International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

The Levels of Job Satisfaction Amongst Employees of the Malawi Police Service: A Case Study of Lilongwe Model Police Station

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ABSTRACT

In Malawi, research on job satisfaction for the police officers has been minimal. The main objective of the research was to investigate the issues that affect job satisfaction for the employees of the Malawi Police Service. Focus was on rewards, relationship between managers and employees, work environment and promotions. This research therefore serves as grounds for improvement for the climate in the organization. MS – Excel was employed to analyze some data and generate graphs in the results section. Some data was analyzed qualitatively and presented through narrations. The results of the study indicate that the workplace relationships, work environment and processes involved in rewards and promotions are impacting negatively on the levels of satisfaction for the employees. The study recommended that the police management must develop proper job descriptions, check its policies, and culture to improve the levels of satisfaction in promotions and rewards. Failure to improve the levels of satisfaction of the employees may lead to low productivity.

KEY WORDS: Job satisfaction, public service employees, police officers.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction has an influence on the life of an organization, including productivity. According to Kunini(2011) a happy employee is a satisfied employee and a happy employee is a productive employee. It is very important that managers strive to ensure that their employees are satisfied so that their efforts lead to high productivity and satisfaction of the organization's customers.

Effects of job dissatisfaction are very costly to an organization. They are manifested by lack of loyalty, increased absenteeism, increased number of accidents among others (Kunini 2011). According to Spectator (1997) evaluating job satisfaction can assist in identifying areas within an organization which need to be changed to boost organization performance.

This research aims at measuring the levels of satisfaction amongst members of the Malawi Police Service. The Malawi Police Service is a security organization responsible for providing for the protection of public safety and the rights of persons in Malawi as provided for in chapter 15 of the Malawi Constitution. Its employees, as all other employees have to be satisfied so that the services offered to the people are of the highest standard.

According to statistics from the national police headquarters Human Resources Department in 2018, there is an increase in the number of officers resigning, involved in early retirement, lacking loyalty, involved in disciplinary offences. This is costly and highly impacts on the image as well as the public trust and confidence on their police. It could be that the employees are not satisfied. Understanding the issues in relation to satisfaction can help management to check policy to improve police services.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Job satisfaction in general is an area which has been explored by more researchers. The term "job satisfaction" is the collection of feelings and beliefs that people have about their current job ranging from extreme satisfaction to extreme dissatisfaction (George et al., 2008). Job satisfaction is not the same as motivation though the two are linked.

Naveed (2011) highlight that job satisfaction is key to productivity and organization success since satisfied employees would be creative, innovative and produce superior quality performance allowing a company to grow and change positively with time and changing conditions.

Job satisfaction is measured in so many ways, the oldest being the degree of facial expression presented by Kunin in (Aziri :2011) or using the Minnesota Questionnaire and Job descriptive index among other means. This research asked questions related to satisfaction in the five facets as provided in the job descriptive index supported by follow up questions.

There are many theories explain job satisfaction like motivational, job characteristics model, Maslow hierarchy of need, and the expectancy theories etc. Models representing the theories have been devised. They are sometimes in concurrence though they differ in relation to one or more aspects. The research was linked to the theories.

Sarode and Shirsath (2014) in Kukiqi (2017) highlight that the environment either mental, physical or social has a significant effect on job satisfaction for public employees. This is so because it affects their health, attitude, and confidence levels in carrying out their work. Polit (2004) in Azir (2011) and Kumar (2017) highlights that the psychological work environment based on stress and wellbeing, harassment, job demands, co-operation, and conflicts, nature of work, wages to be earned, growth opportunities affect the level of employee satisfaction and performance.

Andrea (2010) agrees with Jijong(2006) that the mood, wellbeing and alcohol consumption also contribute to job satisfaction for police officials. The research indicated that Job satisfaction is primarily associated with positive affect, life satisfaction, and self-esteem; job stress was primarily associated with negative affect and alcohol consumption; thoughts of quitting had moderate loadings on both factors. The findings could be similar to those of the MPS.

