

DEMOGRAPHIC AND WORK EXPERIENCE CHARACTERISTICS OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AGENTS AS DETERMINANTS OF THEIR JOB SATISFACTION.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the relative contributions of selected demographic and work experience factors as predictive determinants of job satisfaction among agricultural extension agents in the former Imo State ADP. The job satisfaction prediction profile featured only work experience variables, with need satisfaction exercising the greatest predictive ability. Thus efforts at agent job satisfaction should logically emphasise need satisfaction.

Key Words: Extension Agents, Characteristics, determinants, job satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction is of current concern in organisational management and supervision. Its importance results from the proven relationships between it and other job attitudes and behaviours. It has been argued that job satisfaction is a major determinant of employee task performance effectiveness (Herzberg *et al*, 1957; Organ, 1977). This is against the background of the assumption that positive job attitudes (such as job satisfaction) are favourable to increased productivity. It may reasonably well be that employee satisfaction should constitute the primary objective of formal organisations, such as the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs).

The functional responsibilities and obligations of the ADPs are articulated at the village level of the clientele (farmers, fishermen, food processors and other primary producers) by the agricultural extension agent. Accordingly, the organisational effectiveness of the ADP can be said to be largely dependent on the extension agent. Extension agent performance is therefore, central. In this connection, the role of favourable job attitude, among others, as a necessary requirement of effective job performance becomes crucial. This justifies an investigation into job satisfaction - a very important job attitude.

The present study emphasizes how job satisfaction can be maximally attained from a number of associated correlates. It will provide

an understanding of the contributions of selected factors as possible determinants or predictors of job satisfaction among extension agents in Imo State ADP.

The Nature of Job Satisfaction:

Job satisfaction can be explained from a number of theoretical orientations. Three sets of theories, namely, (i) expectancy, (ii) needs and (iii) values are illustratively relevant in this context. The expectancy theory of the determinants of job satisfaction defines the concept as the congruence between perceived amount of rewards that should be received by an employee and the amount actually received (Campbell *et al*, 1970; Lawler, 1973). Thus the difference between perceived and actual rewards determines employee's overall job satisfaction. The needs theory examines job satisfaction in relation to needs fulfillment. Anchored firmly in the foundational works of Abraham Maslow employee satisfaction is determined by the extent to which the job enables the incumbent to satisfy his or her needs. Thus, job satisfaction is equated with need satisfaction (Robbins, 1989). Need satisfaction is evidently two dimensional, material and non-material, with the latter rooted deeply in values and beliefs. Subsequently, job satisfaction is also explainable from a values perspective, the perception that an employee's work experiences are in accord with his or her values and beliefs defines employee job satisfaction. This school of thought stresses that such experience should not be destructive

or disruptive of individual's system of values and beliefs.

Accordingly, these intangibles are said to constitute the most accurate and valid measures of employee job satisfaction (Blood, 1969; Korman, 1970).

Against the preceding background, job satisfaction can be defined as pleasurable or satisfying experiences or feelings which an individual derive from his or her job, which in turn predispose the employee favourably to that job. The popularity of job satisfaction as an organisational work variable is attested to be Umstot (1984), who describes it as the most extensively studies job attitude. It has been strongly linked with several important job attitudes and behaviours. For instance, in the early 1930's, early organisational scholars with strong beliefs in the human relations cause postulated a cause - and - effect relationship between job satisfaction and performances that job satisfaction 'cause' improved job performance. This has since become the subject of an interestingly rewarding controversy, in the light of later findings that the relationship was neither causal nor simple (Brayfield and Crockett, 1955). It was later reported that performance in fact 'caused' satisfaction (Lawler and Porter, 1967), rather than the reverse. As a matter of fact, the satisfaction performance argument has continued to generate increasingly vigorous academic and research interest till date (Umstot, 1984, Robbins, 1989).

This satisfaction - performance paradox notwithstanding, job satisfaction has been very much associated with a number of topical variables in work behaviour. For instance, Scott and Taylor (1985) reported a consistent significant relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism. Job satisfaction has also been associated with employee turnover (Mobley *et al.*, 1979), and retirement (Schmidt and McCunne, 1981). It has also shown significant relationship with life satisfaction (Locke, 1976) and physical and mental health (Wanous and Lawler, 1972; Locke, 1976). Job satisfaction studies have focussed on various organisationally relevant factors. It has been studies in relation to both individual and organisational variables (Herman and Hulin, 1972; Blunt, 1980); organisational factors (Asika, 1985; Inanga and

Fabanwo, 1988); environment factors (Howell *et al.*, 1975) and personal characteristics of respondents (Shrestha and Singh, 1975; Darnosubroto, 1983). The diverse array of empirical investigations on job satisfaction validly confirms its strategic importance in explaining employee work attitude and productivity.

The Problem:

The analyses in the foregoing sections provide the basis for the present study involving agricultural extension agents in the former Imo State ADP. It investigates the contributions of selected demographic and work experience characteristics as possible determinants of job satisfaction among this category of respondents. It will proffer an understanding of how enhanced job satisfaction will be achieved, by identifying those personal and work environment factors which together predict it. A great proportion of the literature, especially empirical studies, derive from industrial (private sector) sources. The public sector - government ministries and departments - is hardly involved. the present study is one of the very few on the ADPs. Moreover, the simultaneous analysis of both demographic and work experience characteristics differs markedly from the 'one - stream' approach which uses only one perspective at a time. The latter could be described as rather simplistic.

