

THE DETERMINANTS OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG AFRICAN SUPERVISORS AND LABOURERS :



THE IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT OF RECENT EMPIRICAL STUDIES

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OPSOMMING

Om Bestuurders te help om die faktore te verstaan wat bydra om Bantoe werknemers tevrede te hou, ontleed die skrywer die tevredenheidsfaktore en die higiënefaktore wat op verskillende groepe werknemers van toepassing is, volgens die hipotese van Herzberg*

*sien ook *Bedryfsleiding/Business Management* nr. 3/4 van Nov. '72, bl. 3

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most distressing lessons to be learnt from the recent strikes in Natal is the almost complete ignorance on the part of management of the work attitudes of their African employees. A common response of the managers involved in the strikes to the question 'why didn't you do anything' was the reply 'they seemed perfectly satisfied to me'. As post-strike investigations showed, they obviously were not. In order to improve this distressing state of affairs, managers of African employees need to be supplied with factual evidence systematically gathered through empirical studies about how the latter react to various aspects in their work situation. They need to be informed about the real state of affairs with regard to the work attitudes of their African employees. It is the aim of the present study to supply this kind of information.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The framework for the study comes from the

hygiene-motivation theory of job satisfaction proposed by Herzberg¹ and his co-workers. This so-called two-factor theory maintains that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are reactions to different aspects in the work situation. Its main hypothesis is that content aspects or factors in the work situation like achievement, task responsibility, the work itself and advancement contribute positively to overall job satisfaction but do not generally contribute much to job dissatisfaction per se; whereas context aspects or factors in the work situation like company policy, supervision, interpersonal relations and working conditions, contribute mainly to neutralizing job dissatisfaction but do not generally contribute much to job satisfaction per se. The former job aspects that form the content of the job are labelled 'motivation' factors to indicate their ability to satisfy the individual's higher-order needs. The latter job aspects that form the context of the job are labelled 'hygiene' factors to indicate the preventative role they play with regard to job dissatisfaction. An important implication of the motivation-hygiene theory is that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are not opposite ends of the same continuum, but instead represent two distinct continua.

3. METHOD

The initial sample consisted of 250 male

African factory workers from 10 different factories in South Africa. Each worker first completed a short Urban-Rural scale² designed to assess the extent to which he adopted traditional (tribal) or modern (western) customs, which has been shown to be internally consistent and to correlate positively with a number of independent demographic, economic and sociopsychological factors that are widely accepted as indicators of Westernization (the acceptance of western values). As a check on the scale, each worker also indicated the number of years he had spent in an 'urban' area. Since the acceptance of western work values by Africans in South Africa has been shown to be highly correlated with their degree of urbanization, it is reasonable to treat the number of years in an urban area as an **indirect** index of the acceptance of western work values. As expected, there was very high positive relationship between urbanization scores on the Urban-Rural scale and 'number of years in an urban area'.

The worker's occupational level was given by the Duncan socio-economic index³ of the particular job-title which the worker's superior felt was most descriptive of the worker's job. To obtain these indices, the superiors were each given a short list of factory job titles, plus short descriptions of each with the instruction 'Simply mark that job title which best describes the kind of work done by the subject in the factory'. The fact that the Africans are only allowed to do 'certain' kinds of jobs in South African factories probably accounts for the finding that, by and large, the sample could loosely be divided into two groups, one of which consisted of workers in jobs that could basically be described as that of 'supervisors' and the other of workers in jobs that could basically be described as that of 'labourer'.

Subjects were then chosen from this initial sample to form three groups, A, B and C such that groups A and B differed significantly in occupational level and groups B and C in their acceptance of western work values. Henceforth group A will be called the 'western-oriented supervisors', group B the 'western-oriented

labourers' and group C the 'tribal-oriented labourers'.

A severe shortcoming of most of the research that has failed to support the motivation-hygiene theory of job satisfaction is that job satisfaction has been measured by scales which assume that job satisfaction-dissatisfaction is a continuum, with job dissatisfaction being merely a low level of job satisfaction. If, as the motivation-hygiene theory suggests, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are qualitatively different, then it is doubtful whether research in which such a single scale of job satisfaction-dissatisfaction is employed, can yield negative results for the theory. In order to adequately test the motivation-hygiene theory it must be assumed that it is correct (initially, at least), with the implication that job satisfaction is qualitatively different from job dissatisfaction and therefore must be measured on a different scale. This is what has been done in the present study in which separate measures of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction have been employed. Overall job satisfaction was measured by means of a horizontal 10-point graphic rating scale, with the end-points labelled 'no satisfaction' (1) and 'maximum satisfaction' (10). Overall job dissatisfaction was also measured by a horizontal 10-point graphic rating scale, with the end-points labelled 'no dissatisfaction' (1) and 'maximum dissatisfaction' (10). The subjects were each required to indicate on the scale their 'feelings about the job as a whole, taking into account both the favourable and unfavourable aspects of the job'. In this way separate indicators were obtained on the extent to which each subject felt satisfied and dissatisfied with his job.

