

AN INVESTIGATION INTO JOB SATISFACTION IN THE MUNICIPALITIES WITHIN ERONGO REGION, NAMIBIA

George R.Chingarande

Cosmas Mwanza

ABSTRACT

Changes in the management of an entity's operations will affect many facets within the organization as well as the employees. In this vein it is therefore, imperative that organizations must regularly feel the pulse of its workforce and attempt to meet their needs in order to motivate and retain them. This paper attempts to investigate the impact on job satisfaction within the Municipalities in the ER. The first research objective was to evaluate the impact of the establishment of ERED on staff job satisfaction in the Municipalities. The second research objective was to measure job satisfaction using the MSQ. The third objective involved the evaluation of the factors that contribute to low job satisfaction among the staff of the various Municipalities within the ER. The last objective was to make recommendations on how to mitigate the status quo regarding job satisfaction in the various Municipalities within the ER. The significance of this research is that no study relating to the impact on job satisfaction has been conducted on the Municipalities within the ER in Namibia.

The research methodology employed the quantitative approach utilising a modified version of the short-form Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) measurement instrument.

The research established a conundrum of evidence that the job satisfaction level in the Municipalities was low and has been existing long before the establishment of ERED. It also established that empowerment was a thorny issue causing job dissatisfaction among the work variables. Other areas of dissatisfaction included supervision, lack of a complaint forum, poor rewards and jobs of a repetitive nature. The implications of this study are that Municipality

management of the ER and other Municipalities in Namibia must use the results for follow-up organizational improvement initiatives and also to establish a baseline for future assessments.

It was recommended that the following changes be implemented to improve the status quo: Executive Development Programs; Employee Relations Management; Culture Change Program; Code of Ethics; Performance Based Rewards and Promotion; Job Evaluation; Job Redesign and Regular Employee Satisfaction Surveys among others.

Introduction

Job satisfaction is a fast growing concept and very pivotal to the performance of any organization whether public or private. A number of studies have researched on job satisfaction (Jurkiewicz and Massey [1] Hoogendoorn, Bongers, de Vet, Ariens and van Mechelen [2]; Gianque, Ritz, Varone, Biget and Waldner [3]; Saba [4]) whose main focus has indicated that motivation and leadership are core predictors to job satisfaction. A number of reasons have made organisations to focus on job satisfaction which include the drive to increase productivity and organisational commitment; lower absenteeism; reduce turn-over and ultimately increase organisational effectiveness.

Past studies have failed to underpin the causes of job dissatisfaction which are vast and varied. Many variables cause job satisfaction and emotional intelligence is very cardinal since every individual has deep seated attitudes. This study is different in that it does not restrict itself to the known influencers of job satisfaction but delves into aspects of the work itself, relationships between supervisor and subordinates, empowerment, motivation and rewards, leadership and emotional intelligence, role clarity and role conflict. The uniqueness of this study is that it is based on an African setting and involves the study of nine Municipalities and the findings might be different from their counterparts.

Background to the study

Erongo Regional Electricity Distribution (ERED) Company or Erongo RED was established by the Government of Republic of Namibia to take over the electricity supply and distribution function which was previously the domain of the Municipalities of Walvis Bay, Swakopmund, Arandis, Omaruru, Usakos, Henties Bay, Karibib, Uis and Erongo Regional Council within the Erongo Region (ER). Regional Electricity Distribution (RED) Companies or REDS are a legal entities which are tasked with the supply and distribution of electricity in dedicated regions,

combining the electricity distribution departments of the Local Authorities (LA's), Regional Councils (RC's) and Nampower. The aim of the establishment of Erongo RED was to supply and distribute electricity more efficiently and to benefit the end users. However, the company has come under a lot of criticism since its inception resulting in communities in the region demanding the removal of the company for its failure to meet the objectives that it was set to achieve (Steenkamp [5]. This change management strategy has caused staff turnover and low staff morale within the Municipalities. A staff migration from different Municipalities into Erongo RED has resulted and hence affected job satisfaction and service quality. There is need to know the job satisfaction levels and what motivates the employees so that productivity and performance is enhanced in the public sector.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to evaluate the impact of the establishment of Erongo RED on staff job satisfaction in the Municipalities; to measure job satisfaction using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) and to evaluate the factors that contribute to low job satisfaction among the staff of the various Municipalities within ER.

Research Methodology

This study employed mixed methodologies. The questionnaire was the research instrument of choice because it is flexible and is not concerned with very detailed and descriptive data. The last question of the questionnaire was open-ended and gives the respondents the opportunity to answer in their own words and give as much detail as they want to. This type of question is consistent with qualitative research.

