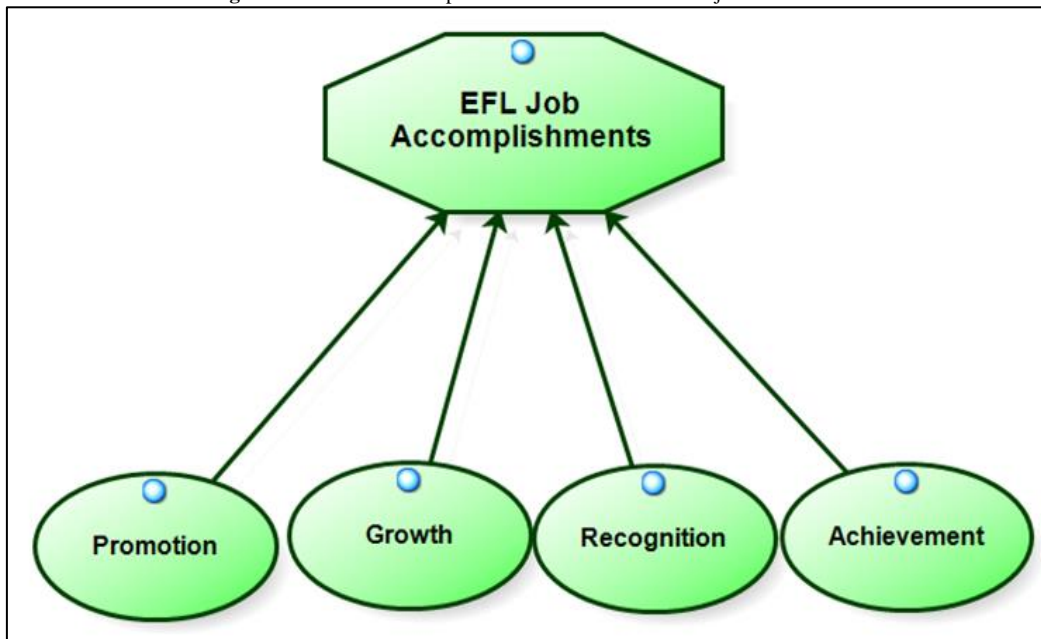
Figure-1. Main themes and sub-themes showing the issues that provide job satisfaction to EFL Teachers



5.1. EFL Job Accomplishments

There are various kinds of opinions expressed as the factors for accomplishments of job satisfaction by the University English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers and categorized as the sub-themes among which are Achievement, Growth, Promotion, and Recognition respectively. The Figure 2 therefore displays the emerged sub-themes.

Figure-2. Factors of accomplishments of EFL teachers for job satisfaction



5.1.1. Achievement

The evidence from this study's interviews showed varied perceptions on how achievement affects job satisfaction among EFL teachers. According to one of the teachers coded as EFLT1 said, "Working as EFL teachers, there are higher achievement at work". Expressing his perception in a similar manner EFLT3 noted thus, "what I have achieved as a teacher are the reasons for my job satisfaction". Based on his own perception, EFLT4 disclosed that, "Though, am still hoping for more but my achievement so far makes me have job satisfaction in my teaching job". Other EFL teachers also buttressed achievement in the job as factors for job satisfaction.

5.1.2. Growth

The success of any organization is possible only when its workforce is trained and growing in their career. Based on the coded data from the interviews, EFLT2 succinctly revealed thus, "there are high growth and development of EFL teachers at work". In addition, EFLT4 noted that, "the growth I have attained since I joined as a teacher is my source of happiness and satisfaction". Also holding the similar view, EFLT6 revealed that, "seeing that am growing in my profession makes me feel inner satisfaction as a teacher". These perceptions of the EFLT2, 4 and 6, was equally confirmed by the other teachers who painted a glowing picture of their growth at job as the reason for their job satisfaction.

