

**AN IN-DEPTH INVESTIGATION OF THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO  
EMPLOYEE DISSATISFACTION AT THE BUSINESS APPLICATION SOLUTION  
CENTRE (BASC), ESKOM**

**by**

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## Declaration

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I declare that **AN IN-DEPTH INVESTIGATION OF THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO EMPLOYEE DISSATISFACTION AT THE BUSINESS APPLICATION SOLUTION CENTRE (BASC), ESKOM** is my own work and that the sources that I have used or quoted from have been acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I have followed the guidelines for quoting and referencing provided by the Sociology Department of the University of South Africa.

.....

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## Summary

This study investigated the causes of employee dissatisfaction by means of a case study of the Business Application Solution Centre (BASC) at the Eskom Academy of Learning (EAL). The rationale for the study was to contribute further to a general understanding of employee dissatisfaction. This study highlighted the issue of the under-representation of blacks and females (of all races) in senior positions, and further emphasised appointment and recruitment issues that promote unfair labour practices, organisational culture and structure issues that undermine workplace relations, and the extent to which management responds to the abovementioned issues.

A mixed method approach was employed to gather data from BASC employees. Qualitative data was collected by means of one focus group discussion and nine in-depth, face-to-face interviews. For the focus group and face-to-face interviews, purposive sampling was used for the selection of respondents, in order to ensure representation on all race, gender and occupational strata. A semi-structured questionnaire was used for both the focus group and face-to-face interviews. The questioning route was guided by the themes of gender, appointment and recruitment issues, culture and structure issues, and management response and practice.

Quantitative data was collected by means of an online survey. Even though the online survey link was sent to employees on all strata, top managers did not participate. The use of a web-based online survey had an element of immediacy and also ensured maximum confidentiality, as responses were transferred to a development server with no link or trace to the respondents.

The study revealed many underlying causes of employee dissatisfaction, such as the following: (1) the main drivers of black and female under-representation in top positions were lack of skills development, mentoring and career-pathing; (2) among the recruitment and appointment practices leading to employee dissatisfaction was the appointment of employees to 'acting' rather than permanent management positions; (3) there was a perception that managers abused their authority by promoting their favourites and overlooking those who they did not like; (4) although an affirmative action (AA) policy had been implemented at BASC, it was felt that employees should be appointed and promoted on merit, and that this should be accompanied by mentoring; (5) in some instances, the hiring of consultants deprived employees of opportunities to perform critical tasks. The fact that consultants were paid more than employees was also a source of discontent; (6) appointment criteria were non-transparent, and respondents revealed that they knew who was going to be appointed even before the recruitment process had been completed; (7) a bureaucratic culture was found to be the main organisational culture issue undermining workplace relations. On the other hand, a culture of teamwork appeared to reduce dissatisfaction and enhance unity; (8) the major organisational structure issues undermining workplace relations were managers who lacked managerial competencies and unequal payment on the same grade; (9) employees who stood their ground were given a low rating during performance appraisals. Others were bullied by senior managers and colleagues, who were rude towards them; (10) a hostile working relationship between managers and employees was caused by managers who lacked human resource skills; and (11) junior managers were undermined by employees who bypassed them and went straight to senior managers to discuss workplace issues.

This study addresses both the general lack of information regarding the causes of employee dissatisfaction in South Africa, and of employee dissatisfaction in the information and communication technology (ICT) workplace environment. The findings of the study will also contribute towards a better understanding of the general causes of employee dissatisfaction.

The results of this study suggest that more in-depth investigations of the causes of employee dissatisfaction are necessary to fully address this issue, and in order to ultimately prevent a further increase in the rate of employee turnover. Some implications for further research became apparent during the course of this study: similar studies on employee dissatisfaction should be conducted with top managers; studies on the experience of managers appointed to acting positions should be undertaken; and follow-up studies on employee dissatisfaction should be conducted as causes are addressed and relevant interventions are implemented.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my late father, Henry William Maleka.

## Abbreviations

BASC	Business Application Solution Centre
BCEA	Basis Conditions of Employment Act
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CEE	Commission of Employment Equity
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CC&B	Customer Care and Billing
EE	Employment Equity
EEA	Employment Equity Act
HRM	Human Resource Management
HRSSU	Human Resources Shared Services Unit
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IT	Information Technology
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
LRA	Labour Relations Act
KPA	Key Performance Area
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MBA	Master's in Business Administration
MBL	Master's in Business Leadership
SDA	Skills Development Act
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

One of the most difficult challenges that employers face is employee retention and satisfaction of needs. Job satisfaction has important implications for the success of an organisation - employee dissatisfaction and turnover are costly to companies and can reduce the competitive edge of an organisation. While there is substantial international literature on the causes of employee dissatisfaction, the paucity of literature on employee dissatisfaction in South Africa indicates that this area is under-researched, particularly in the information and communication technology (ICT) industry. It is envisaged that this case study will contribute towards an understanding of the causes of employee dissatisfaction in South Africa, particularly in the ICT industry, as well as to a further understanding of employee dissatisfaction in general.

### **1.2 Causes of employee dissatisfaction**

There are a number of issues addressed by international literature on employee dissatisfaction. Appointment and recruitment issues have been found to play a significant role in employee dissatisfaction. In some ICT companies, it has been found that women and black employees are not appointed into senior positions because they have not been mentored and do not have managerial experience, and also because of “old boys’ club” recruitment practices (Warschauer, 2004; Slocum & Hellbriege, 2007). In some instances, it was found that white males and females were more likely to be interviewed than people from other race groups (Bowles, Edwards & Roosevelt, 2005; McGinnity, Nelson, Lunn & Quinn, 2009). In the ICT industry, it has been found that older employees are alienated and not appointed because they are costly (Webster, 2007). In addition, divisional managers decided whom they wanted to employ and only followed appointment and recruitment procedures in order to avoid being taken to the labour courts (Slocum & Hellbriege, 2007). In some cases, managers appointed employees without advertising the position (Wickham, Collins, Greco & Browne, 2005). It has also been found that psychological assessments were sometimes used to

discriminate against women and employees from other race groups (Dobbin, Schrage & Kalev, 2008). Internationally, temporary employment is common and women are often employed as temporary workers, which means that they do not qualify for workplace benefits such as medical aid and are paid less than their male counterparts (Houston, 2005; Giddens, 2001; Giddens, 2006).

International studies have shown that a bureaucratic culture undermines the unity of a culture. It was found that knowledge workers were dissatisfied because they worked for bureaucratic managers who did not trust them and therefore supervised them closely (Watson, 2008; Walton, 2003; Vecchio, 2000; Lewis & Cooper, 2005; Townsend, 2007; Goldthorpe, Lockwood, Bechhofer & Platt, 1968). Furthermore, they did not share valuable and updated information with employees (McShane & von Glinow, 2005).

In a bureaucratic culture, employee dissatisfaction can manifest itself in several ways - for example, by fiddling<sup>1</sup> (Noon & Blyton, 2007; du Plessis, 2009), sabotaging bureaucratic managers, and not delivering work on time (Edwards, 2007). A bureaucratic culture can therefore undermine a culture of unity by breaking down trust between managers and employees (Giddens, 2001), creating tension in the workplace, which can lead to depression (Gala & Fitter, 2002), and increasing absenteeism in the workplace (Warr, 2007).

The notion of the organisational structure known as *bureaucracy* was expounded primarily in the work of Max Weber (1947), who proposed an organisational model rationally designed to perform complex tasks efficiently. Bureaucracy, however, resulted in mixed reactions. It was criticised, inter alia, for perpetuating patriarchy in the workplace and creating racial and gender imbalances, particularly in management positions (Babbie, 2007: 358). Since women are usually relegated to lower organisational structures, they are more susceptible than men to unfair labour practices such as bullying (Harris, 2009; Osborne, 2009) and sexual harassment (McDonald & Dear, 2008; Schaefer, 2008). Bureaucratic managers are also believed to be hostile, do

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<sup>1</sup> To fiddle is "to give someone wrong information about something" (Longman Dictionary, 2009: 636).

not want employees to use their creativity and initiative, are inflexible and do not delegate tasks to their subordinates (Herzberg, 1968). Conversely, it is argued that through bureaucracy, employees are motivated to work hard because they have an expectation that they will be promoted (Bratton, Sawchuk, Forshaw, Callinab & Corbett, 2007) in accordance with their performance (Olsen, 2005), and not by engaging in politics (Meriac & Villanova, 2006; Rosen, Chang & Levy, 2006; Zaidman, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot & Dryzin-Amit, 2006; Cropanzano & Li, 2006). In addition, it has been found that bureaucratic managers (Moorhead & Griffin, 2001) motivate employees (Kilduff & Kranhardt, 2008: 161), encourage them to be customer-orientated, and standardise the work process. It is thought that since employees then know what is expected of them, they will be less confused (Slocum & Hellriegel, 2007) and more competitive (Tullock, 2005; Vecchio, 2000).

Human resource management has increasingly replaced bureaucracy in the workplace. Employees are given an opportunity to be creative and develop themselves (Slocum & Hellriegel, 2007). Managers are encouraged to be charismatic (Bratton, Sawchuk, Forshaw, Callinab & Corbett, 2010), to engage different stakeholders during restructuring (Townsend, 2007; Giddens, 2006), to encourage their employees to work together (Aguinis & Henle, 2003), and not to alienate employees (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004). They are also encouraged to look after employees' well-being (Cummings & Worley, 2001; Maleka, 2006; Nel, Werner, Haasbroek, Poisat, Sono & Schultz, 2008) and socio-emotional needs (Stacey, 2010; Odih, 2007; Webb, 2006), and not to intimidate employees (Burawoy, 1974).

In South Africa, past workplace industrial policies and legislation created racial and gender imbalances, vestiges of which still remain. In the 1950s, for example, workplace policies were influenced by the Labour Relations Act (LRA), which perpetuated a skills imbalance, whereby white males were skilled in both technical and managerial fields. Despite the Employment Equity and Skills Development Acts, which were introduced during the 1990s, these imbalances are still visible in workplaces today. The majority of workplaces are still dominated by white males at the top management level (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005; van Zyl, 2009).

Besides workplace policies, there are other structure-related issues that cause employee dissatisfaction in South Africa. Some employers still use race to pay employees differently, and it has been found that white employees earn more than their black counterparts (Alexander, 2008). Another structure-related issue is that South African managers attend Euro-centric or US-centric leadership courses, which confuse them because they are not applicable in their own workplaces (Dorfman, 2004). Since leadership interventions are not relevant, they end up causing dissatisfaction among employees (van Zyl, 2009). It is argued that Euro-centric and US-centric leadership interventions do not help South African managers to understand that black employees like working in groups, and that white employees prefer working as individuals (Beukman, 2005).

### **1.3 The rationale for and objectives of the study**

Job satisfaction has important implications for the success of an organisation. Berry (1998: 294) and Bittel and Newstrom (1990: 387) argue that job satisfaction is the most important factor for improving productivity.

The rationale for this study is twofold, namely:

1. To contribute further to an understanding of employee dissatisfaction in the workplace; and
2. To recommend management practices that will reduce the level of employee dissatisfaction.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify race and gender issues which promote the under-representation of blacks and females in senior positions;
2. To identify appointment and recruitment issues which promote unfair labour practices;
3. To identify organisational culture issues which undermine workplace relations;
4. To identify organisational structure issues which undermine workplace relations; and
5. To investigate the extent to which management currently responds to the abovementioned issues.

### **1.3 Eskom as a case study**

The Business Application Solution Centre (BASC) at the Eskom Academy of Learning (EAL) is used as an extended case study, as it highlights several of the major causes of employee dissatisfaction identified in international literature.

Eskom is the biggest generator of electricity in Africa. It distributes 95 percent of its electricity to South Africa (SA), and 40 percent to the rest of Africa (Eskom Annual Report, 2009: i). Eskom sustains the coal, transport and construction industries, and transport and coal companies are contracted to supply coal to Eskom's power stations. Through Eskom, R350 billion programme contracts are awarded to construction companies. In total, it is estimated that the coal, transport and construction industries employ around 100,000 people, mostly from rural communities (Eskom Annual Report, 2009: ii).



Eskom consists of the following eight divisions: Generation, Distribution, Transmission, System Operations and Planning, Enterprises, Corporate Services, Human Resources, Finance and Group Communication. Corporate Services has 1339 employees, which is 3.7 percent of the total number of Eskom employees (Eskom Annual Report, 2009: 93). BASC is the ICT department and, as such, is also one of the Corporate Services departments.

The BASC management and employees are mandated to assist other Eskom divisions to implement information technology (IT) applications. Once the IT applications have been implemented, BASC management and employees support these applications. Supporting IT applications, in IT jargon, is known as production support. One of the IT applications supported by BASC is Customer Care and Billing (CC&B), and is used by the Distribution Division. CC and B is the IT application that Distribution uses to bill customers for electricity consumption. Implementing and supporting IT applications requires employees with scarce and critical skills, such as project management, business analysis, process engineering and change management.

From 2006 to 2007, a number of issues contributing towards employee dissatisfaction were reported by BASC employees. Dissatisfied employees either moved to other divisions or left Eskom altogether, resulting in high employee turnover in this division. The problem faced by Eskom is that when BASC employees resign, it takes time to replace these workers with scarce skills. This has a negative impact on implementing new IT applications and supporting those which are currently in production. Due to the complexity of the IT projects that BASC is mandated to implement, consultants are sometimes hired to make up for the loss of employees. Because consultants charge higher rates per hour than BASC employees, BASC management incurs higher employment costs.

In 2008, BASC management conducted a survey to investigate the reasons for employee dissatisfaction in the division. The survey revealed that:

- 19.12 percent of the dissatisfaction issues were related to appointment and recruitment practices;
- 13.24 percent of the dissatisfaction issues were related to culture;
- 20.59 percent of the dissatisfaction issues were related to structure; and
- 14.71 percent of the dissatisfaction issues were related to workplace policies (BASC, 2008/08/13).

While this survey identified a number of issues that give rise to employee dissatisfaction, it only dealt superficially with these issues. The BASC study, for example, did not indicate which management practices led to dissatisfaction, which policies caused discontent, or how the inconsistent application of policies resulted in dissatisfaction.

It is hoped that this case study will contribute further to our understanding of the causes of employee dissatisfaction and indicate how managers can better manage employee dissatisfaction in similar contexts.

## **1.4 Overview of the research methodology**

### **1.4.1 Research design**

The research approach followed in this study can be described as both exploratory and descriptive (Babbie, 2007: 92-94). Leedy and Ormrod (2010: 97) suggest that “especially in studies of human behaviour, mixed-method designs with both quantitative and qualitative elements often provide a more complete picture of phenomenon.” Since this study was concerned with human behaviour (i.e. employee dissatisfaction), the researcher followed the above authors’ advice by using a mixed-method research design.

Even though there are differing views regarding the use of a mixed-method research design, the researcher chose this design for the following reasons:

- It enabled him to solicit high-quality and credible data; and
- The researcher was skilled in using a mixed-method research design.

All the data collection instruments used in this study (i.e. paper-based and online questionnaires) were piloted before the start of the data collection process. The questions contained in the questionnaire were drawn from the literature that was reviewed, and qualitative data was collected from one focus group discussion and face-to-face interviews with nine respondents. Quantitative data was collected by means of an online survey, to which 121 employees responded. The researcher worked with an external company to develop a web-based (online) questionnaire. The benefits of using the online survey were that it had an element of immediacy and confidentiality was guaranteed. The external company received the uploaded questionnaires and was able to code the data. The researcher grouped themes together in order to analyse the qualitative data (i.e. face-to-face interviews, focus group discussion and open-ended questions in the online survey report). Graphs were used to analyse data from the online survey.

#### 1.4.2 Ethical considerations

The researcher adhered to the guidelines stipulated in University of South Africa's (UNISA) Research Ethics Policy (2007). Since this study focused on sensitive issues, verbal and informed consent was obtained before the interviews took place. The researcher was careful when asking respondents questions regarding racial and gender issues, and it was clearly explained that their responses did not necessarily mean that they were racist or sexist. The results of this study will be made available to all the stakeholders before they are published. In order to safeguard the identities of the respondents, only what they said was recorded, and no-one was forced to participate in this study. The results of this study will be shared with the researcher's senior manager.

## 1.5 Overview of the remaining chapters

In *Chapter two*, a brief historical overview of labour relations in South Africa is provided as a context for understanding the roots of some present day causes of employee dissatisfaction.

The theoretical constructs used in this study are discussed in *Chapter three*. An overview of international literature on employee dissatisfaction is provided, and this is followed by a discussion of the consequences of employee dissatisfaction. Traditional management practices are then scrutinised, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the causes of employee dissatisfaction.

In *Chapter four*, the research design employed in this case study is discussed, beginning with an explanation of the methodological approach. Thereafter, the research design is presented, including a brief description of the research environment, sampling methods, online survey, face-to-face interviews and focus group. The data analysis technique used in this study is also described, and the concepts of reliability and validity are then discussed.

*Chapter five* presents and analyses the findings of this study. In this chapter, the findings are analysed in accordance with the research objectives and focus on issues of gender and race, appointment and recruitment, workplace structure, organisational culture issues and management responses.

The general conclusions of this study are discussed in *Chapter six*, and recommendations are then made with regard to reducing employee dissatisfaction.

The definitions of key concepts as used in the study are contained in Annexure One.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF LABOUR RELATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Labour relations in South Africa are rooted in the historical context of the country, which has a long history of excluding black workers. It has been observed that labour relations in South Africa was often viewed as the art of overcoming racial problems, rather than a study of the regulation of employment (Piron, 1982: 5). It may be surmised that some management practices and causes of employee dissatisfaction still have their roots in those historical factors which resulted in a black/unskilled – white/skilled labour dichotomy during the apartheid dispensation. Despite radical legislative changes to address historical disparities between races, as well as between genders, many practices have arisen which circumvent the protection offered to employees through various laws.

### **2.2 The origins of racial exclusion**

Prior to 1994, South Africa's socio-economic infrastructure developed primarily within the parameters of cultural plurality. Black workers originally came to be excluded from the labour relations system by custom and tradition. South Africa had a subsistence agrarian economy, in which both the white settler population and the indigenous black populations were involved. Black workers were employed on white farms or on "Native Reserves." It was only after 1835 that the employer/worker relationship became formalised in any of the South African colonies by the introduction of, inter alia, the Master and Servant Law No. 1 of 1841 (Nel et al., 2008:76; Bendix, 1996: 77).

The differentiation of labour, which was established by the Master and Servant Laws No.1 1841 and No. 15 of 1856, was further entrenched by the discovery of diamonds and gold in 1867 and 1886 respectively. The advent of the mining industry in South Africa created a demand for labour which was met, inter alia, by the importing of skilled mineworkers and artisans from countries such as Britain, Australia and Germany. The high wages offered to these skilled workers were the start of the enormous differences between skilled and unskilled earnings in the country. The skilled workers also brought with them their peculiar style of craft unionism, which was based on retaining their exclusiveness, maintaining standards and preventing job dilution and fragmentation, all with the aim of creating a secure, privileged and highly remunerated position. These unions therefore excluded black workers, who were regarded as cheap, unskilled labour that could be used by employers to undermine their job security and high standard of living (Jones, 1982: 26).

The Mines and Works Act No. 12 of 1911 stated that skilled work could only be performed by whites, and through this Act, “highly discriminatory regulations were promulgated, reserving approximately 32 categories of skilled work for white workers and thus formally excluding African workers from these jobs, as had occurred in the case of the Chinese workers” (Finnemore, 2009: 26). As a result of acts such as the Master and Servants Act No. 15 of 1856 and The Black Regulations Act No. 15 of 1911, black workers were prohibited from striking and were hired as “casuals.” The draconian Industrial Conciliation Act No. 11 of 1924 was passed, which excluded black employees from the bargaining structures and prevented black workers from being unionised (Bendix, 2010: 57- 60). In this way, the foundations were laid for the protection of various trades, conditions of work and the white worker in the labour market.

Even though laws favoured white skilled workers, restructuring in the mining industry, which took place in 1922 through the cutting of costs by hiring cheaper black labour and introducing machines, caused dissent (Finnemore, 2009: 28). White workers whose jobs were under threat embarked on a violent strike (known as

the Rand Rebellion), which led to the jailing and death of many of these miners. Bendix (2010: 60) observes that “hundreds of white mine workers were subsequently laid off. Those who did return to work had to be satisfied with lower wages and the deskilling of certain jobs”. The struggle by white mine workers to retain and entrench their positions was eventually won with the introduction of the Industrial Conciliation Act No. 11 of 1924, the Wage Act No. 27 of 1925, the Mines and Works Amendment Act No. 25 of 1926, and the “civilised labour policy” introduced by the Pact government in 1927. The Industrial Conciliation Act No. 11 of 1924 statutorily excluded blacks from the definition of “employee”, thus formalising existing customary practice (Du Toit, Bosch, Woolfrey, Cooper, Giles, Bosch & Rossouw, 2006: 7). While the Industrial Conciliation Act No. 11 of 1924 covered “organised labour” (who were not black by definition), the Wage Act No. 44 of 1937 applied to “unorganised” workers who had no access to the collective bargaining system. This Act was designed specifically to function as the backup legislation for white or “civilised” labour not covered by the Industrial Conciliation Act No. 11 of 1924. The Mines and Works Amendment Act No. 25 of 1926 reintroduced and legalised the colour bar in the mining industry, and was aimed at protecting the security of white labour in the mining industry. A civilised labour policy was designed to stimulate the employment of whites in the face of the “poor white” problem, which had been developing since the 1920s. The policy was designed to stimulate the employment of whites in preference to blacks, and to prevent white wages from falling to “uncivilised” levels in the face of black competition. These measures set the pattern whereby whites filled well-paid administrative, supervisory and skilled positions, while blacks performed unskilled and poorly paid work (Williams, in Jubber (ed.) 1979; Jones & Griffiths, 1980).

