

Impact of Workplace Conditions on Level of Employee Satisfaction

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Abstract

Late arrivals and no show are major concern in South African workplace. The bad working environment and attitude of management may result in dissatisfied employees, which contributes toward most of the absenteeism. This study aims to investigate the impact of the management and workplace conditions on the level of satisfaction of the employees. A Johannesburg based non-profit organization which has been facing high staff turnover was selected as a case study. About 50 employees across several departments were selected using convenience sampling for semi-structured interviews and participant observations. The result showed that majority of participants reported on limited equipment and machinery available to perform daily tasks, for instance the whole organization was using only one printer to scan, print and copy documents. Furthermore, majority of participants were concerned that management does not provide sufficient resources and rewards to deserving employees.

Keywords

Workplace conditions, Management, Non-profit Organization, Employee satisfaction.

1. Introduction

For any organization, work is a fundamental segment to accomplish the mission and vision through the use of competent workforce. Employees should meet the execution criteria set by the organization to guarantee the nature of their work. In order to accomplish this, employees require a workplace that enables them to work openly, either individually or in a group, without any problem. Satisfied and motivated employees are likely to continue working efficiently.

A South African non-profit organization based in Johannesburg has been providing financial support to primary and secondary learners with an aim of educating underprivileged and disadvantaged children across the nation. Since 2000, this organization has changed over 800 lives, developed 420 young leaders with a 100% pass matric rate (Student Sponsorship Programme, 2014). The organization also runs mentorship programmes for students, offers parent workshops, and run bursary programmes outsourced by large funding agencies. The organization is a non-governmental organization (NGO), which is being sponsored by national and international agencies, and has partnered with local and international schools.

The working environment in the non-profit organization under study is more casual and flexible compared to the corporate workplace, and employees tend to have little focus or drive when conducting work responsibilities. The responsibilities mainly include field work to interact and engage with schools across the country, distribute and collect

application forms, and administer mentorship programmes. The employees tend to go home without returning to the workplace once the fieldwork is done for the day. The nature of the work also excludes employees from making decisions, hence they tend to take accountability fairly loosely. Furthermore, employees feel that there is a lack of communication and interaction from the management. The management tend to dictate expectations on the employees; however, they are not available to listen to the problems of employees. Many employees within the organization are leaving, which has highly impacted productivity of the team and the organization.

The main aim of this study is to explore the impact of the management and workplace conditions on the level of satisfaction of the employees. This study will help management identify the factors causing the employee dissatisfaction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Behaviour and Job Satisfaction

The attitudes and behaviours of individuals and groups in any organization makes them distinct from each other, and determines organizational behavior (Johns, 1996) which reveals how each employee is committed to the organizational goals and mission. Every employee has their own interests, aspirations and expectations within the workplace. Organizational behavior determines job satisfaction of employees as workplace conditions impact employees' ability to do their work. Employers are responsible for providing reasonably safe and healthy working conditions to their employees (Grogan, 2005), including working hours and efficient equipment. With limited and faulty machinery and equipment, employees become less motivated towards their work resulting in lower performance levels. According to Grogan (2005), South African labour legislation specifies that workers should not work for longer than 45 hours a week. In the case of overtime, the workers must be remunerated, the rate of which is more than half times the normal wage. This rule and rate should be followed by all organization - private businesses, governmental and non-profit organizations. Every employee in South Africa has a right to fair remuneration and other benefits in accordance with their contracts, skills, experience and knowledge as well as their effort and loyalty devoted to the employer (Pons and Deale, 2007), as long as employees are sincere and tender services.

According to Lowe et al. (1996), unfair conduct also has an impact on job satisfaction. Unfair conduct includes demotion, probation, lower benefits and bias during conflict. Employers must not isolate and side-line employees from decision making relative to their job. The organization leaders must play a prominent role in ensuring that employees are not unfairly treated, which involves doing things differently, stimulating the organization, leading the change effort, communicating and involving people in decision making (Mulki et al., 2015). The management must ensure that employees feel satisfied. Often in the case of non-profit organizations, limited number of staff members increase employees' responsibilities, however remuneration does not increase accordingly.