5.1.3. Promotion

Scholars have established that when workers are not denied promotions duly merited, it brings job satisfaction. These same perceptions were expressed by University English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers in relation to promotion. According to EFLT1, "All EFL teachers are promoted as at when due as far as the EFL teachers have the promotion criteria with all the documents needed". Similarly, while reiterating the values of promotion in job satisfaction, EFTL8 amply described it thus, "I get promotion as at when due and this gives me joy and satisfaction in my job" Buttressing this claim, EFLT4 said, "I am satisfied in my job because of the regular promotion in my teaching job" Other EFL teachers expressed similar views on promotion as a factor for job satisfaction.

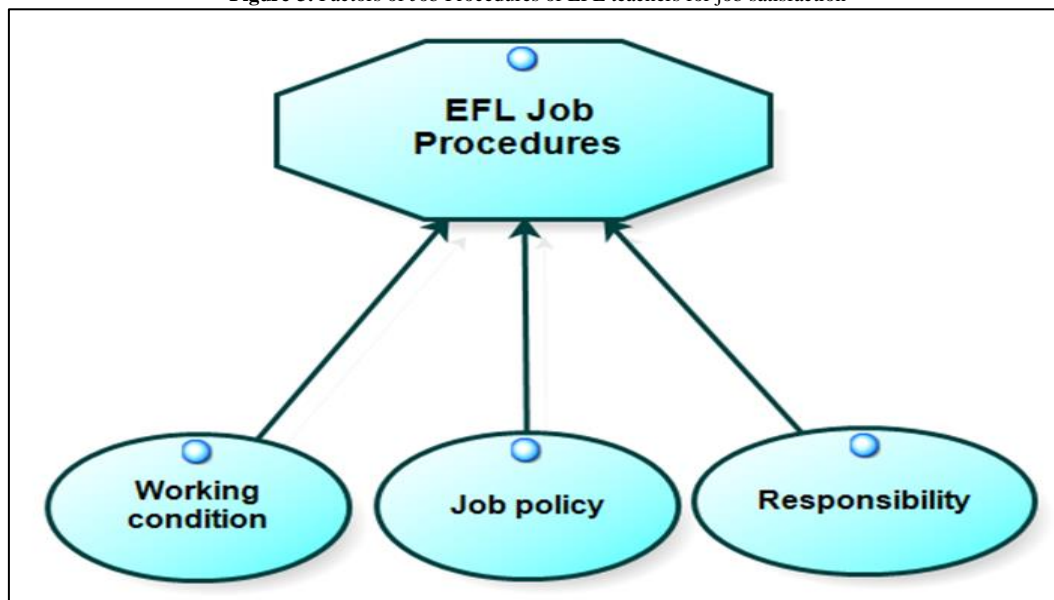
5.1.4. Recognition

Recognition of staff is a direct way to motivate workers to put more efforts in the job and attract them to stay with the establishment (Lardner, 2015). There is no doubt that every staff would love to be treasured by the superiors.

Most of the University English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers raised recognition as the salient point in their job satisfaction as teachers. For instance, EFLT10 highlights further thus, "When your employer values your worth, your contribution as important and appreciate it in whatever way, you will feel satisfied in your job. That is my case and my reason". Corroborating this perspective, EFLT9, also expressed his perspective on how recognition as a motivating factor for job satisfaction thus, "the University management do recognize EFL teachers". This viewpoint is reflected in the perception of other EFL teachers.

5.2. EFL Job Procedures

The coding from the University English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers interviewed revealed factors that enhance the teachers job satisfaction. These factors were categorized and analyzed under a theme named EFL job procedures as displayed in the figure 3 output from NVivo.

