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JOB SATISFACTION AMONGST EMPLOYEES AT A SELECTED MUNICIPALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE INFLUENCES OF RESOURCES

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ABSTRACT

Service delivery by public bodies such as municipalities and government departments is a critical issue given the increasing number of protests about service delivery. The purpose of this research was to determine how resource (un)availability affects job satisfaction amongst employees of the King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality (KSDM) in the Eastern Cape. Questionnaires were designed using SurveyMonkey and the link was sent to employees via the organisation's intranet. Although 64 questionnaires were completed, only 44 of these were usable for data analysis purposes. The findings of the study show that employees at the Municipality are generally satisfied with the personal, group and organisational factors that affect job satisfaction, but are concerned about the tools, quality of materials, office space, finances and the time required for them to accomplish the desired results. Such resources are very essential for the day-to-day execution of duties, and therefore the study recommends that the Municipality should consider adopting a strategic approach in terms of managing company resources so as to attain its objectives.

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction is a complex construct (Judge, Van Vianen & De Pater 2004), with many comparable definitions. According to the seminal work of Locke (1976), job satisfaction is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state when employees evaluate their job experiences. Implicit in Locke's definition is the importance of both affect, or feeling, and cognition, or thinking. When we think, we have feelings about what we think. Conversely, when we have feelings, we think about what we feel. Cognition and affect are thus inextricably linked in our psychology and even in our biology. Thus, when people evaluate their jobs, as when they assess anything important to them, both thinking and feeling are involved. Locke further defines job satisfaction as an individual's subjective valuation of different aspects of their job. Spector (2005) argues that job satisfaction is an attitudinal variable that reflects the overall belief of people about their jobs. In simple terms, this suggests that job satisfaction is the extent to which people feel positive about various aspects of their jobs, which is congruent with the view of Locke (1976). Similarly, Lumley, Coetzee, and Tladinyane (2011) describe job satisfaction as the overall feelings of employees about their jobs and the attitudes they have towards various aspects of their jobs, and as the perceptions that could consequently influence the degree of fit between the individual and the organisation, which correspond to the definitions of Spector (2005) and Locke (1976). The

above descriptions view job satisfaction as an employee's sense of pleasurable well-being at his or her work and within the work environment. The question that guide this study was Does the unavailability of resources affect job satisfaction amongst municipal employees in the KSD Municipality?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resources

By definition, resources are the means to do a job properly and with excellence. Resources include facilities, material(s), equipment, work environment and conditions that are supportive, competence among employees, capability and knowledge, and well-trained staff (Benson, 2005). Scholarly thought regarding the importance of resources has a long tradition. People are the most important resource of an organisation, as they contribute not only physical but also mental characteristics to organisations, such as knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours, and therefore resources in this study focuses mainly on human resources. Beginning with the identification of the acquired and useful abilities of individuals as a source of revenue or profit, there is a widely acknowledged sense that individuals possess a stock of skills, knowledge and experiences that can be leveraged for organisational and/or personal benefit. Building on this fundamental insight, scholars working in disciplinary traditions ranging from psychology to economics have developed the human capital construct (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011) and yet other scholars such as Becker (1962) have argued that there is no point in having human capital resources without other resources to do their jobs. Human capital, defined as a unit's composition of employees' knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs), can be a particularly critical determinant of a unit's service provision; however, not all forms of human capital resources are considered equally important (Ployhart, Van Iddekinge & Mackenzie Jr 2011). Ployhart *et al.* (2011) seem to disagree with the above scholars in that they say not all forms of human capital resources are considered equally important. Wright and McMahan (2011, as cited by Fu 2013) posit that human capital refers to the stock of skills and knowledge embodied in individuals, which can be achieved through education and training. On the basis of the Job-Demand Resources (JD-R) model (Li *et al.* 2015), personal resources have been identified as the most crucial determinants of work engagement, together with job resources. To understand the critical importance of people in the organisation is to recognise that the human element and the organisation are synonymous (Tella, Ayeni & Popoola 2007).

Municipalities

The Local Government: Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998:36 defines a municipality as “an organ of state within the local sphere of government consisting of political structures, office bearers and administration of the municipality”. Bizana *et al.* (2015) categorise these municipalities as follows:

- Category A (Metropolitan cities) (8) – “Large urban complexes with exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in its area”
- Category B (Local municipalities) (229) – “Local municipality that shares municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with the category C municipality within whose area it falls”

- Category C (District municipalities) (46) – “A district municipality has municipal executive and legislative authority in an area that includes more than one municipality” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996: Chapter 7, Section 155)

As indicated in the above statements, there are 283 municipalities in South Africa, with 229 category B or local municipalities. This study focuses on category B only, and deals with two local municipalities.

KSD is the name of the local municipality where the study took place. KSD was formed before the local government elections in the year 2000, when the Mqanduli and Mthatha transitional and rural councils were merged; Mqanduli village is situated 30 kilometres south of Mthatha. KSD is approximately 3 019 square kilometres in extent. The majority of the population of the municipality resides in the rural areas, where they still practise cultural traditions. The researcher approached the complete population of 1 044 employees with access to computers to achieve as much participation as possible from the employees of all departments, together with their managers.