The Halpern⁴ job factor questionnaire was used to measure the subjects' satisfaction with the major different aspects or factors in the work situation. There were 8 items, each covering a specific job factor. Four of the items covered 'motivator' factors, namely opportunity for advancement, work itself, task responsibility and achievement. The remaining 4 items covered 'hygiene' factors, namely company policy, supervision, interpersonal relations and

working conditions. The items in the scale were specifically developed to cover the most important motivation and hygiene factors in terms of Herzberg's 'two factor' theory, using his actual definitions as far as possible. Subjects

were required to indicate the extent of their satisfaction with each of these 8 job factors on a 7-point graphic rating scale, ranging from very dissatisfied (1) through neutral (4) to very satisfied (7).

TABLE I
JOB FACTOR SATISFACTION SCORES FOR THE THREE GROUPS

FACTOR	WESTERN SUPERVISORS (n = 52)		WESTERN LABOURERS (n = 50)		NON-WESTERN LABOURERS (n = 49)	
	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD
achievement	5.7	1.9	5.4	1.5	5.6	1.5
work itself	6.4	1.3	5.6	1.4	5.5	1.6
responsibility	6.5	1.2	5.7	1.3	5.9	1.4
advancement	6.3	1.2	5.3	1.6	6.0	1.2
company policy	6.2	1.8	5.6	1.6	6.4	1.3
supervision	6.0	1.6	5.7	1.5	6.5	1.2
interpersonal relations	5.1	1.1	5.8	1.2	6.8	1.2
working conditions	4.8	1.3	5.1	1.4	5.7	1.1
overall satisfaction	8.2	2.1	6.1	2.3	7.5	1.9
overall dissatisfaction	4.0	2.5	4.2	2.0	4.5	2.5
urban-rural scale	13.4	2.7	12.0	2.2	4.7	1.8
years in 'urban' area	10.8	2.5	9.4	2.9	4.1	2.0

4. MAIN RESULTS

4.1 A number of findings suggest, in accordance with the motivation-hygiene theory, that job dissatisfaction is not merely the opposite of job satisfaction. In the first place, although the western-oriented supervisors were significantly more satisfied with their jobs than the western-oriented labourers, they were **not** significantly less dissatisfied than the latter. Similarly, although the tribal-oriented labourers were significantly more satisfied with their jobs than the western-oriented labourers, they were also **not** significantly less dissatisfied than the latter. In the second place, if satisfaction-dissatisfaction represents a bipolar dimension on a single continuum, then the correlation between the

separate scales should be significantly negative. However, neither of the negative correlations between the scale of job satisfaction and that of job dissatisfaction among the western-oriented supervisors and among the western-oriented labourers were significant, while the correlation among the tribal-oriented labourers was actually slightly positive.

4.2 The results demonstrated clearly show that the western-oriented supervisors and labourers placed different emphasis on some of the job factors as satisfiers and dissatisfiers. For instance, the supervisors rated themselves as significantly more satisfied with their opportunities for advancement, their amount of task responsibility and the intrinsic nature of their

work than did the labourers. On the other hand, the labourers rated themselves as significantly more satisfied with the interpersonal relations in their work situation than did the supervisors. These results would seem to be explicable in terms of the different occupational positions held by the members of the two groups. The supervisors had advanced further in their particular firms than the labourers; they were given much more responsibility than the latter in their jobs, and their duties were more varied and potentially ego-involving than those of the labourers. On the other hand, the labourers had more opportunity for forming close interpersonal relations in their jobs than the supervisors, since they worked in teams whereas the supervisors were each in charge of different groups of workers.

4.3 It was also noticeable that the western-oriented and tribal-oriented labourers also placed different emphasis on some of the job factors as satisfiers and dissatisfiers. For instance, the tribal-oriented labourers rated themselves as significantly more satisfied with their opportunities for advancement and their working conditions than did their western-oriented counterparts. These results would seem to be explicable in terms of the different expectations of the members of the two groups, with the unbanized (western) labourers being more likely, in the light of earlier research,^{5,6} than the non-urbanized (tribal) labourers to expect the firm to give them certain things, like opportunities for advancement and good working conditions, as their just reward for offering the firm their services. This suggests that the presence of these factors is not likely to affect the western-oriented labourers in as positive a way as their tribal-oriented counterparts, with the result that the former are likely to be less satisfied with these factors than are the latter.

