

Employee Job Satisfaction in Public Sector: A Study Based on the Case of Niger

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Abstract This study refers to how job characteristics, work environment, pay satisfaction, and advancement opportunities influence employee's job satisfaction. The study results showed that job clarity, effective communications with management, a participatory management approach, organizational support of career development, opportunities for advancement, and family-friendly policies are all significant variables affecting the job satisfaction of employees. The effect of pay satisfaction on employee job satisfaction was not significant. This study also found gender differences in factors affecting employee's job satisfaction.

Key words Job satisfaction; Communications; Employees; Opportunities

1 Introduction

The productivity of public sector employees is a cause of increasing concern in most countries in the 1990s. This concern is particularly great in Niger, where the size of the public sector is large in relation to the private sector (compared with other countries), and where the level of governmental revenues have fallen substantially over the past decade.

The scientific study into productivity improvement dates at least back to the pioneering work of Frederick Taylor in the second decade of this century. His scientific management began the development of the empirical foundations for the analysis of employee productivity. Later, in the 1930s, studies by Elton Mayo led to the discovery of what was termed the Hawthorne Effect, which led to the development of the human relations approach to management. The human relations approach postulates that treating employees less as if they are automatons will lead to improved productivity.

Maslow built the theory of the hierarchy of needs on the needs, wants, and hungers of individuals. Skinner considered an individual's needs, wants, and hungers as good examples of inner causes of behavior the second link in his theoretical chain.

2 Literature Review

According to Bradley and Brian (2003), employee's job satisfaction is pleasure that an employee derives from his/her Job. It is an attitudinal variable that describe how people feel about their job. (Agho, Mueller, and price, 1993). Similarly Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza suggest job satisfaction is determined by the balance between inputs and out puts. According the concept, human has basic and universal needs and that, individual needs are fulfilled in their current situation, and then that individual will be happy. Job satisfaction depends on balance between work role inputs (pain)- like education, working time, effort, and work out puts(pleasures) like wages, fringe benefits, status, task importance, working conditions, and intrinsic aspects of the job. If work outputs (pleasures) are relative to work role inputs (pains). Frederick Herzberg Theory: Herzberg an American Behavioural scientist suggest that people show their dissatisfaction with salary, job security or organization policy. However, improvement regarding these dissatisfying factors do not necessary mean to have satisfying employees. He identifies hygiene factors like recognition, achievement and growth. According to him these might be helpful to raise job satisfaction level .The independent effect of hygiene factor is inconclusive and have been revisited time and again. Hackman & Oldham theory of job characteristics: This theory first introduced in 1975. The concept of this theory revolves around five core work and three psychological dimensions. Skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and task feedback are the work attributes that result in three psychological states namely meaningfulness of work, responsibility for work outcome, and knowledge of work activities.

3 Methodology

The study was conducted in the ministry of public health in Niamey, a satellite city, which is the capital of Niger. The data used in this study was collected from the telephone contacts and questionnaires sent by E-mail in the form of file attached. After download and printing, employees responded to them

and returned as attachment. Others information has collected by the Internet sites of the various hospitals, and others by the experience of the writer in the ministry as the manager of human resources. The questionnaire took about ten minutes to complete. In all, 203 employees answered the self-administered questionnaire containing questions regarding job satisfaction, age, gender, education level, tenure and marital status.

4 Definition of Job Satisfaction

There are a plethora of definitions of job satisfaction, some of which are contradictory in nature. Spector (1997) refers to job satisfaction in terms of how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. Ellickson and Logsdon (2002) support this view by defining job satisfaction as the extent to which employees like their work.

Schermerhorn (1993) defines job satisfaction as an affective or emotional response towards various aspects of an employee's work. The author emphasizes that likely causes of job satisfaction include status, supervision, co-worker relationships, job content, remuneration and extrinsic rewards, promotion and physical conditions of the work environment, as well as organizational structure.

Similarly, Mc Namara (n.d.) points out that job satisfaction refers to an individual's feeling or state of mind giving heed to the nature of the individual's work. The author further explains that job satisfaction can be influenced by a diversity of job dimensions, inter alia, the quality of the employee's relationship with their supervisor, the status of the physical environment in which the individual works, degree of fulfillment in work.

5 The Determinants of Job Satisfaction

Scientists generally pay attention to two competing sources of workers' job satisfaction.

5.1 Demographic variables

The most important demographic variable that receives huge attention in job satisfaction research is sex. A number of empirical studies on job satisfaction have suggested that female workers have lower level of job satisfaction than their male counterparts because male officials dominate most of the public organizations.

Another common demographic variable studied is educational level. Most of the researches on the relationship between education level and job satisfaction yield consistent findings. Especially Griffin, Dunbar & McGill (1978) found that workers with higher educational level would tend to be more satisfied with their job than workers with lower educational level. The third commonly identified variable in the research on demographic characteristics is age. Worker's age has been found to have a negative impact on worker's job satisfaction (Buzawa, 1984). This means that younger workers are more satisfied with their jobs than their senior counterparts.

The fourth and final variable is the job assignment of a public official. Public officials have many different interests, and these are sometimes satisfied on the job. However, the more public officials find that they can fulfill their interests while on the job, the more satisfied they will be with those jobs. For example, a recent study results showed that university graduates were more satisfied with their jobs when these were consistent with their university majors than when these fell outside their fields of interest (Vandenberg & Lance, 1992).