A promotion takes place when an employee makes a shift in the upward direction in organizational hierarchy and moves to a place of greater responsibility (Dessler, 2008). Promotion can make a significant increase in the salary of an employee as well as in the span of authority and control. Once promoted, the employees themselves feel to be an effective contributor and thus will be more satisfied with their job.

Findings of a study by Bennet (1997) indicate that in developing Caribbean nations traditional predictors such as promotion policy, and citizen support are interrelated in affecting satisfaction levels in police employees. On the other hand, not all traditional predictors, such as individual characteristics, influence job satisfaction. The findings suggest that nation-specific external and internal political factors affect the levels of job satisfaction.

Another research was conducted by Mabila (2014) on satisfaction of police officers in the royal Swaziland police found that police officers perform effectively and are satisfied when given necessary resources to carry out their work. However, police officers work for long hours and their efforts are not adequately rewarded, they are not treated fairly and there are insufficient structures to help police officers who experience burnout.

Research conducted by Cook and Chisoni (2015) on community policing indicates that citizens of Malawi view the police as lacking resources which lead to failure to reach far remote areas. However, there are mixed reactions that some police officers serve their interests, political interests and community interests. Smith (2015) in the community policing review highlighted that the challenges which the police face range from mobility, infrastructure, finances, and resources. The respondents in this research were local people not the police so this current research will give a check if the things pinpointed by the locals contribute to levels of job satisfaction of police officers.

Two surveys by smith (2015) and Cook (2015) report that the trust and confidence which the people have in the police in Malawi is low because the police are not loyal and responsive to the needs of their employers who are the citizens. The crime victimization survey indicates that 40 percent of crimes are not reported to the police because the victims believe the police are not responsive enough. The police like to sit idle and wait for the community to bring suspects to them due to poor skill and investigative capacity. It can be argued that these actions can be a manifestation of low levels of job satisfaction.

The differences in findings from one region to another may be due to the differences in work environment, pay, systems followed in rewarding or promoting personnel but also the relationships that exist between managers and employees.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN / METHODOLOGY

The research is a case study of Lilongwe Police, a Semi Urban police station in Malawi. The study population has people with varied demographic characteristics in terms of location, gender, age, educational qualification, and length of service. It includes serving police officers of the Malawi Police Service only because they are the ones whose satisfaction is being affected by the current conditions in the MPS.

3.1 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The total estimated sample for the study is 42 police officers based on the percentage method. This represents about 6 percent of the total population of Lilongwe police station according form data at the Police Headquarters database unit in 2018. Ten Key informants also informed the study and were officers who take direct responsibility on the police officers like Human Resource specialists, Lines and discipline in charge, formation leadership. The study targeted officers of both genders from both rural areas and formations of Lilongwe police station.

Simple random sampling was employed in selection of serving police officers (who are not key informants) to participate in the study. This ensured that every officer had an advantage of taking part in the study (Sarantakos: 1998). For the selection of key informants, the study used purposive random sampling technique.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The study used both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to enrich our data. The study adopted use of a structured questionnaire having both closed and open-ended questions for individual respondents. In depth interviews were conducted with the key informants. Some primary data was sourced from the Malawi Police Service Standing Orders (2010 version). Informed consent was applied at all times.

Data was analyzed quantitatively using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics in the form of tables, charts, and percentiles were used to determine the severity or frequency of the variables under study. The qualitative data was put in categories, coded, and sorted to identify patterns and frequencies to easily interpret the meaning of responses. Qualitative data analysis took the form of a narrative presentation.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 HOW REWARD AFFECT EMPLOYEE LEVELS OF JOB SATISIFACTION

The research found that employees are rewarded for good work in different ways ranging from promotions, monetary rewards, verbal appreciation, and medals. Sometimes there is not any external reward for the employee and a reward is not a right so cannot be demanded. Most managers and employees are not aware of the standard reward mechanisms in place, and this results in varied action on employees who do good work. Only 18.8 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the reward system whereas 81.2% were either not certain or dissatisfied. 9.4% were very dissatisfied. More employees are dissatisfied with the way rewards are handled confirming findings by Bennet (2007) that traditional predicators e.g reward policies influence job satisfaction.