By the mid-1940s, race and gender imbalances were firmly entrenched in South Africa. On average, the wage gap between white and black workers increased from 10.6 percent to 15.1 percent between 1948 and 1970 (Seekings & Natrass, 2005: 137). In coal mines, “the average white received eleven times as much pay as the average African worker” (Alexander, 2008: 10). Through the labour laws, white

Afrikaner males were the preferred candidates for managerial positions (Bendix, 1996: 87). Black workers, on the other hand, were kept unskilled (Crankshaw, 1997: 58). Labour-related issues were discussed only with white unions (Lipton, 1986: 39-40), while black trade unions had no standing and could not be registered. In terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act No. 28 of 1956, any further registration of racially mixed trade unions was forbidden, and unions registered before 1956 were required to establish and maintain separate branches (“parallel unions”) (Seekings & Natrass, 2005: 138). This trend continued from 1965 to the 1990s.

In the early 1970s, black employees in the transport and clothing industries embarked on unprotected strikes. No fixed demands were made but, as Bendix (2010: 79) notes, “... the actions were indicative of general dissatisfaction among black employees.” These strikes had a serious impact and compelled the National Party government to review its labour acts. The government was also under pressure from the international community to change its repressive and discriminatory labour laws. A labour relations expert, Professor Nic Wiehahn, was appointed to investigate the status of black workers within the labour relations legislation system (Finnemore, 2009: 34). Some of the recommendations of the Wiehahn Commission of Inquiry into labour legislation were as follows:

- Freedom must be granted to all employees regardless of race, sex or creed;
- Trade unions, irrespective of composition in terms of colour, race or sex, should be allowed to register;
- A system of financial inspection of trade unions should be introduced;
- Prohibitions against political activity by unions need to be extended;
- Liaison committees need to be renamed as work councils;
- Where no industrial council has jurisdiction, work councils and workers’ committees should be granted full collective bargaining rights;
- Statutory job reservations should be phased out;
- Safeguards need to be introduced to protect minorities previously protected by job reservation;
- The Industrial Tribunal should be replaced by the Industrial Court;



- Fair employment practices need to be established by the Industrial Court;
- Job reservation must be phased out, with the consent of those concerned, and allowance for a closed shop should be maintained; and
- A tripartite National Manpower Commission must be established (Bendix, 2010: 78).

These recommendations were met with mixed reactions, particularly from white workers, who felt that their positions were under threat (Bendix, 2010: 82).

In terms of the Labour Relations Amendment Act (LRA) No. 57 of 1981, full trade union rights were extended to every worker, irrespective of his/her origin. Full autonomy was granted in respect of trade union membership, and all racial restrictions were removed (Finnemore, 2009: 36 - 37).

After the democratic elections of 1994, labour laws were revisited to address the race and gender imbalances of the past. The Employment Equity Act (EEA) No. of 55 of 1998 ensures that women of all races and men from other race groups are appointed to management positions and in technical fields, which have previously been dominated by white males (Finnemore, 2009: 322). According to Commission of Employment Equity (CEE) reports, black females are not equally represented in the higher strata of workplaces, and at top management levels, white males are still over-represented (CEE, 2008: 7; CEE, 2010: 33). It would appear from the annual reports of some of the large private enterprises listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) that the appointment of black men and women to top management positions is minimal (Woolworths, 2009: 10-11; Pick n Pay, 2008: 10-13; Shoprite, 2009 : 6; SPAR, 2008: 14). Another study indicates that less than ten JSE-listed companies had “seven female [Chief Executive Officers] CEOs and 60 percent did not have any women in top management” (van Zyl, 2009: 114). Evidence suggests that even though the labour law was changed in the 1990s, transformation at the top management level in the private sector is moving at a slow pace.

## **2.3 Trends in the workplace**

While legislation has undergone many changes in the past, employees still revert to tactics to circumvent the protection offered to employees through various laws. These tactics include the subcontracting of employees, workplace restructuring and outsourcing.

### **2.3.1 The subcontracting of employees**

Since the 1980s, sub-contracting has been implemented by management in order to reduce labour costs (Bezuidenhout, 2002: 2). The purpose of sub-contracting is to compel employees to work long hours and to pay them extremely low wages. For example, in Carltonville, at the Vaal Reef mines, sub-contracted employees were paid R5000 per year, whereas permanent employees were paid R60000 (Sikhakhane, 2003: 21-20). The recruitment modus operandi of employers is to employ workers on a sub-contracting basis, so that they prevent and discourage them from becoming unionised (Webster & Buhlungu, 2004: 40).

### **2.3.2 Workplace restructuring**

There is an increasing culture of “converting employees into independent contractors” (Webster & Buhlungu, 2004: 40). This practice became rife when management started to become aware that “independent contractors” were not protected by the LRA of 1995 and the Basic Conditions Of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997. Hence, it was easier for them to dismiss workers when they restructured (Binikos, 2006: 72), and they did not give them severance packages. Employers subjected sub-contractors to working under unfavourable conditions, and in some instances, they were not provided with protective clothing (Clarke, Godfrey & Theron, 2002: 31).

### 2.3.3 Outsourcing

The outsourcing of an organisation's non-core functions is becoming common practice these days, since it is regarded as being more cost-effective. In many instances, outsourcing a department or business unit results in workers losing their jobs or being deprived of the opportunity to upgrade their skills (Bendix, 2010: 424).

### 2.3.4 Hostility, lack of mentorship and career-pathing

A study conducted in a bank by Booysen (2007: 56-58) showed that black males and females resigned at a higher rate at senior and junior management levels. They resigned because white males who feared losing jobs were hostile towards them, and because of the lack of mentorship programmes. Another reason for their attrition was the lack of career-pathing.

## **2.4 Skills development challenges**

Workplaces are still faced with a number of skills development challenges, which are discussed below.

### 2.4.1 Skills programmes

In spite of the South African government passing legislation such as the EEA No. of 55 of 1998 and Skills Development Act (SDA) No. 97 of 1998, there are still problems with skills development in South African workplaces. Using the CEE report as a benchmark, it is noted that skills programmes that are implemented by JSE-listed companies, for example, are either not training enough black managers for top management positions, or are skilling them through management programmes, but are not appointing them on a larger scale. Companies elect an EE committee which comprises lower ranking employees or appoint a junior transformation manager. These employees are the ones given the responsibility of coming up with skills interventions and an EE plan. To some extent, these EE committees have managed to ensure that non-white employees are skilled enough to be appointed in junior management and supervisory positions (Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda & Nel, 2010: 273).

Managers need to address labour-related gender and racial imbalances in a fair manner. They must meet EE targets and retain some white males with supervisory and management skills (Alexander, 2008: 8). In order to overcome this challenge, a suggestion has been made that when management implements EE, it should ensure that employees from other racial groups, as well as women, are given the opportunity to develop themselves (Erasmus et al., 2010: 273).

#### 2.4.2 Leadership interventions

Leadership programmes attended by South African managers have been criticised because they are Euro-centric or US-centric (Dorfman, 2004: 56). In addition, they confuse South African managers because they are not applicable in their workplaces and managers who implement them might cause dissatisfaction among employees (van Zyl, 2009: 114). It can, for example, be argued that Euro-centric and US-centric leadership interventions do not help white South African managers to understand that black employees like working in groups, and that white employees prefer working as individuals (Beukman, 2005: 141). Despite changes in legislation, it may be argued that gender and race issues are not being adequately addressed by management.

### 2.5 Summary

In this chapter, the origins of racial exclusion in South Africa were briefly outlined. The chapter concluded by highlighting some gender and race issues, as well as current organisational practices which circumvent the worker rights enshrined in current labour legislation, and which might lead to employee dissatisfaction.

The concept and theories of employee dissatisfaction are dealt with in the next chapter, as well as management responses to employee dissatisfaction and change, as the context for an investigation of employee dissatisfaction in South Africa.

## **CHAPTER THREE: THEORIES OF EMPLOYEE DISSATISFACTION AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSES**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Although many studies have been conducted on employee dissatisfaction, the dearth of literature on the South African context indicates that this topic is under-researched in South Africa, especially in the ICT sector. Hence, the majority of the literature reviewed in this chapter is from Europe and the United States of America (USA). The literature review focuses on the issue of employee dissatisfaction, as well as management practices adopted since the 1930s to address this issue. It also highlights the way in which issues of gender, race, position, recruitment, organisational structure and culture contribute to employee dissatisfaction. From the management response perspective, an alternative management practice recommended by Watson (2008) and Fulcher and Scott (2006) will be discussed, and its challenges will be explored.

### **3.2 Trends in employee dissatisfaction**

Global trends seem to indicate that employee dissatisfaction is widespread. The 2005 Conference Board Survey in the United States of America (USA) showed that half of the 5000 families surveyed reported that they were dissatisfied with their jobs (Dubrin, 2007: 67). In another study in the UK, within the ICT industry, it was found that “one-third of men and 40 percent of women were dissatisfied”, because they were spending longer hours at work (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006: 8). The Gallup study indicated that 31 percent of non-white employees were dissatisfied because they were paid lower wages (Mooney, Knox & Schacht, 2009: 264). In the Eastern Cape, out of 500 skilled health employees, it was found that 80 percent of them felt that “they were very dissatisfied with their pay” (Arnolds, 2009: 8). These figures point to employee dissatisfaction being a global problem which, if not adequately addressed, may have severe consequences.

### **3.3 The consequences of dissatisfied employees**

The consequences of dissatisfied employees are varied and could render workplaces uncompetitive if they are not investigated and reduced. The findings are that dissatisfied employees are frequently absent from work and their workplace performance is poor (Nurullah, 2010: 10), dissatisfied workers experience alienation (Blauner, 1964: 16-32), and when they are alienated, they resign (Byars & Rue, 2008: 244). One study found that dissatisfied workers ignored managers' orders or complained about their managers, team leaders and co-workers (Grobler, Warnich, Carrel, Elbert & Hatfield, 2006: 128). Another study found that some of them joked and talked behind their managers' or co-workers' backs (Watson, 2003: 232-233). Worker dissatisfaction also caused stress, as indicated in one study, because they had to work longer hours after their co-workers were retrenched (Herzberg, 1968: 79). Still others developed a coronary thrombosis (Coleman, 2007: 227), ate unhealthily and suffered from high blood pressure (East, 2005: 17). These are some of the repercussions of dissatisfied employees, which may result from work, co-workers, and management practices.

### **3.4 From Taylorism to Globalisation**

Employee dissatisfaction as a result of management practices such as scientific management, human relations and bureaucracy can be traced back to the 1930s. These practices are discussed below.

#### **3.4.1 Scientific Management**

The first management practice that was used to create and control worker satisfaction was Scientific Management or Taylorism. It was introduced in the early 1930s in the USA within the manufacturing sector by an industrial engineer by the name of Taylor. Taylorism is defined as "the first systematic and practice of management, its defining characteristic has been the attempt to separate mental and manual labour, subjecting both to exact measurement" (Thompson,

1989: xvi). Employees who performed manual labour were discouraged from using their minds when they worked, and only managers and supervisors were mandated to think on behalf of employees (Watson, 1995: 23; Vallas, Finlay & Wharton, 2009: 122). Taylor claimed that economic reward is the only way to reduce employee dissatisfaction, and that through Taylorism, employees will be united (Watson, 2003: 257; Thompson, 1989: xv). Critics of Taylorism argued that contrary to creating worker satisfaction, Taylorism alienated employees from their work (Marshall, 1998: 390-393).

The notion of alienation is divided into four dimensions. The first dimension is powerlessness, and this is associated with bureaucracy (discussed in section 3.4.4), where employees are treated as “instruments of labour” (Watson, 2003: 247). Through Taylorism, manual workers were powerless because they did not “influence general managerial policies” (Giddens, 2006: 664). The second dimension of alienation is meaningless – this is when the “employee may lack understanding of the co-ordinated activity and sense of purpose in his work”. In terms of Taylorism, employees did not understand their contribution to the success of the organisation. Instead, they were told to work hard and were rewarded economically (Thompson, 1989: xv). The third dimension is isolation, through which employees feel ostracised. This means that there is no participatory working relationship (see ‘globalisation’ in section 3.4.5). The last dimension of alienation is self-estrangement, whereby employees feel worthless (Blauner, 1964: 16-26). Since Taylorism made employees feel powerless, isolated and unworthy, a new management practice that supported employees was urgently needed.

### 3.4.2 Human Relations

The management practice that encouraged manager support and teamwork, known as the human relations movement, then emerged. It was pioneered by Mayo, Roethlisberger and Dickson, who conducted a study at Western Electric's Chicago plant, where the findings were in opposition to Taylorism (Thompson, 1989: 15). They found that employee dissatisfaction could be reduced if managers or supervisors showed an interest in employees' social needs and used positive feedback. They also found that "high social cohesion within a group brought together the needs of the group for rewarding interaction and cooperation with the output needs of the management" (Watson, 2008: 41). Furthermore, they found that technical and human competencies were critical in order for a manager to have a satisfactory working relationship with his/her employees. They explained technical competencies as "the instruments of labour" and human competencies in the following way: "formal components deal with the structure of command and co-operation, while the informal aspects refer to work groups and their behaviour patterns" (Thompson, 1989: 19).

Unlike Taylorism, a human relations approach empowers employees because they are given more responsibilities at work- they are up-skilled by performing more challenging tasks, given more freedom to use their initiative, and rotated so that they are not confined to a single task (Bratton et al., 2007: 310). Braverman, however, criticised human relations management practices for perpetuating scientific management or Taylorism oppression in a subtle way (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004: 636). The human relations approach was accused of failing to address employees' psychological needs (Watson, 2003: 30).



### 3.4.3 Motivation and needs theories

Maslow (1954) developed a motivational theory based on a hierarchy of needs. He argued that people will be dissatisfied if:

- their physiological needs, which include shelter and food, are not met;
- they feel insecure and unprotected (i.e. their safety needs);
- their belongingness and love needs are replaced by feelings of loneliness, ostracism and rejection;
- their esteem needs of worth, strength and achievement are not met - this means that they will feel unworthy; and
- their self-actualisation needs for doing what fulfils them are not met (Maslow, 1954: 35-46).

It may be argued that Maslow's safety needs are no longer applicable in the 21st century, because employees are working in a turbulent and global era where employers cannot guarantee their employment until retirement (Dessler, 2011: 41). Furthermore, it is difficult to contemplate how employees can self-actualise when they are disrespected, treated as objects and classified in income statements as expenditure or costs (Covey, 2004: 16). Maslow's theory is criticised for not giving a clear indication of which "need is predominant at any given time" (Bratton et al., 2007: 253). The latter claimed that Maslow's theory was a "propaganda device" because it failed to acknowledge that employee motivation could be driven by what they termed "instrumental" and "bureaucratic" orientations. According to them, employees were motivated by "a tangible monetary reward" and by climbing the corporate ladder (Bratton et al., 2007: 253). This argument is discussed later in this chapter as a positive element of the bureaucratic management practice.

Herzberg's study, which was conducted in 1959, focused on whether accountants and engineers' reasons for dissatisfaction originated in their work or their private lives. Herzberg found that the causes of employee dissatisfaction were external factors such as "company policy and administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions", and that employees were satisfied when they achieved their tasks, recognised for their efforts, allowed to use their brains, and were promoted (Herzberg, 1968: 71). Herzberg referred to the causes of employee dissatisfaction as "hygiene factors" and the causes of employee satisfaction as "motivators". Hence, Herzberg's theory is known as the motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg, 1968: 71-74). Herzberg claimed that hygiene factors did not reduce dissatisfaction (Mcshane & Travaglione, 2003: 151; Buzinski, 2009: 12; Luthans, 2008: 172), but that employee dissatisfaction was caused by "the meaningless of work". Herzberg argued that reducing or eliminating hygiene factors brought only temporary satisfaction (Herzberg, 1968: 81-86). For example, if employees' wages or salaries were increased, they would be satisfied for a certain period of time, and that once they became used to that wage or salary, they would become dissatisfied and want more. Herzberg argued that hygiene factors only satisfy the "biological needs" of a person, which is characterised by the greed for more (Herzberg, 1968: 86).

East (2005: ii) argued that religion and societal values may create satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the workplace. (See, for example, Watson (2008: 54). Others, such as Noon and Blyton (2007), argued that other religions, such as Islam, Buddhism and Catholicism, also encourage their followers to find satisfaction in their work lives. People are encouraged to be respectful, work hard, complete or accomplish tasks on time, and be persistent (Noon & Blyton, 2007: 59-60). Similarly, the Japanese work ethic, which is not driven by religion, but rather by societal values, encourages employees to work hard, be loyal to their employers, and to not be dissatisfied because they have to work long hours without appropriate payment (Mouer & Kawanishi, 2005: 18-19).

### 3.4.4 Bureaucracy

In the 1950s, a management practice known as bureaucracy emerged (Lounsbury & Carberry, 2005: 503), which had originally been advocated by Max Weber in *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (1947). Bureaucracy is defined as a “component of formal organisation that uses rules and hierarchical ranking to achieve efficiency” (Schaefer, 2009: 240). Gerth and Mills (1958: 230-233) argued that through bureaucracy, top positions were reserved for certain employees, who were taught to hold onto power and to not share important information with their subordinates. Employees were expected to follow certain procedures when they executed tasks, and were punished when they deviated from this (Ritzer, 2004: 112). According to Babbie (2007: 358), this perpetuated “race, class, and gender inequalities.”<sup>2</sup> Although bureaucracy also created racial imbalances, it was widely accepted in the US and Europe, and some of its principles are still applied in the workplace. Gerth and Mills (1958: 196) noted, however, that in some instances it has been found that through bureaucracy, qualified and skilled employees were appointed as managers. As organisations were hierarchical, managers were trained to be “impersonal”. Impersonal, like other concepts, has both negative and positive aspects. The positive side of impersonality occurs when managers objectively evaluate employees’ performance on their tasks. The negative side is that it is antagonistic towards the human relations’ approach, in which managers develop an interest in employees beyond their tasks.

Weber’s bureaucracy was criticised for producing impersonal managers who treated employees as tools or apparatus (Watson, 2003: 247). It created a platform for payment gaps between managers at the highest and lowest echelons. Since managers knew that they would be paid higher salaries and receive dividends, their behaviour became unethical (Frey & Osterloh, 2005: 2).

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<sup>2</sup>In the gender and race section later in this study, it will be shown that black employees and women are still unequally represented in the workplace.

The similarity between Taylorism and the bureaucratic management practice is that they both produced managers who lacked social or leadership skills, or what Herzberg called “interpersonal skills”. These managers’ relationships with their employees were cohesive, and they did not use their creativity and initiative, but instead followed procedures when they occupied top positions (Herzberg, 1968: 71-74, 91). This management practice is no longer popular in the global era (Schaefer, 2009: 422). In conclusion, it can be argued that the bureaucratic management practice is not the only cause of employee dissatisfaction or satisfaction, as it both has positive and negative outcomes (Olsen, 2005: 18). These different outcomes have led to new management practices, which emerged during the global era.

#### 3.4.5 Globalisation

There are numerous definitions of globalisation. According to Schaefer (2009: 422), globalisation refers to the way in which information is exchanged through technology, how global values are integrated and how different nations have allowed economic institutions to “trade”. Globalisation is also defined as transformation brought about in terms of technology, how people communicate and changes in workplace structures, and where employees are driven by the “neoliberal ideology”, which encourages individualisation (Chase-Dunn, Kawana & Brewer, 2000: 77). Another definition is that of neo-colonialism practiced by workplaces that operate globally, which “exploit the resources and people from poor countries” (Babbie, 2007: 346).

In the global era, workplace structures are being flattened (Clegg & Clarke, 2001: 47; Greenberg & Baron, 2003: 551). For example, if a workplace had ten hierarchies, it was reduced to five. Chase-Dunn et al. (2000:17) state that globalisation is brought about an “information age”. In an information age, unlike a bureaucracy, managers are no longer the only people with skills and education. Instead, managers depend on employees who have the knowledge and skills to use and develop technology (Brandth & Kvande, 2006: 148; Carnoy, 2000: 20-

21; Castells, 2000a: 143; Castells, 2000b: 467; Alvarez, 2006: 387; May, 2002: 50; Cardoso, 2006: 41; Moore, 2005: 150 ; Watson, 2003: 66-68). These “skilled employees” are not union members - they negotiate their own salary and are expected to learn new “technologies” at a faster rate, in order to make workplaces more competitive (Chase-Dunn et al., 2000: 81).

