

## **Job Satisfaction in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Scoping Review of Literature from 2004-2024**

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### **Abstract**

*Job satisfaction is a critical determinant of employee performance, retention, and overall organisational effectiveness, influencing numerous key performance outcomes. Although extensively studied globally, job satisfaction remains an emerging area of research within sub-Saharan Africa. This scoping review aims to map the existing literature on job satisfaction in sub-Saharan Africa, with particular focus on the populations studied, contextual factors, and measurement instruments utilised. Covering a twenty-year period (2004–2024), the review included 42 studies identified through systematic searches of databases such as EBSCOhost, JSTOR, PubMed, Emerald, ProQuest, and ScienceDirect. Screening processes adhered to PRISMA guidelines, encompassing both abstract and full-text review stages. Findings reveal a predominant reliance on Western-developed measurement tools, although there is a growing trend towards the development of African-centric instruments. Correlational study designs were most common, particularly in research focusing on the health and education sectors. Notably, primary extractive sectors, including agriculture, were underrepresented. The review highlights critical gaps and advocates for future meta-analyses or systematic reviews to synthesise existing evidence and inform policy and practice in the region.*

**Keywords:** job satisfaction, scoping review, sub-Saharan Africa, African-centric instruments, Western-developed measurement tools, screening processes

### **Introduction**

Job satisfaction plays a vital role in determining employee performance, retention, and overall organisational effectiveness. As a key construct of organisational behaviour studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, job satisfaction functions as a cross-disciplinary variable intricately linked to various performance outcomes (Vigan & Giauque, 2018). In many high-income countries, including the United States, a significant proportion of workers report high levels of job satisfaction (Meier & Spector, 2015). Comparatively, job satisfaction in Asia tends to be somewhat lower than in the U.S. (Deng et al., 2024), while Europe, characterised by a diverse workforce, generally exhibits higher job satisfaction rates (Faragher et al., 2005). Notably, mental health factors such as self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and burnout are closely associated with job satisfaction levels (Faragher et al., 2005).

Conversely, in sub-Saharan Africa, research reveals a broader and more variable range of job satisfaction prevalence. Understanding job satisfaction in this region is particularly important due to its unique socio-economic, cultural, and political contexts that shape the work environment. This review examines the populations studied, contextual factors, and measurement instruments used to assess job satisfaction in sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting their strengths, limitations, and contextual relevance. Job satisfaction levels in the region may be influenced by factors such as job security and the availability of alternative employment opportunities, both of which are deeply affected by socio-economic conditions and culturally rooted humanistic values (Maleka et al., 2019; Sartorius et al., 2011). For instance, despite significant political transitions in the past decade, North African countries continue to attract substantial foreign direct investment, which plays a critical role in supporting economic growth, job security, and labour market alternatives (Badran & Youssef-Morgan, 2015).

While job satisfaction tends to remain relatively stable on a global scale, regional distinctions emerge due to varying levels of socio-economic development (Dziuba et al., 2020). In the Global North, particularly in the United Kingdom, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has seen a paradoxical situation where, despite relatively high wages, many workers exhibit decreased motivation to attend work. Current estimates suggest over eleven million economically active individuals are absent from the workforce, possibly reflecting diminished job satisfaction (Get-Britain-Working White Paper, n.d., ILO, 2021). In contrast, the Global South, exemplified by Zimbabwe's staggering unemployment rate of approximately 90% (Maleka et al., 2019), shows a strong tendency among workers to remain in their jobs for extended periods, even when wages fall below the poverty datum line. These contrasting realities underscore the critical influence of economic conditions, cultural norms, and workplace dynamics on job satisfaction and employee behaviour across diverse settings.

Job satisfaction is a well-established area of inquiry within organisational behaviour (Dormann & Zapf, 2001; Vigan & Giauque, 2018). Although some scholars argue that there is no universally accepted definition of job satisfaction (Vigan & Giauque, 2018), there is broad consensus regarding its antecedents and outcomes. This consensus enables the integration of findings across diverse studies. Generally, job satisfaction is defined as the overall contentment an individual feels toward their job, often conceptualised as a multifaceted construct encompassing an employee's attitudes and feelings about various aspects of their work (Adio & Popoola, 2010; Meier & Spector, 2015). Job satisfaction reflects the degree to which

employees are content or dissatisfied with elements such as the work environment, job roles and responsibilities, compensation, benefits, and other work-related variables.