Table 1.1 Employment structure (targeted population)

Section/department	Number of employees
Communication & Social Services (water, street cleaning.	399
Finance & Admin Corp, HR, Finance	133
Public Safety (Traffic, Fire)	335
Sport & Recreation (Sportsground, Stadium)	12
Technical: Electricity, Plumbers	160
Environmental Protection (Environmental Health practitioners....	05
TOTAL	1 044

Research design

The study utilised a quantitative approach. The reason for using a quantitative methodology for this study is that the researcher wanted to determine the current resource availability in relation to job-satisfaction levels among the municipality staff to establish whether job satisfaction is affected by resource un/availability. This was achieved by using a self-designed questionnaire, which was the most appropriate as all the available instruments did not cover all elements of the resources that were the focus of this study. The questionnaire was made available to participants in the form of a web-based questionnaire, hence only employees with access to computers were asked to complete the questionnaire. In this instance it meant that a total of 1 044 participants were approached. The total population was approached, as the numbers were sufficient to do the required statistical tests (a chi-square, Pearson/Spearman). To be able to do the relevant statistical tests, the researcher needed a sufficient number of completed questionnaires (of all employees of the KSD Municipality with access to a computer), calculated as the number of questions in the questionnaire multiplied by the response scale. Likert-type questions were used, based on a six-point scale, anchored by 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = unsure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly

agree, and 6 = don't know/not applicable, where n = number of questions \times 5 = minimum number of completed questionnaires.

Procedure for data collection

An invitation to respond to a questionnaire was mailed to the KSD municipal manager and HR department, who facilitated the distribution of the link to the employees with access to computers – 1 044 participants. A low response rate posed a threat to the validity of the study. Particularly, the researcher had no control over the poor response rate, because the researcher did not have to distribute the questionnaire herself (someone did it on her behalf as prescribed by SurveyMonkey and the ethics application agreement); therefore, how respondents responded was beyond the researcher's control and she had to trust the distributor. The researcher also had no control over issues like firewalls and other network-related hiccups that may block some users from accessing the questionnaire, especially since the questionnaire came from SurveyMonkey and not directly from the sender to the user. These factors, and others like non-completion of the questionnaire or questionnaire incompletely filled in, resulting in missing data, may have had an impact on the poor response rate, which may threaten the validity of the results. The questionnaire contained one question for each of the 44 items of satisfaction. These were Likert-type questions based on a six-point scale (strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree, strongly agree, don't know/not applicable). It also collected information on personal characteristics such as race, age (categorised according to generation x or y; baby boomers), gender and qualification. The first page of the questionnaire covered the purpose of the study, ethical concerns (according to Unisa standards), and an introduction to the study.

Data analysis and interpretation

Quantitative statistical procedures were used. Data was collected by way of web-based questionnaires that were completed electronically and submitted anonymously. The primary reason for utilising this approach was time and cost savings, as well as the dispersed geographical location of the employees. Employees were not required to write their names on the questionnaire; in that way they remained anonymous. The researcher employed the help of a professional statistician who is contracted by Unisa and thus bound by confidentiality provisions to assist with the statistical analysis of the questionnaire. Software that was appropriate for analysing relationships between resource availability and job satisfaction (for example, t-tests and exploratory factor analysis) to test for differences between the different biographical groups was used; web-based questionnaires (which were suggested by the statistician and approved by the supervisor) were initially expected to be used for data capturing, analysis and for presenting the results. Thereafter the researcher discussed the results with reference to the literature review. However, for the purpose of this study, a Cronbach's alpha was performed to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. Exploratory factor analysis (organisation, group and personal factors) and item analysis were also performed to determine the factors/dimensions of the construct (namely job satisfaction in the case of the KSD Municipality) (Tavakol 2011). The questionnaire was first administered to the smaller municipality, and the responses were used to conduct an EFA (the statistician assist with that). The EFA helped us to 'clean the questionnaire', which was then administered to the larger municipality, after which CFA was performed (with the help of the

statistician). The statistician assisted the researcher with all statistics to be performed to measure 'job satisfaction' and resource availability between the different biographical groups, for example managers, staff, administrative clerks, technicians, etcetera

Table 1 Recommended response rates in survey research

Population	Percentage suggested	No. of respondents
20	100%	20
30	80%	24
50	64%	32
100	45%	45
200	32%	64
500	20%	100
1000	14%	140
10000	4,5%	450
100000	2%	2000
200000	1%	2000

The following two paragraphs are the first part of the profile of the respondents, to give an idea of the possible generalisability of the findings because of the low response rate. In the case of organisational research, survey response rates are declining (Fulton 2016; Rogelberg & Stanton 2007), which threatens the (external) validity of (some) conclusions drawn. From the table above, it would have been reasonable to have at least 140 respondents, as this would have enabled the researcher to undertake both the exploratory factor analysis as well as the chi square tests. The results can thus (possibly) also not be generalised to the population as a whole (Kim 2005). However, it was decided to go ahead with the analyses because valuable information that would not otherwise have been available could be used to assess the situation. In line with the purpose of the study, the questionnaire used to obtain data consisted of a self-designed questionnaire using the SurveyMonkey online questionnaire. The results are reported following the structure of the questionnaire. The first section of the questionnaire covered the profile of respondents: job level, race, age, gender, highest qualification, and total years of service.