Figure-3. Factors of Job Procedures of EFL teachers for job satisfaction

5.2.1. Job Policy

On the influence from job procedures, some of the teachers identified job policy as key to job satisfaction. According to EFLT1 on their job policy as teachers, “is ok and good for all teachers”. In a similar manner, EFLT3 noted that, “because the policy guiding our work is considerate, we are highly satisfied as teachers”. Attesting to the instance of what necessitate job satisfaction based on the job policy, EFLT7 said, “our work policy is conscious of needs and condition, so, it gives me job satisfaction”.

5.2.2. Responsibility

The coding from the University English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers interviewed highlighted the importance of spelling out responsibility for teachers in relation to job satisfaction. According to EFLT9, “Our job is well spelt out and teacher knows her or his responsibilities”. In relation to this perception, EFLT4 said, “the mere fact that I know my responsibility is enough to face my work and spend the rest of my time with my family”. Corroborating this perception, EFLT7 categorically stated that, “our employer made clear to us our responsibilities therefore, we know our limitation and out right at wok”.

5.2.3. Working Condition

The condition in which workers such as teachers operate is very important to job satisfaction. From the interviews conducted with EFL Teachers, it was revealed that their working condition play a major role in attaining job satisfaction. According to EFLT1, “I love my working condition so, it gives job satisfaction”. Similarly, EFLT3 said, “There is good working condition for EFL teachers”. Putting it succinctly EFLT10 highlighted the values of working condition thus, “I feel ok, I feel belonging and I feel safe and secure economically and mentally with my teaching job because the working condition is perfect for me”.

5.3. EFL Job Ranking

As part of the findings, it was discovered that one major theme which aided job satisfaction is how the job itself is ranked. Most of the teachers acknowledged that the way their job is ranked bring honour and satisfaction to them particularly, in terms of salary and job status. In line with these sub-themes that emerged from the findings as shown in [figure 4](#), the subsequent analysis presented the teachers raw perceptions.

Figure-4. Factors of Job Ranking of EFL teachers for job satisfaction

5.3.1. Salary

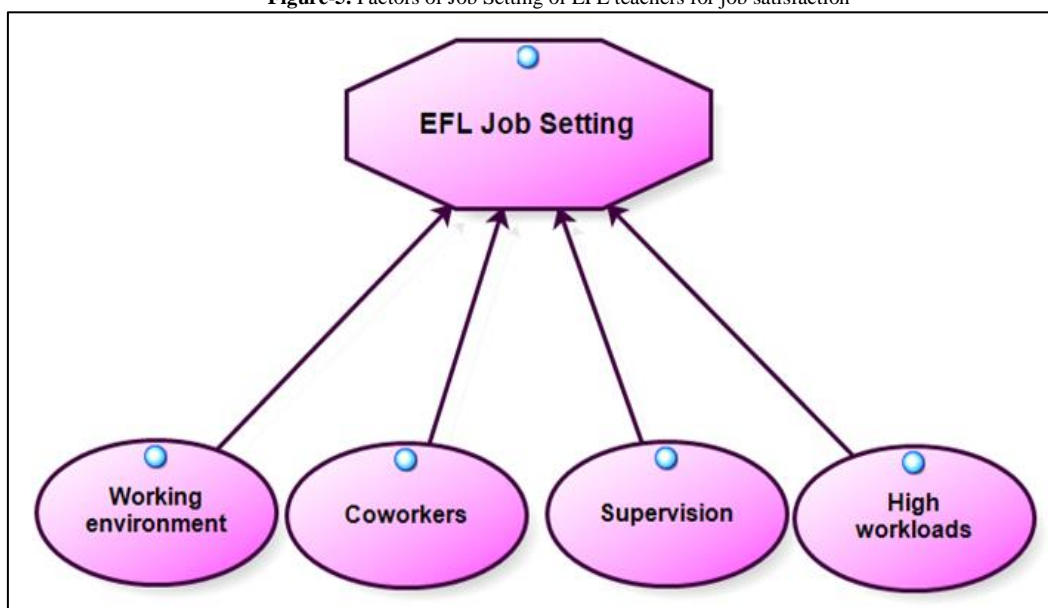
Salary is a major determinant of job satisfaction across the world. This perception was also expressed the teachers interviewed. According to EFLT3, "My salary is good and adequate, so am so satisfied with my job". From another perspective, EFLT6 noted that, "Because we are paid good salary commensurate with my job am satisfied". Meanwhile, EFLT10 agreed with the viewpoint by stating thus, "Our salary is a source of job satisfaction for us".