## **Background of the concept**

In recent years, there has been a marked increase in scholarly and practical interest in the concept of job satisfaction (Reshma & Velmurugan, 2024; Lee et al., 2023). This surge is attributed to a combination of heightened academic focus and evolving workplace realities, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic catalysed significant shifts in employees' values, work-life balance, and mental health awareness, further amplified by advancements in technology and greater accessibility to data (Hassan et al., 2022).

Despite the homogenising effects of globalisation, job satisfaction research in sub-Saharan Africa remains disproportionately underrepresented compared to other world regions (Vigan & Giauque, 2018). The overreliance on Western paradigms and measurement tools (Faye et al., 2013) risks undermining cultural validity and may misrepresent job satisfaction in African contexts. This underrepresentation raises essential questions about the applicability and relevance of dominant theories and frameworks when applied outside Western contexts. While global reviews often suggest lower job satisfaction levels in sub-Saharan Africa (Ayalew et al., 2021), such findings may be biased due to the prevalent use of Western-centric measurement tools. In essence, it could be argued that there are differences in the underlying reasons on what makes employees happy in various work contexts.

Numerous scholars attribute disparities in job satisfaction to historical legacies, cultural distinctions, and enduring economic hardships (Janicijevic et al., 2018). Colonial histories, political instability, and limited socio-economic opportunities have profoundly shaped the employment landscape and worker expectations across the regions. Whilst colonial historicity could be a plausible explanation of marked differences in job satisfaction, one would argue that this could not hold water as almost all the world regions experienced some colonisation in one form or another.

In many developing nations, employment serves a foundational role, ensuring survival and escape from poverty, primarily due to the limited capacity of governments to meet essential social needs (Adio & Popoola, 2010; Ndong Ntutoume, 2023; Owuor, 2021). In contrast, in more economically advanced nations, work serves a broader purpose that includes self-actualisation, social integration, and psychological fulfilment (Georgescu & Herman, 2019).

Job satisfaction is, thus, deeply intertwined with economic structures, labour market dynamics, and avenues for expressing workplace discontent (Freeman, 1977). According to the ILO (2021), sub-Saharan regions facing high unemployment and limited alternative opportunities, like Zimbabwe with an unemployment rate of around 90% (Maleka et al., 2019), may lead employees to stay in unsatisfying jobs out of necessity. Conversely, in economically stronger countries like South Africa, more abundant opportunities and better working conditions often correlate with higher reported levels of job satisfaction (Dziuba et al., 2020; Heimerl et al., 2020; Maleka et al., 2019). In less prosperous economies, restricted opportunities may compel employees to endure suboptimal conditions, thereby suppressing their capacity to express dissatisfaction (Lazarova et al., 2023).

This context calls for a reassessment of the methodologies and tools used in job satisfaction research. Existing evaluation instruments, largely grounded in Western epistemologies, may therefore inadequately capture the unique variables that influence job satisfaction in sub-Saharan Africa. The resultant findings may reflect methodological biases rather than authentic lived experiences. Thus, expanding the theoretical and methodological toolkit to include Afrocentric and indigenous perspectives is essential.

Given these considerations, this study adopts a scoping review approach to systematically map the literature on job satisfaction in sub-Saharan Africa. This methodology is particularly suitable for assessing research breadth, identifying knowledge gaps, and guiding future investigations. By situating job satisfaction within its historical, cultural, and economic contexts, this review seeks to provide a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the construct in the region.

While job satisfaction remains a globally studied phenomenon, there is a pressing need to enhance the representation of non-Western, particularly sub-Saharan African perspectives in this field. This review contributes to that effort by offering context-sensitive insights and laying the groundwork for more culturally responsive research. By incorporating local realities and diverse epistemologies, future scholarship and practice can achieve a richer, more holistic understanding of job satisfaction across global contexts.

