

WORKER PARTICIPATION AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONGST ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The aim of the study was twofold. Firstly it investigated the relationship between worker participation and job satisfaction amongst academic staff and administrative staff at a South African university. Secondly it investigated if there is a statistically significant difference between worker participation levels of academic and non-academic staff. Most empirical work on worker participation has focused on workers in the industrial and manufacturing sectors of the economy, with limited focus on worker participation in the services sector. This study aims to address this gap through this exploratory study of the impact of worker participation on job satisfaction at a South African University.

Key Words: Worker Participation, Job Satisfaction, University

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Introduction

This study investigates the relationship between worker participation and job satisfaction in a South African university. The literature and empirical work reveals that the over whelming emphasis on worker participation is in the manufacturing and industrial sectors. This is evident by the work done by Buhlungu (1994), Twala (1990), Hemson (1996), Webster and von Holdt; (2005) and Masondo (2010). This study shifts the focus from those sectors to examine worker participation in the services sector, and education sector more specifically. The study is also empirically novel in that most of the literature of job satisfaction has not examined the link between job satisfaction worker participation.

There is a limited body of work that examines worker participation in the services sector. Therefore one of the aims of the study is to extend the empirical focus of worker participation into the service sector. Worker participation refers to the involvement of workers in the decision-making processes of an organisation. This involvement may take place at a departmental level where individual employees give input on particular work related issues that may directly or indirectly affect them and their jobs. It may also take place at an organisational level where employees through their representatives give their input in organisational wide issues that may affect the running of an organisation at large which may also directly or indirectly affect individual employees, group of employees or all employees. On the other hand, job satisfaction refers to the extent to which individuals like their jobs. People have a set of

expectations and needs which they expect to be fulfilled by their jobs. If they do not find this fulfilment in their jobs they are likely to find their jobs less satisfying.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be described as an affective or emotional reaction to the job resulting from the incumbent's comparison of actual outcomes with the required, anticipated and deserved outcomes (Cranny *et al.*, 1992; Locke, 1976 in Hirschfeld, 2000; Oshabeni, 1999 in Stander and Rothmann, 2009). Schneider and Snyder (1975) in Hirschfeld (2000) on the other hand, define job satisfaction as a personal evaluation of conditions present in the job, or outcomes that arise as a result of having a job. Weiss *et al.*, (1967) in Schreuder and Coetzee (2006) and Wright and Kim (2004) explain this comparison further by stating that employees seek to achieve and maintain correspondence with their environment. Correspondence with the environment can be described in terms of the individual fulfilling the requirements of the environment, and the environment fulfilling the requirements of the individual. This means that employees will experience job satisfaction if they feel that their individual capacities, experience and values can be utilised in their work environment and that the work environment offers them opportunities and rewards (Dawis, 1992; Roberts and Roseanne, 1998 in Wright and Kim, 2004). There are various factors that may lead to job satisfaction which may be categorised into intrinsic and extrinsic (Weiss *et al.*, 1967 in

Schreuder and Coetzee, 2003; Spector, 1997 in Hirschfeld, 2000; Herzberg *et al.*, 1959 in Robbins *et al.*, 2003). On the one hand, intrinsic factors are those factors that make an individual feel happy and motivated internally because of the fulfilment he/she gets from the job and the environment. Such factors are intangible and may include the meaningfulness of the job, recognition, and growth opportunities (Roos and Van Eeden, 2008). On the other hand, extrinsic factors are external factors of the job and an environment that makes an individual feels happy at work. These factors are tangible and may include pay, company policies, and physical work conditions (Roos and Van Eeden, 2008). If worker participation is one of the job satisfaction factors it may be categorised as an intrinsic factor because of its nature.

Very often higher learning organisations like any other organisation, either private or public, are faced with high labour turn-over. Yet the main function of a Human Resources Department is to attract, develop and retain skilled employees. Templer and Cawsey (1999) maintain that attracting and retaining high profile employees is a critical feature of globally competitive organisations (Paul, 2002). For this reason, an organisation's ability to retain knowledgeable workers is a critical component in determining its present and future success. The loss of knowledgeable workers means the loss of both tangible and intangible knowledge and possibly the loss of competitive advantage (Kinnear and Sutherland, 2000 in Sutherland and Jordaan, 2004:56). Hence Sutherland and Jordaan (2004:56) see retention of key workers as the biggest challenge in human asset management today.

