

Job Satisfaction in the Healthcare Services in South Africa: Case of MPH

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Abstract

The ultimate goal in the health environment is quality service delivery it is imperative that employees perform optimally and maintain acceptable levels of job satisfaction. The aim of this study was to investigate how job satisfaction of healthcare personnel influence quality service delivery through productivity, work performance, employee loyalty and retention at Mafikeng Provincial Hospital (MPH) in the North-West Province. The study utilized a descriptive method in order to reach its aim and the results reveal that among the determinants of job satisfaction, the availability of sufficient resources to do the work was selected as the major determinant of employee job satisfaction at MPH and at least 56.3% of the MPH workers were not satisfied with sufficient resources available to do their work, which hindered the effectiveness of service delivery. Satisfaction with job done by immediate supervisor was the second determinant of job satisfaction on this aspect the organization is doing very well with 66.0% of the respondents reported satisfaction with their immediate supervisor's jobs. The findings from the study show that job satisfaction improves productivity and performance, this was evident from majority of respondents (83.5%) who agreed that job satisfaction affects the way they met their target quotas, this makes logic when we look at the response rate of 79.6% of employees who agreed that they spent productive time working on the tasks assigned to them, rather than idling or doing other things which do not benefit the organization.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, healthcare service delivery, South Africa, MPH.

1. Introduction

Every healthcare institute is expected by the public to render quality and professional healthcare services. In order to do so, healthcare institutes need employees to be satisfied with their jobs. Health care workers can be a valuable source of information about factors that enable or hinder them from providing high quality care. The South African health system consists of both a private for profit health sector and a public health sector. The majority of South Africans rely on the public health care sector for their health care needs but expenditure in the private sector far outweighs that of the public sector. This scenario, exacerbated by the global financial crisis, has resulted in an over-serviced private sector, and under-serviced public sector. Provision of good quality health care requires that the whole health care system be functioning with well trained, motivated and satisfied staff, adequate services and equipment, good referral networks and appropriate management and support. The absence of some of these would lead to poor quality.

The findings on the management structure of public health facilities in South Africa highlighted the difficulties associated with the centralization of decision-making authority (Padarath, Chamberlain and McCoy, 2005). The resultant restricted authority and accountability for facility managers impacted negatively on service delivery at a local level. Facility managers felt disempowered to take decisions and solve problems in their facilities. Additionally, a shortage of competent and qualified health personnel contributes to inadequate health care. The South African Human Rights Commission's (SAHRC) public hearings indicated that health institutions are severely understaffed and experience difficulties in retaining existing staff members, who are lured by incentives in the private sector and in other countries. Vacancy rates were particularly high in rural areas and facilities serving disadvantaged areas.

On the other hand, there have been more studies on job satisfaction of nurses and doctors and investigations on why they leave the country (Herman, 2005:1; Mariani *et al.*, 2003:9; Mavanyisi, 2005:35 and Pillay, 2003:58). So far,

however, there has been little discussion about the contribution of job satisfaction of the health personnel on quality service delivery. Healthcare personnel in this study refer to health professionals who are not Physicians, Dental professionals, Clinical psychologists, Pharmacists or Nurses. For the purpose of this study health personnel will refer to Health professionals who received specialized training and require special licensure; these workers includes Dieticians, Laboratory technologists, medical illustrators, technicians, medical record technicians and physicians' assistants.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Job satisfaction in public healthcare environment

Job satisfaction is one of the most studied areas in organizational psychology and is generally defined as "the attitudes and feelings people have about their job. Positive and favorable attitudes towards the job indicate job satisfaction, and negative and unfavorable attitudes towards the job indicate job dissatisfaction" (Armstrong, 2008:187). Most researchers agreed that job satisfaction is closely related to behaviours and attitudes at work (McKenna, 2000:119). Job satisfaction is a multifaceted concept related to employee's attitude and feelings towards his or her job (Mullins, 2005:89) and they are interdependent, according to Crossman and Abou-Zaki (2003:371).

