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Management

experiencing internal changes and external pressures

Management within organisations is experiencing numerous internal changes as well as external pressures. Change may bring satisfaction, joy and advantages to employees; for others though the same change may bring pain, stress, psychological threats, disruption of social arrangements and lowering of status.

Many people expect work to be meaningful, challenging and growth to be managed by a person's own abilities. Therefore, it is important to learn more about how life in organisations impact upon their employees' satisfaction and performance.

The continuing challenge to management is thus to provide a quality work environment and to improve production and efficiency through revitalisation of business and industry. The desire to increase employees' job satisfaction is universal and agreeable to almost everyone.

Job satisfaction is a complex issue. It can be mediated by several factors such as

- personality and other dispositions,
- societal conditions,
- the need to love and be loved, self-esteem and
- locus of control.

Seen from the point of view of organisations, some of these factors cannot be improved at work and are up to individual employees to improve them. In this way, job characteristics and the work environment may contribute more or less to employee job satisfaction.

The difference between the results that the individual desires and those he or she maintains will affect his or her satisfaction. Employers have to create a culture that will make employees want to invest their skills and talents within the organisation.

The concern of the present study is the relationship between quality of work life (QWL); job satisfaction (JS) and job performance (JP).

The main objectives of the article are:

- to obtain information on how such variables are related to employees job satisfaction and performance,
- to identify factors staff indicated as needs, interests and concerns in making the organisation (municipality) a more attractive place to work for and,
- to provide policy makers with useful recommendations to improve employees' quality of work life, satisfaction and per-

formance.

The concept of the quality of work life encompasses a wide range of organisational phenomena, but can also be viewed as a philosophy of management that enhances the dignity of all employees; introduces changes in an organisation's culture and improves the physical and emotional wellbeing of its employees (e.g. providing opportunities for growth and development). Thus, quality of work life of an individual is shaped by the individual's affective reactions to experienced characteristics of the work organisation.

The issue needs to be addressed because quality of life at work is becoming increasingly important and management should be able to recognise and improve the work environment in both its physical and psychological dimensions and effectively deal with aspects that influence employees' job satisfaction and job performance. The following, generally accepted components of quality of work life assessment were studied.

Perceived organisational support

According to Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski and Rhoades, perceived organisational support consists of unique favours or actions granted by the organisations to individual employees as well as unselfish organisational actions.

They define perceived organisational support as the employee's "...global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their wellbeing." High levels of perceived organisational support are thought to engender feelings of trust, long term obligations and organisational identification among employees.

Perceived organisational support may change within organisations in response to new corporate policies and practices that benefit employees or in response to critical events signaling organisational support.

Hypothesis: perceived organisational support is positively related to job satisfaction and job performance of municipal employees.

Organisational commitment

Recently organisations have witnessed an upsurge of interest in the relevance of work attitudes for employees' behaviour in organisations and in greater understanding of the factors that in-

fluence an individuals' decision to stay or leave an organisation.

Organisational commitment is important to organisations because of the desire to retain a strong and dedicated work force. One way to address this issue is to understand the commitment employees have to their organisation and to determine the effect of various levels of commitment.

Organisational commitment is defined as the "employees' feelings of obligation to stay with the organisation: feelings resulting from the internalisation of normative pressures exerted on an individual prior to entry or following entry." according to Allen and Meyer.

A number of forms of organisational commitment have been identified. According to the well known scheme of Meyer and Allen affective commitment refers to identification with, involvement in and emotional attachment to the organisation, in the sense that employees with strong affective commitment remain with the organisation because they want to do so.

Continuance commitment refers to commitment based on employees' recognition of the costs associated with leaving the organisation.

Thus, employees with strong continuance commitment remain with the organisation because they have to do so, either because of low perceived alternatives or because of high personal sacrifice associated with leaving the organisation.

Normative commitment refers to commitment based on a sense of obligation to the organisation. Therefore, those with strong normative commitment remain with the organisation because they feel they ought to do so.

Hypothesis: organisational commitment (all three aspects) is positively related to job satisfaction and job performance.

Physical working conditions

The working environment has considerable potential for contributing to the quality of work life in organisations. The healthy and well functioning employee is an important prerequisite for productivity, quality work and service rendering and the ultimate measure of success of the organisation.

Working conditions refer to external factors that affect the wellbeing (internal) of the employees to perform the job normally and the physical or environmental conditions of work which allow the employees to perform their jobs within acceptable limits of exposure to hazards.

