



A comparison of satisfaction levels among permanent and contractual government employees in Bihar

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Abstract

This study examines the expected differences in job satisfaction between permanent and contractual government employees in Bihar. Government departments increasingly rely on contractual personnel to provide public services, particularly in health, education, rural development, social welfare, and local administration. Although contractual employment may offer employment opportunities and flexibility, it can also involve insecurity, lower benefits, limited promotion prospects, and weaker institutional integration. Permanent employees generally enjoy greater employment security and better service benefits, but they may experience bureaucratic constraints, workload, and limited performance incentives.

The study proposes a comparative, cross-sectional research design using a structured questionnaire administered to permanent and contractual government employees in Bihar. Job satisfaction is measured through dimensions including pay, job security, promotion, supervision, workload, recognition, working conditions, and work-life balance. The study presents a conceptual framework, sample tables, proposed statistical techniques, and illustrative graphs. Since no primary dataset was supplied, the numerical results included in the analytical section are clearly identified as hypothetical examples rather than actual findings. The proposed study is expected to assist policymakers in designing fairer employment conditions and improving public-sector performance.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, permanent employees, contractual employees, government employment, job security, and public administration

Introduction

Government employees play a central role in implementing public policy and delivering essential services. In Bihar, government departments employ both permanent personnel appointed through regular recruitment procedures and contractual personnel appointed for fixed periods or specific programmes. Contractual employment has expanded in response to the need for rapid recruitment, programme-specific skills, financial flexibility, and the delivery of centrally and state-sponsored schemes.

The employment conditions of these two groups differ substantially. Permanent employees generally receive greater employment security, structured pay scales, pension or retirement benefits where applicable, and formal promotion channels. Contractual employees may receive comparatively lower remuneration, limited social-security benefits, short-term contracts, and uncertain prospects of renewal. These differences may affect their psychological well-being, motivation, commitment, and satisfaction with work.

Job satisfaction refers to the positive or negative attitudes that employees hold toward their work and employment conditions. It is influenced by both intrinsic factors, such as recognition and meaningful work, and extrinsic factors, such as pay, security, promotion, and working conditions. A comparison of satisfaction levels between permanent and contractual government employees is therefore important for understanding workforce morale and the quality of public service delivery.

The present study develops a research framework for examining this issue in Bihar. It does not claim to report completed fieldwork. The tables and graphs labeled “illustrative” demonstrate how results may be presented after primary data are collected.

Background of the Study

1. Government employment in Bihar

Bihar's public administration includes departments and agencies responsible for education, health, rural development, agriculture, social welfare, public works, municipal administration, and other public services. In addition to regular civil-service employees, numerous schemes and programmes depend on contractual personnel, including community-level workers, project staff, technical assistants, data-entry operators, health workers, instructors, and programme coordinators.

The coexistence of permanent and contractual employment can create differences in

- Remuneration and allowances;
- Employment security;
- Eligibility for promotion;
- Access to training;
- Retirement and social-security benefits;
- Participation in organizational decision-making;
- Workload and working hours; and
- Recognition and institutional status.

These differences may contribute to unequal levels of job satisfaction even when employees perform similar duties.

2. Importance of employee satisfaction

Employee satisfaction is important because dissatisfied employees may show lower organisational commitment, reduced morale, absenteeism, turnover intentions, and weaker service orientation. In contrast, satisfied employees are more likely to demonstrate commitment, cooperation, responsiveness, and willingness to undertake additional responsibilities.

In public administration, employee satisfaction has implications beyond individual well-being. It may influence

- The continuity of public services;
- Citizens' experiences with government offices;
- Implementation of welfare programmes;
- Organizational efficiency; and
- Employee retention in difficult or rural postings.

Statement of the Problem

Permanent and contractual employees often work within the same administrative system but experience different employment conditions. Contractual employees may perform comparable duties while receiving lower pay, fewer benefits, and less employment security. Permanent employees may have better formal benefits but may face bureaucratic rigidity, limited recognition, and high workloads.

Despite the significance of these differences, comparative evidence on employee satisfaction in Bihar remains limited. A systematic study is required to determine whether employment status is associated with overall job satisfaction and which dimensions contribute most strongly to the difference.

The central research problem is therefore

Do permanent and contractual government employees in Bihar differ significantly in their levels and dimensions of job satisfaction?

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives

- To measure the overall job satisfaction of permanent government employees in Bihar.
- To measure the overall job satisfaction of contractual government employees in Bihar.
- To compare the satisfaction levels of the two employment groups.
- To examine differences in satisfaction related to pay, job security, promotion, supervision, workload, recognition, and working conditions.
- To identify demographic and occupational factors associated with job satisfaction.
- To suggest policy measures for improving employee satisfaction in Bihar's government departments.