Amos, Ristow, and Pearse (2008:130) postulate that employees experiencing high satisfaction levels contribute to organizational commitment, job involvement, improved physical and mental health, and improved quality of life both on and off the job. Job dissatisfaction on the other hand, culminates in higher absenteeism, turnover, labor problems, labor grievances, attempts to organize labor unions and a negative organizational climate. Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert and Hatfield (2006:39) and Robbins *et al.* (2003:67) support that when employees become dissatisfied, costly problems can result. These include excessive absenteeism, turnover and grievances. They maintain that while it is difficult to put a monetary value on job dissatisfaction, estimates can be made of the economic cost of the results of job dissatisfaction such as absenteeism, turn over and employee grievances. Hence, as part of their social responsibility, many managers strive to create rewarding and satisfying work environments for their employees.

Healthcare is crucial service industry that has significant effects for facilitating productivity increases, supporting the population's general wellbeing and enabling them to pursue a more meaningful life (Siddiqui and khandakar, 2007:264). The pattern of healthcare needs and demands has changed in the public sector. This is largely attributed to the spreading of worldwide diseases such as HIV/AIDS and rise in chronic diseases. As a result of these, the roles of healthcare personnel are changing (Masterson and Dolan, 2004:595). Considering the above and in light of the vision of Healthcare 2010 "Equal access to quality care" of the Department of Health: North-West Province, it is imperative that employees maintain satisfactory job satisfaction and performance levels. Boggie (2005:35) maintains that in order to provide good service, the quality of employees is critical to ensure success. It is for this reason that it is essential that the area of job satisfaction be explored in order to gain a better insight thereof. This will provide executive managers with important information to enable them to stimulate greater job satisfaction amongst employees.

2.2 Job satisfaction and service delivery

Quality service delivery is defined as the ability of the service provider to meet or exceed customer needs and expectations (Bakar, Akgun and Assaf, 2007:504; Quader, 2009:110 and Sohail 2003:198). Quader (2009:112) further defines expectations as the pre-experienced beliefs about the service against which the actual service performance is measured. Ronen and Pilskin (2006:141) highlighted that quality service is achieved by a quality process when the employees and managers are part of the process and are actively involved in the process design and control. A process can only be improved when teamwork is used to identify problems, solve them and prevent their reoccurrence. Therefore, management commitment to this entire process is vital.

Ogunrin, Ogunrin and Akerle (2007:292) assert that, with regard to quality in service delivery, the motivational status and job satisfaction of employees is more crucial than sheer statistics. Therefore, employees are the greatest assets and no matter how efficient an organization's technology and equipment may be, it is no match for the effectiveness and efficiency of the employees. According to Ittner and Larcker (2003:4), employees who feel satisfied with their jobs provide higher levels of customer satisfaction and quality service delivery. However, Timmreck (2005:43) argues that employee job satisfaction alone is not enough to effect the changes necessary for significant service quality improvements. He highlights that maintaining high service quality is also a function of providing employees with the control and authority to better serve customers. Across the private, public, and voluntary sectors, empowering staff is

widely advocated as a means to improve the performance and productivity of organizations

The results of Snipes *et al.* (2005:1338) study which determined specific facets of employee job satisfaction which have the largest effect on customer perceptions of service quality, suggest that management efforts to increase intrinsic job satisfaction facets, such as employees' perception of the job itself, may have a larger influence on service quality than other satisfaction facets. Aspects related to pay, contingent rewards, and operations have less of an effect on employees' service performance than intrinsic factors. This implied that with extrinsic motivation, employees focus more on the rewards rather than the work itself and, therefore, work only well enough to get the rewards. According to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005:875), the argument that employee satisfaction improves service quality is grounded on the theory of equity in social exchanges. Although there are different views on social exchange theory, theorists agree that social exchange involves a series of interactions to generate obligations that are unspecified. Flynn (2005:735) supports that in the context of social exchange theory, when an employer offers favorable working conditions that make its service employees satisfied, the latter will in return tend to be committed to making an extra effort to the organization as a means of reciprocity for their employer leading to a higher level of service quality.