Globalisation emerged in the 1980s when bureaucracy lost popularity (Lounsbury & Carberry, 2005: 513) and when the service industry was becoming more prominent (Crompton, 2006: 62; Dow & Parker, 2001: 12). Unlike the 1960s, from the 1980s onwards, workplaces could not guarantee employees’ job security (Baldry, Bain, Taylor, Hyman, Scholarios, Marks, Watson, Gilbert, Gall & Bunzel, 2007: 46). Contrary to bureaucratic and Taylorism management practices, in the global era, employees are required to use their brains, and managers encourage “participatory leadership” (May, 2006: 41; Thompson, 1989: 18). Some of the ICT skills, as well as those of business analysis and project management, were mentioned earlier as being critical skills that would enable BASC to meet its mandate. It is during this global era that, in the USA and Europe, many workplaces are employing more women. However, women’s working conditions are not what they should be (Heymann, 2005: 104). In general, it has been found that women are not being appointed on a permanent basis, do not receive workplace benefits such as medical aid, and are being paid less than their male counterparts (Bozzoli, 1983: 137; Houston, 2005: 13; Giddens, 2001: 393; Giddens, 2006: 62; Grieco, 1996: 9; Odih, 2007: 153). Women are dissatisfied because managers maximise profits and pay them pittance, even though they (women) have enriched them (Cohen & Kennedy, 2007: 94). Furthermore, they are not appointed in management positions (Schaefer, 2008: 198). While globalisation has been defined in some quarters as neo-colonialism practiced by global workplaces to “exploit” workers, these arguments suggest that women are more exploited than their male counterparts in the work environment (The ways in which women’s movements have opposed these unfair management practices are discussed in detail in this chapter).

In conclusion, with regard to Taylorism and globalisation, it has been argued that these management practices failed to reduce employee dissatisfaction (i.e. they did not view employees holistically, but only addressed certain aspects). For example, Taylorism only focused on economic rewards as a means of reducing employee dissatisfaction, and not on the social and psychological dimensions of this problem. The human relations management practice was accused, inter alia, of not using participatory leadership (Watson, 2003: 30). Later in this chapter, a management practice which includes features of Taylorism, human relations, Maslow's theory and participatory leadership will be discussed as a means to reduce employee dissatisfaction.

### **3.5 Gender and race issues**

Studies have shown that gender imbalance is a global phenomenon. Females are insufficiently represented in top management positions (Alvesson & Due Billing, 2009: 143; den Dulk & van Doorne-Huiskes, 2007: 55; Edwards & Wajcman, 2005: 80; Grint, 2005: 212-213; Heilman, 2001: 657; Jacobsen, 2007: 191; Rees, 2006: 231; Perrons, 2003: 73; Vallas et al., 2009: 129) because workplaces are mostly patriarchal (Schaefer, 2008: 184; Thompson, 1989: 189). A study conducted in the USA in 2007 revealed that only 32 percent of computer system analysts were females (Schaefer, 2008: 198). The USA's Department of Commerce, Telecommunications and Information Administration's 2002 report indicated that black women did not have the money to enrol for ICT programmes (Warschauer, 2004: 55). Alvesson and Due Billing (2009: 145) believe that another reason for women not occupying top management positions is because they are inexperienced and do not have the necessary management qualifications. It is alleged that they are not promoted because managers do not invite them to events such as "golf outings, card games, and other activities", where the former take decisions regarding whom to appoint (Slocum & Hellriegel, 2007: 13). This management practice of excluding or not appointing women in top positions is known as the "sticky floor" (Bratton et al., 2007: 281). The non-promotion of women to top positions makes them susceptible to unfair labour

practices such as bullying (Harris, 2009: 7), mobbing (Zippel, 2006: 12) and sexual harassment (Schaefer, 2008: 194-195). According to the Equal Opportunity Commission, in the USA, sexual harassment cases by male employees across strata have increased since the early 1990s (Sunday Times, 2010: 12). It must be noted, however, that not only women are susceptible to sexual harassment. In Australia, for example, a female employee in the police force was dismissed for sending her manager and male co-worker lewd text messages. In the USA city of California, there was an incident in which a lower stratum male employee was awarded millions for being unfairly dismissed by a female manager who had sexually harassed him.

Employees who file sexual harassment cases may experience a negative attitude towards them. In USA and European workplaces, it was found that females were blamed for wearing mini-skirts, which tempted males (Zippel, 2006: 3). In another case, it was found that “male workers [were] reluctant to come forward because they think they won’t be believed or taken seriously”. A survey conducted in the UK of 500 males showed that only 2 percent of their colleagues had been supportive. Common responses in this regard were: *You must be gay* or *Hey, enjoy it* (Sunday Times, 2010: 12).

The feminist movement has resulted in a growing opposition to unfair labour practices since the 1970s. Cases of women who experienced mobbing, bullying and sexual harassment in their workplaces have been brought under scrutiny. Their activism has also been associated with cases of the victimisation of women in the workplace (Zippel, 2006: xi; Rustad, 1984: 270). Drawing up fair labour policies which address issues of gender is a difficult task because workplaces are left with the task of formulating policies that are “gender neutral or sensitive”. If they are formulated to be “gender neutral”, they are seen as perpetuating the status quo of patriarchy. On the other hand, if they are formulated to be “gender sensitive”, they can result in males being dissatisfied, as they view these policies as discriminatory (Zippel, 2006: 19). In the USA, the aims of feminists were to

protect women appointed to senior positions, and to look at recruitment processes. They challenged job advertisements that discriminated against women. For example, they ensured that these would be rewritten to include statements like “women are encouraged to apply”. In addition, they were not impressed with the number of women employed in top positions, and wanted gender committees to be established that represented these women (Ruxton, 2004: 190).

Women’s perceptions and experiences make them feel powerless. Chacko’s 1982 study found that “women who perceived that they were selected because of their sex had less commitment; less satisfaction with their work, with supervision and with their co-workers...than women who felt sex was not important factor in their selection.” Furthermore, an earlier study by Jacobson and Kock, conducted in 1977, found that “women appointed to leadership positions roles on their basis of their performance were evaluated more favourably than women appointed on the basis of sex.” The consequences of these experiences and perceptions were severe, because they alienated women. Consequently, they were reluctant to apply for management positions, even if they had the proper qualifications and skills (Hall, 1994: 230-231).

Besides gender issues, another cause of employee dissatisfaction is race (Parker, 2006: 175). In the USA, a study conducted in 2008 showed that a black professional with a doctorate degree earned \$30 000.00 less than a white professional with a doctorate degree, and earned \$11 000.00 less than a white professional with a master’s degree (Schaefer, 2008: 60). These findings are in contrast to the views of Sennett (2006: 54), who argues that unequal pay is not race-related.



Some studies on race reveal that professionals from other racial groups are often undermined. It was found that in the USA, black professionals were dissatisfied and frustrated because they were not promoted, earned lower salaries and were undermined by white males. Since these employees were dissatisfied, they were unproductive and ultimately resigned (Taylor, 1991: 45). In South Africa, it was found that black managers were working in environments where they were not respected, and in some instances were labelled as top management's "yes men" (Nzimande, cited in Webster, 2002: 182). In Spain, the Mapuche were identified as "brave and fearless warriors, bloodthirsty bandits, lazy, the white man's burden and gentle savages lacking education" (Jenkins & Solomons, 1989: 207). Derogatory names and the undermining of professionals from other races makes them feel worthless.

### **3.6 Appointment and recruitment issues**

Isolation is a dimension of alienation which is used to implement a recruitment strategy in which older and more experienced employees are not appointed (Webster, 2007: 7). Managers isolate them by hiring younger, less costly employees (ibid). This practice of not giving older employees opportunities to develop themselves goes against the "lifelong learning" principle (Webster & Leger, 1992: 55), and the global practice of having knowledgeable or educated employees (Egan, Yang & Bartlett, 2004: 281; Willcocks & Mason, 1987: 53). These arguments are in contrast to the belief that older employees are not dissatisfied in their workplaces (Firebaugh & Harley, 1995: 87).

Other than being isolated, employees are dissatisfied because they work for bureaucratic managers who make them feel worthless. For example, a bureaucratic federal study found that female managers were worse off than their male counterparts because they were perceived to be power-hungry and control freaks (Hall, 1994: 227). In another case, it was found that male managers intimidated employees (Turner, 2003: 102) and were inflexible (Merton, 1990:

204). They were not trusted because they were unkind, ruthless and unapproachable (Coleman, 2007: 227). Their subordinates suffered from disgruntlement and low morale (Bews & Uys, 2002: 22; Yulk, 2002: 149; Dannhauser, 2007: 100), and were estranged from their work, because they felt powerless, oppressed and isolated (Webster, 2007: 05; Kemp, 1992: 10-11; Vos, 2002: 785).

Rivalry is another cause of employee dissatisfaction. For example, in an accounting workplace in the USA, it was found that employees were dissatisfied when they found out that they were paid the same as employees whose work, they believed, was less important than that of other employees appointed on the same grade in another department (Wallace & Wold, 1986: 50-55). Being dissatisfied with their co-workers signifies that employee dissatisfaction is not always vertical (i.e. from managers to employees), but can also be horizontal (i.e. amongst employees).

### **3.7 Workplace structure and culture issues**

One cause of dissatisfaction which has vertical rewards is workplace politics (Mcshane & Travaglione, 2003: 412; Holtzhausen, 2007: 288). Workplace politics is a multifaceted concept, which can be defined as the “activities that are not required as part of the organisation, but that influence the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organisation” (Robbins et al., 2007: 477). Workplace politics undermines teamwork and staff morale (Robbins et al., 2007: 276; Kotter, 1992: 148), and employees tend to learn about workplace politics through socialisation. Members of a group gang up against employees with a different sexual preference, race and accent, culture, marital status, social class and impairment, as well as those with different views to theirs. As a result, they frustrate those who are outside their group, often resulting in the resignation of the discriminated employee (Shallcross, Ramsay & Barker, 2010: 27; Bendix, 1996: 579). Group members who play workplace politics reap the rewards of

being protected by their group members, and are in some instances even promoted (Holtzhausen, 2007: 288). Employees who practice workplace politics adhere to workplace deliverables and labour policies (e.g. sexual harassment), but their more subtle discriminatory behaviour undermines team members (Sias, 2009: 75) and managers who are not part of their group (Robbins et al., 2007: 276). It is thus difficult for managers to dismiss or discipline them, because their actions are not work-related or in breach of any workplace policies. Once they are appointed as managers or reap the rewards of playing workplace politics, in order to safeguard their positions, they become bureaucratic, monitor employees' tasks closely, do not trust employees to work on their own, and isolate employees (Watson, 2008: 319; Lewis & Cooper, 2005: 65; Townsend, 2007: 70).

Employees who felt alienated because of close supervision used various strategies to get even with their bureaucratic managers. They pretended to be submissive, but they ultimately sabotaged them (Watson, 2008: 307 & 311). A study in the USA found that employees who worked for bureaucratic managers silently resisted their managers' instructions. In front of their bureaucratic managers, they pretended to be submissive. These employees dragged their feet, and their managers were in trouble because they did not complete their tasks on time (Edwards, 2007: 15). This resulted in their positions being under threat (Kotter, 1992: 156-157).

Another strategy employed by workers, as revealed in Townsend's 2005 study, was to fiddle. One respondent in Townsend's study explained their fiddling technique as follows:

*We can take a call, and if they [customers] need to pay a bill then we transfer them into the computer interactive system "cardgate". What we can do is hit the transfer but we don't release the button. So then we are on mute while the customer does the interactive computer processes. And that really gives me three or four minutes.*

*Sometimes I go and have a cup of tea or maybe go to the toilet, every now and then I go for a cigarette. The best part is that the "cardgate" system does not hang up when the caller remains on transfer. I can sit there for 20 minutes if I want to but I don't push my luck, 10 minutes for a cigarette is plenty. And a call of that length isn't unusual so it won't stick out in your stats. You have to think these through, the last thing I want to do is get caught by being greedy (Townsend, cited in Noon & Blyton, 2007: 254).*

Fiddling or dishonesty, such as that described above, can affect the manager's or department's monthly performance. Employees also fiddle by "surfing the Internet", abusing sick leave when they are not sick, and using workplace equipment for private purposes (Noon & Blyton, 2007: 254; du Plessis, 2009: 153). They may fiddle in groups or as individuals (Watson, 1980: 230). Managers often tolerate this deviant behaviour because they also fiddle (Noon & Blyton, 2007: 256-257).

### **3.8 Management responses**

In order to reduce the effects of gender, race, appointment, recruitment, structural and cultural issues, managers have to respond differently by adopting different management practices (Jenkins & Solomons, 1989: x). Managers sometimes give employees opportunities to develop themselves (Slocum & Hellriegel, 2007: 13), which may lead to them being promoted (Yulk & Lepsinger, 2004: 162). A study conducted in a USA health workplace showed that after management gave women opportunities to develop themselves, they were promoted to higher occupation strata. Even though managers were promoting women, they were criticised for promoting them to positions that made them report to males (Moen & Roehling, 2005: 115). This was known as "women's expertise" and "men's authority" (Savage & Witz, 1992: 11,131).

Multi-skilling has been found to be a source of worker satisfaction (Perrons, 2003: 77) and is a growing global trend, whereby managers are creating knowledge workers (Standing, Sender & Weeks, 1996: 7; Kenny & Webster, 1998: 220-221). Numerous examples of multi-skilling initiatives exist, both abroad and in South Africa. Gregg (cited in Savage & Witz, 1992: 10) refers to the Oxfam Regional Management Centre in the USA, where multi-skilling was implemented. In South Africa, in a report submitted to the Department of Labour, it was revealed that, in the mid-1990s at Fulco Incorporation, almost 20 percent of the employees were multi-skilled (Bezuidenhout, Godfrey & Theron, 2004: 35).

Managers often implement culture change interventions in order to change human behaviour. The approach of implementing culture change from management to employee level has been supported by functionalists such as Schein, Lundberg and Gilgiari since the mid-1980's (Demers, 2007: 81). Watson (2008: 172) is of the view that a cultural change intervention will be most effective if it is facilitated by an impartial person. Hofstede (1991: 202) argues that culture change interventions must be driven by top managers. A change culture that emerged in the 2000s, particularly in the ICT industry in the USA, is known as "flexibility", whereby employees are allowed to work from home (Hassan, 2008: 5; Brandth & Kvande, 2006: 155), communicate with team members and managers electronically (e.g. via email), and hold meetings either in the workplace or via remote access technologies installed on their computers (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2001: 523).

A different management ethos has emerged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to create trust between management and employees and ultimately to reduce employee dissatisfaction. New management responses have reduced the many causes of employee dissatisfaction. Managers and employees have worked together to achieve their goals, and employees have not sabotaged managers (Watson, 2008: 160). Different stakeholders such as unions, managers and employees, have worked together (Townsend, 2007: 167). Since team members worked together, and employees have been consulted about policies (Giddens, 2006: 664), feelings of alienation have diminished (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004: 621). A study in the UK at a process factory showed that employees were taking leave less frequently, supported their managers, and did not resign (Edwards & Scullion, 1982: 53-195). Employees were paid fairly, and obeyed instructions from their managers. Management was interested in employees' social issues and wellbeing. This management response, which combined different management practices, was termed HRM (Watson, 2008: 167). HRM is in line with the argument that the management practices of Bureaucracy, Taylorism, Human Relations and Herzberg's theory had some "truths" in them (Thompson, 1989: 9), and was seen to be the management path to reducing employee dissatisfaction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Fulcher & Scott, 2006: 760).

Contemporary HRM industrial relations promote harmonious working relationships between employees and employers through a democratic leadership style of management. In this way, both employees and employers have rights. For example, employees can lodge a grievance against managers, and managers can dismiss employees. A working culture of oneness between managers and employees is thus promoted (Hofstede, 1991: 178). Furthermore, employees are given the responsibility of using their brains and meeting targets, as well as being customer-focused, creative, taking the initiative (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006: 81 & 172), and sharing skills amongst themselves (Argote & Ingram, 2008: 204). Managers are encouraged to communicate with employees (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006: 172) and top managers (van der Merwe,

1995: 132-132). They are also encouraged to motivate employees (Bratton et al., 2007: 251), be persuasive and influential (Hostede, 1991: 94; Hersey, 1984: 75), not discriminate against employees based on gender, race or disability (Bratton et al., 2007: 251) and to not intimidate employees (Burawoy, 1974: 213). Employees who are not being threatened by bureaucratic managers or co-workers, are fulfilled, or are not insecure in their jobs are usually not stressed (Locke & Taylor, 1990: 140-142).

Through HRM, managers or co-workers can refer stressed employees to the employee wellness programme (Maleka, 2006: 7; Nel et al., 2008: 317-318). By means of employee wellness programmes, employees are taught how to cope with stress and avoid situations that are stressful. Workplaces appoint external professionals to assist stressed employees who are infected with chronic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and workers are encouraged to join support groups in order to receive emotional support (Whiteside & Sunter, 2000: 153; Human Dynamics Health, 2003: 9; Fesko, 2001: 3; Parker & Aggleton, 2002: 8; Amos et al., 2008: 151; Forbes, 2003: 43 ; Farham, 2002: 95).

Employees who work with customers need training on how to deal with emotions (Edwards & Wajcman, 2005: 34). This is because they are often in contact with frustrated customers, who may be verbally abusive. Even though customers may use abusive language, call centre employees are trained to empathise with customers and to avoid being rude over the phone (Odihi, 2007: 119). The process of training employees to control their emotions when they interact with customers is known as emotional labour (McShane & Travaglione, 2003: 123).

Through HRM, managers are encouraged to discipline employees who abuse their leave. A study conducted at the Allied workplace showed that leave abuse was reduced by 80 percent because “the union recognised management’s right to bring disciplinary charges for repeated absenteeism” (Burawoy, 1974: 131). This agreement between management and the union was the result of

participatory leadership, whereby management consulted with the unions before they implemented policies. In the South African context, through the HRM's Industrial Relations division, when a manager is going to discipline an employee who is abusing his/her leave, a shop steward is called to the disciplinary hearing. By means of participatory leadership, the shop steward will represent employees at the disciplinary hearing, in order to ensure that the hearing is substantively and procedurally fair (Nel et al., 2008: 104).

Even when HRM is implemented in the workplace, employees do not always display commitment (Wasti & Önder, 2009: 309). The ESRC Future of Work studies conducted in the UK between 1992 and 2002 found that the employee commitment level was lower than 50 percent. The Isles study conducted in 2004 showed that top managers were committed because they were paid well. The same study indicated that lower strata employees were less committed, and 54 percent of them said that if they had an opportunity, they would leave their current employment if they were dissatisfied (Williams, 2007: 176 -177). The Isles study validates Taylor's claims that money can influence employee satisfaction, and that resignation is one of the consequences of employee dissatisfaction.

### **3.9 Summary**

The literature reviewed in this chapter focused on the issue of employee dissatisfaction, as well as the management practices adopted since the 1930s to address this issue. The literature review has provided a broader understanding of the views of international scholars with regard to the ways in which issues such as gender, race, appointment and recruitment practices, organisational structure and culture contribute to employee dissatisfaction. It may be assumed that the issues identified in this chapter are also relevant to employee dissatisfaction in South Africa.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter commences with a discussion of the research design and methodological approach employed in this study. This is followed by an outline of the research methodology, sampling techniques and data collection instruments used, as well as a discussion of the ethical considerations that apply to this study.

### **4.2 Research design**

A research design is a clear and detailed explanation or set of actions for achieving a research output or end-product (Mouton, 2001: 55; Babbie & Mouton, 2006: 74). A case study was selected as the research design, in order to investigate the causes of employee dissatisfaction at Eskom's BASC. A mixed-method approach comprising both qualitative and quantitative research designs enabled the researcher to mitigate the weaknesses in each research design (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010: 97; Bryman, 2001: 447).

Leedy and Ormrod (2010: 97) suggest that "especially in studies of human behaviour, mixed-method designs with both quantitative and qualitative elements often provide a more complete picture of phenomenon". The aim of this study was to conduct an in-depth investigation on the causes of employee dissatisfaction (i.e. human behaviour) in the workplace, and it was therefore logical for the researcher to follow Leedy and Ormrod's advice.

There are differing views among scholars regarding the mixed-method research design. There are those who argue that since quantitative and qualitative research designs have different characteristics, they must not be mixed. Research designs that are not mixed are known as mono-method designs (Bryman, 2001: 446). Others are in favour of the mixed-method

research design and advise that researchers should be sufficiently skilled “to carry both the quantitative and qualitative research... and that triangulation exercise has been conducted.” Furthermore, scholars argue that utilising the mixed-method design enhances the credibility and quality of the research findings (Bryman, 2001: 455-456). The researcher used the mixed-method design in this study for the following reasons:

- It enabled him to obtain quality and credible data (see *Chapter five*); and
- The researcher was skilled in using the mixed-method research design.

A limitation of the study, however, was the limited number of interviews that were conducted due to potential respondents expressing a fear of reprisals from management, despite the fact that the researcher had been granted permission by management to conduct the study.

### **4.3 Research design epistemologies**

The research design employed for this study was both qualitative and quantitative. This means that it was influenced by the epistemologies of interpretivism and positivism. According to Babbie (2007: 04), epistemology is “the science of knowing; systems of knowledge.” Interpretivist sociologists were influenced by Weber’s notion of *Verstehen*. According to them, data should be in the form of words, and sociologists must “respect the difference between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman, 2001: 13). Through conducting face-to-face interviews and one focus group, the researcher was able to explore the “subjective” causes of BASC employee dissatisfaction across different strata.