### **Scoping review objectives**

The concept of job satisfaction plays a critical role in shaping workforce dynamics, influencing not only productivity, but also employee well-being and overall life satisfaction (Faragher et al., 2005; Gazi et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2023). Employees who feel valued and fulfilled in their

roles are more likely to experience lower levels of stress, burnout, and turnover intentions (Griffeth et al., 2000; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). From an organisational perspective, higher job satisfaction is directly linked to increased productivity, greater employee engagement, enhanced innovation, and improved retention rates, all of which contribute to the long-term success and competitiveness of enterprises (Bakotić, 2016; Harter et al., 2002). At the societal level, widespread job satisfaction supports economic stability and social cohesion by fostering a more motivated, resilient, and empowered workforce (Green, 2006). In this way, job satisfaction functions not merely as an individual concern, but as a vital component of sustainable development and societal progress.

Although extensively explored from multiple theoretical and disciplinary perspectives (Freeman, 1977; Vigan & Giauque, 2018), this body of research remains unevenly distributed across global contexts. This study, therefore, seeks to evaluate the breadth and depth of job satisfaction research within the sub-Saharan African region. To that end, the research aims to address the following objectives.

- i) To conduct a comprehensive review of the existing literature on job satisfaction within the context of sub-Saharan Africa, highlighting key insights and thematic trends.
- ii) To provide an overview and critical assessment of the various survey instruments and measurement scales employed in job satisfaction research across the region.
- iii) To identify and evaluate the methodological approaches adopted in these studies, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method designs.
- iv) To investigate population and contextual gaps within the existing body of research, and inform future scholarly inquiry.

## **Methodology**

This scoping review systematically mapped two decades (2004–2024) of peer-reviewed literature on job satisfaction within the context of sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular emphasis on organisational behaviour. The review aimed to identify prevailing theoretical frameworks, commonly employed measurement instruments, and the contextual dimensions shaping job satisfaction in the region. The methodological framework for this review was guided by the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) scoping review framework and further refined based on the PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews) guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018).

## **Inclusion criteria**

Inclusion criteria were rigorously defined to ensure the relevance and contextual integrity of the selected studies. First, articles were required to be predominantly written in English to promote accessibility and alignment with the global academic discourse. Second, studies had to explicitly focus on sub-Saharan African countries and address job satisfaction within either public or private sector organisations. This regional focus reflects the unique socio-economic, political, and cultural conditions that influence organisational environments and employee experiences across the continent. Additionally, only studies published within the past ten years (2014–2024) were included to ensure the timeliness and relevance of the findings.

## **Search strategy**

To enhance the breadth and robustness of the review, a systematic search was subsequently conducted across several academic databases, including EBSCOhost, Emerald Insight, ScienceDirect, ProQuest, JSTOR, and PubMed. These databases were selected for their comprehensive collections of peer-reviewed literature in the fields of social science, organisational studies, and human resource management.

The search strategy employed broad terms such as “job satisfaction,” “work satisfaction”, and “employee satisfaction”, which were iteratively refined using Boolean operators (AND, OR) and geographic delimiters (e.g., “Sub-Saharan Africa” or specific country names) to isolate relevant studies. This approach ensured comprehensive coverage of literature addressing job satisfaction within diverse and multicultural African contexts.

## **Selection process and data sources**

The screening process yielded an initial pool of 98 peer-reviewed articles. After the removal of duplicates and the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria, 80 articles were retained for full-text review and data extraction. These studies were selected based on their empirical or theoretical contributions, recency of publication, and relevance to the research objectives.

Both public and private sector studies were included, enabling a comprehensive comparison of job satisfaction across different institutional and organizational environments. This sectoral inclusivity provided deeper insights into how structural and policy-related variables shape employee experiences.