2.3 Determinants of job satisfaction

Two main groups of factors contribute to job satisfaction, namely personal factors and organizational factors. Personal factors refer mainly to personality, status and seniority, general life satisfaction and the extent to which the job characteristics are congruent with personal characteristics. Organizational factors refer to pay and benefits, the work itself, the supervisor, the relationship with co-workers, and working conditions (Nel *et al.*, 2008:126).

Malhotra and Morris (2009:899) indicate that the organizational determinants of job satisfaction play a very important role because the employees spend major part of their time in organizations hence there are number of organizational factors that determine job satisfaction of employees. As a result, job satisfaction in the organizations can be increased by organizing and managing the organizational factors. Additionally, personal determinants of job satisfaction also help a lot in maintaining the motivation and personal factors of the employees to work effectively and efficiently. Hence, job satisfaction can be related to psychological factors while a number of personal factors determine the job satisfaction of the employees.

Rosta and Gerber (2008:520) define job satisfaction as a multidimensional parameter, consisting of intrinsic factors, which include decision autonomy and recognition, and extrinsic factors, which includes wages and job security. A variety of personal characteristics have been found to have significant effects on reports of job satisfaction including gender, race, age, marital status, children and education (Brown and McIntosh, 2003:1245). Kahneman and Krueger (2006:10) indicate that individual job satisfaction is not only affected by a worker's own absolute income level, for example, but also by their income relative to some expected level or comparison group.

Expectations have been found to vary depending on a worker's age, educational level and occupation (Clark, 2004:58). Other identified determinants of job satisfaction, which may be helpful in the consideration of job satisfaction, include the differing job characteristics of workers, hours of work, establishment size, union membership and occupation. There have been found to have significant effects on self-reported job satisfaction (Gardner and Oswald, 2007:51). Clark (2004:59) found a significant effect of including 'work values', or worker's reports of the factors important to them in their job, on job satisfaction. More specifically, workers who emphasize the importance of pay report lower job satisfaction, whilst those who emphasize workplace relations are more likely to report high levels of job satisfaction.

Accordingly, Mogerou (2002:20) argues that job security is a major determinant of job satisfaction in all sectors of employment for both males and females. While, Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000:520) report that job security significantly increases the individual's job satisfaction. They affirm that job security is ranked seventh in importance among all the determinants of job satisfaction, their findings further report that some determinants of job satisfaction such as job security are country specific.

Long job tenure is an important determinant of greater job security as this shows long-term employer-employee relationship and a good job-match (Campbell *et al.*, 2001:18). In their study they show that employees who have long-term contracts report lower risk of job loss compared with those with short tenures who unambiguously feel that suffer from the greatest job insecurity. Liu, Wang and Lu (2010:3) in their study on clinic doctors, medico-technical workers and public health workers found that most staff considered their job to be of importance and got along well with their fellow workers. What they felt most dissatisfied with were work reward (i.e. welfare, pay, and promotion opportunity), working conditions, and sense of work achievements. They also discovered that some caregivers complained that the salary was too low, considering their experience and skill levels, which substantially hurt their work enthusiasm.

According to Le'vy-Garboua and Montmarquette (2004:136), job satisfaction reflects a worker's experienced or post-decisional preference for her job relative to outside opportunities. The worker who reports being satisfied with her job ranks the mental opportunity of choosing the same job from the beginning until the present date and possibly in the future, with today's knowledge of what happened on the job and available alternatives. This definition implies that, under perfect foresight, workers would always be satisfied with their own voluntary choice of job in the past. It takes unforeseen events, or surprises, to have workers wish to deviate from their own past decision and report a variable satisfaction with their job over time. Shimazu, Shimazu, and Odahara (2004:451) argue that satisfaction relates to dynamic uncertainty and that most workers will not be choosing a single job in their whole life. Even a rational worker with perfect foresight may be satisfied with her job in the past and still want to change job in the near future, just like a spectator who enjoyed a show will usually not want to attend the same show next week. Additionally, since jobs are commonly experienced over an extended period of time, job satisfaction indicates both the worker's enjoyment of past experience and his/her expected enjoyment if she stays in this job in the future.