Research Questions

1. What is the overall level of job satisfaction among permanent government employees in Bihar?
2. What is the overall level of job satisfaction among contractual government employees in Bihar?

3. Is there a significant difference between the two groups?
4. Which dimensions of employment contribute most strongly to job satisfaction?
5. Does the relationship between employment status and satisfaction vary by department, gender, age, tenure, or location?
6. What employment reforms may improve satisfaction among both groups?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses may be tested:

- **H1:** Permanent government employees have significantly higher overall job satisfaction than contractual government employees.
- **H2:** Permanent employees report significantly greater satisfaction with job security than contractual employees.
- **H3:** Permanent employees report significantly greater satisfaction with pay and employment benefits than contractual employees.
- **H4:** Satisfaction with supervision and interpersonal relationships does not differ significantly between the two groups.
- **H5:** Job security, pay, promotion opportunities, and working conditions significantly predict overall job satisfaction.
- **H6:** The relationship between employment status and job satisfaction remains significant after controlling for age, gender, tenure, education, department, and rural or urban location.

Review of Literature

1. Concept of job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is commonly understood as an employee's evaluative response to the job. Locke (1976) described it as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. Spector (1997) treated satisfaction as a multidimensional construct involving pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, co-workers, nature of work, and communication.

2. Theories relevant to the study

- **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory** distinguishes between hygiene factors and motivators. Pay, supervision, job security, and working conditions are hygiene factors. Their absence may generate dissatisfaction, although their presence does not necessarily create strong motivation. Achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and meaningful work are motivators that may generate positive satisfaction.

- **Equity theory** argues that employees compare their inputs and outcomes with those of other employees. If contractual employees perform similar work but receive lower pay, fewer benefits, or less recognition, they may perceive inequity and experience dissatisfaction.

- **Social exchange theory** suggests that employees develop attitudes toward organizations based on the perceived balance between their contributions and the support they receive. Institutional support, fair treatment, and respect may therefore influence the satisfaction of both permanent and contractual personnel.

3. Employment status and satisfaction

Research in public and private organizations frequently indicates that job security, fair pay, career advancement, and organizational support are important predictors of employee satisfaction. Contractual employees may experience insecurity because their employment depends on renewal, project funding, or administrative decisions. They may also experience weaker access to training, promotion, and welfare benefits.

However, employment status alone may not determine satisfaction. Contractual employees may report satisfaction when they value flexibility, meaningful work, local employment, or opportunities for future career development. Permanent employees may report dissatisfaction if they experience excessive workload, administrative pressure, limited recognition, or inadequate infrastructure.

Research Methodology

1. Research design

A **cross-sectional comparative research design** is appropriate because the study compares two employment groups at a particular point in time. A mixed-method design may also be used by combining questionnaire data with interviews.

2. Study area

The study may be conducted across selected districts of Bihar. To improve representativeness, districts may be selected from different geographical and administrative regions, such as:

- North Bihar;

- South Bihar;
- central Bihar;
- urban districts; and
- Predominantly rural districts.

The final district selection should be based on feasibility, departmental access, and the distribution of permanent and contractual employees.

3. Population

The population includes permanent and contractual employees working in selected Bihar government departments, government offices, public institutions, and government-supported programmes.

4. Sample design

A stratified sampling technique is recommended. Employees may first be divided into permanent and contractual strata. Within each stratum, respondents may be selected by department and district.

An illustrative sample distribution is shown below.

Table 1: Proposed sample distribution

Employment category	Proposed respondents	Percentage
Permanent employees	250	50.0
Contractual employees	250	50.0
Total	500	100.0

The equal allocation shown above is methodological and illustrative. The final sample should reflect the population distribution or use appropriate sampling weights.

5. Data-collection instrument

A structured questionnaire may contain five sections:

- Demographic information;
- Employment and work characteristics;
- Job-satisfaction dimensions;
- Organizational commitment and intention to remain; and
- Open-ended comments.

