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## Staff Perceptions on Motivational Practices and their Implications for Staff Job Satisfaction: the Case of Zimbabwe Open University, Matabeleland North Regional Centre

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### **Abstract:**

*The current study sought to explore staff perceptions on motivational practices and their direct and indirect implications for staff job satisfaction. The case of Matabeleland North Regional Centre of the Zimbabwe Open University was used. A population of 30 staff members was used from which a sample of 20 (N=20) elements was selected. Convenient sampling technique and questionnaires were used in collecting data. The major findings of the study were that most staff members were satisfied by the nature of their work, work responsibilities, rate of pay for their posts, pension contributions, interaction with co-workers, management style as well as staff development opportunities at the regional centre. The study concluded that staff members were generally satisfied by their working conditions and the overall institutional support they were receiving from Zimbabwe Open University. The study recommended that the regional centre should continue promoting and up-scaling its different hallmarks for motivating staff which include nature of work, rate of pay, rate of allowances, work responsibilities, leave conditions, work environment, pension contributions, promotional prospects, conducive interaction of co-workers and management, staff development, general institutional support and collaboration with key stakeholders.*

**Keywords:** Motivation, job satisfaction, staff, perception, organization, management

### **1. Background to the Study**

Motivation is a force that drives, directs and sustains an individual's effort towards the attainment of an objective or a set of objectives. One major management dilemma in most organisations is how they can motivate their employees so that they experience personal morale and job satisfaction which will help them contribute meaningfully and maximally to the attainment of organizational goals. Fundamentally, an understanding of the needs of both the organisation and employees can enable institutions to put in place measures meant to enhance high organisational productivity and effectiveness, while on the other hand ensuring individual staff morale and job satisfaction. The current study sought to explore the impact of motivational practices on staff morale and job satisfaction at Matabeleland North Regional Centre of the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU). ZOU was created by a Zimbabwean Act of Parliament (Chapter 25:20) and started as a Center for Distance Education in 1993 which was transformed into a College of Distance Education, later becoming a fully - fledged university with its own Charter and Vice Chancellor in 1999 (Benza, 2001). ZOU is a multi-disciplinary inter-faculty institution offering degree and non-degree courses through distance teaching and open learning to youth and adult learners and evolved after the Zimbabwean government had realized that there was need to develop distance education and open learning to cater for a substantial component of the people of Zimbabwe, who, intentionally or unintentionally, could not be accommodated in conventional universities (Benza, 2001). Thus, ZOU came on board to essentially offer qualifying individuals the opportunity to study in the comfort of their homes and workplaces through ODL. ZOU operates through a National Centre based in Harare, 10 Regional Centres dotted across the country's 10 provinces and a Virtual region which caters for clients in different parts of the world particularly the Southern African region. ZOU provides knowledge, skills, competencies and dispositions necessary for the development of competitive human resources using well developed distance teaching and open learning methods (Kurasha, 2010). It is against this backdrop that the current study sought to explore staff perceptions on motivational practices and their implications on job satisfaction at Matabeleland North Regional Centre of the Zimbabwe Open University.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

Many institutions take cognisance of the fact that motivation plays a key role in promoting employee morale and job satisfaction for organisational effectiveness. The problem at stake is how staff views their job satisfaction as necessitated by motivational practices at Zimbabwe Open University.

### 1.2. Purpose of the Study

The fundamental purpose of this study was to determine staff perceptions on the nature and levels of motivational practices at Matabeleland North Regional centre of the Zimbabwe Open University. In addition, it was meant to explore the implications of these practices on staff job satisfaction at the regional centre with the view of improving organisational effectiveness.

### 1.3. Research Questions

The current study was essentially guided by the following research questions:

- What are the means of motivating staff at ZOU Matabeleland North Regional centre?
- How does staff view the different forms of motivational practices implemented by their employer at ZOU Matabeleland North Regional centre?
- What are the implications of motivational practices on staff job satisfaction at ZOU Matabeleland North Regional centre?