2.4 Job satisfaction and productivity

Sy, Tram and O'Hara (2006) state that employee productivity depends on the amount of time an individual is physically present at a job and also the degree to which he or she is "mentally present" or efficiently functioning while present at a job. Hence, companies must address both of these issues in order to maintain high worker productivity. This may occur through a variety of strategies that focus on employee satisfaction, health, and morale. However, some research indicates that employee satisfaction does not necessarily contribute directly to productivity. Satisfaction may be viewed as a passive attribute, while more proactive measures such as motivation levels and brand engagement are viewed as more closely linked to behavioral change, performance, and ultimately, to bottom line performance (Clark, 2003:19). Employee retention involves taking measures to encourage employees to remain in the organization for the maximum period of time (Nel et al., 2008:128). According to Robbins and Judge (2009:132), employee loyalty is characterized by employees being committed to the success of the organization and believing that working for this organization is their best option. Not only do they plan to remain with the organization, but they do not actively search for alternative employment and are not responsive to offers. Schermerhorn *et al* (2004:167) state that organizations face a lot of problems in employee retention these days, hence hiring knowledgeable people for the job is essential for an employer, but retention is even more important than hiring.

Amos et al. (2008:58) highlight that, it is important for managers to have an understanding of why people would leave an organization and it is equally important as well to identify those factors that attract people to organizations, and keep them there. Therefore, if a person is not satisfied by the job he/she is doing they may switch over to some other more suitable job. The top organizations are on the top because they value their employees and they know how to keep them glued to the organization (Takahashi, 2006:195). However employees stay and leave for reasons, which maybe personal or professional. These reasons should be understood by the employer and should be taken care of. Dickin, Dollahite and Habicht (2010:339) investigated how paraprofessional Community Nutrition Educators' perceptions of work context relate to job satisfaction and intention to leave the position. Their results depict that despite low satisfaction with pay, overall job satisfaction was high and intention to leave was low. Satisfaction was positively related to Community Nutrition Educators' perceptions of program value, work relationships, and having a voice in relevant decisions. Intention to leave was negatively related to perceptions of program value and supervision and satisfaction with pay, but the latter relationship was found only among more educated Community Nutrition Educators'.

The study of Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2007:898) confirmed that job satisfaction is a very good predictor of future quits and, more important, revealed that job satisfaction does not influence the inclination to become non-employed; that is, neither men nor women self-select out of the labor force due to dissatisfaction. The study further refutes the claim that the gender/job satisfaction paradox (i.e., the fact that women tend to be more satisfied at work than men) is being driven by self-selection. However, the paper maintains that based on job satisfaction information and quitting behavior, there is no apparent difference in firm attachment between men and women.

Findings by Denton et al. (2007:83) indicate that among the restructuring variables, job insecurity was the most highly significant predictor of propensity to leave. Although it would be expected that as workloads increased with no increases in pay that would result in propensity to leave, their findings show that those who reported lower rates of work intensification were significantly more likely to leave their agency, although not by a large margin. Additionally, fewer resources within the home-care system were also found to be a significant indicator of propensity to leave, as were staff shortages and lack of organizational and peer support, although their effects were found to be relatively minor. Once

again, the average number of hours worked per week, satisfaction with levels of pay and age emerged as important indicators of propensity to leave.

Shields and Ward (2001:679) found that nurses who report overall dissatisfaction with their jobs had a 65% higher probability of intending to quit than those reporting to be satisfied. However, dissatisfaction with promotion and training opportunities were found to have a stronger impact than workload or pay. The findings by Corneliben (2006:8) on the study on job characteristics as determinants of job satisfaction and labor mobility reveal that job insecurity reduces job satisfaction, increases the subjective probability of job search but it decreases quits. However, in circumstances of higher job insecurity it seems to be hard to find a job to quit into. Hence, the study confirms job satisfaction as a strong predictor of job search and quits. Theodossiou and Vasileiou (2007:74) in a study investigating the relationship between job satisfaction and job security in European countries revealed that workers in jobs with low likelihood of job termination derive higher utility from work compared to the workers in insecure jobs.