Positivism is associated with Auguste Comte, the French sociologist who lived from 1798 to 1857. Comte and the positivists (like Emile Durkheim) adopted their research methodology from the natural sciences (i.e. statistics) - they argued that sociological research can be objective and its hypotheses must be generated from available literature (Bryman 2001: 13).

#### **4.4 Research methodology**

While the research design is the plan, the research methodology is the procedure that the researcher follows in order to find the solution to the research problem (Babbie, 2007: 4). Research methodology comprises the following three dimensions: sampling, data collection, and data analysis (Mouton, 2001: 56).

##### **4.4.1 Sampling**

Purposive qualitative sampling was utilised by the researcher to conduct nine face-to-face interviews. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which respondents are chosen based on the “researcher’s judgment” concerning how they can add value to the research problem (Babbie, 2007: 193). The researcher selects the sample from incumbents who may have various views regarding the research problem (Leedy & Ormond, 2010: 212). The researcher’s knowledge of the sample and the research topic is therefore vital. Since the researcher, in this case, was also a BASC employee, he purposefully selected respondents whom he believed would provide valuable information. He also selected respondents from different racial groups, age groups and occupational strata. This helped the researcher to obtain diverse views about the causes of employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction. This approach of selecting diverse respondents helped the researcher to avoid soliciting only the views of employees from one stratum, racial group and gender.

In addition, for the focus group, the researcher purposefully selected respondents whom he believed would provide valuable information. Unfortunately, the potential respondents from other race groups (Whites, Coloureds and Indians) did not attend the focus group session. The invitees (1 White and 1 Black) who did not attend the focus group session told the researcher that their reason for not attending was the fear of management reprisal.

For the quantitative online survey, the researcher surveyed all the employees at BASC, with the exception of those who participated in the face-to-face interviews and focus group session. The researcher was influenced by Leedy and Ormrod (2010: 213), who suggest that if the population is below 500, the researcher should “survey the entire population.” One of the definitions of population is the entire “group of people” investigated or researched (Babbie & Mouton, 2007: 100).

#### 4.4.2 Data collection

Data for this study was collected by means of in-depth interviews, a focus group discussion and an online survey. The use of multiple data collection techniques, or triangulation, is a technique that facilitates the validation of data through cross-verification from two or more sources (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010: 99; Hassard et al., 2008: 143). The use of multiple data collection techniques was aimed at addressing the weaknesses inherent to using only a qualitative or quantitative research design. For example, sociologists in the UK report that the response rates to questionnaires have become very low. They believe that this might be attributed to the fact that people are no longer interested in participating in surveys (Savage & Burrows, 2007: 6). They also report that even though in-depth interviews solicit richer data, they are used minimally in the UK, and are not used at all in the USA (Savage & Burrows, 2007: 11).

#### 4.4.2.1 Face-to-face interviews

Face-to-face interviews were chosen as one of the data collection techniques because, according to Neuman (2006: 301), they have the highest participation rate. A semi-structured interview schedule was drawn up, and the questionnaire began with a focus on the demographics of the sample (Berg, 2004: 65). The other questions included aspects pertaining to gender, race, appointment, recruitment, organisational structure, organisational culture and management responses. Using face-to-face interviews also gave the researcher an opportunity to “probe” when respondents were not providing sufficient information (Neuman, 2000: 73). According to Neuman (2006: 36), this means “a follow-up question in survey research interviewing that asks a respondent to clarify or elaborate on an incomplete or inappropriate answer.”

A semi-structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questions were formulated based on issues identified in the literature review. In chapter five of this study, before the results are presented, the researcher discusses what scholars have said, and then presents the results. A semi-structured questionnaire assists researchers in extracting “rich data” from respondents (Bryman, 2001: 285). Different types of questions were used (see Appendix Two), by means of which the researcher was able to probe and extract data (Bryman, 2001: 285). Using different types of questions which allow for further probing and clarification is more effective in sourcing information than using only exploratory questions, which is what BASC management did in 2007.

The researcher also followed the stages of interviews suggested by Neuman (2006: 306). Firstly, he telephoned would-be respondents and asked them if they were interested in participating in the study. Some of them asked the researcher why they had been selected, and he had to then explain that he used a purposive sampling technique, and that they had been selected because they were knowledgeable about the research problem. The

researcher then made appointments with the key informants, which appeared on their calendar in Groupwise. Before the interviews commenced, the researcher read the introductory part of the questionnaire (see Appendix Two). At the end of the interview sessions, respondents wanted to know whether or not the researcher was going to give the report of the study to senior management. They were of the view that this report would sensitise senior management to the causes of employee dissatisfaction.

In order to be an effective interviewer, the researcher had to overcome interview bias. According to Neuman (2006: 308-309), interview bias is caused by an interviewer who is inexperienced, makes errors by omitting questions from the questionnaire, does not know how to “probe”, and uses a research instrument that is worded in such a way as to lead respondents. In order to avoid the latter, the researcher sent the interview questionnaire to his supervisor and a professional English editor, who ensured that it was professionally worded. The researcher then sent the questionnaire to four researchers, in order to obtain their inputs. One of them was a master’s student, two of them were honours students, and one of them was a doctoral student. Testing the wording of an interview questionnaire by sending it to various people is known as a pilot (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010: 110). The rationale behind piloting the interview questionnaire was to assist the researcher to identify and rectify “poorly worded questions...questions revealing the researcher’s own biases, personal values, or blind spots” (Berg, 2004: 90). In order to familiarise himself with the questionnaire, the researcher conducted three interviews with his wife. This process helped to overcome the pitfalls mentioned by Neuman (2006: 308-309).

A number of logistical arrangements had to be made before the researcher was permitted to conduct face-to-face interviews. Firstly, he had to write a two-page proposal stating how this study would benefit BASC. This was submitted to the researcher’s manager on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2010. She then

forwarded it to the BASC manager,<sup>3</sup> who took a look at it and then forwarded it to the Tuition Committee and the Human Resources representative, who also perused it. Once it had been approved, they notified the BASC manager. This logistical process of seeking permission to do field work is known as gate-keeping (Berg, 2004: 160; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010: 139; Bryman, 2001: 295; Holliman, 2005: 5). The BASC senior manager then sent the researcher's manager an email, which she forwarded to the researcher on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2010. After this, the researcher was given permission to collect data. He then started scheduling interviews with nine respondents.

#### 4.4.2.2 Reliability of the qualitative interview questionnaire

Babbie (2007:151) defines reliability as "...quality of measurement method that suggests that the same data would have been collected each time in repeated observations of the same phenomenon." Due to the refining and pre-testing of the semi-structured questionnaire, the researcher was confident that, when used by other researchers for the same sample, it would yield similar results. The notion of validity in qualitative research is associated with "credibility" (Bryman, 2001: 272). The same credible instrument was used to collect data for the focus group discussion.

#### 4.4.2.3 Focus group discussion

One of the many definitions of a focus group discussion is that it is an alternative form of interview, i.e. one which is conducted with more than one person at a time (Babbie, 2007: 322), where "a one-shot collection is necessary" (Berg, 2004: 123). The researcher used the same semi-structured interview framework that was used for the face-to-face interviews. Instead of publicly asking the respondents for their biographical information, the researcher gave them documents to complete on their own. The rationale for

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<sup>3</sup>, A gatekeeper is "someone with the formal and informal authority to control access to a site" (Neuman, 2006: 387). A gatekeeper is different to an informant, because an informant is a person whom the researcher meets in the field (Berg, 2004: 161).

doing this was to protect their identity, as well as to protect confidential information such as employee grade levels. This helped, because every respondent was then treated equally, and since they all had different grade levels, they did not feel threatened about participating because of a lower grade level. The researcher encouraged the respondents to try to address each question in the moderator/interview guide (see Appendix Two). Unlike the face-to-face interviews, where respondents were given pseudonyms, in the focus group session, the researcher identified the participants as number one, two and three. This helped the researcher during data analysis. The advantage of the focus group discussion was that the setting was flexible, and it allowed the researcher to probe for clarity (Krueger, cited in Babbie, 2007: 323). The environment in which the interview was conducted was non-threatening, and the respondents were therefore not afraid to answer the questions that were posed.

Organising a focus group is not an easy task (Krueger, cited in Babbie, 2007: 323). The number of respondents who participated in the focus group session was below the normal range, as stipulated by Babbie (2007) and Leedy and Ormrod (2010). The former recommends that a focus group should have between 5 and 15 participants (Babbie, 2007: 322), while the latter are of the view that a focus group should have 10 to 12 participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010: 148). In this study, eight employees initially accepted the invitation to attend via email, but only three showed up for the focus group session (refer to section 4.4.1). While this was not an optimal number, the three participants did, however, provide valuable insights.

#### 4.4.2.4 Online survey

An online survey was used as the quantitative data collection technique. Online surveys have several advantages, among which are the facts that they usually yield high response rates, and do not take much time to complete (Marcus, Bosnjack, Lindner, Pilischenko & Schut, 2007: 374).



The survey questionnaire was administered via e-mail to all BASC employees. In the e-mail, the researcher requested employees who had participated in the face-to-face interviews and focus group session not to participate in the online survey. To ensure that employees' anonymity was guaranteed, the researcher instructed them to not provide their user names and passwords when they clicked on the link where they had to answer the questions in the questionnaire. Once they had submitted their responses, these were transferred to a development server without a link and trace to them. Confidentiality was ensured by informing respondents that their responses could not be traced back to them.

The online survey questionnaire had a number of advantages: firstly, respondents did not have to leave their workstations, unlike the focus group session and face-to-face interviews. Secondly, its data set was quicker to analyse, unlike the face-to-face interviews and focus group session, which required the researcher to listen to the recordings over a period of time. Thirdly, the researcher developed open-ended questions to enable respondents to provide richer data. This helped the researcher to mitigate the interpretivists' criticism that surveys do not produce rich data.

The researcher heeded the advice of Leedy and Ormord (2010: 213), who suggest that for a population of less than 500, all members of the population under scrutiny should be selected. The researcher therefore sent the online questionnaire to the entire BASC population, with the exception of those who had participated in the face-to-face interviews and focus group session. According to the report that the researcher received from Bytes Technology, 154 employees clicked on the link, but only 121 ultimately completed the questionnaire. This means that the response rate was 39.54 percent.

#### 4.4.2.5 Piloting of the online survey

The researcher used the face-to-face interviews and focus group discussion to reformulate questions developed for the online survey. The online survey was then sent to ten people outside BASC, in order for them to complete it and provide comments or feedback. This feedback helped the researcher to further refine the questions used for the online survey. The questionnaire was sent electronically to the BASC population in September 2010, and excluded respondents who had participated in the face-to-face interviews and focus group session. The researcher used the blind copy field in Groupwise, the software program used at Eskom to send emails, so that employees were confident about participating in the field work, because they were assured that the results would be sent to the development server. In order to collect valid data in the field, the researcher applied different ethnographic strategies, which are discussed in the next section.

#### 4.4.2.6 Ethnography

There are different definitions of the concept of ethnography and how it should be applied. The definition that is applicable and relevant to this study is that which defines it as a study in which a researcher “enters the natural setting in order to conduct...research” (Berg, 2004: 147). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010: 139), an ethnographer or researcher should use these strategies for the following: planning, negotiation, building rapport, knowing how to record data and knowing when to leave the research field. In this study, the researcher also applied these ethnographic strategies, which helped him to successfully collect data. These strategies were used for both qualitative (focus group session and face-to-face interviews) and quantitative data collection methods (i.e. online survey).

### *Planning*

Initially, according to the project plan, the researcher wanted to conduct the interviews and focus group session in August 2010. This milestone was achieved as planned, because the researcher conducted ten interviews and the focus group session in August 2010. The researcher planned to conduct face-to-face interviews for an hour at a time and the focus group session for two hours. The latter lasted for an hour, due to the small number of respondents who participated in the study. The former averaged twenty minutes per interview, even though they had been planned for an hour. The researcher's plan was to conduct the online survey in the beginning of September 2010. However, it was only conducted in the middle of October, due to the reasons mentioned in the next section.

### *Negotiation*

Negotiations took place with different stakeholders. Since some of them knew the researcher, they did not ask permission from their manager, but only requested that he should book them for interviews. The other negotiation that the researcher had to undertake was to request a server on which to host quantitative data. This took the researcher a month (i.e. August to September 2010), after which he was told to draft a five-page proposal, which was taken to the master's and doctoral committee for approval. Subsequently, the researcher had to ask the manager who controlled the server to request her subordinate to convert the online survey questionnaire from Excel to the standardised Eskom survey format. This took a month to do, since it was not work-related and, at that time, the department's employees were under pressure to deliver other survey reports.

Another negotiation that the researcher undertook was when a “potential respondent” (Berg, 2004: 107) wanted to know why she had been selected to participate in the focus group session. This negotiation took place on the Friday before the focus group session, which was held on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2010. This employee wanted to know if she had been selected because she was a *black sheep* (her exact words). The researcher explained that she had been selected because of her knowledge, which would contribute to the study. After this negotiation session, she agreed to participate in the study. However, on the day of the focus group session, she did not arrive, and when the researcher phoned her office number, he found out that she had taken leave. This experience is in line with Berg’s argument that “some individuals will not cooperate regardless of how persuasive one is” (Berg, 2004: 107).

In terms of the interviews, other “potential respondents” (these included all race groups) were negotiated with, as they indicated that they did not have the time to participate in the interviews in August 2010, due to the fact that they were busy with urgent work-related tasks. Some of these tasks were related to the restructuring of the ICT division. Hence, they promised the researcher that they would either participate in the online survey at a later stage, once they had completed the tasks in question. The researcher knew about the restructuring, because even he had been re-linked to the Eskom Academy of Learning in September 2010. This re-linking was part of Eskom’s strategy to centralise all learning and training departments.

### *Building rapport*

Before the researcher could start with the interviews and the focus group session, he talked about topics that were not related to the study (Berg, 2004: 104). This helped the researcher to build “rapport” with the respondents (Neuman, 2006: 391), and made them feel more relaxed and at ease (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010: 151).

## *Trust*

In order to create an environment of trust, the researcher informed the respondents that their names would not be disclosed, and some of them already knew the researcher, as he had previously worked with them on ICT projects. Furthermore, Neuman (2006: 391) argues that the following things affect trust: “How you present; the role you choose for the field; and the events that encourage, limit, or make it impossible to achieve trust. Trust is not gained once and for all. It is a developmental process built up over time through many nuances (e.g. sharing personal feelings, storytelling, gestures, hints and facial). It is constantly recreated and seems easier to lose once it has been built up than to gain in the first place.”

## *Leaving the data collection site*

The researcher left the site, the Simulator building, on 15 September 2010. This happened because the researcher’s department, Learning and Change Support, was re-aligned to the EAL. This re-alignment was part of Eskom’s human resource strategy of centralising all the training departments into the EAL. When the researcher left BASC’s Simulator building, he had conducted the focus group session and ten interviews. The online survey questionnaire was only sent to BASC employees on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

### 4.4.3 Data capturing

The researcher used a digital recorder to capture the data. The benefit of using a digital recorder is that it gave the researcher an opportunity to rewind and listen to the recordings as many times as necessary. It also helped the interviews to flow, because the researcher experienced minimal interruptions when recording. He used a notebook to record events as the interviews unfolded. The process of recording ideas is known as “memoing” (Babbie, 2007: 404). These recording activities during the research process are

referred to as quality assurance (Mouton, 2001:107). The researcher also used the digital recorder to capture data during the focus group session. One of the challenges that the researcher experienced was that the computer he used could not read the .WMA files. Since the researcher is working in the ICT department, he requested the employees who were doing technical work to load the WinTax Admin Manager software onto the computer. This enabled the researcher to listen to and transcribe the recordings of the face-to-face interviews and focus group session.

The researcher's approach was to record responses word for word, for both the face-to-face interviews and the focus group session. This is one of the guidelines recommended by qualitative research gurus such as Leedy and Ormrod (2010: 149). Furthermore, after conducting the focus group session on 30 August 2010, the researcher developed the online questionnaire using Excel. Once it had been developed, it was first sent to the department that hosts surveys on the Eskom server. The researcher waited until he was informed in the middle of October that his survey would not be hosted on the Eskom survey because it had not been sponsored by Eskom. The researcher then contacted Bytes Technology and asked them to host the online survey on their server. Since the questions had already been developed using the Question Mark Perceptions (QMP) software, they were Qparked and sent to Bytes Technology. To Qpark the questions, the researcher zipped questions together and sent them to Bytes Technology.

The link to the questionnaire was e-mailed to 306 BASC employees on 25 October 2010, and those who had participated in the face-to-face interviews and focus group session were told not to participate in the online survey. The survey was opened for three weeks. Since their responses were hosted outside Eskom, respondents participated freely.

#### 4.4.4 Data analysis

In order to analyse the qualitative data (i.e. face-to-face interviews and focus group session), the researcher coded, classified or grouped words together. Since the respondents spoke English, it was not necessary for the researcher to translate data during transcription, and this saved time during data analysis. A report by Bytes Technology for the online survey had figures that helped the researcher to analyse quantitative data: grades of employees, years of employment, factors that increase employee satisfaction, and factors that could contribute towards a reduction in employee resignations.

#### 4.5 Ethical considerations

The researcher adhered to the guidelines provided in UNISA's Research Ethics Policy (2007). Since this study focused on sensitive issues, verbal and informed consent was obtained before the interviews. The researcher was careful when asking respondents questions regarding racial and gender issues, and it was made clear that their responses did not necessarily mean that they were racist or sexist. The results of this study will be made available to all the stakeholders before they are published. In order to safeguard the identities of the respondents, only what they said was recorded, and no-one was forced to participate in this study. The results of this study will be shared with the senior manager.

#### 4.6 Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology used in this study, and included the research design, sampling techniques, data collection methods and instruments, data analysis and interpretation, ethnographic strategies and issues of reliability and validity. The ethical considerations were also outlined in this chapter. In the next chapter, the findings of the study are presented and discussed.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the study are presented and interpreted. Firstly, the profile of the research respondents is outlined in terms of their demographic characteristics, employee grades and years of employment. Thereafter, the results are organised thematically according to the research questions in this study.

In order to generate in-depth and new information about causes of employee dissatisfaction in the workplace, BASC was used as a case study. It is envisaged that the findings of the BASC case study will contribute to a broader general understanding of employee dissatisfaction and management responses.

The objectives of the study were derived from the issues identified in a review of the literature, as contained in *Chapter three*. The objectives of this case study were as follows:

1. To identify race and gender issues which promote the under-representation of blacks and females in senior positions;
2. To investigate appointment and recruitment issues which promote unfair labour practices;
3. To identify organisational culture issues which undermine workplace relations;
4. To identify organisational structure issues which undermine workplace relations; and
5. To investigate the extent to which management currently responds to the above-mentioned issues.



A number of causes of employee dissatisfaction were identified in this study: (i) the lack of skills development and career pathing; (ii) the high number of consultants who are hired; (iii) the appointment to 'acting' managerial positions; (iv) arbitrary managerial discretion and managers who lack managerial competencies; (v) unequal payment on the same grade; (vi) bullying by managers or co-workers; (vii) the working relationship between managers and employees; (viii) appointment criteria; (ix) workplace politics; (x); and employee resignations.

While the study focused on causes of employee dissatisfaction, respondents also revealed a number of positive aspects related to their employment.

## **5.2 Profile of the sample**

### *Racial profile of respondents*

In terms of the EEA No. 55 of 1998, workplaces in South Africa are compelled to appoint previously disadvantaged males and females. The racial percentages of the respondents were as follows: 72 percent were black, 16 percent were white, 8 percent were Indian, and 6 percent were coloured. Sixty-three percent of the managers were female and 37 percent were male. The predominance of female middle managers at BASC is contrary to both international and other South African findings that only a few black women are appointed as managers in ICT workplaces.

### *Employees' grades*

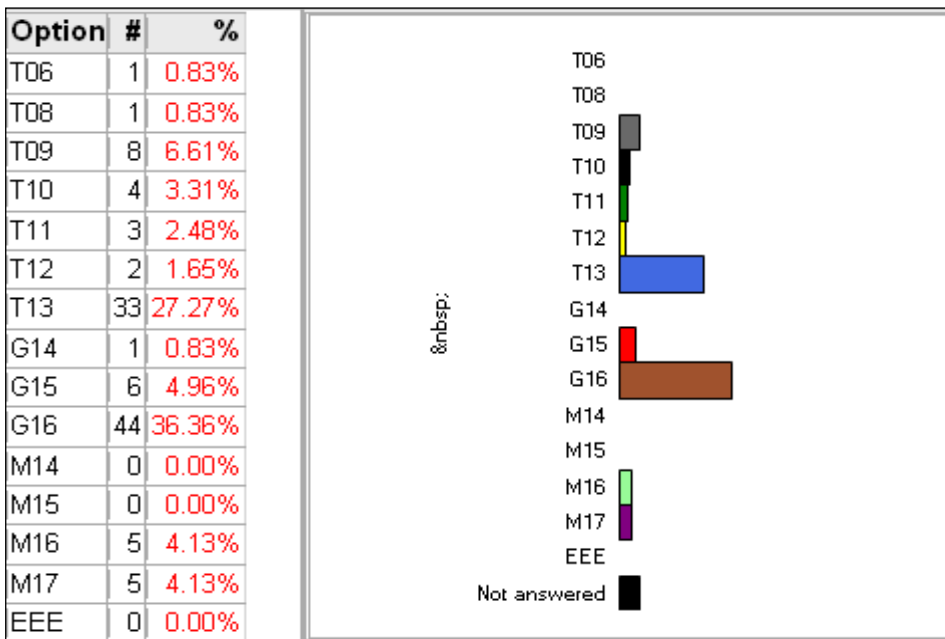
In the nine face-to-face interviews that were conducted in this study, four respondents were G-graded specialists or managerial employees who did not have employees reporting to them (1 Black female, 2 Black males, 1 Indian male), and three were M-graded middle managers (1 Black female, 1 White male, 1 Black male), who did have employees reporting to them. Two of the respondents were T-graded employees (1 White female, 1 Coloured female) - these were non-managerial employees.