### 1.4. Significance of the Study

Findings of this study are expected to come up with recommendations for increased staff morale and job satisfaction for ZOU employees at Matabeleland North Regional centre. The same trend may also be shared with other regional centres of ZOU, which will possibly increase general staff contentment and performance. The study would assist ZOU to appreciate the dynamics of staff motivational practices aimed at boosting staff morale and job satisfaction in an ever-changing corporate environment. Thus, such a development will subsequently lead to improved organisational effectiveness and quality in line with the ZOU vision 'to become a world class open and distance learning university'.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1. The Concepts 'Motivation' and 'Job Satisfaction'

Gibson et al, (2000) view motivation as a concept used when one describes the forces that act on or within an individual to initiate and direct behaviour. Snell (1999) says motivation is everything that pushes an individual to do something and in far-fetched instance, to excel in performance. In the same vein, Bateman and Snell (1999) say that motivation relates to forces that energize, direct and sustain a person's efforts. It is a process that starts with a physiological or psychological need that activates a behavior or a drive that is aimed at a goal. With motivation, however, other staff members perform way above the level expected of their abilities.

Staff or employee motivation is a process by which an employee's internal energies are directed toward various goals and objectives within an organization (Uwen, 2000). Donald (2002) views employee motivation as the art of invigorating an individual to action by creating a safe environment in which their enthusiasm can be unleashed and through providing a reason or incentive for people to produce. Notably, employee motivation causes one to discard own goals for the goals of the organization. Work motivation is, therefore, a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work related behaviour, and to determine its form, direction, intensity and duration (Pinder, 2008). With adequate staff morale and job satisfaction, the employee is expected to be highly productive, as a highly motivated employee will work towards achieving high performance in order to promote organisational effectiveness. This paper notes that there are two major types of motivation, namely, intrinsic and extrinsic. Gasva et al (2012) note that 'intrinsic' motivation is driven by an interest or enjoyment in the task itself, and exists within the individual while extrinsic motivation' comes from outside of the individual and relies on external factors.

Gibson et al (2000) posits that job satisfaction refers to an individual's expression of personal well being associated with doing the job assigned and depends on the level of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as its outcomes. Job satisfaction has also been defined as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job; an affective reaction to one's job; and an attitude towards one's job (Weiss, 2002). Mount and Johnson (2006) note that without personal morale and job satisfaction, even the most qualified, experienced and talented employee will not perform and deliver to their fullest potential. As noted by Green (2001), staff morale and job satisfaction are related to rewards, such as pay or salary, allowances, acknowledgement of good performance letters, praise and other forms of compensation for the job done. Job satisfaction describes how content an employee is with his or her job. The happier (high morale) employees are within their job, the more satisfied they are said to be (Bateman and Snell, 2009).

### 2.2. Abraham Maslow's theory of Motivation

Maslow (1990) asserts that human needs exist in the form of a hierarchy, ascending from the lowest to the highest, and for him, when one set of needs is satisfied; such kind of need ceases to be a motivator. This theory assumes that an individual attempts to satisfy the more basic needs before directing energy and behaviour towards satisfying higher-order or higher level needs.

According to Maslow's theory cited in Gasva et al (2012), humans have five fundamental motivating needs, namely:

- Physiological needs: basic needs for sustaining the human life, such as food, water, warmth, shelter, sleep, medicine and education

- Security or safety needs: needs to be free of physical danger and of the fear of losing security, such as a job, property, shelter, protection against emotional harm.
- Social needs: need to belong and be accepted by others. People try to satisfy their need for affection, acceptance and friendship
- Esteem needs: need to be held in esteem both by themselves and by others. This kind of need produces such satisfaction as power, prestige, status and self-confidence. It includes both internal esteem factors like self-respect, autonomy and achievement and external factors such as status, recognition and attention
- Need for self-actualization: regarded as the highest need in his hierarchy, it is the drive to become what one is capable of becoming and includes growth, achieving one's potential and self-fulfillment.

Although no human need is ever fully satisfied, a substantially satisfied need no longer motivates. If organisations want to motivate employees, they need to understand what level of the hierarchy that individual is on and focus on satisfying those needs or needs above that level.

### 3. Methodology

A research design is the structure of the investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions (Kerlinger, 2000). This study utilised the case study design where Matabeleland North Regional centre of the Zimbabwe Open University was used as the case. A case study was considered appropriate because of its perspicuity in eliciting participants' perceptions (Frankel and Wallen, 2006). A population of 30 staff members, which comprised the sampling frame was used. A sampling frame is a complete list of all the cases or elements (sampling units) in the population from which the sample is drawn (Nachmias and Nachmias, 2006; Saunders et al, 2007). From the population, a sample of 20 (N=20) elements was selected and utilised. Convenient sampling as a technique was used to come up with the sample, and was done through identifying the required number of elements.