2.5 Job satisfaction and work performance

Wong and Law (2002) indicate that job performance is influenced by employees' ability to use emotions to facilitate performance. Employees could use both positive and negative emotions to their advantage to improve performance. For example, positive emotions, such as excitement or enthusiasm, could stimulate employees to provide better customer service, complete their work assignments, or contribute to the organization. Conversely, negative emotions, such as anxiety, could facilitate employees' ability to focus on their work tasks. Employees with high emotional intelligence should be more adept at regulating their own emotions and managing others' emotions to foster more positive interactions, which could lead to more organizational citizenship behaviours that contribute to performance.

In the study investigating the impact of employee satisfaction on operational performance in high-contact service industries, based on 206 service shops in Hong Kong, Yee, Yeung and Edwin Cheng (2008:653) found that employee satisfaction is significantly related to service quality and to customer satisfaction, while the operational performance in turn influences firm profitability. They also found that firm profitability has a moderate non-recursive effect on employee satisfaction, leading to a "satisfaction-quality-profit cycle". With regard to performance, Helmig and Lapsley (2001:265) found that physicians working at public hospitals complained that the job was insufficiently rewarding in that they received little recognition for good work from superiors. Moreover, physicians rated contentment with the process of performance assessment and positive working relationships with supervisors higher in private organizations.

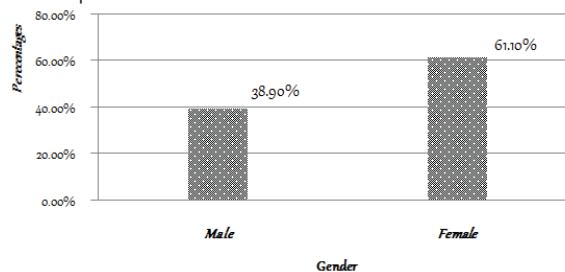
3. Research Analysis

According to Silverman (2006:102), frequency distributions give the researcher a rough idea of how distribution of scores look like. Saunders (2003:89) states that data analysis involves summarizing and simplifying data collected, condensing it and displaying it into different categories. Zickmund (1997) adds that data analysis is the application of logic to understand and interpret the data that has been collected about a subject.

3.1 Gender

Figure 1 below indicates the distribution of the gender of the respondents. It is indicated that most of the respondents were females. It shows that almost 3/5 of the population consists of females.

Figure 1: Gender distributions of respondents



Source: Author calculations

3.2 Age distribution

According to Table 1, the majority of the respondents were young adults aged between 36 and 55 and represented 37.86% of the respondents, while the minority of respondents was aged between 18 and 25 and they represented 13.59% of the respondents. It was also found that 42.5% men were aged between 36 and 55, while women dominated the lower age group of 26 – 35 with 38.1%.

Table 1: Age distribution

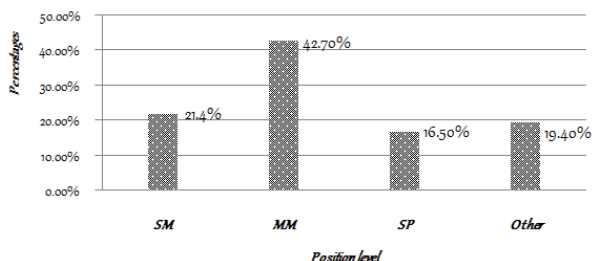
Age	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative %
18 - 25	14	13.59%	14	13.60%
26 - 35	35	33.98%	49	47.60%
36 - 55	39	37.86%	88	85.40%
56+	15	14.56%	103	100.00%

Source: Authors' calculations.

3.3 Position level

Figure 2 below portrays the positions that the respondents occupied. The greatest part of the respondents was in middle management with 42.7%. Senior management occupied 21.4%, supervisors and other levels occupied 16.5% and 19.4% respectively. These responses are based on the nature of the organizational structure used by the MPH.

Figure 2: Position Levels of respondents



3.3.1 Major determinants of job satisfaction

From Table 2, the availability of sufficient resources to do the work is the major determinant of employee job satisfaction at MPH with the highest mean of 2.5825. It was discovered that the majority of the respondents were not satisfied with sufficient resources for employees to do their work, hence the organization has to do something to increase sufficient resources to do the work. If the resources to do the work are not sufficient that will have a diverse impact on service delivery, because people will not be able to produce quality services if they do not have sufficient resources.