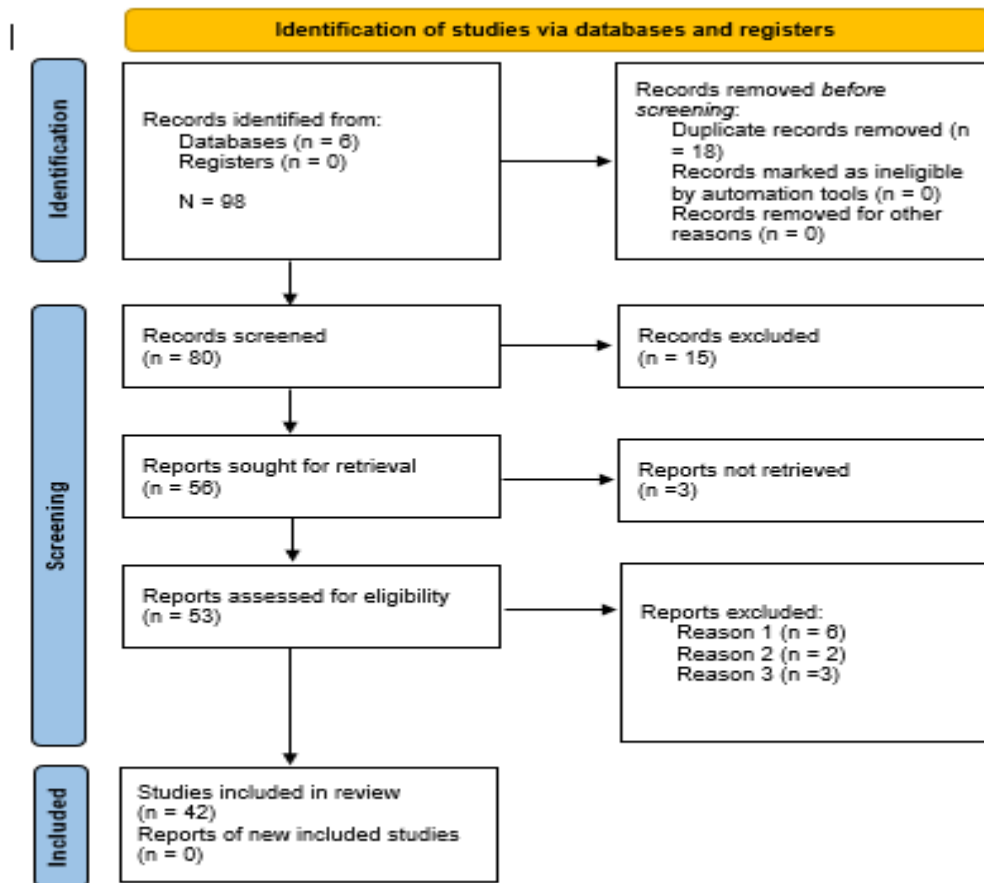


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow diagram (M.J. Page et al., 2021)

Table 1: Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1. Sample representative of organization(s) studied	1. Unidentified target population or studies including non-working classes including students
2. Studies published between 2004 up to 2024	2. Outside the sub-Saharan African region.
3. Studies focusing on the adult working class	3. Studies published before 2005.
4. Summary statistics for gender, and other	4. No clear country of study – including two or more countries in one study.
5. Response rate adequate	5. Duplicated literature by the same authors and with similar content;
6. Sample size acceptable	6. Literature with incomplete data; - no demographic distribution data.
7. Job satisfaction and outcome measures acceptable	7. No clear sampling method or research methodology.
8. Statistical analysis of study findings appropriate	8. No clear tools to measure the variables.
9. Attrition rate adequate (if longitudinal design used).	9. Literature not published in English.

Following a systematic literature search, ninety-eight (98) potentially relevant articles were initially identified. Using Microsoft Excel Version M365, eighty (80) articles remained for full-text screening. This phase was conducted independently by two reviewers (Q.D. and Y.L.) to

uphold objectivity and methodological rigor, consistent with established practices in systematic review methodology (Higgins et al., 2022; Liberati et al., 2009)

Inclusion criteria for full-text screening were as follows:

- 1) The study must focus on a clearly defined occupational group within a specific sub-Saharan African country;
- 2) It must explicitly examine job satisfaction or investigate variables demonstrably linked to job satisfaction;
- 3) It must involve primary data collection utilising a self-administered questionnaire to assess job satisfaction;
- 4) The study must report its research methodology, including sample size and empirical findings.