2.2 Leadership and Job Satisfaction

The level of job satisfaction is also influenced by the management and leadership of the organization. Leadership is an influence that particular individuals exert upon the others towards the achievement of organization's goals (Johns, 1996; Kuo et al., 2013). Leadership plays a pivotal role in the success and attitudes of the employees in the workplace. Employees on average are satisfied with their jobs; however, they tend to be less satisfied with their pay and promotion opportunities where the leaders can have influence (Robbins et al., 2009).

Effective leadership can have a positive influence on the organization through enhanced productivity, innovation, job satisfaction and commitment of the workforce. Leaders such as managers, executives and directors play a major part in the decision making of the business, and hence are responsible to understand and know their employees by assessing their expectations, needs and requirements. As indicated in figure 1, leaders should understand various needs of employees in order to satisfy them.

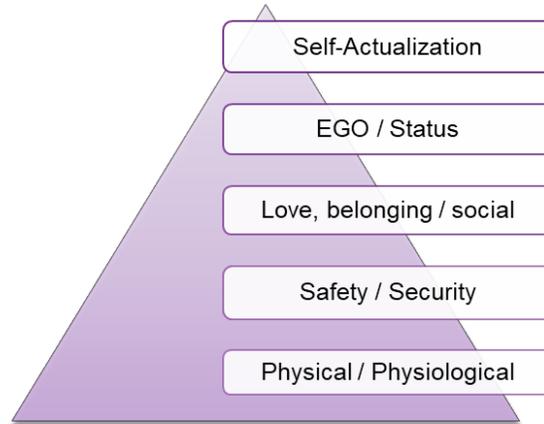


Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (adapted from Banks, 1997)

Although a leadership position attracts certain benefits, it comes with major responsibilities and challenges. The leadership characteristic is determined by the extent to which leaders are approachable and their personal concern for employees. Actions of some leaders may have consequences for an employee's job satisfaction (Johns, 1996). An initiating-structure type of leader may decrease job satisfaction and level of performance, when employees are under a high degree of pressure due to deadlines, unclear tasks or external threats. Other types of leader behaviours which affect the job satisfaction of employees within the workplace are participative behaviours and supportive behaviours (Banks, 1997; Lin et al., 2016). Leaders with participative behaviours often involve employees in the decision-making process to make them feel valued and appreciated, which results in loyal employees. Leaders with practice supportive behaviours encourage employees to perform well, which results in employees performing to their best and positively contributing towards the goals of the business. This is set out in the Path-Goal theory outlined in Figure 2 below.

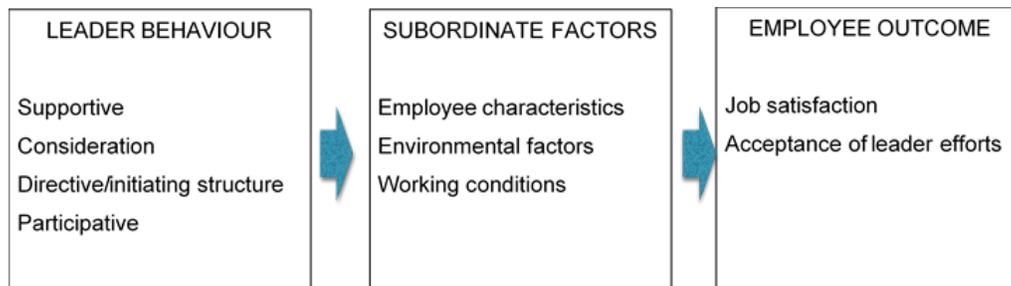


Figure 2. Path-Goal theory (adopted from Johns, 1996)

2.3 Occupation Fulfilment

Numerous organizations get into trouble as they fail to account for the importance of the workplace for representative occupation fulfilment (Raziq and Maulabakhsh, 2015), which results in organizations being unable to bring innovative products onto the market to be competitive (Aiken et al., 2002). Occupation fulfilment is an introduction of feelings (mental, physiological and natural conditions) that employees have towards the job they are performing at the workplace (Cheng et al., 2014), and is a basic necessity that allows employees to feel content and be inspired towards better execution.

Employees feel separated from the organization if they start feeling unhappy with the work assigned to them or are unsure about certain components, such as their rights; dangerous working conditions, dispute with their colleagues and management (Lacasse, 2015). In such environment, organizations becomes unable to manage the cost of disappointed employees as they are unlikely to perform to the guidelines of the organization and eventually gets terminated. This process and the consequent enlisting of new staff bring with them extra expenses.