5.3.2. Status

Aside salary being paid, another sub-theme that emerged from the findings is the status of the teachers in Ningxia, China. This was clearly expressed by EFLT2 who said, "the status of EFL teachers is well respected". Buttressing this viewpoint, EFLT5 highlighted that, "when your job is placed in a good status, you have job satisfaction. That is my view".

5.4. EFL Job Setting

On whether the factors that motivate job satisfaction, it has been discovered that the University English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teacher's job satisfaction is imperative in the job setting as much as other factors. Based on the findings four sub-theme, Supervision, Coworkers, working environment, and work itself. Emerged and explained the perception of the teachers. The [figure 5](#) shows the graphical representation.

Figure-5. Factors of Job Setting of EFL teachers for job satisfaction

5.4.1. Supervision

One of the sub-themes emerged is the factor of supervision on job satisfaction of university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers. As noted by EFLT8, "There is good supervision of EFL teachers at work". Confirming the impact of supervision on job satisfaction EFLT2 revealed that, "supervision of teachers is key to teaching

efficiency so, when some of us remember this, we feel satisfied that after all, someone is approving of our teaching". This opinion on impact of supervision on job satisfaction is reflected in the perception of other EFL teachers.

5.4.2. Coworkers

Relationship with colleagues at work is a very broad concept however, the findings of this study revealed the situation with university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers in Ningxia, China. According to EFLT1, "there is good relationship among the coworkers". The same perspective was expressed by EFLT5 who said, "My rapport with coworkers includes aspects such as teamwork, commonality, support, confidence, and enabling atmosphere".

5.4.3. Working Environment

It has been identified that for better job satisfaction the working environment is important as the motivating factor to be considered for university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers. Similar expression was made by the teachers interviewed. According to EFLT8, "one of the encouraging influences to my job satisfaction is the working environment". Emphasizing the importance of the need to make the environment enabling for successful and sustained job satisfaction EFLT4 concisely said, "my working environment mostly make feel satisfied with my job". Elucidating further on the impact of working environment EFLT9 disclosed thus, "I am very happy with my teaching environment particularly, my class and the facilities provided for me to do my work".

5.4.4. High Workloads

Contrary to all the initial expressions made by the university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers in Ningxia, China, they also made it known that the only thing affecting their job satisfaction is high workloads. According to EFLT1, "Workloads is higher and most EFL teachers had occasionally experienced stress at work". Reiterating how high workloads affect them EFLT3 disclosed thus, "Though, am ok with the work but sometimes the enormous teaching I have to do affect my performance and by implication my job satisfaction". From the perspectives of EFLT2, "The teaching workload is the only challenge we are facing as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers in Ningxia, China".

In this analysis, job satisfaction has been assessed through multiple facets that revealed job satisfaction as depending basically upon what the university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers in Ningxia, China gets from their job.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on this study findings, it can be concluded that there is a substantial influencing factors discussed on job satisfaction of university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers in Ningxia, China. Similarly, the findings in this study will help the education department to understand more on the background and the level of influence which the motivating factors have on EFL teachers that may bring about job satisfaction. In view of this, the management of university where English as a Foreign Language are taught should set in motion strategies to sustain the current situation. However, the issue of high workload should be reexamined, having being the only factor examined that is challenging EFL teachers in Ningxia, China. In addition, findings from the study which is based on university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teachers in Ningxia, China suggest that future researchers should extent the focus of job satisfaction to low socioeconomic countries in relation to intrinsic values.

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