This multi-stage, structured screening process was designed to ensure the inclusion of only methodologically sound and contextually relevant studies. Discrepancies between reviewers were resolved through discussion and, when necessary, adjudicated by a third reviewer. This approach reflects best practices in systematic review protocols and enhances the reliability and validity of the final synthesis (Moher et al., 2009).

A total of fifty-six (56) studies were retrieved for full-text screening following the title and abstract screening phase. However, three (3) potentially eligible studies could not be accessed for full-text review due to subscription requirements that exceeded the resource constraints of this review, an issue similarly noted in previous reviews where limited access to subscription-based databases posed challenges to comprehensive inclusion (Lefebvre et al., 2011; Bramer et al., 2017).

Of the fifty-three (53) studies assessed during full-text screening, eleven (11) were excluded based on eligibility criteria. Specifically, six (6) studies were excluded due to an unclear definition of the occupational population under investigation, which is critical for ensuring population-specific relevance in systematic reviews (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Two (2) studies were excluded because they encompassed multiple countries, a factor that can introduce heterogeneity and complicate context-specific analysis, particularly in regionally focused reviews (Gough, Oliver, & Thomas, 2017). Finally, three (3) studies were excluded due to insufficient methodological transparency, particularly concerning data collection procedures, which hindered the ability to appraise study quality and reliability (Moher et al., 2009).



Results

The findings revealed that the studies included in this scoping review encompassed 14 countries out of a total of 42, resulting in a coverage rate of 38% for the sub-Saharan Africa region. Among the studies, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Malawi each contributed six studies, collectively accounting for 42% of the total studies reviewed. Additionally, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Somaliland were represented by one study each. The results of the review are presented in Table 2 below.

The studies included in this scoping review spanned 14 out of the 42 countries in the sub-Saharan Africa region, representing a coverage rate of approximately 38%. South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Malawi were the most frequently studied, each contributing six articles, which together made up 42% of the total sample. In contrast, countries such as Nigeria, Rwanda, and Somaliland were each represented by a single study, highlighting differences in research distribution across the region. Figure 2 below provides a detailed summary of the geographic distribution of these studies.

Prevalances of Studies in the Review

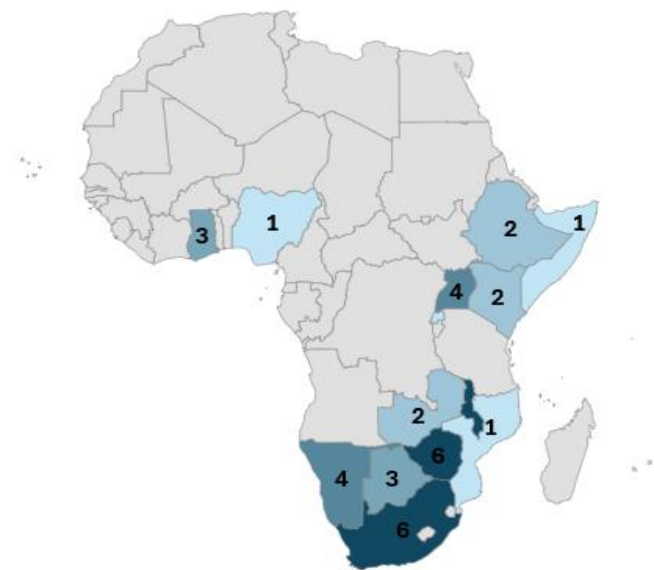


Figure 2: Distribution of studies within the sub-Saharan African countries

A total of 12,498 participants were included in the reviewed studies, resulting in an average sample size of approximately 298 respondents per study. Notably, one study reported a substantially larger sample size of 1,714 participants, which was identified as an outlier. The smallest study sample comprised only 51 respondents. Among the occupational groups investigated, the health sector, particularly nursing professionals, was the most extensively

studied, accounting for 14% of all included studies. Similarly, teachers within the education sector represented 14% of the studies. University academic staff constituted the second largest occupational category at 9%. The representation of other employee groups, including those in construction, retail, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), mining, government, and general employment sectors, is summarised in Table 2.