Considering the scenario of job satisfaction factors, previous studies have not reported worker participation as one of the job satisfaction factors in the higher learning environment. This study will therefore assist higher learning organisations to gauge worker participation as one of the factors that may lead to job satisfaction, and then seek ways of encouraging or increasing worker participation within their organisations in order to ensure that employees' level of satisfaction is increased.

Job Satisfaction in the tertiary education sector

Work done by Schulze (2005) on job satisfaction of black female academics revealed that factors leading to job satisfaction are teaching autonomy and flexible working hours. Furtehr work by Schulze in 2006 revealed that there was a strong relationship between job satisfaction and physical conditions and support. This study was limited to the Department of Humanities in two different institutions of higher learning. The findings of a case study done by Mammen (2006) on satisfaction of academic staff with terms and conditions of service and their job satisfaction in the Faculty of Science in one of the

historically disadvantaged higher learning institution revealed low job satisfaction. This can be associated with uncertainty about the continuity of the institution, inefficiency or dissatisfaction with poor management of the institution itself, problems with financial administration, poor research support, lack of promotion opportunities and high workload. Liebenberg and Barnes (2004) studied the factors influencing a customer service culture in higher education environment and discovered that there was a negative relationship between the corporate culture and job satisfaction.

Worker Participation

Drehmer *et al.* (2000:4) state that historically, within the general management literature, there are three apparent distinct conceptualisations of participation. These are most commonly referred to as participative management, employee involvement, and employee empowerment. Participative management is concerned with shared decision-making in the work environment (Mitchell, 1973 in Drehmer *et al.*, 2000:398). Employee involvement consists of four critical factors which were identified as information sharing (degree of downward and upward flow of information), training (expertise and knowledge of specific operations and the organisation in general), decision-making (types of decisions and the areas in which are made) and rewards (types of rewards and compensation used within the organisation). Stander and Rothmann (2009) refer to empowerment as some aspects of power and control over decision-making, work processes, performance goals and measures, and over people. They are of the opinion that participative decision-making and information sharing are some of the leadership behaviours of empowering people. They go further to say that empowerment perceptions are associated with increased job satisfaction and work productivity and with decreased propensity to leave organisations. Robbins *et al.*, (2009) state the more common definition of empowerment is the concept of providing more information, skills and ability to make decisions and how to perform one's work. On the other hand, employee involvement and participation in decision-making is directly linked to job satisfaction (Savery and Luks, 2001; Scott-Ladd *et al.*, 2005 in Stander and Rothmann, 2009).

Early views typically described participation as parties influencing each other in making certain plans, policies, and decisions and or as joint planning (French *et al.*, 1960 in Drehmer *et al.*, 2000). Locke and Schweiger (1917) and Wagner (1994) in Wright and Kim (2004) also defined participation as a process in which influence is shared among individuals who are otherwise hierarchically unequal. Such process strives to strike a balance in involvement of management and their subordinates in decision-making, problem solving and information

sharing. Cotton *et al.* (1988:9) argue that participation decision-making can be evaluated in terms of various outcomes, including workplace democratisation, reduction of industrial conflict and employee involvement in decisions.

More recent descriptions of participation include the meaning of work, competence to perform activities, self-determination in work behaviours, and the impact or influence of participation on outcomes of work (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995 and 1996 in Drehmer *et al.*, 2000). Cohen-Rosenthal and Carines (1991) and Gunter and Furnham (1996) in Roos and Van Eeden (2008) see worker participation as employees having some influence over their jobs and assisting in problem-solving. Markey *et al.* (2001:4) define employee involvement/ participation as any workplace process that allows employees to exert some influence over their work and the conditions under which they work. Bendix (1996, 2006 and 2010) states that worker participation entails the involvement of the employee in the organisation and planning of the work process, in the establishment of procedures and future processes, in the decision-making function at various levels and in the management and policy-making bodies of the undertaking.

Valoyi *et al.* (2000:32) are of the opinion that employees' desire to participate in decision-making that involves the work itself, working conditions, human resources, and corporate policy and planning. They further explain that in most instances decisions relating to the work itself should include decisions on work methods, technical matters, equipment, performance and production standards. The results of studies done by Witte (1980) and Larkin, and Larkin (1994) in Valoyi *et al.* (2000) revealed that workers desire more participation in decisions that directly affected their jobs, for example, determining an acceptable level of daily production and the necessity to install new equipment.