Data from the selected elements (ZOU employees) will be solicited using questionnaires as the research instrument. As noted by Kidder (2001), the advantages of using questionnaires include that they are less expensive especially where they are handed directly to respondents, can be used to acquire data from many people within a short period of time, avoids potential bias of an interviewer, reduces pressure on respondents, and boosts confidence in their anonymity. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were used which allowed respondents to provide both direct and elaborate answers.

### 4. Results

The study used Wess (2002)'s model of assessing means and level of staff motivation in an organisation.

Attribute	Satisfied	Unsure	Not satisfied	Total
Nature of Work	19	0	1	20
Rate of Pay (Salary)	18	0	2	20
Rate of Allowances	15	2	3	20
Work Responsibilities	19	0	1	20
Leave conditions	15	3	2	20
Work environment	15	0	5	20
Pension contributions	18	2	0	20
Promotional prospects	12	8	0	20
Interaction with co-workers	18	2	0	20
Management style	18	2	0	20
Staff development	20	0	0	20
General institutional support	20	0	0	20
Collaboration with key stakeholders	15	0	5	20

*Table 1: Means of staff motivation*

The table shows that 19 (95%) of the respondents were satisfied by the nature of their work as well as work responsibilities, while only 1 (5%) was unsatisfied. A total of 18 (90%) of the respondents were satisfied with the rate of pay for their posts while only 2 (10%) were not satisfied. A total of 15 (75%) of the staff considered their rate of allowances and leave as satisfactory. Only 2(10%) and 3(15%) were unsure of the rate of allowances while 3(15%) and 2(10%) were not satisfied by the rate of allowances and leave respectively. A total of 15 (75%) indicated satisfaction with their work environment while 5 (25%) were not satisfied. As many as 18(90%) were satisfied with pension contributions while 2 (10%) were unsure. A total of 12 (60%) said they were satisfied with their promotional prospects while 8(40%) were unsure. As many as 18 (90%) were satisfied with their interaction with co-workers as well as the management style while 2 (10%) were unsure in both instances. Interestingly, all the 20 (100%) of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied by staff development opportunities as well as the general institutional support they were receiving as staff. A total of 15 (75%) of the staff members indicated satisfaction with their collaboration with key stakeholders while 5 (25%) were not satisfied.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the current study concluded that:

1. All most all (95%) staff members were satisfied by the nature of their work as well as work responsibilities. This may indicate that almost all staff members feel quite comfortable in terms of their occupational placement and posts as well as their key result areas (KRAs).
2. Most (90%) of the staff members were satisfied with the rate of pay for their posts, which implies that they are happy with the salaries that they are getting as they find them generally commensurate with their qualifications and experience
3. A satisfactory number (75%) of staff members were happy with their rate of allowances, leave conditions, work environment as well as collaboration with stakeholders. This shows that more needs to be done with regards improvement of these elements of staff motivation
4. Many (90%) of the staff members were satisfied with pension contributions, interaction with co-workers as well as management style at the regional centre. This shows that staff interaction and their experiences with management are generally pleasant.
5. An average number (60%) of staff members were satisfied with their promotional prospects, while 40% were unsure, implying that a slightly higher number of staff members see opportunities for promotion ahead of them, while a good number is uncertain.
6. All (100%) staff members were satisfied by staff development opportunities and the general institutional support they were receiving from Zimbabwe Open University. This point to the fact that the institution is doing its level best to support the needs of its staff, including access to study for a degree with ZOU while being exempted from paying fees as well the general conducive and motivating working conditions.

Based on the above findings and conclusions, the current study makes the following few pertinent recommendations:

1. The regional centre needs to continue promoting its different hallmarks for motivating staff, including; nature of work, rate of pay, rate of allowances, work responsibilities, leave conditions, work environment, pension contributions, promotional prospects, conducive interaction of co-workers and management, general institutional support and collaboration with key stakeholders.
2. The region needs to consider rate of allowances, leave conditions, work environment as well as collaboration with stakeholders. This shows that more needs to be done with regards improvement of these elements of staff motivation
3. The region and institution at large needs to consider opening up promotional prospects for staff which would motivate staff who may feel they have overstayed in a post or they are being underutilized by the region and institution.
4. A similar research but bigger in magnitude should be conducted within the institution and at other similar institutions in order to illuminate the undiscovered mechanisms of organisational motivational practices and their dynamic implications on staff job satisfaction

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