## **Research designs and methodology**

All studies included in this scoping review employed primary data collection methods and utilised a cross-sectional study design. Among these, 16 studies (38%) were classified as correlational, as they primarily sought to examine relationships or associations between job satisfaction and other variables. Exploratory designs represented the second most common approach, with 15 studies (35%) aiming to investigate phenomena where limited prior research existed. In contrast, analytical and descriptive designs were each employed in three studies, comprising 7% of the total, respectively. Furthermore, three studies (7%) applied moderation or mediation analysis, an extension of the correlational framework, focusing on understanding the mechanisms through which variables influence job satisfaction. These findings indicate that correlational studies were the most frequently adopted research design within the scope of this review.

## **Measuring instruments used to measure job satisfaction in Sub-Saharan Africa**

The analysis revealed that the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) developed by Spector was the most utilized instrument for measuring job satisfaction, appearing in eight studies, which accounts for 18% of the total. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) was also widely cited, with two additional studies employing modified versions of the MSQ, representing 4% of the reviewed studies. A notable proportion of 11 studies (26%) used custom-developed instruments, all of which underwent piloting and pretesting with samples drawn from the target populations. These instruments were frequently refined through input from expert panels, enhancing their face validity.

Additionally, the Warr-Cook-Wall Job Satisfaction Scale (1979) was used in three studies, representing 7% of the sample. The Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS), developed in 1974, was cited in only one study, despite its historical prominence in the field. The diversity of tools reflects both the methodological preferences of researchers and the contextual adaptations necessary for studying job satisfaction across different occupational and national settings.

**Table 2: Results of the scoping review**

Sample size (Total number of employees covered in job satisfaction surveys 12498 mean of 298)					
Tools used to measures job satisfasaction in the studies		Countries were studies were und		Distribution of Target Population in the studies	N%
Tool used to measure job satisfaction	N%	Country	N%		
Adopted Drukpa (2010) and Medina (2012).	1(2%)	Botswana	3(7%)	Banking - Employees	1(2%)
American Society of Health-System Pharmacists JS Tool	1(2%)	Ethiopia	2(5%)	Construction - Employees	1(2%)
Bellingham (2014)	1(2%)	Ghana	3(7%)	Construction - Quantity Surveyors	1(2%)
Faragher et al., 2005; Huddleston and Good, 1999).	1(2%)	Kenya	2(5%)	Education - Teachers	6(14%)
Job Diagnostic Survey - Yale University 1974	1(2%)	Malawi	6(14%)	Education - Teachers & Energy - Nampower employees	1(2%)
Job Satisfaction Scale - Brown et al (2001)	1(2%)	Mozambique	1(2%)	General employees	4(10%)
Job Satisfaction Scale of Warr, Cook and Wall (1979)	3(7%)	Namibia	4(10%)	Government - Employees	1(2%)
Job Satisfaction Survey - Spector	8(19%)	Nigeria	1(2%)	Health - Workers	1(2%)
Job Satisfaction Brayford and Rothe (1951)	1(2%)	Rwanda	1(2%)	Health - Care Staff	2(5%)
Kim, Leong and Lee (2005) Adopted	1(2%)	Somalliland	1(2%)	Health - Medical Internship	1(2%)
Measures of Job Satisfaction Scale (MJS)	1(2%)	South Africa	6(14%)	Health - Nurses	6(14%)
Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)	6(14%)	Uganda	4(10%)	Health - Pharmacist	1(2%)
Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) - Adapted to Martinsand Proenca (	1(2%)	Zambia	2(5%)	Health - Physicians	1(2%)
Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) - Adapted Buitendach & Rothmann	1(2%)	Zimbabwe	6(14%)	Health - Professionals	1(2%)
Own Instrument	11(26%)			Health - Surveillance Assistants	1(2%)
Physician Work-Life Survey (WLS)	1(2%)			Health - Workers	1(2%)
Taylor & Brownes (1972)	1(2%)	No: Countries	14	Leather - Employees	1(2%)
Workplace Climate and Job Satisfaction Survey	1(2%)			Manufacturing employees	1(2%)
				Mining- Employees	1(2%)
				MNC - Employees	1(2%)
				NGO - Employees	1(2%)
				Retail - Employees	2(5%)
Study Designs - Methodology	N%	< 80	3(7%)	SME - Employees	1(2%)
Cross-section - Analytical study	3(7%)	80 - 150	9(21%)	University - Academic Staff	3(7%)
Cross-section - Comparative study	2(5%)	151 - 200	5(12%)	University - Librarians	1(2%)
Cross-section - Correlational study	16(38%)	201 - 300	10(24%)		
Cross-section - Descriptive study	3(7%)	301 - 450	9(21%)		
Cross-section - Exploratory study	15(36%)	451 - 600	4(10%)	Health Sector	15(35%)
Cross-section - Moderation or Mediation study	3(7%)	>601	2(5%)	Education Sector	6(14%)
				University Sector	4(9%)