Stohl and Cheney (2001:6) view worker participation as comprising of organisational structures and processes designed to empower and enable employees to identify with organisational goals and to collaborate as control agents in activities that exceed minimum coordination efforts normally expected at work. These activities may include decision-making and broad inclusion at the shop-floor level, involvement in decisions and actions traditionally under the purview of management such as hiring and firing, representative voice in conversations and strategic decisions at the corporate or industry-wide level. Stohl and Cheney (2001:6) go further to say that, generally, a culture of participation exists wherein at least some efforts are made at democratising the processes of work, although motives for and degrees of this are highly variable across organisations.

Through worker participation individuals are able to register concerns, suggestions, and ideas that

transcend the narrow scope of a job description thereby enabling them to engage in a greater variety of activities and grant them more access to knowledge about the organisation. This, in a sense promotes trust, supportiveness, and openness, as well as commitment to high-performance goals. On the other hand, it changes attitudes, values, and beliefs and sometimes broadens workers' rights as well as responsibilities (Stohl and Cheney, 2001; Hodson, 2002). According to Churchill *et al.* (1976) in Roos and Van Eeden (2008:58) worker participation enhances job satisfaction, especially in setting standards.

Drehmer *et al.* (2000:12) suggest that participation do not relate to productivity, but that it does increase individual satisfaction. Although participation is often intended to enhance productivity by empowering workers to make decisions, the system's very design prevents workers having a say in how they might become more involved in their jobs as well as in the organisation at a large (Stohl and Cheney, 2001). Stohl and Cheney (2001) further state that workplace participation is rooted in the idea that individual workers can make a difference, that their unique work experiences and knowledge are fundamental to improving organisational processes.

Wright and Kim (2004:22) contend that participation has an indirect effect on job satisfaction through task significance, feedback and career development. They are of the view that participation grants employees influence in and access to activities often reserved for management, such as information processing, decision-making or problem solving. In this way, it not only gives employees more responsibilities for organisational performance but also inherently signals that the organisation recognizes that employees can make important contributions to the organisation. Employees may see their work as more important or significant and more intrinsically rewarding and meaningful. Lawler (1986) in Wright and Kim (2004) states that participation improves the employee's understanding of organisational processes and assists in developing problem solving and technical skills and also enhance flow and use of information. Kemp (1992:9) maintains that the democratic style of management has been described by Beach as one in which policies are developed through group discussion, where a leader listens to the suggestions of the followers and when he/she makes suggestions provides alternatives. Kemp (1992:10) further maintains that the aim of democratic management is to draw individual employees into problem-solving and decision-making processes, to involve and to integrate them. A democratic leader provides his/her followers with sufficient information and encourages them to make their own decisions.

Cotton *et al.* (1988:9) state that participation in decision-making is characterized in terms of three properties; formal-informal, direct-indirect and as a

location along a continuum of how much access or influence organisational members have in making a decision. They go further to explain these properties by stating that formal participation has a system or rules imposed on or granted to the organisation like formal established equity circles. Informal participation in contrast is a non-statutory consensus emerging among interacting members like casual supervisor-subordinate exchange. Direct participation involves immediate personal involvement of organisational members while indirect participation involves some form of employee representation. On the other hand they state that access refers to the amount of influence an organisational member can exert when making a given decision.

De Villiers and Kooy (2004:5) point out that within an organisation participation options range from participation at organisational workstation level (involving direct supervisory employee relationships around daily tasks – direct participation) to high-level participation (involving elected worker representatives – indirect participation). In the first instance, relations are more task-centred while in the latter instance relations are more power-centred. Maller (1992) describes task centred participation as the transfer of limited authority down the line, but essentially the power structure within the company remaining intact with the management determining all major decisions which does not involve control over the labour process, narrowly defined in terms of the immediate work environment. Examples of task centred participation include briefing groups, quality circles and autonomous groups. Power centred participation is described by the same author as involving worker influence over the text in which labour process operated which includes participation in policy making. Examples of power centred participation include worker directors, collective bargaining and self management structures. Maller (1992:10) breaks this further by stating that task centred and power centred participation may occur through pseudo, partial and full participation. Pseudo refers to a technique of persuading employees to accept a decision that have already been taken. Partial refers to a situation in which workers can only partly influence decisions because they are in the unequal position of permanent subordinates but the final prerogative of decision making rest with the management. Full participation refers to the decisions that relate to the running of department or even the enterprise as a whole (Maller, 1992).