Human Resources Management (HRM) assumes a critical role in the maintenance of employees and retaining their workers successfully. The elements that impact on worker maintenance are the workplace, director bolster, organizational picture, representative esteem coordination, compensation, reward and acknowledgment and employees' vocational improvement. According to Denton and Zeytinoglu (2005), the workplace stands out amongst the most vital aspects in the maintenance of the employee. Studies have also indicated that remuneration is imperative for drawing in and holding talent. Likewise, professional improvement is imperative for worker maintenance and develop skilled workforce and pioneers to attain upper hand and retain talents (Ferri et al., 2005; Freyermuth, 2007).

Inadequate strategies within the organization are responsible for high non-appearance of employees (Dunn, 2007), hence it should be tackled through the recognition and use of suitable strategies at different foundations and administrators (Evans and Rauch, 1999; Wilkinson and William, 2002) which stop absenteeism rather than empower non-appearance (Dalton and Todor, 1993). A better participation can be obtained with the managers who present strict methodology for chronicling, checking and exploring affliction of non-attendance (Jones et al., 1998). O'Reilly and Pfeffer (2001) observed a 30% to 40% decrease in non-appearance rates following the presentation of a strict non-appearance observing and following framework. Few organizations are limiting or eliminating weary pay (Jones et al., 1998), and others use disciplinary activities (Dunn and Wilkinson, 2002) to diminish non-attendance. Organization can also use participation reward to motivate employees to reduce non-attendance.

3. Research Methodology

The study used case study design and qualitative research method to implement an up-close and in-depth examination (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). The non-profit organization based in Johannesburg was selected as the case study based on the high staff turnover experienced by the organization. Qualitative method allowed to examine how employees attribute meaning to their situation in the workplace and enabled them to share their views on job satisfaction.

This study took an interactive approach, through interviews and observations, and argues that the overall organizational performance is affected by several factors, mainly: lack of employee engagement, leadership and job satisfaction. Out of 86 total staff working in the Johannesburg office, about 50 employees across five departments (Finance, Bursary Management, Marketing, Communication, Human Resources) were selected purposively (non-probability sampling technique) in order to determine whether the employees that formed the sample were satisfied and intended to continue working there on a long-term basis.

4. Results and Discussion

The major factors influencing the level of job satisfaction are provided in table 1. Limited resources and role of management were reported by the participants as main contributing factors affecting the level of dissatisfaction of employees within the organization.

Table 1: Factors influencing job satisfaction

Category	Factors	Frequency	Percentage of responses
1	Insufficient resources	40	80%
2	Role of Management	45	90%
Number of respondents = 50			

4.1 Availability of Resources

The study revealed that majority (80%) of the participants reported that the organization has limited equipment and machinery available to perform their daily tasks. Compared to HRM department, more participants from Bursary and Communication departments reported on insufficient resources (Figure 3).

The organization still used Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) computer, which is bulky and monitor freezes frequently requiring computer to be rebooted multiple times. This has created inconvenience and caused frustration among employees forcing them to make mistakes and be distracted, ultimately affecting their performance and productivity. The images in CRT monitors are less sharp which may cause damage to the eye in a long term usage.

Furthermore, participants also reported that only one printer is available which is used for multiple tasks (scanning, copying and printing), which was also observed during the study visit. This has resulted in many delays as one printer only allows employees to perform only one task at a time and number of print jobs keeps on compiling. Therefore, employees are failing to meet their deadlines which has caused major inconvenience with high level of complaints and frustrations amongst the participants. The participants would prefer to work with efficient and effective resources, which is aligned with Pons and Deale (2007) who stated that employees are required to have all the necessary resources to perform their jobs well. Limited sources may cause delays and lower the performance and productivity of employees (Grogan, 2005).