Job satisfaction may be measured using a five-point Likert scale

Response	Score
Strongly dissatisfied	1
Dissatisfied	2
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3
Satisfied	4
Strongly satisfied	5

6. Variables and measurement

Table 2: Operationalization of variables

Variable	Indicative measures	Measurement
Employment status	Permanent or contractual	Nominal
Pay satisfaction	Salary adequacy, timeliness, parity	Likert scale
Job security	Security of employment, renewal uncertainty	Likert scale
Promotion	Career advancement and promotion opportunities	Likert scale
Supervision	Fairness, support, communication	Likert scale
Recognition	Appreciation and rewards	Likert scale
Workload	Working hours, workload fairness	Likert scale
Working conditions	Infrastructure, resources, safety	Likert scale
Training	Access to training and development	Likert scale
Work-life balance	Ability to balance work and personal life	Likert scale
Overall satisfaction	General evaluation of the job	Likert scale
Intention to remain	Desire to continue in the organisation	Likert scale

7. Reliability and validity

Content validity should be established through review by experts in public administration, human-resource management, and social research. A pilot study involving approximately 30 to 50 respondents may be conducted before the main survey.

Internal consistency may be assessed using Cronbach's

alpha. A coefficient of approximately 0.70 or higher is commonly treated as acceptable for exploratory social-science research, although interpretation should consider the number and nature of items.

Construct validity may be examined using exploratory factor analysis if the sample size and item structure are appropriate.

8. Statistical techniques

The following statistical methods may be used:

- Frequency and percentage analysis;
- Mean and standard deviation;
- Independent-samples t -test;
- Mann-Whitney U test if normality assumptions are not satisfied;
- Analysis of variance for departmental comparisons;
- Correlation analysis;
- Multiple regression;
- Effect-size estimation; and
- Thematic analysis of interview responses.

The mean satisfaction score may be calculated as

1. Illustrative demographic profile

Table 3: Hypothetical demographic profile of respondents

Characteristic	Permanent, n=250	Contractual, n=250
Mean age	42.1 years	35.6 years
Female respondents	36.8%	42.4%
Mean years of service	15.7 years	6.2 years
Rural posting	54.0%	61.2%
Graduate or above	78.8%	74.4%
Health and education departments	44.0%	58.8%

2. Illustrative mean satisfaction scores

Table 4: Hypothetical satisfaction scores by employment category

Satisfaction dimension	Permanent employees	Contractual employees	Difference
Pay and benefits	3.62	2.74	0.88
Job security	4.08	2.21	1.87
Promotion opportunities	3.18	2.36	0.82
Supervision	3.41	3.28	0.13
Recognition	3.12	2.69	0.43
Workload	2.91	2.76	0.15
Working conditions	3.20	2.88	0.32
Training opportunities	3.05	2.63	0.42
Work-life balance	3.14	2.82	0.32
Overall satisfaction	3.41	2.70	0.71

The pattern suggests that the largest difference would occur in job security, followed by pay and benefits. The smallest differences would occur in supervision and workload.

Proposed Analysis and Discussion

1. Overall satisfaction

If the illustrative pattern were confirmed by actual data,

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n X_i}{n}$$

The independent-samples test compares the mean scores of permanent and contractual employees:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_P - \bar{X}_C}{\sqrt{\frac{s_P^2}{n_P} + \frac{s_C^2}{n_C}}}$$

Where $\bar{X}_P$ and $\bar{X}_C$ are the group means, s_P^2 and s_C^2 are the group variances, and n_P and n_C are the group sample sizes.

9. Ethical considerations

The study should obtain informed consent from all respondents. Participation should be voluntary, and respondents should be informed that they may withdraw at any time. No personally identifiable information should be reported. Because employees may fear administrative consequences, data collection should protect confidentiality and avoid transmitting individual responses to supervisors.

Illustrative Data Presentation

The numerical tables in this section are examples intended to demonstrate the format of analysis.

employees may also have longer service, higher average age, greater access to formal benefits, and different occupational roles. These factors must be controlled statistically.

2. Job security

Job security is likely to be the most significant area of difference. Permanent employees usually have greater continuity of employment, subject to service rules and disciplinary procedures. Contractual employees may face uncertainty concerning contract renewal, funding, transfer, and continuation of the programme in which they work. This uncertainty can affect not only satisfaction but also long-term planning, willingness to invest in the organization, and perceived fairness.

3. Pay and benefits

Differences in salary, allowances, leave, medical benefits, retirement provisions, and other employment benefits may influence satisfaction. Where contractual employees perform comparable work but receive substantially lower compensation, they may perceive a lack of distributive and procedural fairness.

A comparison should therefore examine not only absolute salary but also workload, qualifications, working hours, and the responsibilities attached to each position.

4. Promotion and career development:

Permanent employees commonly have formal promotion pathways based on seniority, examinations, performance, or departmental rules. Contractual employees may have fewer opportunities for advancement within the same programme or department. Limited career progression may reduce motivation and increase turnover intentions. Career development opportunities, certificates, training, transparent internal recruitment, and recognition of prior experience may improve satisfaction among contractual employees.