Research Design

Research Approach

This study aims to investigate if there exists a relationship between worker participation and job satisfaction amongst a sample of academic and non-academic staff at a South African university

It was hypothesised that there is a relationship between worker participation and job satisfaction, and that the worker participation level of academics is higher than the participation level of administrative staff.

This study is quantitative in nature and is informed by a positivist philosophy of research methodology. Quantitative data was collected by means of a survey design. Survey designed methods according to Bryman and Bell (2007:56), comprises of a cross-sectional design in relation to which data is collected predominantly by a questionnaire or by structured interviewing on more than one case and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative or qualitative data in connection with two or more variables which are then examined to detect patterns of association. Millward *et al.* (2000) in Bryman and Bell (2007) go further to state that the purpose of a survey is to provide an extensive and authoritative body of factual information.

Research Method

Participants

One hundred (100) participants were selected using stratified random sampling, one of the strategies of probability sampling. The targeted population had 492 subjects made up of 169 (34%) academic and 323 (66%) non-academic staff, fixed term contracts and permanent employees. It was hoped that the sample selected would give in-depth information that would enable the researchers to draw conclusions about the research questions.

The majority of participants which is 40 (40.2%) have served the institution for a period of between one to five (1-5) years. In terms of the representation of the sample, 58 (58.6%) participants were academic staff, while 41 (41.4%) non-academic staff. Of the sample surveyed, 69 (71%) respondents were permanent employees and 28 (29%) respondents were fixed term contract employees. Men constituted 54% of the sample, while women constituted 46% of the sample. In terms of the educational level of participants, most participants (33%) had 4 year Bachelors degree/Honours. With respect to age distribution, the majority of participants (37.4%) were of the age of between thirty to forty (30-40) years (see table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample

Item	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	54	54
	Female	6	46
Age group	Below 20 yrs	5	5.1
	Between 20 - 30 yrs	27	27.3
	Between 30 - 40 yrs	37	37.4
	Between 40 -50 yrs	20	20.2
	Above 50 yrs	10	10.1
Educational Level	Grade 12/High School	9	9
	3 yr Diploma/B Degree	32	32
	4 yr B degree/Honours	33	33
	Postgraduate MA/PhD	26	26
Occupational category	Academic	58	58.6
	Non-academic	41	41.4
Tenure	Less than a year	15	15.2
	1-5 years	40	40.4
	5 - 10 years	23	23.2
	10 - 15 years	10	10.1
	15 and above	11	11.1
Employment status	Permanent	69	71
	Contract	28	29

Measuring Instruments

Primary data was collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaire used had three parts. The first part gathered demographical information about respondents like length of service, gender, level of education and occupation.

The second part measured the degree to which employees felt involved in the decisions related to either their work or work unit. This part had four items adapted from previous studies which have reported Cronbach Alpha of 0.89 (Hrebiniak, 1974), Cronbach Alpha of 0.87 (Mohr, 1971) and Cronbach Alpha of 0.98 (Wright and Kim, 2004). Participants were required to respond on a 5 point Likert scale 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always.

The third part of the questionnaire used a Minnesota Job Satisfaction (MSQ) questionnaire developed by (Weiss *et al.*, 1967 in Martin and Roodt, 2007). The questionnaire (MSQ) was designed to measure an employee's satisfaction with his/her job. It had 20 items drawn from a long form which has 100 items. Martin and Roodt (2007:26) state that the purpose of the short MSQ is to determine the degree of job satisfaction in characteristics associated with the task (intrinsic satisfaction) and in non-task characteristics (extrinsic satisfaction) as well as overall satisfaction (total satisfaction).