Target Population

The target population for this study was the staff of the nine Municipalities in the ER, being the Municipalities of Walvis Bay, Swakopmund, Arandis, Usakos, Omaruru, Henties Bay, Karibib, Uis and ERC. The total workforce for the nine Municipalities in the ER is 124.

Data for this study was obtained from the staff of each of the seven Municipalities within the ER. A stratified random sampling approach was used in order to include all the different Municipalities in the region. The reason for choosing this approach is because when a population is heterogeneous such as this one under study, the approach is more efficient, accurate results are obtained since all groups are represented (Cooper and Schindler[7].

A total sample of 92 from the total population completed the questionnaire, except for the two Municipalities, that is, the Municipality of Henties Bay who has declined the request for the research to be conducted, whereas Arandis Town Council approved the request for the research to be conducted, however the questionnaire distributed to the staff could not be obtained in time.

Construction of the Research Instrument

The purpose of this questionnaire was to assess the impact and measure the employee's satisfaction with their jobs in the nine Municipalities within the ER. The Questionnaire included 20 items and was tailored to measure the job satisfaction. Each item represented either an intrinsic facet or an extrinsic facet of the job situation. Each item presented the respondent with five response alternatives which ranged from very satisfied to very unsatisfied on a 5-point Likert scale.

Section A comprised of demographic data of the respondent, that is, gender, age group, tenure, educational level and name of the Municipality work for.

In Section B, there were twenty questions to gauge the level of job satisfaction of the workers in the nine Municipalities under study. Respondents were requested to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with given statements on job satisfaction. Section B adopted the Likert 5 point scale requesting respondents to indicate the degree to which they are satisfied with their current job. A Likert scale of 1 to 5 point, bipolar rating (extremely satisfied to not satisfied at all) was used on this part of the instrument. Fink [8] noted that, organizational survey items usually provide five, seven or nine point options to have a bipolar scale with a mid-point, which provides a pivotal view of the data.

The last question, section C of the questionnaire was open-ended which gave the respondents the opportunity to answer in their own words and give as much detail as they wanted to. This type of question is consistent with qualitative research.

Data Analysis

Excel spreadsheet was used to load the data which was then exported to the SPSS software package for analysis.

All cases with or 50% or more of missing entries were discarded and the data re-ordered appropriately. Statistical processes with SPSS included descriptive, correlations and factor analyses.

Results and Discussion

A total of 92 questionnaires were usable out of a total of 150. This translates to a 61.33% return rate . A total of 39 (42.4%) were male while the number of female was more at 53 (57.6%). A plausible reason was not available regarding this disproportionate in the number of females who participated over the number of males.

In the sample 1, 1.1% of the respondents were younger than 20 years;8, 8.7% were above 50 year 20, 21.7% were between 21-30 years 45, 48.9% were between 31-40 years and 17, 18.5% were between 41-50years.

It is observed that the majority 48.9% of the Municipality staff compliment ranges from 31-40 years of age. This is indicative of the physical condition required to perform the civic duties entailed by this sector.

All in all 20 different job satisfaction factors were studied. As depicted by Table 4.3, the job satisfaction scores ranged from a low of 1.89 for factor seven and a high of 3.14 for factor 15 which are working hours and implementation of company policies respectively. The mean satisfaction score for all the factors put together was 2.60 which is rather average as it corresponds with the response option just satisfied on the questionnaire.

The aggregate job satisfaction scores for all Municipalities range from 2.18 for Uis Village Council to a high of 2.91 for Walvis Bay Municipality. It is noteworthy that all the scores are below 3 which are the modal score. Thus essentially all Municipalities are blighted by poor job satisfaction problems although they are afflicted to different levels. It is evident that the restructuring exercise has negatively impacted on job satisfaction, and the worst affected Municipality is the Uis Village Council.

Arandis Town Council approved to participate in the study; however the questionnaires distributed could not be obtained in time for data analysis. The CEO of Henries Bay Municipality decline to have the Municipality participate in the study.

Factors affecting Job Satisfaction

A total of 20 factors were studied. Of these 20 only four factors scored above 3 as depicted by the Mean column in Table 4.3. The other sixteen had scores below 3. Since 3 was the mode and are indicative of borderline satisfaction, the results graphically illustrate that there are only four factors with which the staffs in the Municipalities are satisfied, but even then the level of satisfaction is just borderline.