Healthy work is characterised by a positive organisational atmosphere, tools and facilities that are designed to improve employees' productivity, the achievement of quality standards and performance targets, the opportunity to maintain and improve personal health and fitness and

Job stress is considered to be a rising concern in many organisations. It includes work overload and role based factors such as a lack of power, a nagging boss, computer problems, deadlines, poorly designed jobs, marital disharmony, financial crises, accelerating rates of change, tension among the diverse groups of employees and an increased demand for higher quality products and services.

avoid ill health, positive collaboration with colleagues, opportunity for applying skills and developing further and the recognition of personal contribution to the organisation.

Hypothesis: good physical working conditions are positively related to job satisfaction and job performance.

Job stress

Job stress is considered to be a rising concern in many organisations, all over the world. It includes work overload and role based factors such as a lack of power, a nagging boss, computer problems, time deadlines, poorly designed jobs, marital disharmony, financial crises, accelerating rates of change, tension among the diverse groups of employees and an increased demand for higher quality products and services.

There is increasing evidence that work-related stress contributes to a variety of ailments, such as tension headaches, backaches, high blood pressure and mental illness. Job stress is defined as a general reaction to an action or situation that places

special (and usually sustained) physical and psychological demands on an individual.

In addition, it can be regarded as harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match or fit the environmental demands, changes and opportunities or needs, abilities and expectations of the employee.

Hypothesis: There will be a strong negative relationship between job stress and job satisfaction as well as job performance.

Work-life balance

Organisations that attract and retain valued employees in a highly competitive labour market are aware of the need for sound human resource policies and practices related to work-life balance.

According to some experts certain organisations offer programmes and services that are designed to foster the wellbeing of their employees to enable them to achieve a balance between their jobs, families and personal lives. Work-life conflict may be characterised by a lack of fit between employees and their responsibilities and the goals of the organisation.

Employers should view the benefits or working conditions that they provide to help employees balance their family and work domains as work life benefits. Work-life balance refers to the ability to effectively manage work, family and personal life without acute stress or negative impact.

Work-life balance from an employee perspective is the maintenance of a balance between responsibilities at work and at home. It fosters a greater understanding between management and staff and greater co-operation and flexibility in organisations.

Hypothesis: Work-life balance is positively related to employee job satisfaction and job performance

Staff development

Learning and professional development including lifelong learning for employees, has been viewed as a strategic tool for organisations because of the potential to increase performance, productivity, job satisfaction, and improve service delivery.

The traditional career contract between employees and employers seems to be shifting, however, to a protean career model based on: "... self-direction in the pursuit of psychological success in one's work by individual employees and organisations."

The introduction of the Skills Development Act and the Skills Development Levy Act in South Africa has increased the importance of staff development to foster cross breeding of ideas and ensure inter-departmental communication among staff; to enhance an organisation's ability to sur-

vive and grow, retain staff, and serve as an integral part of sound quality of work-life.

Staff development is defined as a dynamic process which focuses on the growth in an individual's skills, knowledge and personal effectiveness and the development of both job specific skills and general skills which will be of use not only in their present job, but also in other jobs, tasks and roles.

It is about supporting individuals, groups (such as departments or task teams) to develop positive attitudes and beliefs towards their jobs and organisation, and organisations to understand, develop and refine their approaches to their work, to consider changes taking place and to develop new responses to them.

Hypothesis: Staff development activities such as promotion, career development, advancement and responsibility are positively related to job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction and job performance

Job satisfaction refers to the degree to which there is a good fit between the individual and the organisation for example, how well interest, needs and wants are met through work, working conditions, a sense of belonging to organisation, self-achievement, fulfilment of personality traits, relationships with superiors, subordinates and colleagues.

In addition, it is a general attitude that the employee has towards his or her job and is directly tied to individual needs including challenging work, equitable rewards and a supportive work environment and colleagues.

Job performance refers to a multidimensional construct which indicates how well a specific employee is performing his or her job, the initiative he or she takes, the resourcefulness shown in solving problems, the extent to which they complete tasks, the way in which he or she utilises his or her available resources as well as the time and energy spent on his or her tasks.

The analyses of the results revealed:

Perceived organisational support (mean = 3.6)

Fifty percent slightly disagreed that the municipality support them and care about their welfare. The negatively affected employees reported (additional item for ideas and suggestions was included) that they were not involved in decision making and that management seemed not to be concerned about their interest whilst wellbeing and decisions made at top management level are also not actively communicated to them.

Organisational commitment (mean = 4.0)

Thirty four percent slightly agreed they are committed to the municipality. The

findings suggest that organisational commitment does not necessary influence employees' job satisfaction.

There are factors that mediate job satisfaction through organisational commitment. Employees' commitment to the organisation may also be influenced by others within the organisation.

Physical working conditions (mean = 4.1)

Thirty nine percent slightly agreed that their physical working conditions are favourable.