5. Supervision and working relationships:

The difference between the groups may be smaller in supervision than in security or pay. Employees in both categories may work under the same supervisors and within the same teams. Supportive supervision, respectful treatment, regular communication, and fair allocation of work can therefore improve satisfaction irrespective of employment status.

6. Workload and working conditions:

Contractual staffs are sometimes recruited to address staff shortages and may carry significant operational responsibilities. Permanent employees may also experience high workloads because of administrative duties, vacancies, transfers, or reporting requirements. The study should measure workload in relation to working hours, staffing levels, field travel, and responsibility rather than relying solely on employment category.

7. Organizational commitment and retention:

Lower job satisfaction may be associated with weaker organizational commitment and stronger intention to leave. This is particularly important for contractual workers who may seek alternative employment when contracts expire or better opportunities arise. High turnover can result in loss of

institutional knowledge and increased recruitment and training costs.

Expected Findings

- Subject to empirical verification, the study may find that:
- Permanent employees report higher overall job satisfaction;
- The largest gap occurs in job security;
- Pay and benefits are a major source of dissatisfaction among contractual employees;
- Supervision and collegial relationships may be relatively similar across groups;
- Contractual employees express stronger concerns about renewal and career progression;
- Satisfaction varies across departments and districts;
- Longer tenure and better working conditions are positively associated with satisfaction; and Perceived organizational support reduces the negative effect of contractual status.

Policy Recommendations

- **Improve transparency in contractual employment:** Government departments should provide written information regarding, Contract duration; Renewal criteria; Remuneration; Leave provisions; Performance evaluation; Grievance procedures; and Termination conditions.
- **Ensure timely payment:** Delayed payment can significantly reduce satisfaction and increase financial stress. Administrative procedures should be designed to ensure that contractual employees receive salaries on a predictable schedule.
- **Establish fair compensation principles:** here employees perform substantially similar work with similar qualifications and responsibilities, compensation differences should be justified by transparent criteria. Periodic review of contractual remuneration should account for inflation, workload, and local living costs.
- **Expand access to social protection:** Subject to applicable law and budgetary capacity, contractual employees should receive appropriate access to accident insurance, maternity benefits, health protection, leave, and other forms of social security.
- **Create career-development opportunities:** Contractual workers should have access to; training programmes; skill certification; performance feedback; transparent internal vacancies; and Preference or recognition for relevant experience where legally permissible.
- **Strengthen grievance redressal:** A confidential and accessible grievance mechanism should be available to both permanent and contractual employees. Complaints should be handled within a specified time frame and without retaliation.
- **Improve working conditions:** Departments should assess staffing levels, office infrastructure, field

equipment, safety, travel arrangements, and workload distribution. Satisfaction cannot be improved through financial measures alone if employees lack the resources needed to perform their duties.

- **Promote equal respect and inclusion:** Permanent and contractual employees should be integrated into team meetings, training, communication channels, and professional recognition systems. Equal respect may improve morale even when employment structures remain different.

Limitations of the Study

The proposed study may face several limitations:

- A cross-sectional design cannot establish long-term causality.
- Self-reported responses may be affected by fear, social desirability, or temporary workplace conditions.
- Employees may hesitate to criticise government departments.
- Contractual employment arrangements may differ substantially across departments.
- District-level sampling may not fully represent all government employees in Bihar.
- Satisfaction scores may be influenced by personal expectations and alternative employment opportunities.
- The use of hypothetical tables in this study does not substitute for primary evidence.

Conclusion

The comparison of permanent and contractual government employees is important for understanding workforce morale and public-service effectiveness in Bihar. Employment security, pay, benefits, career progression, and institutional recognition are likely to be major factors distinguishing the two groups. Permanent employees may report greater satisfaction because of stable employment and stronger service benefits, whereas contractual employees may experience dissatisfaction arising from uncertainty, limited advancement, and unequal employment conditions.

Nevertheless, job satisfaction is multidimensional. Supportive supervision, fair workloads, training, recognition, and adequate working conditions may improve the experience of both permanent and contractual employees. A rigorous empirical study using a representative sample and validated questionnaire is required to determine the magnitude and significance of these differences.

A balanced employment policy should not treat contractual personnel as a temporary administrative resource without considering their well-being and contribution. Improving transparency, payment regularity, social protection, career development, grievance redressal, and workplace inclusion can contribute to a more motivated and effective public workforce in Bihar.

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