Promotion Prospects

The respondents were asked the question: “*How satisfied are you with your promotional prospects on the job?*”

This factor had a mean score of 2.97. The score registered was low. Furthermore, correlation analysis was performed to understand how the notion that the promotional prospects were not satisfactory was linked to gender, education level and tenure. The results are depicted in the table below, which shows that there were no significant correlations at the 95% confidence level. Thus it is evident that across all demographic dimensions the prevailing view is that the promotional prospects are not satisfactory. However, a significant positive co-relation (with values of 0.236 and $t=0.024$) was established between tenure and promotion prospects. The longer the employee has worked for the organization the better they felt about their promotion prospects. This points to a possible underlying sentiment that people are promoted by length of service rather than other factors. Workers become more committed if there is an expectancy of a job promotion since it uplifts their status and emoluments (Kosteas [9]).

Praise and Appreciation from Supervisor

The third factor under study was the degree to which subordinates felt that their supervisors appreciated them. This was measure by the question, “*How satisfied are you with the amount and frequency of informal praise and appreciation you receive from your supervisor for doing a good job?*”

The mean score for this factor is 3.01. This corresponds to the response “satisfied” on the Likert scale of the questionnaire. The cross tabulation of the various scores on this factor against the different Municipalities is presented in the table below. The table reveals that although generally the staffs in the various Municipalities feel they are satisfied with the level of praise and appreciation they receive from their supervisor, the situation is different at Municipality 8 (Karibib). For all the other Municipalities more than half of the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the level of praise and appreciation, but for the Karibib Municipality 5 of the seven respondents were not satisfied as shown by the score of two or less.

Relationship with Supervisor

To establish the quality of the relationships between the staffs and their supervisors the staffs were asked the question, “*How satisfied are you with the relationship that you have with your supervisor?*”

The mean score was 2.29. To refine the insights into the state of supervisor-staff relationships a cross tabulation of this factor and the different Municipalities was performed. For all the Municipalities more than half the respondents are not satisfied with the current state of the supervisor employee relationships. A supervisor who is friendly and uses non-verbal immediacy tends to open communication lines and improves job satisfaction. Relationships points Gbadamosi [10], is important across the globe especially within Africa where the manager needs to foster positive working relations with and between his or her African employees.

Implementation of Departmental Policies

To establish the degree of the staffs' satisfaction with the manner of the implementation of departmental policies, they were asked to respond to the question, "*How satisfied are you with the way departmental policies are put in practice*".

The mean score was 3.07 which points to a general satisfaction with this factor. This trend is further supported by evidence from cross tabulations which indicates that more than half of the staffs from the each Municipality are satisfied or very satisfied with departmental policy implementation. Participative decision-making processes, elimination of restrictive organizational policies and procedures will enhance job satisfaction and give staffs a sense of belonging where they will tend to own decisions taken (Gellatly) (11). The staffs responded to the question, "*How satisfied are you with your physical working conditions?*" with a score of 2.35. This score is indicative of low general satisfaction with the physical working conditions. Further analysis was performed to establish whether this poor satisfaction was linked to Municipalities, gender, age and tenure. This was true for all municipalities. These findings are in line with (Santhepparaj and Alam [12] who found that, there is significant correlation between working conditions and job satisfaction. Studies have also shown that low job satisfaction levels can be imputed to the physical working conditions (De Troyer [13].

Pearson's correlation analysis was performed to evaluate the correlation between the various demographic factors and their satisfaction with the physical working conditions. There were no significant co-relationships at the 95% confidence level. Hence staffs of different education levels, both male and female and regardless of the length of service share the same view that the physical working conditions are not satisfactory.

Working Hours

The respondents were asked to respond to the question, “*How satisfied are you with your working hours?*” With a mean score of 1.89 this item showed the least level of satisfaction of all the factors under study. Working hours are ostensibly a great source of perturbation among the employees across all the municipalities. People with longer working hours are less satisfied with their jobs than those working less hours (Nanda and Browne[13] and (Kaiser[14].

Furthermore, research indicates that a stressed worker may develop negative feelings for his or her job if supervisory care is absent (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling and Boudreau [15].

Consideration of Views and Participation

The respondents were asked to rate the degree to which they were satisfied that their views, inputs and participation were valued by responding to the question, “*How satisfied are you that your views and participation are valued?*” The mean score for this item was of 2.71 which is low. The findings are in line with (Gellatly[11] who states that participative decision-making processes, elimination of restrictive organizational policies and procedures, self-managing work group structures, reward systems that match volunteers’ expectations, and realistic job reviews to match volunteers and their abilities with organizational needs will motivate and satisfy the worker.