5.2 Work environment variables

Herzberg (1959; 1966) developed two-factor theory of job satisfaction: "motivation" and "hygiene". According to Herzberg's theory, if handled properly, hygiene issues cannot motivate workers but can minimize dissatisfaction. Hygiene factors include company policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions.

They are variables related to the worker's environment. By contrast, a worker's job satisfaction was influenced by factors associated with the work itself or by outcomes directly derived from it such as the nature of their jobs, achievement in the work, promotion opportunities, and chances for personal growth and recognition. Because such factors were associated with high levels of job satisfaction, Herzberg referred them as 'motivation factors'. Hackman and Oldham (1975) proposed five "core" dimensions for evaluating the immediate work environment constituting the Job Diagnostic Survey UDS. These core dimensions turned out to be associated significantly with job satisfaction and a high sense of workers' motivation. That is, the work environment source consisted of five dimensions, namely those of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback (Reiner, & Zhao, 1999). The most important characteristic that receives huge attention in Hackman and Oldham's study is the

meaningfulness of the work that means to what extent the individual perceives the work as significant and important. Job meaningfulness can be defined as the product of three dimensions: skill variety (activities that challenge skills and abilities); task identity (the extent to which the job requires completion of a “whole”, identifiable piece of work); task significance (how substantially the job has impacts on other people’s lives).

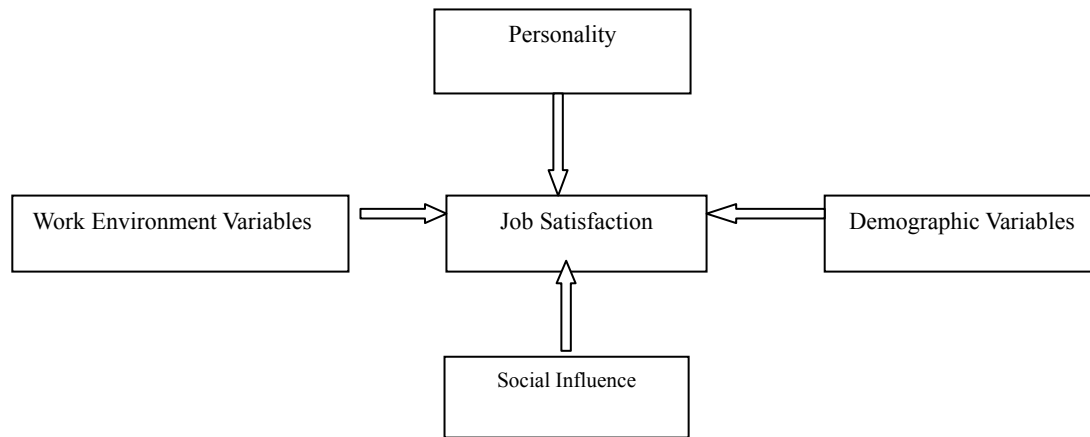


Figure 1 Determinants of Job Satisfaction

6 Discussion

6.1 Demographic information

The sample consisted of 203 civil servants employed by the Ministry of Public Health in Niger. Administrative clerks made up the greater number of respondents that participated in the study ($n = 43$ or 21.2%). The majority of respondents were medical workers ($n = 123$ or 60.5%) with the sample being more representative of males 102 than females ($n = 125$ or 61.6%). Most of the respondents have a std. 10 educational level ($n = 83$ or 40.9%), are in the age group 30-39 years ($n = 93$ or 45.8%) and are married ($n = 121$ or 59.6%). The majority of respondents are permanently employed ($n = 177$ or 87.2%), have 11-20 years service in the public sector ($n = 105$ or 51.7%) and fall in the income bracket R 5001-R 10 000 ($n = 76$ or 37.4%).

6.2 Descriptive statistics for the dimensions of job satisfaction

The results of this study indicate that employees at the Ministry of Public Health in Niger where the research was conducted, are most satisfied with their coworkers (mean = 37.73; SD = 13.42), followed by the nature of the work itself (mean = 36.36; SD = 9.78) and the supervision they receive (mean = 30.69; SD = 11.98).

They are however, less satisfied with promotional opportunities (mean = 12.76; SD = 14.66) and least satisfied with the pay they receive (mean = 11.96; SD = 13.08).

6.3 Results

The results indicate significant relationships at the 99% confidence level between respondents' job satisfaction and occupational class ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.01$), race ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$), gender ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$), educational level ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$), tenure ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$), income ($r = 0.53$, $p < 0.01$) as well as job status ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$).

Furthermore, there was a significant relationship between age and job satisfaction ($r = 0.26$, $p < 0.05$) at the 95% confidence level. However, no significant relationship between marital status and job satisfaction was found ($r = 0.14$, $p > 0.05$).

7 Conclusion

Job satisfaction has been subject of great interest among behavioral scientists and Human research management researchers over period of time. Number of organizational, individual, and psychological factors has been identified to enhance satisfaction level. However, these factors have been revisited time and again and job satisfaction determinants information is still inconclusive. This has led to develop a conceptual model and test it in developing country to assess the magnitude of different factors that might enhance job satisfaction of employee in public sector work setting.

It is anticipated that results of this study will enable to understand the concept of public employees' job satisfaction with further refined perspective.

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