The focus group comprised two G-graded employees (2 Black females) and one T-graded employee (1 Black female).

The majority of the respondents (51 out of 121) in the online survey were G-graded. There were no EEE-graded employees who responded to the online survey. The organisational structure showed that Black males and females, White females and Coloured males, and Indian males were not appointed at the EEE-grade. It showed 2 White males, 1 Indian male and 1 Indian female.

The grades of respondents who participated in the online survey are indicated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Grade of respondents



### *Respondents' qualifications*

The respondents had a range of tertiary qualifications. One respondent reported that he had a Master's in Business Administration (MBA), while one was a second-year MBA student. The others had national diplomas in ICT and/or project management. A diploma in ICT was the minimum requirement for any position at BASC.

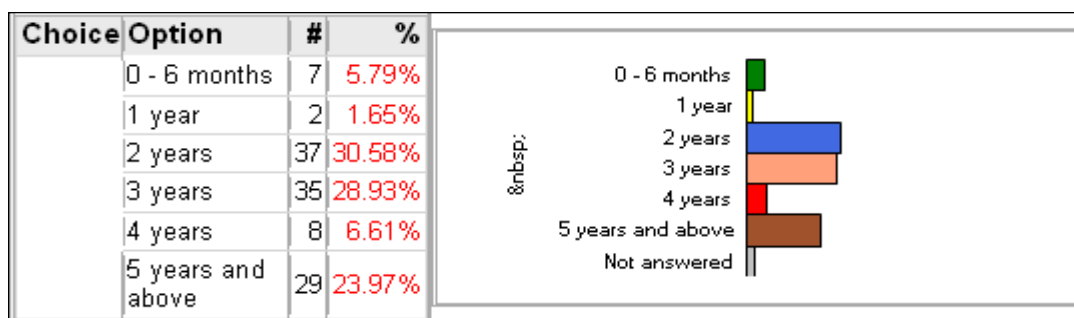
### *Years of employment*

All face-to-face interviewees and focus group participants had been employed by BASC for more than three years.

Seventy-two of the online survey respondents had been employed at BASC for three and more than three years, as indicated in Figure 2 below.

The respondents' years of employment are shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Years of employment



Since the majority of the respondents had worked at BASC for more than three years, it can be assumed that they had acquired a considerable amount of job experience.

### 5.3 Lack of skills development and career paths

Limited opportunities to develop skills for career advancement emerged as one of the major sources of dissatisfaction. In terms of the SDA No. 97 of 1998, employers are encouraged to develop their employees so that they can either be promoted or perform optimally. The respondents were asked the following question: How would you describe the barriers to employee skills development?

The lack of opportunities for development and difficulties in attempting to further their careers, were expressed by a number of respondents, as follows:

*If you are a developer, but your aspirations are to be a manager, management will only approve developer's courses.*

*In our organisation firstly, they have to look at the budget and what is also frustrating is that you are not allowed to do what you want to do. It must first be discussed. Management must look into to see where you are going to use it and I mean that it is not why we are studying to be in a specific position. Yah, it is not fair, because we are all working towards being a manager or the CEO [Chief Executive Officer] of the company and if you do not get the opportunity to study towards that, how are you going to reach that!*

*In our environment, the problem is that is that, your further study is approved on the job you are doing. So, if you want to study something outside your area there is always negative feedback from the approver saying that it is not part of your current job. But in terms of developing an employee, I think they should allow employees to study things that may not be part of their current field but may allow them to grow and move within the organisation. Not everybody is working in their ideal jobs, and the only way to move to their ideal job is to study.*

Barriers to skills development were explained by one respondent as follows:

*I think the barriers to skills development are two. Number one, a manager has to have the appetite and passion in developing the people who are reporting to him or her. So, if that passion and appetite is not there, the manager just focuses on the - let's say deliverables, then obviously the skills development will not happen as required, because usually skills development is more future focused, the way we look at it. So, the barrier I would say is caused by lack of passion, which will then lead to lack of funding for that particular candidate who wants to be developed. And I think now, the second barrier can be an issue of the employees themselves. Most of the time they choose a line of development which is not what they are doing as a job. So it makes it difficult for the manager to support an investment in that development area because as a manager you must say how development in terms of skills will contribute towards the particular area you are managing. So you know it is usually those two things that are barriers so, yah, those are the barriers that I have seen in the past.*

The lack of training opportunities at BASC was compared by one respondent to the training opportunities in other companies:

*I have seen in other companies, I will not mention their names, when you join them the first thing they do, they take you to a training programme. Although you have a qualification they have ways of things. You need to remember that when you go to school, university or technikon, they give you generic skills. But now you need the specific skills to carry out your work. So it is important that you take people to that training, and you need to ensure that after a certain period you take them back to that training as well so that they have the latest knowledge.*

One female respondent expressed her dissatisfaction with the fact that females tended to be given mundane tasks, rather than opportunities to work on core tasks:

*I do feel at certain times when there are technical projects, which means that there is a new capability application that the company has bought, I do feel that normally, it tends to go to the guys and not the ladies to do the implementation. And we are only given the soft projects in terms of maintaining and making changes to the system; I am not sure why.*

A respondent who had been given the opportunity to develop explained how positive this experience had been:

*For now, I am very satisfied to have been given an opportunity to be developed and change my career. There have been barriers before but eventually, I'm ok now and nothing needs to be changed besides the fact that I don't want to go back to the previous department. I was so stressed and demotivated and couldn't stretch my capabilities.*

A number of suggestions for enhancing skills and competencies were made by respondents:

*Mentor or coach employees to transfer knowledge.*

*Career mapping and putting people where they belong, not according to what is required by management.*

*Have a clear view of the goals for an employee's career path and assist the individual in this regard. There is the feeling that management only allocates resources to one type of position, in order to benefit their key performance indicators (KPIs).*

#### 5.4 The hiring of consultants

Opportunities to execute critical tasks have been recognised as an important source of employee satisfaction (Slocum & Hellriegel, 2007). The practice of hiring consultants at BASC to implement and upgrade applications, manage projects and analyse business were revealed to be a major source of dissatisfaction among respondents. This was perceived as depriving Eskom employees of opportunities for development, in order to acquire scarce skills and execute critical tasks.

The need to give these opportunities to BASC employees was articulated by one respondent:

*Provide Eskom employees the same opportunities as consultants. Why have so many consultants when Eskom employees can do the job?*

The high fees paid to consultants was also a source of discontent:

*At the moment we [have] got a lot of outside companies that are helping us. I think if they develop us more, they can use us instead of paying all the monies for people who are doing consulting work for us.*

*Some consultants are not skilful, they are being taught by Eskom employees, but they are getting more money than us.*

It was suggested by one respondent that Eskom might reduce costs for external contractors if it deployed its own employees.

The prevailing view was that the hiring of consultants was detrimental. Various reasons were given by respondents as to why consulting is not working for Eskom:

*There are too many contractors that are working for BASC. And then if we develop all the BASC people to know what the contractors do, cause those guys even when they do develop something they leave without giving you all the information so that they could be called back.*

*They do not do handovers, even if they are doing handovers they are doing it 50 percent and they are keeping 50 percent. And they are getting paid more money. Whereas we can use the same money that we are paying contractors to develop our staff and then we won't hire other contractors.*

*The support team is not engaged in the early stages of the project in order to learn the skills so that when the system goes live, and they are not given necessary documentation and skills.*

*Consultants are highly paid and some of them do nothing; instead they spend most the time surfing the Internet.*

One respondent expressed the view that some consultants hid information from employees.

Not all respondents experienced difficulties with the appointment of consultants, however:

*I cannot complain. I work with one consultant and no other member, so there is not much team member interaction since I am the only person working on the system, apart from the technical consultant. In short, there is less team work because I am the only one in my team.*



## 5.5 Appointment to 'acting' managerial positions

The appointment/placement of employees in 'acting' positions appeared to be a source of great frustration. Employees were given the opportunity to act as managers, but were not appointed permanently into this position, and were not remunerated at the rate of permanently appointed managers. During face-to-face and focus group interviews, the researcher asked the respondents if their managers were 'acting' or were permanently appointed.

An acting manager expressed his concern as follows:

*What is important for me is this acting position. If it can change from acting to permanent, then I will have a long term plan. At the moment I do not have a long term plan. I have got a three month plan. Because you need to remember with 'acting' ... it just needs an e-mail to remove me from that acting position. So whatever plans you have, you have to try and achieve them now ...So, we need to stop all this 'acting'! Not only acting for me, but the 'acting' for everybody within BASC.*

When asked how the 'acting' status of his position affected his relationship with his team members, he replied:

*With my team members the relationship is good. Right! But the issue is that when you have too many people acting, it becomes a problem because although you have that authority, you have limitations. I do have a lot of limitations. I have to do a lot of consultations as well before I can take a decision.*

Being in an insecure acting position appeared to affect the behaviour of some managers. One respondent expressed the opinion that:

*Remember our managers are acting, so they want to prove that they can manage and that has a negative impact. Sometimes they just tell us that the decision has been made and you have to do this. They use the autocratic style of management.*

It was felt that managers who were empowered:

*Remove specialists as acting managers and put in real managers.*

However, not all employees had problems with acting managers. One respondent expressed her relationship with her manager as follows:

*At the moment my manager she is acting, but she is a very fair person. She does not treat other people differently because of your colour or your race. I think she treats everybody fairly.*

Similar responses were:

*The female acting manager does not micro-manage, because she has many years' experience in Eskom.*

*We relate well. There are no issues. It is an open relationship.*

The advantages of being appointed as an acting manager were also mentioned. Since some managers do not have managerial skills, being appointed as an acting manager can give them the opportunity to acquire managerial skills such as budgeting and dealing with people issues.

## 5.6 Abuse of authority by management

Abuse of power by some managers causes employee dissatisfaction (Bews & Uys, 2002; Vos, 2002; Coleman, 2007). The following question was asked in this study: In your view, what do you think are the barriers to promotion? Responses revealed that there was a widely held perception that management discretion resulted in the minimalisation of employees' promotion opportunities, and for many participants, this amounted to an abuse of authority by management.

Typical responses regarding promotion based on management discretion were as follows:

*[We want a] fair promotion system that has nothing to do with managers' discretion.*

*Consistency must always be maintained, managers' discretion is not a way to go.*

*Minimise manager discretion and formulas and models which cannot be influenced by human relationships.*

*Perceptions are still playing a big role in how BASC employees are promoted. It is not what you know and how good you can be to be in a position to be given a chance to be promoted.*

*In production you find that you are performing the same work as a G16, but there are no plans for you to get promoted or rewarded for that particular work.*

Favouritism was also a concern:

*Eliminate or close the gap of giving middle management powers to employ their preferred candidate.*

The futility of applying for a position was expressed by one respondent:

*Well I don't know, but in Eskom there are no real promotions, right! People have to apply for positions. I think some of the issues there is that when people apply for positions, which are at next level is the fact that sometimes the management already knows who they are looking for, and they are just following the process as a formality, but they have already decided. So, in a way they are wasting people's time applying for posts you know, getting themselves all prepared and worked up emotionally even when they do not stand a chance – only to find out it is a political position.*

One respondent believed that the race of the manager also played a role in promotion decisions:

*If I am a black lady, and the other one is white, it is easy for that person to be promoted. So I think there is a lack of trust in some of the departments, not all the managers are doing that.*

#### 5.6.1 The need for management development

Managers who lack leadership competencies are a source of employee dissatisfaction (Covey, 2004; Bratton et al., 2010; Slocum & Hellriegel, 2007; Hofstede, 1994). The respondents were asked the following question: Do you think that managers would be better leaders if they attended a leadership course? The majority of the respondents reported that the development of inexperienced managers and those who lacked HRM and leadership competencies was essential to reducing employee dissatisfaction and making BASC competitive.

A number of areas where leadership development was required were proposed:

*I think the more they can because of the...the all different cultures that are working together, I think you really...always go on courses where they tell you how to treat people, how to make sure that things go smoothly. I mean a manager will never be the favourite person in the company but it is nice if you know that your manager is there for you and not against you or that there is no favouritism between managers and the working colleagues... Managers need to go on leadership courses always, because things changes in the company, not even in the company but in South Africa... So ja, I think they need to attend these leadership courses, just to make them aware of the sensitivity of the people.*

*Yes, maybe even a MBA or an MBL. Management within this environment is a combination of technical and people skills. But the big thing is people.*

A number of respondents who had attended a Situational Leadership (SLII) course reported on the value of the course:

*The good thing about that course is that when you rate a person, you do your job compact and you do a performance appraisal -you do not rate based on a person but based on a task.*

*Definitely, you know we have been sent, for example, to a SLII course and, eh, it really you know made one aware of the importance of leadership. Actually the point you touched on is one of the things that are covered in the business management studies that I am doing - that to manage is one thing but to lead is another thing. And I think that a characteristic of leadership is that sometimes you can be trained, a huge percentage of it comes from inherent talent you know. They are looking for leadership especially during difficult times, they are not looking for someone who will point fingers at them and make them carry the blame for their non-success. But they are looking for*

*someone who will lead them, who will steer them out of trouble. That's when the spirit of belief and trust comes in that manager.*

There was also a perception that leadership qualities are largely hereditary and that leadership courses would not necessarily benefit those without such leadership qualities. A few respondents expressed some scepticism:

*You can go to a course but, if you are not a leader yourself, if you cannot lead it will be difficult to be a leader. Because other people are born to be workers, if they become managers they just do disaster.*

*I think it can help others, and sometimes it cannot help others. I think there are people who are born to be leaders. Even though they have never gone the course but they really know how to manage people and I have experienced that. Sometimes managers will go to different courses but when they come back they are still the same. They are still doing the same management style, I do not know if it is because of ignorance or what but I am not sure.*

One respondent, who did not associate leadership with something that was hereditary, was concerned about the fact that managers did not implement what they had learned:

*Managers attend something but they never practice what they have learnt.*

The problem of implementation was also raised by one respondent who had not been given the opportunity to implement what he/she had learned:

*I have attended this SLII and the course sounded fantastic especially for the managers who had subordinates, but in our department it was never implemented.*

One respondent felt that a leadership course would not change a manager's personality. He responded by saying:

*Yes, the manager that I report to is open and very democratic. And his manager is more autocratic, and instead of being democratic by involving people in decision making, but actually it is filtered down. It is imposed on everyone. So in terms of leadership, a leadership course will not change your personality but it will help you treat people better, as opposed to being autocratic.*

Participants cited a number of bad management practices that they had experienced, which they thought could be improved through management development:

*Information is not given as to how things are done around here, explaining the workflow, basically they do not explain important business workflow, the applications we support, especially to new employees.*

*He needs more training on working with people. I will say, all managers from production services need thorough training and eventually they'll get there. I hope that BASC will invest in them and not opt to save costs. They [the managers] also need to know more about the organisation's policies.*

*It sucks, it's a nagging trying to prove to the top ones that you can manage, forgetting your resources on how to bring them to speed and help them achieve objectives and deliver on what is expected; they all have a bossy attitude. Their way or no way. Shame I pity them because they are losing the most valuable employees. Half the department is looking to leave our department. It's only the uneducated who were promoted through connections that are comfortable, since they've got nowhere to go, and are overpaid.*

*I think there is a challenge with micro-management. [It is not] necessary for the manager to check if I really come at 07:00 o'clock and leave at 04:00 o'clock. I mean I can come at 07:15 o'clock and leave at 18:00 o'clock! Is it a problem if I am working overtime on my own? Do I have to say today I will work overtime if there is a task that I need to finish? When you tell that I will work late it is problem and when you come to work late it is a problem. The other thing is that she is afraid to make a decision - she will be put on hold until a senior person is contacted. I think there are a lot of things that she needs to go to, I think she has to attend a workshop. Another thing is motivation. We need to be motivated as staff, we need to be developed. How then can we be happy? It is so difficult because you can do mistakes all the time. In fact, when you do something good it is silent. The moment you do one thing wrong, it removes everything. It is so difficult to cope at our department.*

While the autocratic leadership style of some managers appeared to be a problem, not all participants had difficult managers:

*It is not that bad. Since I have joined Eskom I never heard of management development, a lot of people are getting promoted to management level but there is no courses they go on for management development. So I think that is very critical for managers in general to develop. My manager's leadership style is participative, although there are areas where it can improve. For example, you can come early she would not say anything, but when you come late one day and go late she will pick it up and start micro-managing. And that is not really good.*

The respondent rated her management style as follows:

*Out of ten, I will give her four in terms of democratic leadership style.*



Other management styles were described as follows:

*He is very approachable and you can talk to him about any issues, the only problem I have is that certain people are treated differently. So, there are a couple of exceptions. I think there are certain people because of their knowledge they get away with more things than the rest of us.*

*It is difficult to say; she gives you a lot of rope. This is a good thing. However, there are certain things that need to be managed, but are being ignored. And the hope is that it will somehow sort itself out. Not good; it depends on the situation and I think she is in between. She can take ideas, but mostly she wants to tell you what to do.*

#### 5.6.2 Management style and competencies

International gender scholars have opposing views regarding male and female managers' competencies (Simpson & Lewis, 2007; Robbins, Judge, Millet & Waters-Marsh, 2008; Bratton et al., 2010; Kilduff & Krackhardt, 2008; Bates, 2006). The respondents were asked the following question: How would you describe your manager's management style? Their responses indicated that at BASC, it was felt that managers were competent.

The positive views expressed by participants applied to both male and female managers, and no differences were highlighted:

*It is quite a good and fair style; he is very good at what he does, people's person and output driven; he promotes macro-management, skills development and he will support you when necessary. Avoids politics. No fighting and there is a peaceful work environment; my current one is open-minded. He just needs his subordinates to deliver their tasks. He is more interested in the output; more of a trainer.*

*She is available to guide you and also allows you to take initiative; she is giving us an opportunity to express our views on all work-related (i.e. salaries) and non-work-related issues (i.e. personal wellbeing) and thanks us for a job well done; she is a motivator, participative, democratic, empowers the employees; strict but fair, with a touch of the human side; interactive and trustworthy, works and shares with the employees. Open and honest, give subordinates the opportunity and chance to give ideas; amiable and accepts everything and accommodates everyone; independent and flexible and perfect, no micro management.*

*In terms of leadership, he is showing that he is really studying and learns these things from elsewhere. Even the way he is managing the team - since we are diverse he is managing us differently because we are individuals at the end of the day. He knows what we can deliver and knows what the other cannot deliver.*

*He is one of the best that I have worked with and I am really happy with the way things are going.*

*Well, what I can tell you is that my manager has improved. Her style is that she is that kind of a person who wants the job to be done. The good thing that she is learning and has taken into consideration is people's emotions. Our manager puts down the rules and we respect that. She wants us to do the job and she is always there for us. Should you make a mistake, or should you do something that is not in line with the company process, she will cover or protect you and I can trust her.*

*His management style shows maturity. Gives you a chance to raise concerns/areas of improvements and debate them if necessary. Focused, knows where is going. He is not selfish. Promotes my growth and independence. He also offers advisory services.*

*I have seen and worked with female managers and believe me they are capable.*

In summary, the respondents were more in favour of managers who had strong HRM skills, and those who attended leadership interventions that would sensitise them towards gender, race, appointment, recruitment, structure and culture issues. This would empower them to become more effective leaders.

### **5.7 Working from home**

International literature shows that ICT workplaces have an arrangement whereby employees can work from home (Hassan, 2008; Brandth & Kvande, 2006; Robbins & De Cenzo, 2008; Handsome, 2009). The researcher wanted to find out if the respondents favoured such a working arrangement.