4.4 To investigate the motivation-hygiene theory proposal of a content-context dichotomy, with content factors affecting mainly job satisfaction and context factors affecting mainly job dissatisfaction, the 8 job factor satisfaction scales were intercorrelated separately for each of the three groups. It was found that the

difference in the proportion of positively significant correlations **within** the two types of factors and **between** the two types was statistically significant for the western-oriented supervisors but not for the western-oriented labourers nor for the tribal-oriented labourers. The proportions for the western-oriented supervisors were 75% and 44%, for the western-oriented labourers 58% and 56%, and for the tribal-oriented labourers 67% and 69%. This finding suggests that it is only in the western-oriented supervisor group that the individuals differentiate sharply between the content and context aspects of their work situation, as implied by the motivation-hygiene theory. In the other two groups they do not appear to make this strong differentiation.

4.5 It is noteworthy that the various content factors clustered together to a significantly higher degree than did the various context factors in each of three groups. This is probably due to the different nature of the two kinds of factors. For instance, content aspects all stem directly from the work itself. Thus, when the work is interesting and challenging per se, there are usually increased opportunities for task responsibility and achievement, which in turn increase the chances for advancement. On the other hand, context aspects do not stem from any common denominator but rather from different sources. For instance, close interpersonal relations may be a reaction against negative company policy, while liking for a supervisor may have little or nothing to do with good or bad working conditions, especially if the supervisor is seen as powerless to alter them.

4.6 Among the western-oriented supervisors the average correlation between satisfaction scores for the four content factors and overall job satisfaction was highly significant and indicated that intrinsic sources (motivators) account for about 49% of the variance in overall job satisfaction. The average correlation between satisfaction scores for the four context factors and overall job satisfaction was much lower and indicated that extrinsic sources (hygienes) account for only about 18% of the variance in overall job satisfaction. The diffe-

rence between these correlations was highly significant, as would be expected from the motivation-hygiene theory. Among the tribal-oriented labourers the position was reversed, with the average correlation between satisfaction scores for the four content factors and overall job satisfaction being significantly smaller than that between satisfaction scores for the four context factors and overall job satisfaction. This indicates that in this group, contrary to predictions from the motivation-hygiene theory, extrinsic sources actually contribute more of the variance to overall job satisfaction than do intrinsic sources, with the proportions being 26% and 4% respectively. Among the western-oriented labourers the average correlation between satisfaction scores for the four content factors and overall job satisfaction did not differ significantly from that between satisfaction scores for the four context factors and overall job satisfaction. This indicates that in this group, contrary to predictions from the motivation-hygiene theory, extrinsic sources account for about as much of the variance in overall job satisfaction than do intrinsic sources, with the proportions being 28% and 30% respectively.

4.7 When the question of job dissatisfaction is considered, we find that none of the predictions from the motivation-hygiene theory are borne out. For instance, in none of the groups did the average negative correlation between satisfaction scores for the four context factors and overall job dissatisfaction differ significantly from that between satisfaction scores for the four content factors and overall job dissatisfaction, indicating that in each group the variance in overall job dissatisfaction was not due significantly more to extrinsic sources than to intrinsic sources.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results of the present study therefore indicate clearly that whether intrinsic or content factors are more important determiners of general feelings of satisfaction about the job than are extrinsic or context factors (as maintained by the motivation-hygiene theory)

depends to a large extent on the occupational level of the workers and their acceptance of certain work-related values (western vs tribal).

The differences between the two western-oriented groups that were found in the present study can be explained in terms of Maslow's⁷ 'need hierarchy' model. According to this model individuals in the relatively high-level jobs (supervisors) usually have their basic hygiene needs satisfied and their attention can be paid to those aspects of the work situation which contribute to their personal development (motivation variables). On the other hand, individuals in the relatively low-level jobs (labourers) are more likely to be motivated by hygiene needs (like security and working conditions) because these are insufficiently well gratified to allow the so-called higher-order needs (the self-fulfilment possible in the job itself) to become prepotent. As a result, the satisfaction of the supervisors is more a function of intrinsic factors, while that of the labourers is more a function of extrinsic factors.