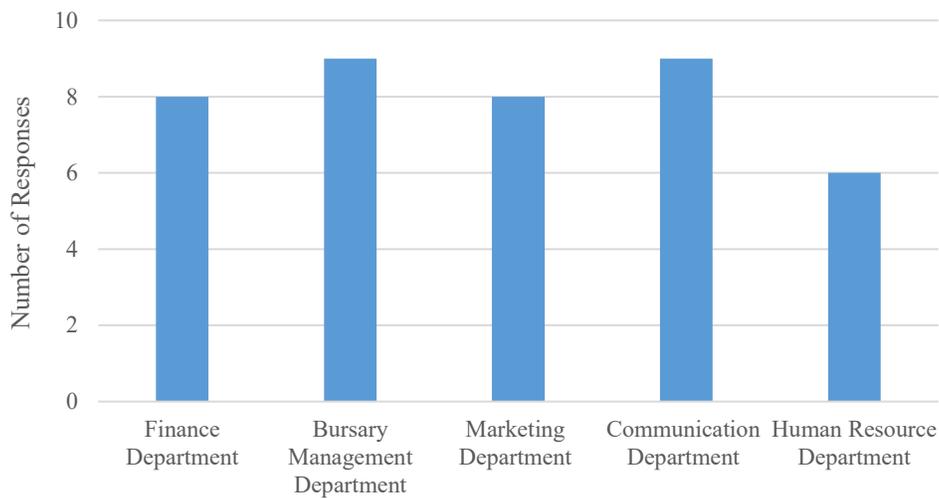


Figure 3. Insufficient resources per department

4.2 Impact of Management on Job Satisfaction

Majority (90%) of the respondents reported that management is often too demanding, and do not provide necessary resources and inspiration to keep them motivated. All the participants from Bursary and HRM departments reported that the role of management has impact on their level of dissatisfaction (Figure 4).

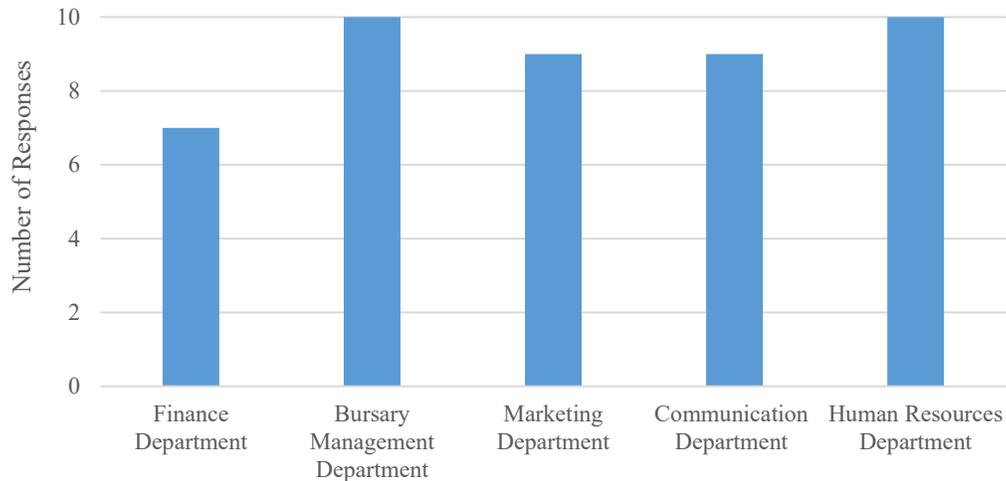


Figure 4. Respondents' view on role of management per department

The participants also reported that they are not involved in the decision-making process, which contradicts the statement of Grogan (2005) who stated that employee should not be left to feel isolated in decision making relative to their job. It was also revealed that the management resolved the conflict unfairly, which is aligned with the Grogan (2005) who stated that unfair conduct is a wider concept than discrimination. Therefore, management should ensure that all employees are fairly treated irrespective of their position or power within the organization.

Employee engagement and involvement was considered by all the participants as healthy and necessary to build working relationship in the workplace, which will eventually increase the performance and productivity of the organization.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Limited resources and lack of management role contributed to job dissatisfaction within the workplace. The employees were observed to be facing difficulty with meeting the deadlines and getting frustration with limited and ineffective equipment as stated by 80% of the participants. The behavior of management plays a pivotal role to keep employees satisfied within the workplace. However, 90% of the participants reported that management does not promote employee engagement and interaction to keep employees motivated.

Recommendations

1. The non-profit organization should attract sponsors and generate funds to add enough and efficient equipment. This will help in eliminating delays and employees will be able to complete their jobs on time.
2. The management must be well trained to handle diversity and ensure equality to resolve conflict and address problems fairly.
3. The organization can implement performance appraisal system to assess employees, which will help to provide constructive feedback to struggling employees and reward better performing employees.
4. The management can implement job rotation, enrichment and enlargement to promote employee engagement and involvement. This will enable employees to perform various jobs and assist each other, and give them a sense of greater responsibility.

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