Even though there is no policy of working from home at BASC, it was found that employees can negotiate with a manager to work from home. This was confirmed by one respondent who commented on the inconsistency of the arrangement:

*There is an employee who has not worked a full day, I think, since February, and always takes a day off every week and works from home. But the rest of us are not allowed to work from home. I think it is happening because that employee has in-depth knowledge of the application and she gets away with more thinks.*

When the researcher asked him how that made him feel, he provided the following answer:

*Well, at the end of the day I am delivering on my outputs, and I am happy in terms of that. But I think that everybody should be treated the same, and that would not have an impact on me delivering my outputs. At the end of the day I will still deliver on what I am mandated to do. Its fine and I think I have accepted it, I have moved on. It is something I have reported to my manager, and he's attempting to address it and I am happy with that.*

A number of respondents felt that working from home would make them more productive and efficient:

*Working from home is more productive than working at the workplace. There are no distractions at your home, and you work in your own time and you are able to do a lot of things in a short period of time. At home there are no meetings.*

*At one stage in my life I had to resign, because I was pregnant and in those days the company did not give longer than six weeks maternity leave. So I had to resign and come back. But then after my baby I worked half day. And it was amazing how I could do a lot of work just in the morning. Instead of staying for the whole day, I did all the work that I was supposed to do for the day; I did it in the morning so that I could leave at one o'clock. So I think you can do it, but I think it needs a lot of discipline.*

Another respondent explained as follows:

*Well, you know what, I think yes I do understand that the reason we have to come to the office has to do with lack of discipline in some of us and lack of maturity in handling the freedom and maybe you would get eh task not to be delivered on time if a lot of us work from home. But I think there are ways and means these days. It is not about people occupying space during office hours, it is about people delivering their deliverables at the end of the day. So if we as the organisation can arrive at the point and say this person we expect this much of deliverables out of every forty hours we pay them for and we have a clear agreement it can be done because we have adequate technology to be able to do that. I mean we have 3G connections, people are always available online, we have Hyperwave where can have visual meetings, for example. Hmm, so for me I think there are benefits to working from home. Number one, I will cut off travel time, which means that I have more time in already the day. Secondly, I already work from home even after hours, so it means even after I have finished work on the Eskom premises I still work from home. So, it is a sign of commitment. However, we have to determine if that person is ready to work from home, but personally I think it will be of huge benefit to for us as an organisation to do that. And we have to ask ourselves, we are not all of us working with products that need us to here physically. We are working in the types of jobs that can be controlled remotely. Whenever a need arises, one should be flexible enough to come to the office and be hands-on.*

Another respondent also explained why it would make more sense to work from home:

*I travel a long distance to come to work and there is not always a tangible thing that makes me come to the office. I mean some days you just sit in the office because you have to be in the office.*

Not all respondents thought that working from home was a better option. One respondent explained that due to operational requirements, he could not work from home:

*Yes, I would love it, but a project manager job within Eskom- is a people management job. You have to be on the floor, and you have to manage it. You can't manage it from home. But as a business analyst, probably you can do a lot things from home, but I think in the current role that I am playing it can only unfortunately be done from work.*

The disadvantages of working from home were also mentioned:

*No, I think coming to work gives you the opportunity to balance between work and home. I mean if you are going to sit and work from home, then you will be around family all the time. It is good to balance between family and work.*

*There are so many things that need to be done at home and I might concentrate on them and not concentrate on the job.*

*Wow, for me I would prefer working from home, but now if you look at the other side, let's say you are wearing another hat now and you are an employer, it is difficult to manage at the moment. I have not done that research to understand if it is easier to manage the output at home or at work. You must remember that when you work at home there are many things that can distract you. If you have kids and you might find that that person has opened the laptop and they are connected and they are not doing anything because they are playing with a kid. Or they are doing something at home - with me I have always something to do at home.*

## 5.8 Disparities in remuneration

Race and gender have often been instrumental in determining employees' remuneration (Schaefer, 2008; Bozzoli, 1983; Houston, 2005; Giddens, 2001; Giddens, 2006; Grieco, 1996; Odih, 2007; Cohen & Kennedy, 2007). Race, in particular, has played a role in determining disparities in remuneration in South Africa (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005; Alexander, 2008). Respondents were asked the following question: Do you think that employees should be paid higher salaries based on their gender or race?

*No, if you can do the job you should be paid accordingly.*

*If we have come [started] at the same time, with the same experience and qualifications, I will feel very bad, I will be disappointed.*

*I will be furious, I believe as a business there should be a minimum and maximum scale for each grade.*

*Upset. It's unfair that some get more privileges than others. I would be angry and would demand to know why. Especially if my performance is better than theirs.*

The question of disparities in salaries elicited some strong reactions:

*It is very painful, we are experiencing this currently, the morale is down, and it's a serious stress to us.*

*It's devastating to realise that others are earning more than you do on the same grade and that they are younger than you and with no qualifications. We all have responsibilities and should be treated the same. The other thing is that managers earn good salaries and have car allowances and all those things, but we at the lower level don't get those benefits and they expect you to go around attending Eskom meetings with that little money that I earn.*

*This is currently the situation where individuals reporting to me with fewer years' experience are earning more than I do. I believe that this needs to be reviewed, as with management comes with additional accountability.*

When asked how they would feel if they found out that employees on their grade were earning more than they did, several respondents indicated that they would change jobs. Typical responses were:

*[I would] apply for a job in another department or look for a job elsewhere or move to a new company.*

*Resign or look for other opportunities.*

*This is currently the situation where individuals reporting to me with fewer years' experience are earning more than I do. I believe that this needs to be reviewed, as with management comes with additional accountability.*

Another respondent, alluding to nepotism and management discretion, asserted that:

*I know for sure that they are earning more than I do. However I'm not worried that I don't have 'Uncle Naidoo'. So whatever I can't change I just disregard. You have to know that our scale is based on the manager's discretion, which is not backed up by any standards.*



Manager's discretion was also viewed as an issue by one respondent:

*As far as offers being made by management are concerned, it is the manager's choice to put you on a lower scale; we have encountered this and management refuses to address these issues.*

One respondent felt that racial disparities still existed:

*Our country has to look into this problem of one race earning on average five times than the other races. It is an issue which, if unresolved, can ruin the future generation.*

A few respondents maintained that they would not be dissatisfied if they discovered that they were paid less than others:

*I would congratulate them and ask them to loan me money.*

*Not a problem; they do earn more than me, but I'm close to their level, so I'm content with what I earn.*

*It's not a big deal when one finds it like that. Based on different reasons, this would be the case but with time it would have to be addressed.*

*It depends on the type of work that they do. If I feel that they sweat more than I do, then I do not have any right to feel hard done by.*

*No problem with that; it's beyond me; there is nothing I can do; I would not feel bad, because it differs with experience. The only thing that I will question is if somebody joins Eskom now, and I have been with BASC for two years, and this guy does not have any experience and I have to teach him what to do. And he is getting here and is having a bigger salary than I do and we are on*

*T13 - that will be very painful and the manager would just say you are earning more than enough. Obviously there is nothing you can do.*

The Human Resources Shared Services Unit (HRSSU) manager told the researcher that information about employees' salaries is confidential. It would appear, however, that employees do discuss their salaries amongst themselves.

Global trends show that employees working in ICT workplaces are generally not unionised (Chase-Dunn et al., 2000). As a result, they are not represented at salary increase negotiations. This also appeared to be the case at BASC. The majority of the respondents indicated that "nobody" negotiated for their salary increases. These respondents were G-graded specialists and M-graded managers. These employees only received increment letters after the Executive Management had unilaterally decided on their increases. The lack of any opportunity to be represented in wage negotiations was articulated by one respondent:

*Well...you are at Eskom and you are in management, I have not personally experienced a situation whereby I was allowed to negotiate for my own increase. My assumption has always been that management has discussions about salary increases and then... you know...increases are given to managerial staff. I haven't had the opportunity of negotiating for my individual salary increase. But from what I heard salary increases are dependent on your performance eh parameters...when you are measured during the KPA and KPI, which determines how much of an increase is given as well that's what I have heard.*

Similarly, responses with regard to the lack of say in their salary increases were as follows:

*We do not negotiate for that. We are just told that how much is it; That's a good question. I do not have an answer for that. I don't think that somebody is negotiating for it. I think...I know that somebody takes a decision on my behalf.*

*Well for the juniors...for the junior managers it is the top managers who are negotiating for our salary increases.*

However, T-graded respondents said that they were satisfied because the unions negotiated for their salary increases. Furthermore, one T-graded respondent said that she negotiated for a salary increase, and that the manager was allowed to use his/her discretion as to whether or not to increase her salary.

## **5.9 Sexual harassment**

Women are susceptible to sexual harassment, because they are usually found on the lowest strata in workplaces (McDonald & Dear, 2008; Schaefer, 2008). The majority (99 percent) of the respondents reported that they were respected at work, and had not been exposed to any form of sexual harassment. Only 1 percent of the respondents recounted that they had been subjected to sexual harassment (They were online survey respondents and did not provide any further details).

Respondents provided their understanding of what sexual harassment entailed and why employees could be subjected to it. When asked to explain what she understood by sexual harassment, one respondent said:

*Well, with my limited knowledge it is when there is a male and a female. Then the male makes some sexual suggestion to the female. I think that position has a role to play.*

When asked to elaborate, she said the following:

*Okay it can be someone who is junior, who is harassing a more senior person. But is highly unlikely though...I think more senior people most probably will be the ones, because they use that power...and it is sort of by default that you will want to submit to those who are in authority. Then when a person is making sexual suggestions or comments that are sexual...then I would define it as sexual harassment.*

Another respondent stated the following:

*Sexual harassment at the workplace comes in many forms. It can be offers made by someone senior, or guys you are on the same level with. Even though they know that you are married, but people still make offers that are not ethical, and then when somebody greets you or talks to you or touches you in an unbecoming manner, or it can be a handshake or cuddling or to some extent a hug, yes. But there are certain limits. But too much familiarity around somebody.*

Another respondent believed that sexual harassment in the workplace was caused by employees who are unprofessional and unethical:

*The assumption is that when we are at work the relationship that we have should be strictly professional. So once there is deviation from, let's say, professional ethics, and it becomes personal and there is a clear signal from the receiving party that they do not want the relationship to go beyond the professional, it becomes sexual harassment.*

Sexual harassment was quite broadly defined, as one respondent observed:

*Sometimes in order for you get a promotion, you must do certain things with your boss. So that you can get...so it is sexual harassment, we do not work like that it is unethical.*

Even though this respondent was not specific, she seemed to be arguing that in some instances, a junior employee can use sexual intercourse as a means for promotion. According to this respondent, using sex to be rewarded vertically or promoted is sexual harassment, and is unethical.

Another female respondent felt that:

*Sexual harassment comes in many forms. Like, for example, we do hear of the cases where people [have sex in the] boardroom to get jobs. So, those are some kinds of sexual harassment.*

### **5.10 Bullying in the workplace**

The problem of bullying in the workplace is well recognised (Harris, 2009; Osborne, 2009; Watson, 2008). The respondents were asked the following question: Have you been bullied at your workstation? The majority of the respondents (80 percent) indicated that they had not been subjected to bullying, but that bullying by managers was experienced by some of the respondents.

One respondent reported that he had been bullied during a performance appraisal. With further probing, the respondent explained:

*The issue with the performance appraisal it was like, eh, my manager did not check what I have done, she just came and said when I look at you I see 2.6. So she didn't go through the list and see what did this one and that one. She just gave me the mark.*

*Basically I was taken away from the project which I managed, and put into a project that was in disarray.*

Bullying also takes more subtle forms, as reported by one respondent:

*My manager, if they are not in a good mood when it is early morning, they don't greet you, but give you a bunch of work that you have no idea how to do, and they expect feedback by the end of the business day.*

Another respondent reported an experience that left her feeling afraid and upset:

*I have experienced that, whereby a senior manager there was a problem with one of the requests, there was an outstanding signature and the person who was responsible for that request was not around and he was throwing harsh words. He was so rude and we were going under the table because he was so angry.*

Bullying was found to be both top-down and horizontal. It was indicated that bullies are *same level employees - a colleague, co-workers and those who are manager endorsed.*

It was also found that bullying was done by female employees. One respondent reported that bullying was done by *females over 40.*

Some respondents indicated that they would not allow themselves to be bullied. One respondent described her experience as follows:

*Okay, a colleague from another department came to request certain changes to be made on the system without following the correct procedure, and then it ended up being some sort of bully or harassment in the sense that you don't say to somebody the words that if you do not do what I say to you I will tell the big boss, not even my boss, the big boss you know...and then I had to stick to my guns and said no, I am not going to do it until you follow the correct procedure - and I explained this to my immediate boss.*

Another respondent described her attempt to stand up against being bullied:

*Well, I was willing to stand up for what was right and it wasn't very popular, because you know what was right was going to cause the department to look bad. So yah, I was bullied and I was told to shut up.*

## **5.11 Working relationships**

### **5.11.1 Relationships with managers**

Different dissatisfaction theories indicate that relationships with managers vary (Keyton, 2005; Watson, 2008; Thompson, 1989; Herzberg, 1968; Schaefer, 2008; Pugh & Hickson, 2007; Watson, 1995; Vallas et al., 2009; Clegg, Courpasson & Phillips, 2006; Vecchio, 2000; Vecchio, 2003; Child, 2005; Meier & O'Toole Jr, 2006; Bennet & Bennet, 2004; Brooks, 2003).

Just over half of the respondents in this study indicated that they were satisfied with the relationship they had with their managers.

Typical comments were as follows:

*We relate well. There are no issues. It is an open relationship. There is no negativity between us.*

*It is a good one that allows the employer and employee relationship to function.*

*What I expect from the relationship is there. Our working relationship allows me to do my job.*

*My relationship with my manager is perfectly healthy.*

*Good professional and mutual respect; good, he don't disturb me and I don't disturb him.*

*I am satisfied with my manager; we do not have issues.*

Similarly, other respondents described their manager-employee relationship as:

*Very good, accommodating and civil.*

Even those relationships that had started off less ideally had improved over time:

*It has improved as it used to be undermining and unsupportive.*

*In the beginning it was not a good a relationship but now we get along very well.*



Not all the respondents, however, enjoyed good relationships with their managers. They described the nature of their relationship with their managers as hostile and emotional:

*Not predictable.*

*Tense.*

*Okay and stable but there is a high level of untrustworthiness.*

*So-so, depending on her mood and her problems.*

*On and off. It is determined by her mood. If she is happy we must be happy and if she is cross she is mad at everyone.*

*I am mostly afraid to talk to her because she says otherwise I have got attitude and one day she said she is busy looking at my attitude. I wonder what she works on the whole and it is bad. Normally it is bad, especially when it comes to the performance appraisals. I think it depends on how she feels.*

*She is very difficult and the next day she is nice.*

*Emotional, has no managerial experience and she is very temperamental.*

Since these responses were from the online survey, the researcher could not determine the gender of those respondents who perceived female managers as being emotional.

### 5.11.2 Relationships with colleagues

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, workplaces encourage teamwork (Watson, 2008; Fulcher & Scott, 2006). The participants in this study were asked the following question: How is your working relationship with your team members? The majority of the respondents (95 percent) said that they were satisfied with the respectful working relationships they had with their colleagues. Working relationships were described as follows:

*Great and there is a lot of trust and transparency.*

*[I have] good open working relationships as I cultivate open discussions.*

*It is good.*

*Super awesome.*

*We work very well with my direct supervisor.*

*Not bad. We have our spats, but everyone knows everyone else's short-comings and moods and we respect that.*

*Fine, although the management tries hard to divide us.*

*Good, but there is one unoccupied female who is giving every one grief.*

The absence of racial and gender barriers was also commented on:

*We work very well together mixed gender and race.*

*We've gone beyond the race barrier and we understand each other.*

Team membership<sup>4</sup> was another issue that was raised. Respondents reported the psycho-social benefits of excellent teamwork:

*My relationship with my team members is good because we can mostly share our feelings.*

*It is a good one as well, we get along fine.*

*As colleagues, we are able to do our job harmoniously and efficiently.*

*Working relationship with my team members is acceptable, it is okay. I think the manager has created an environment whereby we can share; we can voice our opinions without feeling intimidated or being discriminated or without any fear whatsoever. So, in a way, you have to understand the dynamics that other people from the same area will sit together, but they are still your team members and you have to give certain information where required, without saying this one is not my ally.*

Not all the respondents reported harmonious relationships with colleagues. Changes in the organisational structure appeared to have created some tension between employees. One respondent reported that:

*The team is a little unbalanced at the moment due to restructuring/IT turnaround. There are some people who are overworked compared to the other team mate and are bullying each other.*

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<sup>4</sup>According to Dubrin (2007: 207), team membership is “a special type of group in which members have complementary skills, and are committed to a common purpose, a set of performance goals, and approach to the task.”

Similarly, another respondent said:

*One thing that I have noticed is that other people based on their skills levels, are allocated more work and they are stressed. The stress causes them to be negative and their quality of work starts to drop. So I think if they balance work and upskill other employees within the department, this will reduce stress in other employees and they will be satisfied. In return, the employees will be committed employees and stay longer in the organisation.*

A minority of the respondents said that their relationships with their colleagues were neither respectful nor disrespectful. One respondent reported that in some instances, the relationship was healthy, and in other instances, it was not:

*The relationship with my colleagues is good, sometimes it is not good. We do work together as a team, we do discuss certain things but we do sometimes have arguments, like job related kind of things, because we are subdivided to do different jobs. So sometimes we find people separating themselves from others.*

## **5.12 Recruitment and appointment**

In terms of South African legislation and policy, affirmative action must be implemented in workplaces to address racial imbalances. The participants were asked the following question: Which recruitment determinant (i.e. experience, qualification & AA policy) do you think should be used to appoint employees? The majority of the respondents said that they would be dissatisfied if experience, skill and affirmative action were not used to appoint and recruit managers. They expressed their views as follows:

*Okay, for me I have a different view. I will tell you something, but the problem is that it is totally different to what Eskom is doing. I still do not believe in the appointment criteria used at Eskom. My understanding is that when you*

*appoint a person, what it means is that you have seen that that person can perform. Right? And then you appoint him based on the output. Depending on the person who is doing the interviews. Sometimes if the person has got the interview questions, they have managed to Google the interviews and you find that when you ask them the questions and they are able to answer the questions, it does mean that they can do the job. So for me, that's one of the issues. So what I will suggest, because it is the policy of Eskom and I do not think it will be changed, is that before you can appoint or promote anybody, I think it is important that you go through that issue of eh success what do they call it succession planning. Then in that period you'll be able to see the people who are the high flyers. These are people that when they go for an interview then you are confident that you can appoint that person as a manager.*

*I think they should check the skills of that person. On my side, what I am experiencing is that the person was promoted because of the qualifications, not the experience. That manager I feel is not supposed to be in that position. The manager, I think the role of the manager is to ensure that his or her people are doing fine. Their family issues are sorted out and the work environment is fine, there is air conditioning, which is fine in order for them to work. But if the manager is changing, that is the one who is bringing more trouble into your life, then they cannot be an effective manager...I think my manager should improve on the human side.*

*Definitely their knowledge ... their content knowledge on the.... I got a problem if a person is appointed in a position for just to do window dressing. Because it is not fair for the employees working in that department. When somebody can go into a position and we know for the fact that person does not know what is going on.*

Similarly, another respondent indicated that:

*Affirmative action is a government requirement, but, qualifications and experience are equally important as well. When asked to explain what he said, he responded as follows: I think it is not proper to employ somebody based on the colour only, because that person can be a token like it is happening in other companies. Maybe in Eskom as well. Where they just put a black person just to meet their targets, where that person does not have powers.*

Correcting past imbalances is important, as revealed in the following responses:

*Issues of the past have to be corrected. And we have to be frank and say that in South Africa unfortunately we are still divided on a lot of things. And unfortunately if it was left to our own discretion, chances are that issues would not be corrected. Unfortunately that led government having to put a certain legislation to try and force certain changes. So, it is a legislative issue, but I think as people we really have to be unemotional about it. We have to say to ourselves: If it was left up to us – would we have done it? So, I think the legislation was put in place really out of necessity more than favouring certain sectors.*

*Obviously we need to balance the numbers. Right? In terms of affirmative action we need to undo the past, which we know that white males were given most jobs. But obviously they cannot take a black candidate for the sake of them being black because they will get frustrated in that position. They should employ them with qualifications and even if they do not have experience, they should use the white males with experience to support the black person. Because experience also takes time, like networking and relationships. So you can sit in a position for five years without knowing anything because you have been side-lined.*

This respondent suggested that:

*There needs to be a process of working together, because we are in a transition mode. Some of the white males have experience but they do not have qualifications, and this experience is very valuable, and some will be retiring soon. So they should not retire with that knowledge, they should share it with the AA candidates.*

The feeling was that few employees were in favour of appointing employees for window dressing and as a token. They wanted AA employees who were appointed to be empowered in terms of knowledge and decision making.