4.2 THE EFFECT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MANAGERS AND   EMPLOYEES ON JOB SATISFACTION

The study found that the relationship between the employer and employees is sometimes a boss – subordinate but changes to more of a friendship. The police organization is a tall organization following bureaucratic lines where Senior officers have a duty to command their territories. Interactions have a protocol. In most cases no natural justice is exercised if there are allegations of employee misconduct.40.6 percent of respondents were not certain of their satisfaction with relationships, 25 percent were dissatisfied 33.3% were either satisfied or very satisfied. A reasonable population was satisfied despite Locke's Affect theory which indicates that employee satisfaction is increased in a job if his or her expectations are met. The findings could be because of the nature of the organization being military.

4.3 EFFECT OF THE WORK ENVIRONMENT ON THE LEVELS OF   EMPLOYEES JOB SATISFACTION

According to the research, the work environment for the police in Malawi is stressful either because of too much pressure of work or in availability of significant work. The environment was perceived by all as lacking the appropriate resources ranging from material, financial and human resources. Dissatisfaction exists when a posting is perceived as a punishment. 56.2% of the respondents were either dissatisfied or uncertain of their position on satisfaction whereas 43.8% were satisfied or very satisfied with the work environment claiming that the nature of police environment is not an easy environment. The findings also confirm the findings of Mabila (2014) that employees perform effectively and are satisfied when given necessary resources. The findings are also confirming the findings by Kafuli (2017) that the physical, social, and psychological environment all contribute positively to the levels of satisfaction if properly handled.

4.4 HOW PROMOTIONS AFFECT JOB SATISFACTION IN THE MPS

Th study found that more employees are not satisfied with the promotion procedures because no clear, consistent, and accountable procedure is followed. It is highlighted that it is difficult to understand what takes a person to be promoted. None of the respondents was very satisfied, 9.4% of the respondents were satisfied, 28% were not certain, 43.7% dissatisfied and 15.6% very dissatisfied. The findings agree with Bennet (2007) and Naveed (2017) that traditional predictors like reward and promotion policies influence job satisfaction.

4.5 SATISFACTION IN GENERAL

Despite being unsatisfied in some areas, more employees intend to report for duties despite the availability of something better elsewhere. Ten of the officers indicated that they would be absent if there was an opportunity to make money elsewhere representing 31.2% whereas 22 indicated that they will remain on duty representing 68.8%. From this it can be argued that more police officers will be ready to avail themselves for normal duties.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes the following for the Malawi Police.

- Lack of job descriptions and correct psychological contract for employees leads to reduced levels of satisfaction as the employees feel they are made to do the work or are treated in a manner in which they were supposed not to be treated.

- rewards policies and procedures in the MPS though archaic are not known to many leading to subjective and unequal treatment in rewarding of employees. The employees do not put effort in their work because they are not sure if the exceptional work will be recognized or not.

- The police culture of doing the job and complaining later is not healthy if the organization is to grow and prevents the young employees from contributing to decision making.

- The police officers have low satisfaction levels because of an environment which expose them to physical and psychological danger. They also lack psychological support from qualified counselors.

- Promotions contribute to life satisfaction especially because of the monetary attachment they have. Nepotism is hindering the integrity of the promotions process leading to lack of satisfaction in many officers. In this study lack of integrity in promotions is the key contributor to reduced levels of satisfaction in police employees.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the MPS must;

- The police must exercise integrity in promotions, communicate and consistently implement the promotion and reward policies in place. Oversight mechanisms must be allowed to monitor the process.

- develop job descriptions for all its employees, monitor their satisfaction levels and put extracurricular programs to help officers make additional money whilst working.

- review and improve, communicate, consistently implement policies in relation to rewards to all employees and enhance Interactive Knowledge sharing mechanisms.

- Ensure a somehow flatter organization in decision making and allow innovation of new ideas by all.

- The police must improve ICT, infrastructure and ensure availability of material resources. It must employ more qualified stress counsellors to support officers especially in stressful and traumatic situations.

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