The differences between the two groups of labourers that were found in the present study can be explained in terms of the social reference group theory of job satisfaction^{7,8} which maintains that, to a large extent, job satisfaction is a function of the extent to which the various aspects of the work situation meet the standards of the individual's reference group. Because of their acceptance of a different reference group's standards, the tribal-oriented labourers approach their jobs with a different set of expectations from those of the western-oriented labourers. In view of their tribal background, it is not surprising that individuals in this group do not really value greatly (or expect) opportunities for advancement and achievement as well as interesting work and task responsibility.^{9,10} As Biesheuvel¹¹ says of the tribal-oriented African 'although he labours with the sweat of his brow, he is not really a worker in terms of his aspirations' (p. 33). This he attributes to 'the relative absence of the compulsive work motivation which is still characteristic of Western culture' (p. 34). As a result, the attainment of these intrinsic 'goals' is unlikely to produce very

strong feelings of satisfaction. However, these tribal-oriented labourers do **not** regard the provision of extrinsic factors merely as indications that the company is keeping its side of the bargain. Unlike their western counterparts, they actively desire and hope for a fair company policy, the right kind of supervisor and peers and, especially, high-quality work conditions^{8,10}. As a result, attainment of these extrinsic aspirations tends to produce strong feelings of satisfaction.

Social reference group theory can also easily explain the fact that the western-oriented supervisors regarded themselves as generally more satisfied with their jobs than the western-oriented labourers and that the tribal-oriented labourers regarded themselves as generally more satisfied with their jobs than the western-oriented labourers.

Since the western-oriented supervisors and labourers are both equally urbanized and accept western work-related values it is reasonable to suppose that they have the same western-oriented reference group. It therefore follows from reference group theory that, because the job of supervisor occupies a higher position in the western-oriented occupational hierarchy than does that of labourer, the western-oriented supervisors will express a significantly higher level of job satisfaction than the western-oriented labourers. From Table 1 it can be seen that this was, in fact, the case.

Social reference group theory can also account for the fact that the western-oriented labourers regarded themselves as less satisfied with their jobs than the tribal-oriented labourers. Whereas individuals in the former group are already fairly urbanized and usually take whites and other urbanized Africans (most of whom are in higher-order jobs than themselves) as their reference group, individuals in the latter group are still fairly tribalized and usually take tribal Africans (most of whom are in low-order agricultural jobs) as their reference group. It therefore follows from reference group theory that, because of the job of labourer occupies a higher position in the tribal-oriented occupational hierarchy than in the western-oriented hierarchy, the tribal-

oriented labourers will express a significantly higher level of job satisfaction than the western-oriented labourers.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 At the theoretical level, the results of the present study indicate clearly that any conceptualization of job satisfaction which does not include recognition of the important part played by the individual's frame of reference is inadequate, especially if, as in the present study, the workers differ in terms of their occupational level and/or reference group. The results make clear the limitations of the motivation-hygiene theory and cast serious doubt on its implications that the determinants of how a man reacts to his job are to be found in the job situation itself and not in the wider reference group from which he draws his standards and expectations.

6.2 At the practical level, the results of the present study make clear that African factory workers should **not** be treated as a homogeneous group who will react in the same way to given programmes aimed at raising their level of job satisfaction. More specifically, those African employees who are still tribal-oriented should be treated differently from those who are already fully urbanized (western-oriented).

6.3 Among the western-oriented supervisors, content factors, especially the nature of the work itself, contributed more highly to feelings of job satisfaction than context factors. Hence management can expect a very favourable response from this kind of worker to the changes brought about by schemes directed at making their work intrinsically more varied, self-fulfilling and responsible. On the other hand, they should not expect this very favourable response to changes brought about by improvements in working conditions.

6.4 Among the western-oriented labourers, they can expect an equally favourable response in the form of greater job satisfaction from changes directed at context as from changes directed at content factors. Workers in this group, for instance, react no better to changes making their

work more varied and self-fulfilling than to improvements in working conditions.

6.5 Among the tribal-oriented labourers management can expect much greater rises in job satisfaction to improvements in working conditions than to changes making their work more varied, self-fulfilling and responsible.

6.6. In short, a flexible approach is required of management in which the various accepted ways of raising job satisfaction (job enlargement), effective reward system, fair and humane company policy, worker participation in decision-making etc. are differentially applied to the various sub-groups making up the African labour force, depending on the latter's special work attitudes. In order to uncover these attitudes, each company should carry out a study before introducing changes aimed at making their African employees more satisfied with their jobs. As the Natal strikes revealed, these changes are long overdue.

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