RESPONSES RELATED TO ACCESS TO RESOURCES BY EMPLOYEES

Responses to questions relating to resources to do the job are addressed next and the responses are reflected in Table 3 below.

Table 3: ACCESS TO RESOURCES TO DO THE JOB

QUESTION	STRONGLY DISAGREE/ DISAGREE	UNSURE	STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE	TOTAL RESPONSES
I have work knowledge, skills and experience (i.e. competence)	3 8.1%	0 0.0%	34 91.9%	37
Access to enough (sufficient number of) team members to do my job properly	2 5.4%	1 2.7%	34 91.9%	37
Access to adequately qualified team members to carry out my job satisfactorily	1 2.7%	0 0.0%	36 97.3%	37
Access to enough support staff to ensure the job gets done properly	14 37.8%	3 8.1%	20 54.1%	37
Access to competent support staff to carry out my duties successfully	12 33.3%	4 11.1%	20 55.6%	36
Access to enough materials and equipment	9 25.7%	1 2.9%	25 71.4%	35
The quality of the materials and equipment is adequate to do the job properly	18 50.0%	4 11.1%	14 38.9%	36
Appropriate tools	18 48.6%	8 21.6%	11 29.7%	37
Finances	18 48.6%	4 10.8%	15 40.5%	37
Information	12 34.3%	6 17.1%	17 48.6%	35
Suitable processes	19 52.8%	8 22.2%	9 25.0%	36
Appropriate systems	10 27.8%	3 8.3%	23 63.9%	36
Appropriate procedures clearly indicating how the job must be done	13 36.1%	4 11.1%	19 52.8%	36
Up-to-date/state-of-the-art technology	11 30.6%	2 5.6%	23 63.9%	36
Enough time to do a proper job	16 42.1%	8 21.1%	14 36.8%	38
Our department is set up in a way that facilitates workflow	10 27.0%	2 5.4%	25 67.6%	37

Generally, the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had access to resources to execute their tasks. These resources relate especially to skills, experience and quality of support staff, as well as team members. However, in a few instances they indicated that they did not have access to

sufficient resources to do their job, specifically the following resources were indicated as being problematic:

- a) Quality of materials and equipment to do a proper job. Fifty percent of the respondents indicated that they did not have such materials. Since most of the respondents were management and other officials in the administrative function, this raises very significant questions, as it is often taken for granted that these groupings do not need lots of resources.
- b) Appropriate tools: Again, 48.6% of the respondents raised this point.
- c) Close to half of the respondents (48.6%) also pointed out they did not have adequate finances to support their work.
- d) Interestingly, 52.8% observed that the processes were not good enough to enable the employees to execute their work.
- e) Time was also seen to be a huge resource, as 42.1% said this was a challenge. This is interesting, as the respondents noted that they had enough support staff as well as team members.

It is important to note that these are mostly borderline cases and that these resources are generally beyond the control of the individual (vs. competence), but within the control of the organisation. As was noted in the earlier chapters, the lack of resources hampers the shaping of a competitive advantage. Hence one can expect that the respondents may not experience job satisfaction because they do not have access to all resource required to do the job properly.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Role of resources in job satisfaction

Although the concept of job satisfaction is multi-dimensional and sometimes even changes depending on the situation, there is an acknowledgement that it is important for any organisation's attainment of its organisational goals. Amongst the few mostly agreed facts has been the role that resources play towards enhancing job satisfaction and organisational goals. This study showed that employees at the municipality had the required skills, competencies and knowledge to complete their tasks; they had adequate support structures, were satisfied with the systems and procedures they followed and were also happy with the materials and equipment they had at their disposal. However, the respondents complained about the tools, the quality of materials and also inadequate finances. The respondents further indicated that they were unhappy with the time they had to undertake their responsibilities. It therefore is imperative for the municipality to look at how it allocates tools, time and finances, since human resources are the most important resources in the organisation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that, in as much as the concept of organisational resources is multi-dimensional (involving tangible and intangible resources), it is important to manage these resources in a similar way to other factors that may affect organisational performance. If resources are not managed well, they can contribute to job dissatisfaction among employees, the same way other organisational, personal and group factors affect (dis)satisfaction. This study has shown in particular that employees at the KSD Municipality are unhappy with tools, finances, time in which

they have to do their work, quality of materials as well as some of the organisational materials. This study therefore calls for the strategic management of resources as a measure to attain organisational goals. On the other hand, the municipality has in place very good staff support systems, a good skills and knowledge base as well as other materials and equipment that are managed well.

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