Even though Eskom's BASC management implemented AA, there were respondents who were dissatisfied with its implementation:

*People should be appointed based on their experience. It is not fair to be held back because of affirmative action and statistics not being met; be fair to all. Treat all equal. All mechanisms do exist but are biased by AA policy.*

The perception that some races are favoured more than others existed:

*Certain races are always preferred to others.*

*Process should be fair; whoever qualifies must get the position, regardless of their race.*

*People must be appointed on the basis of their abilities. Race and gender should not be priorities, as this promotes nepotism and racism.*

*Not skin colour. That's not working in this organisation or country, and opportunities should be given to all employees, and the AA policy must be considered, in order to ensure a representation that reflects the demographics of South Africa's population at management level.*

Respondents further identified a number of issues that should be considered in the appointment of managers. These can be summarised as follows:

*Do not appoint managers based on ethnicity and 'broer-skap' (i.e. friendship).*

*Managers need to be equipped with the necessary HR skills and experience, or attend managerial courses.*

*Particularly when a technical resource expert is being appointed as a manager, training for that transition is imperative. Their managerial skills should be aligned with the type of team and environment in which they are going to reside.*

*Mentorship should be a priority, especially for those employees who were specialists and are now being appointed as managers. There should be a management skills matrix for all managers, and their qualities should be mapped / matched.*

*The focus must be on their productivity and interpersonal skills, and they should be well-spoken individuals who fully understand the principles of being a good manager. Individuals who lead by example and people who really deserve the position should be chosen, because positions given to the wrong individuals create resentment and the need to leave.*



*Eskom should not just take someone with a vivid understanding of a system and think that he/she can be a manager. This is slowly breaking the spirit of the organisation down, as most of the junior managers have no experience. All these managers should go for industrial relations management training, and not just a dummy management training course that lasts for five days.*

*Thorough management training should be given as part of this grooming process. Preferably, this training/coaching should take place prior to the appointment, as people tend to become overwhelmed by the responsibility and tasks involved at that level.*

*Ensure that both immediate and technical managers understand people management better.*

*An aptitude test needs to be done and references need to be provided, and the decision should be based on the results. Qualifications and operational knowledge cannot motivate and get employees to give their best. People will not support a negative and nagging manager, the potential manager must have the skills to manage people. This is not an easy task, and these appointments must therefore be looked at very carefully; In terms of the recruitment process, most of the managers are not fit to be managers. Someone with the knowledge, qualifications, experience and who knows how to communicate and develop people is needed.*

*One needs to first assess their level of maturity in dealing with people and then look at their qualifications. They must love to lead and empower people, not to police or micro-manage them.*

*Check for the most common and obvious characteristics: leadership skills, vision, power, people skills and objectivity. In addition, the most important thing is that a manager must be knowledgeable and emotionally intelligent.*

Another respondent advocated the use of psychometric testing when appointing people:

*Some people are wired to work in isolation, and if you are wired to work in isolation and are appointed to manage the team, that becomes a problem for you and the team because it causes unnecessary friction. Well, there are people who are more management material than others. So there must be assessments of some kind to find out what kind of a person you are - like personality assessments.*

Workplaces have appointed gender committees that ensure that women are appointed in senior management positions (Ruxton, 2004). The following question was asked in this regard: What is your view regarding gender committees?

*For me, it will add value. As long as eh the scope is properly defined from the beginning, because otherwise we will keep on creating these committees and you find that it is not adding value. But as long as it is well established and you find that people are well informed about it, and we also explain to those people that in the end, they should have identified people. Because it is impossible that we do not have talent in Eskom, we do! It is just that it may be the way in which we go about looking for that talent.*

The establishment of a gender committee was proposed by some respondents:

*I think a gender committee can be setup to be good practice, to make sure that everybody is given a fair chance including the ladies.*

*I think it will be great to have a gender committee because there will be representing all the genders in the workplace.*

*It is better ground because there is no mechanism at this stage.*

*It is very important to have a gender committee because you know men are dominant and they think of only male issues, without taking the other gender into account that committee can assist in the whole organisation.*

*Yes, we do need a gender committee because we need to have a focus area. We cannot treat the issue of gender equality as a 'by the way' type of issue. However, the terms of reference for that gender committee need to be clear – because I would say the true results or success should not be around the numbers, but it should be the quality. You know they should pride themselves and say such a candidate in a position and this candidate are proving to be a winner. Because if we concentrate on the numbers it will tarnish what we are trying to achieve. And I truly believe that women are as intelligent as men. You know, God created equally in that manner, but we just have to make sure that we give opportunities to candidates who are equipped enough to deliver on those positions – then if not, we should eh commit ourselves to develop them up until they are properly equipped.*

Some global and South African employment advertisements contain the following statement: “Women are encouraged to apply” (Ruxton, 2004). Respondents were unsure about whether or not this statement would improve women’s chances of being appointed in management positions. The appointment of women simply because they are women appeared to be a contentious issue:

*A job description should be a job description. Anyone who wants to apply must apply irrespective of their gender.*

*I do not think it is going to help, because once you start that, for me, it has a bit of sexism now. Yah. Because we are saying that women are encouraged to apply. Another person might think you are saying that it is only women who will be considered for that position. Yes, I think we should look at those issues like the gender committee whereby we can encourage people to apply. But once it*

*comes to that that eh application process and recruitment process, we should not be making those statements - it should not be there.*

One female respondent in the focus group discussion shared her opinion with the other respondents, stating as follows:

*I think it should be open to everyone. Because you know the minute you put a statement like that I will personally say that you are putting that particular candidate as a female candidate at a disadvantage. That's my opinion.*

When asked to explain why, he responded that:

*Well, because you are saying they will already get a preferred judgment and preferred referral. You understand. I think really if you are a candidate you would want the confidence, of saying that I have been chosen on merit. You know, even though there might be in the scoring some compensation factors which will give an advantage to a female candidate. But I think it is about time we have confidence in the female candidates that they were chosen on merit. Not because they are female, because as I have said, I have seen and worked with female candidates, and believe me they are capable.*

A number of respondents supported the favouring of women:

*That's a tough one. Even if currently we say it is an affirmative action position, that statement that says: women are encouraged to apply? Yes, I think it should be included.*

*Certainly yes! If you know that for that post they are looking for a woman...okay because you do find that in some positions like within hmm eh that positions are just hmm exclusively put aside for the ladies and then it should specify.*

*Yah, I think it is good especially eh for women empowerment. It gives hope that I will be considered. Yah, it's good.*

In summary, the findings of the study indicate that qualification, experience and skill are the favoured recruitment and appointment criteria. The majority of the respondents were of the view that BASC would become more efficient and competitive if it provided inexperienced managers with development opportunities or appointed skilled and experienced managers. It was also suggested that when appointing managers, interviews should not be used as the only tool, but that psychological assessments are also important to determine whether or not candidates have human resource competencies. In terms of gender-based advertisements, respondents were divided. With regard to the appointment of a gender committee, the majority of the respondents said that it would be useful, as long as it had a clear mandate, because there was already an EE committee at Eskom.

### **5.13 Workplace politics**

Scholars stipulate that workplace politics is not for the benefit of the workplace, but is used to further individuals' interests (James, 2006; Vigoda, 2003; Robbins et al., 2007). Respondents were asked the following question: How would you describe micro-politics? They defined politics in various ways:

*It is like a personal agenda you know, like we will be sitting and discussing this only to find that out that I am just like a pawn in a bigger picture which I do not understand. Like the example of people going to an interview and yet it is already being decided who the position belongs to. I mean that is politics.*

*Politics for me is the scenario whereby you have people have their own agenda and they will use whatever resources available to them to achieve that. In some cases, they might have to sabotage other employees...What I mean is that whenever I am an employee it easy for me to set up that person for failure. For me, that is politics, or I might assist in the plan of taking out a manager as well. It is possible as well.*

*Some of the junior employees, they are capable and they take their best out - it's a challenge for their managers and therefore they will try by all means to stop them. And other things is, like, you know people are very angry inside so when you get employees maybe from outside they do not really appreciate them because they feel like they are taking away the jobs they were supposed to get. Yah!*

*Jealousy and emotions are involved. The one person does not give the other person an opportunity to grow. Basically, we do not help one another to climb the ladder. Instead you climb up the ladder, get on top and once up there you kick it and you do not leave it for the next person to climb it.*

Playing politics has vertical rewards (Meriac & Villanova, 2006; Zaidman, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot & Dryzin-Amit, 2006). The respondents were asked if they agreed with this statement. The majority of the respondents said that politics was not beneficial for Eskom. Instead, it made employees disrespect other employees and managers.

One respondent said:

*Politics is all about people who want to rule...You find out people team up ...with a manager, and employees start hating that person and at work. Another respondent added: For example, if ever there is a person who always takes credit for what other people have done, and that team's spirit will be down because they know they will not be recognised for it as well. People who use politics normally get credit for things they did not do.*

Similarly, another respondent reported that workplace politics are:

*Very demoralising, because you feel that whether you do something or you do not do it is beside the point. It doesn't really matter.*

The same respondent added that:

*You can find that like the one project I worked on, like I worked so hard when I find out at the end of the day that you know it was not about the work. It was already decided what the outcome is, regardless of the final assessment. People do not look at the interests of the company, but they look for their personal gain. That is why you see other companies do not perform or other departments do not perform because of politics.*

Another respondent said:

*What I was saying; maybe let's say I want a promotion. I will start talking to a senior manager. Right? And my manager is not aware and when the senior manager is looking for an M-upper [higher grade] he might appoint me.*

There are different strategies suggested to minimise or eradicate politics (Walton, 2003; Watson, 2008; Edwards, 2007; Noon & Blyton, 2007; du Plessis, 2009; Gray, 2007; Robbins et al., 2007; Kellerman, 2008). Respondents were asked this question: What do you suggest should be done to eradicate micro-politics? The respondents suggested the following in this regard:

*I think we need to be transparent and discuss issues with the staff.*

*Try to treat fellow employees equally.*

*Appoint competent and mature managers.*

*More forums for interaction to try and understand diversity in the workplace.*

*As a manager, stop gossiping about employees.*

*Politics should be exposed and not tolerated. A no-nonsense attitude should prevail and it should be driven from the top and made well known throughout the company.*

*Make management aware of politics and ask them to stop it! Even if they are involved in it themselves. Management should be good enough not to participate in it.*

*Honesty, remember the main reason we are employed at Eskom is to keep the lights burning and not to enrich ourselves.*

*Openness and no victimisation of employees.*

*Top management rotations.*



*Eliminate or close the gap of giving middle management powers to employ their preferred candidates.*

*Manage work not people and don't entertain office politics.*

*Stop promoting people who do not have skills.*

*Pay employees fairly and some of the minor politics will fall away.*

*Strict supervision of working time and a strict but fair approach to all of the team.*

*Micro-managing creates poor morale and should not be adopted unless proven necessary.*

*Treat all employees equally across the board.*

*We need to remove some level of power from whites. All areas are still led by them yet we claim that we are free and there's democracy. Blacks still need to remove greed within themselves and grow sound leadership skills to run a giant organisation.*

*There is not much to be done except to instil a culture of openness and integrity. Lead by example.*

*Workplace culture can assist in getting rid of internal politics. If we all have the same mindset.*

*Pay employees fairly and some of the minor politics will fall away.*

#### 5.14 Culture of respect

The last two responses show that salary and creating a culture of respect are essential in order to reduce employee dissatisfaction. The respondents were asked the following question: Does your workplace culture assist you in achieving your work objectives? The majority of them said that a culture of respect enabled them to reach their work objectives and create a good working environment.

One respondent said:

*That manager believes in me. I do not know if it is because I am a woman and he is an Indian man and it is part of his culture. I think it is his culture. I think it is good. I think people get along. We are the company and if I look over the years I worked here eh it is amazing how people treat each other with respect. There is no discrimination because I am white, you are black, you are yellow or whatever colour, no.*

Another respondent said:

*Our culture is dynamic. Yah, it is a corporate culture. Eh I think it is because we have different types of people working here, they come from different nations as well. So, it is a good culture, there is a lot of respect you get from others as well. And most of the people I can they are goal driven because they have got things they want to achieve and all of us we make sure that we meet our deadlines.*

Another respondent stated that the culture was based on respect, and that this assisted him in achieving his objectives. He also alluded to the fact there are certain things that undermine the achievement of objectives. When responding to this question, he said:

*Yes, yes. However, to be honest, what I have observed personally is that the pace within the organisation tends to be slow. The sense of urgency tends not to be there. And eh sometimes we tend to be disempowered, especially if you are a manager and you are giving instructions, because you can give instructions but if there is a lack of delivery, what recourse do you have? You understand, and I think maybe it has to do with the line of work I am doing - because we are a functional organisation, some other things take priority. But my observation is that this is mainly what makes things difficult to achieve, because sometimes there is a lack of respect for deadlines and there is a lack of respect for commitment. What is there is delivery, but on the whole what is lacking is that accuracy in terms of saying - if we commit to this, let us deliver it at that time.*

These respondents also indicated that the workplace culture helped them to achieve their workplace objectives.

However, a few respondents strongly believed that the culture at BASC was bureaucratic. They expressed the following opinions:

*If the BASC management would give people opportunity to grow and stop nepotism in appointing people. BASC culture is depressing, there are too many contractors.*

*I'm a bit isolated from the decision making process when in fact I can contribute greatly towards the correct decisions being made, but its a consequence of the information hiding game the managers play. Information is*

*power, so the managers like keeping it to themselves. It is terrible. The people generally they do not care, you know. Yah, I don't know, I guess ah I think I have seen worse things. Maybe it is not as bad as my experience has been, but in my experience, I have seen that you'll be required to do work and ask people to do it and people do not respond.*

*It is very demoralising and pathetic.*

Here are some of the phrases used by respondents to describe the culture at BASC:

*Entitlement.*

*Lack of accountability.*

*Micro-management.*

*It creates poor morale.*

*Autocratic.*

*Management not listening enough to subordinates' suggestions.*

*Favouritism.*

*Culture of knowing the right people at the top is rife.*

*Red tape and unnecessary confidentiality of information.*

*Culture of fear and it stifles innovation and creativity.*

## 5.15 Organisational communication

A lack of communication with employees about changes or other labour relations issues breaks trust between managers and employees (Giddens, 2001) and creates dissatisfaction (Vecchio, 2000). Managers tend to communicate with employees when things are okay (Thomas & Inkson, 2004; Kemp, 1992). Conversely, research shows that effective communication increase employees' satisfaction (Bratton et al, 2010). Participants were asked the following question: Do managers communicate information happening in the workplace?

One respondent made this comment:

*If I have to compare with other companies where I have worked before, it is actually quite good here.*

Other responses similarly reflected positive attitudes:

*Yah, I think they do. From my side, managers, they do communicate. But not all managers do communicate because there are some of the things you hear in the corridors, others you'll communicate at the meetings which it is good. Other information you just hear people saying and do not know what is happening. That's to say, some communicate and others they do not communicate.*

*Yah, my manager does communicate the information. One thing we need to understand about this is that communicating information is good and bad, depending on the information. There is information that management must not communicate until they get proper clarification. I will give an example - do you remember that we were told that there will be an IT restructuring, right, and that BASC will be impacted, if we were told by management from day one the*

*first thing we will be worried about is our jobs. And you do not want to create that uncertainty within our environment. So you have to be quiet until you understand exactly what is going on, then you have to start communicating.*

Another respondent indicated that he was satisfied with the information sessions held at BASC every three months. However, he suggested that there should be:

*More information sessions and the BASC communication should send e-mails on time about structural changes and other information that affects employees.*

Not all the respondents thought that there was effective communication, and referred to the role of the grapevine in these instances:

*They do communicate but I must say with the latest Back2Basics and the IT centralisation, I think communication has been poor. It cannot have been properly managed, because I believe that keeping people in the dark is not a good strategy, because then you give the grapevine, you know a very high energy. And usually the grapevine will deliver information, whether it is accurate or inaccurate. And we have to remember that people make their decisions based on information – wherever it comes from, people make their decisions based on information. So I would say it is very important to give employees a full view of where the ship is going, because if they don't, the grapevine can claim that there is an iceberg – whereas there is none! And based on that employees can take a decision to jump ship, because they were told that there is an iceberg coming whereas no, we are actually reaching our destination. It is very important to give employees a clear view.*

One respondent reported that:

*You only hear it in the corridors.*

Another one responded as follows:

*Not timeously. The rumour always reaches the employees before the actually communication does.*

The flow of information to top management was also a problem:

*Not really, they [middle management] do communicate some things that favour them.*

After the researcher probed, he responded as follows:

*Like, the issue with car allowances. Since we found out that it was only Indians with car allowances at T13, we raised it with the management and they said that they will take it up with Nico, and they told us that Nico is not answering. And when we took it up with Nico at the meeting, he told us there are no documents that stay in his office more than two days - he answers them as soon as possible. So it means that they are not reporting the truth about the top management.*

### **5.16 The use of initiative**

Giving employees' carte blanche to use their own initiative contributes significantly to employee satisfaction (Brafman & Beckstrom, 2006; Bratton et al., 2007; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006). To validate this statement, the respondents were asked this question: In your workplace, are you allowed to use your initiative? The majority of the respondents stated that they had been given opportunities to use their own initiative.

Some respondents, however, felt that their views were disregarded. They were asked this follow-up question: If not, how does this make you feel? One respondent explained that:

*One feels like you do not have value to add here.*

Another also expressed his despondency:

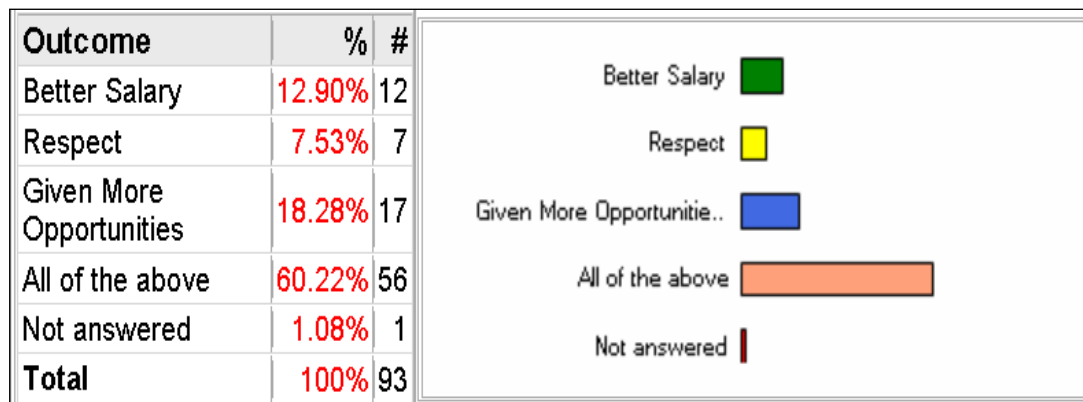
*Sometimes it makes you feel demotivated, because your new initiatives are not taken into consideration.*

### 5.17 Increasing satisfaction levels

Literature shows that managers who have HRM competencies increase employee satisfaction (Watson, 2008; Fulcher & Scott, 2006). To validate this statement, the respondents were asked the following question: What would increase your satisfaction level in your current job?

The percentages in terms of the factors that would increase employee satisfaction are indicated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Factors that increase employee satisfaction





Respondents perceived the following HRM practices to be the causes of employee satisfaction:

*I think we need total quality management eh whereby I know that development comes from an individual. But if I want to develop myself, and the other person says no I will not make it, so that person discourages me. Obviously when you go out for a course or you go for further study there is something that you can bring to the department, but if those things are not happening the department will remain stagnant. People will not grow - you remain at the same level and you will not move to the management level because you are not mature enough to move to the next level and you are not groomed enough to be a manager. You cannot think because you have to go with the process. I think if they can change that, I will be satisfied*

*At the moment I would like to be on a higher grade...I am T11 and I would like to be at T12. Eh...not only because of the money, but I think we deserve to be on a higher level. There is a lot of work that we do, that they were not recognised for it. We need to motivate to eh...HR ...eh to make sure that we get a higher grade.*

*The whole view with regard to the way the department is structured. If we can have change management people within the organisation, that can help us in terms of re-aligning our values and then redefining our core principles and people to help our managers in terms of how to manage certain people within a certain skills level. Because another thing is that you cannot be treated as an administrator and when you are dealing with certain professionals you know, who are qualified and capable to do the job, you are doing much better - you need to be open-minded*

Other respondents perceived trust and responsibility to be the causes of employee satisfaction:

*Yah, I think when I say shareholder it means if I am entrusted to look after the section that I have been given and entrusted in such a manner that the organisation knows that I would not let that unit to be under any jeopardy because Eskom is depending on that unit delivering its mandate, for me that would increase my satisfaction and commitment. That's really what drives me because I know I have been given that sense of responsibility. Eh and I think the thing is being given a tangible job where you are saying, if I have to deliver this thing it will have a huge impact because for me in the past I have delivered high impact projects. That's what drives me, that's what energises me.*

*I would like to say more money, but what I would like to see is other employees working a bit harder and developing their own skills. Currently, we've got G16 and T13 employees. I think because of our experience, it is easy for T13 to pass on work to G16 because they have done it before and from eh the skills development point of view, we should actually get the T13 to try and attempt these things and the G16 to guide them. So, upskilling should be focused on - that will bring satisfaction to me*

One respondent believed that giving employees meaningful work could lead to employee satisfaction:

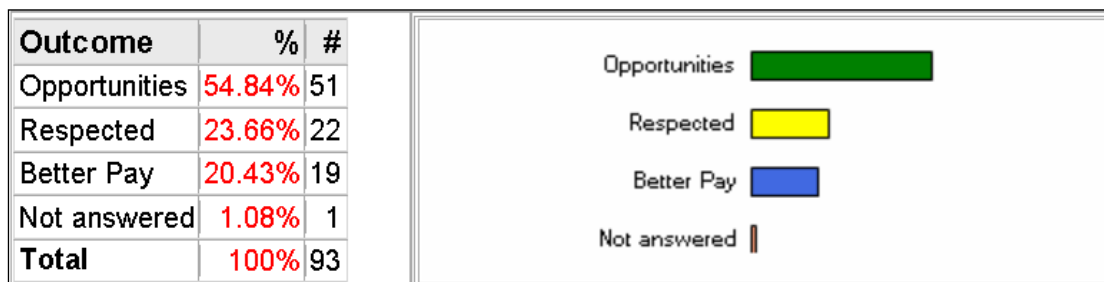
*If I was given meaningful work, because the fact that my work is not important to my customers means that my work is not required.*

## 5.18 Employee resignations

It has been found that the following are the causes of employee resignations: not giving employees opportunities and consultation (Giddens, 2006), unequal payment, and the undermining of black professionals (Taylor, 1991). To validate these claims, the respondents were asked the following question: What do you think should be done to reduce employee resignations?