The questionnaire has been used in several job satisfaction studies by Jewell, *et al.* (1990) in Wright and Kim (2004) who reported a high level of stability in testing and retesting with Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.89. Sempene *et al.* (2002) also reported Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.92, Chen *et al.* (2005) in Kahumuza and Schlechter (2008) reported Cronbach Alpha of 0.98, Visser and Coetsee (2005) obtained Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.88 and Maharaj and Schletcher in Kahumuza and Schlechter (2008) obtained Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of 0.79.

Participants were required to respond on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = not satisfied or dissatisfied, 4 = satisfied, 5 = very satisfied.

Research Procedure

The questionnaire was administered by the researchers themselves, distributed and collected by researchers direct to and from participants.

Statistical Analysis and Results

Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyse data. Four tests were conducted to investigate answers to the research question, namely; Mean, Chi-square, T-Test and Pearson Correlation, the results of which are reported below:

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation

Scale	Mean	Sd	1	2
Participation	3.43	.488	.000	-
Satisfaction	3.02	1.03	-	.000

Table 2 indicates p-value = 0.00, which is a strong positive linear relationship between worker participation and job satisfaction significant at 0.05, showing a linear relationship between worker participation and job satisfaction. This means that

when the degree of worker participation increases the degree of job satisfaction also increases. The more employees participate in decision-making processes that affect their work life, the more satisfied they are with their jobs.

Table 3. Chi-Square Test

No	Values	p-values
1	I feel involved in important decisions in my work. * What is your occupation?	.000
2	I feel involved in important decisions in my work. * Employment status	.003
3	How long have you worked for this institution? * Location of your work	.000
4	How long have you worked for this institution? * Medical aid, housing subsidy, leave etc	.002
5	What is your occupation? * Location of your work	.000
6	What is your occupation? * Opportunity to learn new skills	.001
7	What is your occupation? * Variety of job responsibilities	.000
8	What is your occupation? * Adequate opportunities for periodic changes in duties.	.004
9	What is your occupation? * The feeling of accomplishment you get from the job.	.002
10	What is your occupation? * A chance to make decisions on your own.	.000
11	Employment status * Location of your work	.000
12	Employment status * Medical aid, housing subsidy, leave etc	.000
13	Employment status * Recognition for work accomplishment	.002
14	Employment status * Variety of job responsibilities	.004
15	Asked for opinion and thoughts when determining my work objectives * Hours worked every week.	.000
16	Asked for opinion and thoughts when determining my work objectives * Flexibility in scheduling your work	.000
17	Asked for opinion and thoughts when determining my work objectives * The way company policies are communicated to employees and put into practice.	.002
18	I feel involved in important decisions in my work. * Flexibility in scheduling your work	.003
19	I feel involved in important decisions in my work. * Opportunity to utilise skills and talent	.000
20	I feel involved in important decisions in my work. * Opportunity to learn new skills	.001
21	I feel involved in important decisions in my work. * Variety of job responsibilities	.000
22	I feel involved in important decisions in my work. * A chance to make decisions on your own.	.000
23	I feel free to suggest changes in my job. * Opportunity to learn new skills	.003

The Chi-Square test revealed an insignificant negative relationship between some of the values, but the values shown in Table 3 resulted in a significant positive relationship. The p-values shown in this table shows a significant positive relationship among the values in comparison. For instance, in row number one the p-value = .000, this depicts a significant positive relationship between the involvement of employees in important decisions of their work and the kind of work they do. A certain occupational category of employees felt more involved in decision-making than the other. For instance, academic employees might have felt more involved in important decisions of their jobs than the non-academic employees, or the non-academic

employees might have felt more involved in important decisions of their jobs than the academic employees. In essence, involvement in important decisions of one's job could be associated with the kind of occupation or the kind of work one does.

In summary, a significant positive relationship was revealed between the location of one's work, the length of service, the occupation and the employment status. This is shown in row numbers 3, 5 and 11 with a p-value of .000. If employees are happy with the location of their jobs they tend to stay longer in their jobs as compared to unhappy ones. If employees are happy with the location of their jobs, they tend to be happy with their occupation and their employment status or visa-versa.

A significant positive relationship was found between the occupation, feeling of being involved in important decisions of the work, opportunity to learn new skills, variety of job responsibilities, adequate opportunities for periodic changes in duties, the feeling of accomplishment one gets from the job, and a chance to make own decisions . This is shown in row numbers 1 and 5-10 with p-values of .000, .002 and .004.