Table 2: Determinants of job satisfaction

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal Accomplishment	103	1	4	2.0583	0.77744
Skills	103	1	4	2.1456	0.78475
Work Load	103	1	4	2.233	0.79464
Sufficient Resources	103	1	4	2.5825	0.85777
Work Safe	103	1	4	2.2816	0.77228
Work Comfortable	103	1	4	2.3107	0.71441
Satisfied With Supervisor	103	1	4	2.3495	0.89343

Source: Authors' calculations.

Satisfaction with job done by immediate supervisor is the second determinant of job satisfaction at the MPH with the mean of 2.3495. On this aspect, the organization is doing very well because on Table 3 below about 66.0% of the respondents reported satisfaction with their immediate supervisor's jobs.

Table 3: Satisfaction with regard to supervisor

Ratings	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
SS	14	13.60%	13.60%
S	54	52.40%	66.00%
DS	21	20.40%	86.40%
SDS	14	13.60%	100.00%

SS = Strongly Satisfied, S = Satisfied, DS = Dissatisfied, SDS = Strongly Dissatisfied

However, the organization still has to investigate the problems of 34.0% of the respondents who are not satisfied with the job done by their immediate supervisors. Comfortable work environment scored the third place as a determinant of job satisfaction at the MPH with the mean of 2.3107 as revealed in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Work environment comfortable measure

Ratings	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
SS	10	9.70%	9.70%
S	56	54.40%	64.10%
DS	32	31.10%	95.10%
SDS	5	4.90%	100.00%

SS = Strongly Satisfied, S = Satisfied, DS = Dissatisfied, SDS = Strongly Dissatisfied

At least 64.1% of employees were satisfied with comfortable work environment, so measures have to be implemented to provide a comfortable work place for all employees. On the other hand, personal accomplishment from work is the least determinant of job satisfaction at the MPH with the lowest mean of 2.0583. This implies that if other determinants of job satisfaction can be fulfilled, then personal accomplishment will just be a bonus to the employee job satisfaction at MPH.

Table 5 asserts that 60.2% of the respondents are satisfied with the service delivery of the company and 6.8% is strongly satisfied with service delivery of the company, this constitutes 67.0% of respondents generally satisfied with service delivery of the company.

Table 5: Satisfaction with quality service provided by MPH

Ratings	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
SS	7	6.80%	6.80%
S	62	60.20%	67.00%
DS	25	24.30%	91.30%
SDS	9	8.70%	100.00%

Source: Authors' calculations

These respondents are assumed to be the majority of those satisfied with the most parts of job satisfaction in the company hence they are optimistic about the service delivery of the company. 33.0% of respondents who are dissatisfied and strongly dissatisfied with the service delivery of the company are assumed to be the ones who were not satisfied with many aspects of company job satisfaction hence; they are a bit pessimistic about the service delivery of the company.

4. Conclusion

The findings of the study indicated that the majority of the respondents were satisfied with aspects of the work which included, safety of work environment, comfortable workplace environment, work done by immediate supervisor and client services offered by the organization. However, it should be noted that they do encounter problems with sufficient

resources available to do their work, in this aspect 56.3% of respondents reported dissatisfaction. They also indicated that job satisfaction affects the way they meet their target quotas and the results confirmed that to be true because 79.6% of the respondents reported that they spent productive time on the tasks assigned to them, which improves service delivery.

Results further revealed that only 31.1% of the respondents were committed to long-term career with the organization while there were high levels of uncertainty with 68.9% of respondents who were somewhat or partially committed. This needs special attention from MPH Management. In addition to lack of commitment, close to 50% of respondents were not secure with their jobs and 62.9% of respondents felt that the organization is not doing enough to improve overall job satisfaction and high work performance was not encouraged. Hence the organization has to look closely at the aspects. In overall, the respondents were satisfied with the quality of service delivery offered by the organization. Regardless of other issues being raised, 61.2% of respondents declared that they would choose this company (MPH) if they have to apply for job again.

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