## Discussion

The main objective of this review was to map the existing literature on job satisfaction in sub-Saharan African countries, revealing that this topic is widely explored. A comprehensive analysis was conducted on 42 studies spanning 14 nations, representing 38% of the countries in the region and more than 50% of the Anglophone nations. It is noteworthy that the other 26 countries are classified as Francophone, while 6 are considered Lusophone, reflecting their colonial histories with France and Portugal, respectively (Ethnologue, 2024). Consequently, this study adopted a thorough approach to ensure extensive coverage, taking into account the quality of the research included.

The findings from the scoping review highlighted a diverse array of job satisfaction survey instruments that have been acknowledged and utilised in contemporary literature. This observation emphasises the significant variety of tools employed across different studies, indicating that both researchers and organisations have adopted numerous methodologies for assessing job satisfaction. However, the dominance of Western-centric job satisfaction instruments suggests a continued reliance on Western paradigms, particularly the Job Satisfaction Survey Scale created by Spector and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire.

These instruments vary not only in their design and format, but also in the specific aspects of job satisfaction they aim to evaluate. Some surveys may focus on overall job satisfaction, while

others delve into dimensions such as the work environment, interpersonal relationships, compensation, and opportunities for professional development. Given the extensive theoretical framework established in the reviewed studies, we argue that there is no need to rely solely on Western-developed tools for research purposes. Instead, it would be prudent to develop tailored scales, as the concept of job satisfaction is widely acknowledged. This is supported by researchers who have created their measurement scales, as noted in the review, which have shown high reliability. We maintain that these measurement tools will enhance the understanding of cultural differences and aid in the conceptualisation of job satisfaction.

The review also indicated that the studies encompassed a range of populations; however, there are notable gaps in other sectors, particularly those that are crucial to economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa, such as agriculture. These gaps highlight the necessity for further research, especially in economically significant sectors that primarily employ individuals with lower educational qualifications. Most existing research has concentrated on sectors that require higher educational attainment.

A comprehensive examination reveals that a significant proportion of researchers are focused on the interactions among various factors influencing job satisfaction. This emphasis is crucial as it marks a shift towards empirically testing hypotheses regarding the relationships between these variables, moving beyond merely descriptive or exploratory methodologies. Correlational research seeks to establish predictive frameworks, and it is recommended that a meta-analytical or systematic method be employed for specific variables within the sub-Saharan context. Such an approach would facilitate a deeper understanding of the involved variables, ultimately strengthening the empirical evidence and models pertaining to their interrelations.

The results indicated that most studies are conducted in health, with over 35% of the studies, whilst the education sector contributed 23%. This concentration can be attributed to the critical role these sectors play in achieving national development and public service delivery goals, particularly within low- and middle-income contexts. Healthcare workers and educators form a substantial portion of the public workforce and are frequently at the centre of government reform agendas and international development funding. Moreover, chronic challenges such as resource constraints, high workloads, inadequate compensation, and poor working conditions in these sectors have heightened scholarly and policy interest in understanding workforce motivation and retention. Additionally, donor-funded programmes and global health initiatives

often mandate workforce assessments, further contributing to the volume of research in these areas. As a result, health and education become accessible and priority-rich environments for exploring issues of job satisfaction in the sub-Saharan context.

### **Practical implication of the review**

While job satisfaction appears to be a well-explored subject, this review reveals significant gaps that call for continued empirical investigation, particularly within the sub-Saharan African context. These gaps pertain to demographic coverage, thematic content, and broader contextual influences, emphasising the need for sustained research efforts by African scholars to deepen and diversify the understanding of job satisfaction across the region.