A significant positive relationship was found between employment status, location of the work, benefits, recognition of work accomplished, variety of job responsibilities and a feeling of being involved in important decisions of the work. This is shown in row numbers 2 and 11-14 with p-values of .003 and .000, .002, .003 and .004.

A significant positive relationship was found between asked for opinion and thought when

determining work objectives, hours worked per week, flexibility in scheduling work and the way company policies are communicated and put into practice. This is shown in row numbers 15-17 with p-values of .000 and .002.

A significant positive relationship was found between a feeling of being involved in important decisions of the work, the occupation, employment status, flexibility in scheduling work, opportunity to utilise skills and talent, opportunity to learn new skills, variety of job responsibilities, and a chance to make own decisions. This is shown in row numbers 1-2 and 16-21 with p-values of .000, .002 and .003.

A significant positive relationship was found between feeling free to suggest changes in the work and opportunity to learn new skills. This is shown in row number 23 with a p-value of .003.

Table 4. T Test

Item	Academics/Non-academic	
	Academics	Non-academic
Participation	.614	.615
Satisfaction	.347	.377

A T-test was done to establish whether there was difference between worker participation and job satisfaction of the two occupation categories, that is, academic and non-academic staff. Table 4 reveals that there was no difference between the worker participation of academic staff or non-academic staff. This is reflected by the p-values of .614 and .615. On average participants felt that they are sometimes involved in decision making processes, of which both occupational categories felt more or less the same way. Furthermore, no difference was found between the job satisfaction of academic staff or non-academic staff. This is reflected by the p-values of .347 and .377. On average participants felt that they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their jobs, and this table shows no difference in the way the two categories of staff felt their job satisfaction level.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant authorities of the institution under study.

No potential risk was envisaged by participation in the study, however, as a benefit to participants it was anticipated that the study may assist higher learning institutions to promote worker participation in their institutions so that employees may find greater satisfaction and meaningfulness in their jobs.

Recruitment procedures

Participants were requested to voluntarily participate in the study, and were also made aware of their right to withdraw at any stage of the study if they wish so.

Informed Consent

Participants were informed of their right to voluntary participation and the benefits they may enjoy from the outcome of the study. They were ensured that confidentiality would be maintained and their participation would remain anonymous since they were not required to disclose their personal particulars. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study should they decide to do so. The study did not in any way cause harm to participants, invade their privacy or involve deception.

Data protection

All information received was treated with strict confidentiality between participants and the researchers.

Reliability

The reliability test was performed on the measuring instrument resulted in Alpha of 0.80 for worker participation questionnaire and 0.88 for job satisfaction questionnaire which is acceptable score.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that there is a relationship between worker participation and job satisfaction. The Pearson correlation test found a linear relationship between the two variables, indicating that the more employees participate in decision-making processes, the more they feel

satisfied with their jobs. This correspondence was also supported by the literature as various authors are of the view that employee involvement and participation in decision-making is directly linked to job satisfaction (Savery and Luks, 2001; Scott-Ladd *et al.*, 2005 in Stander and Rothmann, 2009).

Worker participation as an independent variable in this study should be practiced in order to achieve job satisfaction which is a dependant variable of the study. The level of job satisfaction of employees may increase if their involvement in decision-making processes also increases as their level of job satisfaction greatly depends on their level of participation. Spector (1986) noted in his review of worker participation that if the degree of worker participation in organisations is higher, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and job motivation is also higher. Hsiao (2004) in Bhatti and Qureshi (2007) went further to classify worker participation according to degree. He found that employees who have high levels of worker participation may get higher job satisfaction than employees with low levels of worker participation. Hsiao therefore concluded that worker participation may lead to increased job satisfaction.

The more recent descriptions of worker participation includes the meaning of work, competence to perform activities, self determination in work behaviours and the impact of participation to influence the outcomes of work (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1995 and 1996 in Drehmer *et al.*, 2000). Such a statement is evident by the participants' responses where they indicated that participation allows opportunity to use their skills and expand their knowledge of the work processes thereby enabling them to feel self-fulfilled. The term self-fulfilment indicates that such a person is proud of his/her achievement and therefore satisfied.

Besides the linear relationship established by Pearson correlation between worker participation and job satisfaction, the Chi-Square test also established a relationship between certain values. According to the Chi-Square results, certain values in the study have a relationship that may lead to employee job satisfaction. The hypothesis formulated in this instance is therefore accepted.