Job stress (mean = 3.6)

Fifty eight percent slightly disagreed that job stress contributed to their job satisfaction and job performance. In the present study, and for undetermined reasons, job stress was not a significant contributor of job satisfaction and job performance.

This does not mean that respondents were not experiencing job stress. There may be factors inside and/or outside the work environment that contribute to employees job satisfaction and result in stress of some sort.

Work-life balance (mean = 3.6)

Forty two percent slightly disagreed that the municipality was actively involved in providing them with good options to deal with the demands of work and the family.

Staff development (mean = 3.1)

Thirty two percent slightly disagreed that the municipality is committed to their staff/career development and if the municipality is committed, most attention is given to a certain group of people.

In addition, the perception is that employees are not recognised for their achievements at work (this information was obtained from the last item for any ideas and suggestions). Communication channels between employees and their superiors were also reported to be inactive.

Job satisfaction was rated with mean of 3.48

Most employees slightly disagreed that they were satisfied with their quality of life at work. This finding suggests the need to improve employees' quality of life at work. Sixty-two percent of the variance in job satisfaction is accounted for by the QWL variables.

Job performance was rated with mean of 4.6

Most employees slightly agreed that they were pleased with their job performance. These findings suggest that quality of work-life variables do not necessarily contribute to job performance.

There are factors outside the scope of this study that contribute to employees' job performance. Thirty percent of the variance in job performance was accounted for by the quality of work-life

variables.

Interestingly, overall comparison shows that respondents experienced lower job satisfaction, but reported slightly higher scores for job performance. Traditionally, it expected that if employees have low levels of job satisfaction, it would ultimately influence job performance negatively and vice versa. Both positive and negative relationships are often obtained.

In addition, job satisfaction and job performance were found to be interrelated to each other and sharing 22% of the variance. These findings suggest that job satisfaction and job performance do not entirely depend on each other.

The more quality of life at work is improved the more job satisfaction increases and the better the job performance. Also, the failure to improve the level of quality of work-life desired by employees might influence employees' job satisfaction and job performance.

Summary of employee suggestions

At the end of each scale respondents were requested to provide any ideas or suggestions. The respondents suggested additional avenues of flexibility by introducing new programmes including the introduction of staff study allowances, on-site gym/fitness facilities, a subsidised on-site canteen, a work based child care centre, a formal acknowledgement programme (e.g. 'employee of the month'), adult basic education and training and a succession plan.

The appointment and promotion of employees must be based on merit and not according to political affiliation. Also, an internal recruitment procedure should be introduced.

Salary and benefits should be based on the position, performance and qualifications of an employee at all levels. The training department should send people for relevant job training and allow employees to decide which training programmes they need to attend.

In addition, they advocated an employees' career development and mentoring office/unit. The advancement of information, communication and technology at all levels was also proposed.

The employees exposed to chemicals or health threatening areas have to be medically examined regularly by the municipal medical practitioners. Heads of departments and line managers should delegate tasks appropriately in time, respect and communicate politely with their subordinates.

Recommendation

The purpose of this study was to investigate various aspects of the quality of life at work as well as the relationship between the quality of work-life variables and job

satisfaction and job performance. Results of the study can be used to help line managers to prioritise and more effectively focus on quality of work-life activities in the organisation.

It should also enable municipal management to be more pro-active in preventing a decline in employee job satisfaction and performance that may result from poor quality of life at work.

Some of the recommendations included that the municipality could contribute to the development of employees' quality of life at work by presenting information in a regular, structured and orderly way that is fully understood and recommended by employees rather than relying on printed or posted mission statements only.

To ensure that the employees' quality of work-life is enhanced, the municipality should provide the necessary knowledge, skills, material, instruments, support, and other resources.

Furthermore, in paying heed to those factors which employees rank as important for positively influencing their level of satisfaction and performance, employees will feel that their job is meaningful.

Management should recognise and encourage employees' pride in their work

and in the organisation, openness and fairness to all employees, and companionship and friendliness. This may help to increase the feeling of personal accomplishments of their employees.

In conclusion, it appears that staff development opportunities, perceived organisational support, work-life, organisational commitment and physical working conditions are important factors influencing employees' job satisfaction.

These findings are to some extent supportive of Herzberg's research which suggested that recognition for good performance, a feeling of achievement and interesting and challenging work will have a greater impact on both improving the level of job satisfaction and reducing the level of job dissatisfaction of municipality employees.

The results indicate that line managers should be aware of those factors which employees rank as important for positively influencing their level of satisfaction and performance with the job.

The formation of appropriate quality of work-life and human resource strategies overall will be integral to the creation of a flexible work place conducive to the attraction, motivation and retention of highly valued employees. Thus reducing

absenteeism, stress, the psychological threats, turnover and improving productivity and morale through the development of a better working climate. ■



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