A key concern highlighted by the review is the widespread reliance on Western-developed measurement instruments. Although there is encouraging evidence of African researchers beginning to develop and adapt tools that are culturally and contextually relevant, such efforts remain limited and fragmented. There is a pressing need for greater coordination and standardisation in the development of indigenous research instruments that more accurately reflect local values, work norms, and organizational structures.

Moreover, the current literature exhibits a notable imbalance in terms of sectoral focus. While the health and education sectors are well represented, crucial sectors such as agriculture, which employs a substantial proportion of the workforce in many sub-Saharan African countries, remain significantly under-researched. This oversight presents a practical limitation for policymakers and organisational leaders who seek evidence-based strategies to improve job satisfaction in sectors vital to national development and food security.

Therefore, future research should aim to address these sectoral and methodological imbalances through inclusive sampling, context-sensitive research tools, and interdisciplinary collaboration. By doing so, scholars and practitioners can generate more actionable insights that are aligned with the unique socio-economic dynamics of the region.

### **Study limitations**

This scoping review is subject to one major limitation that may affect the breadth and inclusiveness of its findings. Notably, the review focused exclusively on studies published in English, thereby disproportionately representing job satisfaction research from Anglophone countries within sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, relevant literature from non-English-speaking countries, particularly those in Francophone, Lusophone, and Germanophone regions, was

likely excluded. This linguistic constraint may have limited the review's ability to capture a more holistic and regionally representative understanding of job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the cultural and linguistic diversity of sub-Saharan Africa extends well beyond colonial languages. Many local languages, such as Kiswahili, which is widely spoken in East Africa, are often used in non-academic or community-based research outputs. The exclusion of such sources may have resulted in the omission of context-specific insights that are highly relevant to the study of job satisfaction. Consequently, this limits the review's ability to fully reflect the multicultural and multilingual realities of the region.

To address these gaps, future reviews would benefit from a more inclusive and multilingual search strategy, as well as interdisciplinary collaborations between organisational behaviour scholars, linguists, and regional practitioners. Such efforts should also aim to incorporate grey literature and consult regionally indexed databases. This approach would enhance the equity, depth, and cultural relevance of future syntheses.

Despite these limitations, the current review offers a meaningful and methodologically rigorous synthesis of existing literature, and identifies critical directions for future research in the field of job satisfaction across sub-Saharan Africa.

Despite these limitations, the review provides a meaningful synthesis of the current literature and highlights key areas for future research.

## **Conclusion**

This scoping review examined the evolution and scope of job satisfaction research in sub-Saharan Africa over a two-decade period (2004–2024). The analysis encompassed a diverse range of occupational populations, with notable emphasis on the health and education sectors, two domains that remain central to human capital development in the region (World Bank, 2020; Oketch, 2016).

Methodologically, literature is characterised by a predominant use of cross-sectional research designs, with correlational studies emerging as the most common approach. This trend reflects an increased interest in empirically examining the relationships among the multifaceted factors influencing job satisfaction (Spector, 1997; Judge et al., 2001). The breadth of variables investigated across the reviewed studies presents a valuable foundation for future meta-analyses or systematic reviews aimed at synthesising findings in a more integrated manner (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

Importantly, the review underscores a critical under-representation of primary economic sectors such as agriculture, which continues to employ over 50% of the labour force in many sub-Saharan African countries (FAO, 2022; ILO, 2021). Addressing this gap is essential for developing more comprehensive and policy-relevant insights into job satisfaction across the full spectrum of economic activity. Furthermore, the continued reliance on Western-developed measurement instruments (e.g., the Job Satisfaction Survey and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire) highlights the pressing need for culturally responsive tools that are conceptually and contextually suited to African work environments (Mugo, 2019; Adeyemi & Ijaiya, 2009).

In sum, while the field of job satisfaction research in sub-Saharan Africa has demonstrated considerable growth, advancing this scholarship necessitates greater inclusivity in sectoral representation, methodological innovation, and the development of indigenous measurement instruments. These steps are vital to ensuring that future research is both contextually grounded and practically impactful.

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### **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

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