Job Security

To establish the sense of job security among the employees they were asked to respond to the very direct question, “*How satisfied are you with your overall job security?*” The mean score of 2.46 betrays a general feeling of insecurity. Furthermore, there is a significant co-relation ($t=0.013$ at the 95% confidence level) between the feeling of insecurity and length of tenure. The positive co-relation points to the fact that the longer the staffs work for the Municipality the more secure they feel in their jobs. This is perfectly logical. These findings are in concert with those of Siddique, Malik and Abbass [17] who state that job security has a strong affiliation with job satisfaction. The more the staffs perceive that there is an element of insecurity regarding their jobs, dissatisfaction will result.

Employee Empowerment

With a mean response of 2.53 to the question, “*How satisfied are you with the empowerment you have to influence the quality of your work?*” this item betrays a general feeling of

dissatisfaction with lack of empowerment. Empowerment is a thorny issue as it has been shown to increase job satisfaction (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (18).

Supervisor Responsiveness

A mean score of 2.64 in response to the question, “*How satisfied are you that your supervisor cares and responds to issues that are most important to you?*” was obtained. This is in keeping with all other supervisor related factors that are generally low.

Remuneration Equity

A score of 3.05 on factor Jsat14 in table 4.3 reveals that the employees are merely satisfied that their remuneration is commensurate with their responsibilities.

There was positive correlation ($p=0.2$) between tenure and remuneration equity. The positive correlation indicates that the longer staffs stay with the organization the more satisfied they are with their salaries. The Pearson co-efficient of 0.202 shows that this satisfaction is marginal. Thus the long serving employees are not as dissatisfied as the new employees but are also not very satisfied with their remuneration. The findings are in concert with those of Adam [19] who states that the remuneration must be equitable and where there is a felt inequity, there is a likelihood that the worker will attempt to remove this frustration by looking for an employment that will give him or her reward for the services which are interpretive as justified. If the in-equity continues to prevail this leads to diminishing job satisfaction.

Perceived Supervisor Competence

The respondents were asked to rate their supervisors' competences by responding to the question, “*How satisfied are you with the competence of your supervisor in making decisions?*” The recorded score was 2.59. This score is below the average, and dovetails neatly into the well established pattern of low supervisor rating by the staffs.

Work Load

The mean score for the work load assessment was 2.27. The question, “*How satisfied are you that your job keeps you busy all the time*” was designed to elicit responses on work overload with higher scores indicating that the staffs were overworked. The low score recorded actually points to the fact that the staffs feel that their jobs do not keep them busy all the time.

There is therefore a case of role under-load of the jobs in the Municipalities. In a related study the opposite was true, where workers indicated the main causes of job dissatisfaction as work volumes.

Job Variety

The job variety score was 2.45 as when asked, “*How satisfied are you that your job keeps you busy all the time?*” This points to a perception of poor job design in the Municipalities under consideration. Work design is a significant attribute to higher job satisfaction as employees tend to enjoy a variety of tasks which are challenging and not routine.

Ethical Integrity

Having been asked, “*How satisfied are you that you are able to do things that do not go against your conscience?*” The responses were predominantly inclined towards dissatisfaction. Consequently, the score was a low 2.48.

Conclusions and Recommendations

There is compelling evidence that the job satisfaction level in the Municipalities is low. The average mean job satisfaction of all factors studied is 2.60. Most poignantly none scored a mean of 4 or 5, which were indicative of ‘very satisfied’ and ‘extremely satisfied’ on the questionnaire respectively. This trend is replicated across all Municipalities on most factors. It is therefore, concluded that the Municipalities under study suffer from generalized low job satisfaction.

In the absence of baseline data predating the creation of Erongo RED, this study cannot on its own fully attribute the low job satisfaction to the establishment of Erongo RED. It is possible that the low job satisfaction has been a chronic malady whose on-set was before the creation of Erongo RED.

Only four factors scored marginally above 3, which are factors Praise and Appreciation from the supervisor, implementation of policies, remuneration equity and the consistency check on policy implementation crafted as application of policies.

Remuneration, equity and prospects of promotion were strongly correlated, and furthermore they were both positively correlated to length of service in the Municipalities. It is therefore, concluded that the employees who have not been with the organization for long take a dim view of their promotion prospects and are also dissatisfied with their salaries. Promotion and remuneration seem not to be performance related, but are designed to reward loyalty.

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