Although Chi-Square results revealed a linear relationship between worker participation and occupation, the T-Test results show that such a relationship is not significant. The T-Test result revealed no difference between the way academic staff and the non-academic staff feel about their involvement in decision making. Both academic and non-academic staff reported similar levels of job satisfaction. This means that there is no significant difference in the relationship between the job satisfaction of academic staff and the job satisfaction of non-academic staff.

Participants indicated that as much as they are interested in institution wide issues they are more

interested and it is more beneficial to them to participate at departmental level where there are issues that affect their day to day activities. Participants stated that at this level they are able to showcase their skills and expertise in terms of sharing ideas that are specific and relevant to their area of functioning. This supports the literature as Nel (1997:28; 2002:218) and Nel and van Rooyen (1993:38) state that direct worker participation should include the provision of all information relevant to the job, consultation on changes that may affect a worker, and personal involvement in the decision-making process by the worker himself/herself. These authors also suggested that workers should be consulted individually or as work teams for any changes that may directly affect their jobs. Since this kind of participation is task-centred, it mostly takes place at departmental level and shop-floor level where workers are afforded a chance to air their views about how best the job can be done. Employees are closer to their work processes and daily routines than they are to the entire institution. The results supported that giving input at task level boosts employees' level of satisfaction. The hypothesis formulated around this area is therefore accepted.

The results of the mean score for worker participation revealed that most participants felt that they sometimes participate in the decision-making process. This shows that there is still room for improvement. If the institution under study is serious about achieving the best results from their employees it should improve the level of employees' involvement in decision-making in order to improve their job satisfaction level. This may include improving lines of communication and having more departmental or shop-floor meetings where employees are given a platform to share their views as this may improve employees' satisfaction level.

The mean scores for job satisfaction revealed that most employees are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their jobs. This was supported by the findings of the Pearson correlation as both the mean score for worker participation and job satisfaction revealed a linear relationship between the two variables. The level of employees' participation in decision-making processes should be improved in order to improve their job satisfaction level so that at least employees have a positive attitude towards their jobs. Bhatti and Qureshi (2007) are of the view that high performing effective organisations have a culture that encourages employee involvement. Hellriegel *et al.* (1998) support this view by stating that employees are therefore more willing to get involved in decision-making, goal setting or problem solving activities which subsequently result in higher employee performance.

Recommendations

Worker participation is necessary in organisations for improving employees' satisfaction. Since the findings of this study established a linear relationship between the two variables under study, it is clear that the level of job satisfaction will strongly depend on the level at which employees are involved in decision-making processes. Organisations should improve or encourage worker participation in order to have satisfied employees. Robbins (2006) is of the view that job satisfaction plays a critical role in improving performance in organisations. Hence, Bhatti and Qureshi (2007) state that one of the leading challenges to management has been in implementing human development strategies to enhance organisational performance and accountability. The organisations have realised that their employees are the greatest asset for achieving organisational performance and for remaining competitive. As Bhatti and Qureshi (2007) state, today's knowledge economy demands investment in the human capital of the organisation and creating a work environment where employees excel at their jobs.

Organisations should create a strong solid foundation where most employees would proudly state that they are satisfied with their jobs in order to be able to predict their long term service to the organisation. In the case of the organisation under study, it is not easy to predict employees' commitment to both their jobs and to the organisation because of the results of the mean scores. Bhatti and Qureshi (2007) suggest human resource policies that encourage worker involvement and aim at providing employees with opportunities to have input in decisions, incentives to expend discretionary effort and the means to acquire the appropriate skills. A need for such policies is vital to create an institution wide standard and uniform way of involving employees in decision-making processes which should be enforced across all departments and compliance should be monitored.

As organisations put emphasis on acquiring and retaining competitive advantage such policies becomes crucial for ensuring that employees acquire life-long skills and are able to contribute meaningfully to the attainment of organisational goals through the prescribed channels. An organisation should not run the risk of losing its knowledgeable employees to competitors that will offer them more job satisfaction than it does. Bhatti and Qureshi (2007) maintain that it is important to know who the knowledgeable and productive workers are and they further describe productivity as the performance measure that encompasses both efficiency and effectiveness.

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