The percentages in terms of the factors that could contribute towards a reduction in employee resignations are indicated in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Factors that could contribute towards a reduction in employee resignations



One respondent said that if a person is not given an opportunity, then he/she will not be fulfilled and will ultimately look for something else:

*If, tomorrow, somebody can give me an opportunity to take on a huge responsibility on their behalf, and trust me to deliver a high impact project, it is obviously a decision I have to consider, because that is what drives me. I live to deliver high impact projects and big changes. I am a person who likes achieving big changes.*

Respondents believed that rudeness and management's negative attitude were the causes of employee dissatisfaction and resignations:

*Management should change their 'I do not care' attitude.*

*There are terms that managers use, like saying 'be glad you have a job'. You see, they are treating people as if they are at their mercy. That is why people are leaving. I think they need to change and they must remember that they themselves are employees, then everything will be okay.*

These were suggestions made to retain employees:

*Yah, I wanted to talk about that, because sometimes you would resign because of the money, or you would want to move to another department because of the package. That is why you find other people are moving from the same level, like they take a level transfer or secondment because they need something new. So I think, for a manager to keep you, she must find out on a monthly or quarterly basis what can make you leave this department. Maybe then, she will understand my viewpoint.*

*The manager should involve me, and give me meaningful work. Also, the manager should give me the bigger picture.*

*Managers must manage the stress level and work allocation - that will help.*

Other respondents said that there was nothing that could be done to make employee stay in the organisation:

*I am not quite sure because I think if they were to up my take-home pay or salary, but I think if you want to go, you'll go irrespective of whether they give you a fat salary or not. But also, you don't want to sell your soul at the end of the day*

*I do not think there is any company that can stop employees from resigning. People go where there is more money and better working conditions. The only thing that the company can do is to come up with a better offer or try to see how they can keep this person from leaving the company.*

## **5.19 Summary**

The case study findings are summarised as follows:

- **Race and gender**

It was found that the main drivers of black and female under-representation in top positions were lack of skills development, lack of mentoring, and lack of career pathing.

- **Appointment and recruitment practices**

It was found that the following appointment and recruitment issues promoted unfair labour practices: the appointment of employees to 'acting' rather than permanent management positions; managers' abuse of authority; AA implementation; hiring of consultants; and non-transparent appointment criteria.

- **Organisational culture**

A bureaucratic culture was found to be the main organisational culture issue undermining workplace relations. On the other hand, a culture of teamwork appeared to reduce dissatisfaction and enhance unity.

- **Organisational structure**

It was found that the following organisational structure issues undermined workplace relations: managers who lack managerial competencies; unequal payment on the same grade; bullying either by managers or co-workers; hostile working relationships between managers and employees; the undermining of junior managers and workplace politics.

- **Management responses**

It was found that managers who allowed employees to take the initiative; who cared for and treated employees with respect; gave employees opportunities to enhance their skills; and who communicated information, increased employee satisfaction.

From the findings of the study, it would appear that management practices seem to play a critical role in contributing towards either employee dissatisfaction or satisfaction.

The conclusion and recommendations of this study are presented in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Introduction

The main aim of the study was to investigate the factors which contributed to employee dissatisfaction by means of a case study. The conclusions of the various chapters are summarised in this chapter. The limitations of the study are also briefly discussed, and recommendations are made for future research.

### 6.2 Case study findings

#### 6.2.1 Race and gender issues

In South Africa, women and black males are still underrepresented at top management level (Bendix, 2010; Finnemore, 2009; Woolworths, 2009; Pick n Pay, 2008; Shoprite, 2009; SPAR, 2008; van Zyl, 2009; CEE, 2010). This could possibly be due to the fact that black employees do not have the necessary experience, and because there are no mentorship programmes to develop them for these positions. It could also be the case that when positions are advertised at senior management level, black employees are not considered for them.

#### 6.2.2 Appointment and recruitment issues

##### *The appointment of managers*

The appointment of managers who lack leadership skills has been widely recognised as a cause of employee dissatisfaction (Aguinis & Henle, 2003; Haralambos & Holborn, 2004; Cummings & Worley, 2001; Nel et al, 2008; Stacey, 2010; Odih, 2007; Webb, 2006; Burawoy, 1974). While some managers had technical skills, it was felt that they lacked people, human and

leadership skills. Employees who worked under these managers reported unhealthy relationships and felt that these managers did not like it when their subordinates wanted to improve themselves. It was also felt that some managers (especially female managers) tended to be emotional and temperamental (As the gender of respondents of the online survey was not specified, it is difficult to determine whether male or female respondents saw female managers as tending to be emotional). As a result, employees were afraid to approach or interact with such managers for fear of their reaction. The appointment of competent managers requires a variety of recruitment tools, inter alia: unbiased psychological assessment, outcome-based interviews and references from employees where applicable.

#### *Management development*

The development of managers was identified as a critical need in this study. Coaching and mentoring, as well as taking part in management development programmes at business schools, were some of the management development interventions that were suggested.

#### *Affirmative action*

The implementation of affirmative action was a cause of dissatisfaction for different reasons. The view existed that certain races are always preferred above others and that race and gender should not be priorities, as this promoted racism. Since the business unit had reached its AA targets, skills, experience and qualifications, rather than skin colour, were viewed as appropriate criteria for appointing employees across strata, especially at the junior management levels. There was a perception that AA was being addressed through window dressing for the sake of government reports.



### *Appointment to acting positions*

The appointment of managers to acting, rather than permanent, positions was a major cause of dissatisfaction and frustration. Acting managers did not have the authority to make salient decisions. The lack of authority and ability to make decisions engendered a lack of trust and respect. On an operational level, managers are not able to make long-term plans. In some respects, acting positions were seen as a double-edged sword, as they provided opportunities for acquiring some managerial skills, but these were countered by the short-term nature of the appointments. Managerial experience gained in an acting position included human resource management, finance and procurement.

### *Outsourcing of tasks*

Reliance on external consultants was another issue that caused dissatisfaction. The feeling was that critical tasks were given to consultants, and employees were therefore deprived of opportunities to acquire experience and develop skills. The higher salaries paid to consultants was also a bone of contention, as it was believed that not all consultants had superior skills.

### *Appointment and recruitment practices*

Non-transparent recruitment processes and practices caused discontent. There were perceptions that when positions are advertised, some of the managers had already decided whom they wanted to employ, and some of the candidates were therefore compromised.

### 6.2.3 Organisational structure

Issues such as sexual harassment, workplace bullying, workplace organisational politics, remuneration, relationship with managers, undermining of managers, reducing resignations, working with customers and giving employees opportunities to use initiative, if not addressed formally by means of organisational policies, have the potential to be harmful for both the individual and the organisation.

#### *Sexual harassment*

Harm caused by sexual harassment is often extreme and may include humiliation, loss of dignity, psychological (and even physical) injury, and damage to professional reputation and career. The majority of respondents appeared to have a good understanding of what sexual harassment entailed. While the majority of respondents reported that they had not experienced any form of sexual harassment, two employees reported that they had experienced sexual harassment. Since they participated in the online survey, the researcher was not able to determine their gender, ascertain the nature of the harassment, whether or not the incidences had been reported, and how they were dealt with.

#### *Bullying*

The findings of this study indicated that some degree of workplace bullying was present. Perpetrators included co-workers, as well as managers. Bullied respondents reported that it made them fearful.

### *Workplace politics*

Workplace politics is defined as “activities that are not required as part of the organisation, but that influence the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organisation” (Robbins et al., 2007: 477). There was a strong view that workplace politics had benefits for individuals, but that in general, this was detrimental to the workplace. As a result, respondents felt that politics should not be tolerated because it also kills team spirit and morale.

### *Relationship with managers*

Another cause of employee dissatisfaction was bureaucratic managers who were hostile towards employees. Respondents felt that such managers were insecure, lacked interpersonal skills and were abusing their power. These managers denied employees opportunities to develop their skills (e.g. by not allowing them to attend training courses). It was also felt that insecure managers hindered the career development of employees. Performance appraisals were not conducted diligently – performance appraisal scores were often forced on employees, and this deprived employees of performance bonuses.

### *Reducing resignations*

Lack of consultation and opportunities, as well as undermining employees and disrespecting them, were some of the reasons why employees resigned (Giddens, 2006). Rude, disrespectful and negative attitudes towards employees are things which would cause them to resign. The majority of the respondents indicated that being given opportunities to execute critical tasks, higher salaries and respect would make them stay in their current jobs. Management was viewed as playing a vital role in retaining employees.

### *Remuneration*

The salary structure was a cause of dissatisfaction, as some employees reported that they earned less than their colleagues on the same grade. Salary disparities were caused by managers' discretion, and it was also believed that racism played a role. Employees who were appointed from outside tended to negotiate better salaries. Some dissatisfied respondents indicated that they would resign or lodge a grievance with the Human Resource department over the issue of salary disparities.

### *Undermining of managers*

There was an indication that in some instances, the structure undermined junior managers, as some employees bypassed them and went straight to the senior management to discuss labour-related issues.

### *Employees' initiative*

Allowing workers to use their initiative is recognised as a source of motivation (Bratton et al., 2007; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006). Respondents who were given the freedom to be innovative reported that they were motivated and satisfied. They also reported that being allowed to use their initiative gave them a feeling of being valued and appreciated.

#### 6.2.4 Organisational culture

Organisational culture is defined as the "personality of the organisation" (Thompson, 2007: 34 & 35). Two different organisational cultures exist. One of the cultures identified by participants was that which enabled some participants to achieve their career objectives, regardless of race or gender. This tended to be related more to the approaches of individual managers, rather than the organisational culture of the company per se. The bureaucratic culture, on the other hand, was perceived as alienating, disempowering and

hostile, and red tape appeared to stifle creativity. The autocratic management style of some managers instilled fear in employees.

### 6.2.5 Management responses

Management responses to employee concerns are decisive. Managers who address employee issues in a fair manner contribute significantly to employee satisfaction (John & Saks, 2011, Slocum & Hellriegel, 2007; Yulk & Lepsinger, 2004; Perrons, 2003; Hassan, 2008; Brandth & Kvande, 2006; Watson, 2008; Townsend, 2007; Aguinis & Henle, 2003; Haralambos & Holborn, 2004; Giddens, 2006; Fulcher & Scott, 2006). The findings of this study revealed that managers who were perceived to have excellent HRM management skills, respected those working under them, gave them opportunities to develop their skills, motivated workers, provided timely and accurate information about events taking place in the organisation, and did not discriminate on the basis of race, gender and qualifications, contributed significantly to employee satisfaction in the organisation.

### 6.3 Contribution of the study

The main contributions of this study are as follows:

- Firstly, few, if any studies, have been conducted on causes of employee dissatisfaction in the ICT workplace in South Africa. This study, to some extent, addresses both the general lack of information on causes of employee dissatisfaction in South Africa, as well as causes of employee dissatisfaction in the ICT workplace. Furthermore, the findings of the study contribute to a more general understanding of the causes of employee dissatisfaction;
- The findings of the study also reveal that AA policy does not always have the intended effect, and that employees would prefer appointment and promotion on the basis of meritocracy and with mentoring; and

- Lastly, the study contributed in terms of its methodology, i.e. the use of web-based questionnaires to collect data. This also ensured maximum anonymity and confidentiality.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the study**

One of the inherent characteristics of case studies is that they have a severely restricted focus. Despite the fact that they cannot be representative, case studies can provide more than simply idiosyncratic understanding (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). While this study was restricted to BASC and the findings cannot be generalised, it can be argued that the findings can be applied to situations beyond that of the actual case study. They give an in-depth insight into identifying the causes of employee dissatisfaction in the multi-cultural workplace and how they can be addressed, especially in South Africa, where this area is under-researched.

#### **6.5 Recommendations for future research**

Some implications for further research became apparent during the course of this study:

- Similar studies on employee dissatisfaction should be conducted with top managers;
- Studies on the post-experience of managers appointed to acting positions should be conducted; and
- Follow-up studies on employee dissatisfaction should be conducted as causes are addressed and relevant interventions are implemented.

## **6.6 Recommendations for reducing employee dissatisfaction**

The study points to the following findings, and this suggests that, in similar contexts, employee dissatisfaction can be addressed in the following ways:

- When senior management positions are advertised, competent black managers and females should be considered;
- Gender committees should be appointed to ensure that short-listings and appointments are gender-sensitive and conducted in a fair manner;
- Gender or employment equity committees should ensure that AA candidates are not appointed merely for window-dressing or to meet equity targets, but are given responsibilities;
- There should be consistent monitoring to ensure that the recruitment and selection policy is implemented fairly, without prejudicing other employees;
- Awareness should be raised with regard to bullying, and a workplace policy and procedure should be implemented. This will enable employees who are being bullied to recognise the phenomenon and have channels through which they can respond when they experience it;
- More employees should be trained and developed, in order to create a pool of skilled employees to be future leaders or managers;
- A succession strategy and plan should be put in place, in order to assist in and prepare candidates for their promotion;
- Regular skills audits should be conducted, in order to identify skill gaps and implement accelerated development plans to remedy this;
- Once employees are skilled, they should be given opportunities to do the jobs currently being performed by consultants;
- Already skilled employees should be challenged and given opportunities to do more critical and meaningful work;

- A mentorship programme should be put in place to assist managers who have been appointed and lack experience;
- A salary audit should be conducted and salary gaps should be addressed;
- The current appointment and recruitment process should be implemented in a participatory, transparent and fair manner;
- The selection process for more senior posts should not be solely based on interviews, but should include other tools such as psychometric testing or in-basket;
- To empower junior managers, senior managers should not address employee grievances if they have not first discussed them with junior managers;
- Individuals appointed as acting managers should be employees who possess both technical and HRM skills;
- More effective communication channels (e.g. monthly information sessions, emails) should be put in place to ensure that information is communicated on time; and
- Change management interventions should be implemented to instil a sense of unity, which will minimise the occurrence of an 'us and them' culture.

## **6.7 Concluding note**

The results of this study suggest that more in-depth investigations of the causes of employee dissatisfaction are necessary to address the causes of employee dissatisfaction, and to prevent dissatisfied employees from either moving to other divisions or leaving the workplace altogether.



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## **Appendix One: Glossary**

### **Conceptual and operational definitions of key terms**

Key concepts, as employed in this study, are defined as follows:

- Black employees

In terms of the Employment Equity Act (EEA) No. of 55 of 1998, the term 'black employees' refers to Africans, Coloureds and Indians (Bendix, 2000: 93). For the purposes of this study, this term refers exclusively to Africans.

- Bullying

Bullying is defined as aggressive behaviour and repetitive, intimidating actions taken towards employees on the lower and/or same grade (John & Saks, 2011), in order to humiliate them and cause them stress (Watson, 2008).

- Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy is an organisational structure, management practice or system, and was developed by Max Weber in the 1950s, in order to make workplaces more effective and efficient (Ritzer, 2004; Slocum & Hellriegel, 2007). Ideally, Weber believed that the following bureaucratic principles would render workplaces more efficient and effective: "rules and procedures controlling organisational activities; a high degree of differentiation among functions; a high degree of job specialisation; interpersonal relations characterised by impersonality; and selection and promotion based on merit" (Dubrin, 2007: 318).

- Dissatisfaction

Dissatisfaction is defined as displeasure or discontentment caused either by work (Castro & Martins, 2010: 03); employees (Dubrin, 2007; Auster, 1996); impersonal, bureaucratic structures (Meier & O'Toole Jr, 2006; Watson, 2003; Bratton et al., 2010; Fineman, Gariel & Sims, 2010); Tayloristic managers (Pugh & Hickson, 2007; Watson, 2003; Giddens, 2006; Blauner, 1964; Thompson, 1989); a bureaucratic culture and inconsistent policy application; and managers who do not have the appropriate qualifications, managerial experience and skills, and who do not give employees any opportunities.

- Gender

Gender is a multifaceted notion which concerns the psychological, social and cultural differences between males and females, as opposed to the term 'sex', which refers to the physiological and anatomical differences that define male and female bodies (Giddens, 2006: 458). For the purposes of this study, the term refers to females, irrespective of their race.

- Human resource management

This is defined as the 21st century management practice used by managers "that affect people behaviour and performance of the people of an organisation so that people are satisfied and contribute to the organisation, achieving its strategic objectives. Some of its practices are remuneration, recruitment, appointment, industrial relations, training and development, change management, organisational culture, socialisation or induction" (Amos, Ristow, Ristow & Pearse, 2008: 8).

- Management

This is a role played by employees who are responsible for planning, organising, leading and managing (Watson, 2008: 324). In this study, managers are M-graded employees who have T- and P-graded employees reporting to them, and senior or top managers, who are EEE-graded employees, and who have M, P and T-graded employees reporting to them.

- Organisational culture

This can be defined as the “personality of the organisation” (Thompson, 2007: 34 & 35) or what employees share, believe and value<sup>5</sup> (John & Saks, 2011: 268; Ireland, Hoskisson & Hitt, 2009: 354; Driskill & Brenton, 2005: 30).

- Organisational structure

Structure is defined as a “chain of command”, “the formal system of task and authority relationship that control how people coordinate the actions and use resources to achieve organisation goals”, a hierarchy, or who reports to whom in the organisation (Dubrin, 2007: 315; Jones, 2007: 7; McShane & Von Glinow, 2005 : 444).

- Race

Race refers to how people are classified in terms of their skin colour (John & Saks, 2011). In this study, the respondents are classified as Blacks, Coloureds, Indians or Whites.

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<sup>5</sup> Organisational values can be “customer service, quality, flexibility and innovation” (Ybema, Yanow & Sabelis, 2011: xv).



- Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment refers to any comments, gestures or physical contact of a sexual nature that are deliberate, repeated and unwelcomed (Macionis & Plummer, 2007: 889).

- Workplace politics

Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2007: 477) define workplace politics as “activities that are not required as part of the organisation, but that influence the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organisation.”

## **Appendix Two: Interview framework**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for making yourself available for this interview session. The purpose of this interview or focus group is to conduct an in-depth investigation into the issues that cause employee dissatisfaction at BASC. These issues are as follows: gender, appointment and recruitment, and management response. This research is being conducted as a requirement for the completion of the researcher's Doctor of Literature and Philosophy (DLitt et Phil) in Sociology (98419) at the University of South Africa. The interview will last for an hour. With your permission, a digital recorder and a notebook will be used for data capturing. To ensure confidentiality, you will be given a pseudonym. Is there anything else you would like to know before we begin?

### **1. Biographical Details**

- What is your age in years?
- What did you study?
- What is your occupational grade?
- What is your marital status?
- What is your religion?
- Which section/department are you from?
- How long have you been working at BASC?

### **2. Gender issues**

- Do you think that employees should be promoted based on their gender?
- Why?
- Do you think that employees should be paid higher salaries based on their gender?
- Why do you think so?

- Who is negotiating for your salary increase?
- In your view, what do you think are barriers to promotion?
- Which mechanisms do you think should be in place to address these barriers?
- How would you explain sexual harassment?
- How many times in the past six months have you experienced sexual harassment?
  - None
  - Once; or
  - Two or more times
- If yes, what have you done?
- Have you been bullied at your workstation?
- If yes, what was the cause?
- What gender is your manager?
- How is your working relationship with your manager?
- How is your working relationship with your team members?

## **2. Appointment and recruitment issues**

- Which recruitment determinant (i.e. experience, qualification, and AA<sup>6</sup> policy) do you think should be used to appoint employees?
- Why do you say so?
- How would you describe the barriers to employee skills development?
- How will you respond if you find out that employees in other departments on the same grade as you are earning more than you do?
- Do you think that it is worthwhile for BASC to invest money in developing employees?
- Why do you think so?
- What do you suggest should be done when appointing employees in management positions?

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<sup>6</sup> AA – is an acronym for Affirmative Action.

- Why do you think so?
- As an employee, are you treated differently because of your race?
- What is your view regarding gender committees?
- Do you think that job advertisements must contain statements such as the following: “women are encouraged to apply”?
- If you are a female, do you think that you should be treated differently because of your gender?
- Why do you think so?

### **3. Culture and structure issues**

- How would you describe workplace politics?
- What is the effect of workplace politics on team spirit?
- What is the effect of workplace politics on staff morale?
- What do you think causes workplace politics?
- Do you think that there are benefits in playing workplace politics?
- Do managers communicate information happening in the workplace?
- What do you suggest should be done to eradicate micro-politics?
- How would you describe culture in your workplace?
- Does your workplace culture assist you in achieving your work objectives?
- In your workplace, are you allowed to use your initiative?
- If not, how does this make you feel?
- If there is one thing about your job that you could change, what would it be?
- Would you prefer working from home?
- Why?

### **4. Management Response and Practice**

- How would you describe your manager’s management practice or style?
- How do you feel about it?

- How do you cope with it?
- What kind of management style do you prefer?
- Why do you prefer it?
- Do you work with customers?
- How are they treating you?
- What would increase your satisfaction level?
- What do you think can be done to increase employee commitment?
- What do you think management should do to reduce employee resignations?
- Do you think that managers would be better leaders if they attended a leadership course?

Is there anything else that you would like to add or ask?

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Thank you for participating in this interview.