METHODOLOGY

A structured questionnaire, constructed and validated by the researcher, was distributed to a randomly selected sample of 201 extension agents (about 53% of study population) in Imo State ADP. Data for analysis were provided by 176 respondents who returned their completed questionnaires (88% response rate). The dependent variable was overall job satisfaction. The independent variable are in two categories: (i) demographic (ii) work experience attributes of respondents. The demographic variables are age, extension tenure, previous extension tenure, formal education, number of in- service training courses attended. The work experience variables are need satisfaction, job involvement, organisational commitment, work overload,

personal importance job challenge, realisation of expectations, co-worker relationships, role clarity and job performance.

Measurement of Variables:

Age was measured as actual number of years of respondent since birth. Extension tenure was operationalised as actual number of years which respondent has worked with extension services of the ADP. The number of years which respondent worked with extension services of another organisation before joining the ADP defines previous extension tenure. Formal Education was measured as the highest formal educational attainment by respondent. In-service training was operationalised as the number of in-service training (not FNTs) attended by respondent. Need satisfaction, job performance, job involvement, organisational commitment, work overload, personal importance, job challenge, realisation of expectations, co-worker relationship and role clarity were measured as sums of scores on statements (ranging between 2 and 20) on a four point Likert-type continuum. Scores (ranging between 2 and 100) were based on responses (strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree).

Person correlation analysis was used to determine the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent. In addition, step-wise multiple regression procedure was used primarily to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables to the dependent. It was further used to obtain the best linear prediction equation of the dependent variable from the independent. All analyses were at the .05 *a priori* level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the five (5) demographic variables, only 3 were significantly correlated with job satisfaction. They are age extension tenure and number of in-service training courses attended (Table 1). Among the 10 work experience variables, 7 showed significant relationships with job satisfaction, as shown in Table 1. They are need satisfaction, job involvement, organisational commitment, work overload, job challenge, realisation of expectations and job performance. It can be observed that job satisfaction was

significantly correlated with more work experience than demographic variables. The results in Table 1 also indicate that in general, work experience variables showed stronger significant associations with job satisfaction compared with the demographic variables (as evidenced by the P - values in parentheses). An attempt was made to predict job satisfaction from the independent variables, to serve as a further test of the relative effects of the variables as potential predictors of job satisfaction. The prediction results, using step - wise multiple linear regression analysis are shown in Table 2 and 3.

The prediction equation of job satisfaction contained 9 variables all work experience factors. None of the demographic variables featured in the prediction profile. Variations in job satisfaction are therefore, accounted for by work experience variables. One interesting observation is that though the performance - satisfaction association was significant, ($r = .1943$, $P < .05$; Table 1). it was not sufficiently strong for job performance to contribute to the prediction of job satisfaction. This re - echoes the popular satisfaction - performance controversy, invalidating the claim that performance 'causes' satisfaction (Lawler, 1967; Greene, 1972). The results further indicate that the single best predictor of job satisfaction among this category of respondents was need satisfaction. Table 2 further shows that need satisfaction accounted for about 63% ($R^2 = .063015$) of the prediction. Thus employee's job satisfaction is maximally attained to the extent that employee's needs are satisfied. The results lend strong credence to the validity of the Needs Theory which equates job satisfaction with need satisfaction.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between job satisfaction and some selected demographic and work experience factors among agricultural extension agents in the former Imo State of Nigeria. It specifically sought to determine the predictive profile of the independent variables in relation to the dependent (job satisfaction).

Results show that the major, infact, sole components of the job satisfaction prediction profile were the work experience factors. None of the demographic factors contributed to the profile. It can therefore, be concluded, that employee job satisfaction is largely a function of his or her experience at work, and not of individual characteristics. The findings of this investigation tend to invalidate the traditional emphasis placed on such individual or personal attributed as age and education in relation to job attitude and behaviours (such as performance).

Conclusively, the results confirm the motivational role of satisfiers (job content factors) which relate to what people do and feel in their jobs. This conforms to the principle of Herzberg's 2 factor theory: that job satisfaction is affected by satisfier factors (as seen in the challenging job). Since improvements in satisfier factors create job satisfaction, it is logical to conclude that improvements in the quality of the predictor variables can translate into enhanced job satisfaction among the respondents in the study. Specifically, such improvements in the determinant variables should emphasize need satisfaction for this study population. This is justifiable because of the leading role played by need satisfaction as the best single predictor of job satisfaction in the present study.

Table 1: Coefficients of correlation (Pearson *r*) between job satisfaction and selected demographic and work experience characteristics of extension agents in Imo State ADP, (n = 176).

Variable	Pearson <i>r</i>		Remark
Age	.1378	(.033)	S
Extension tenure	.1492	(.024)	S
Previous extension tenure	.0995	(.095)	NS
Formal Education	.1231	(.052)	S
In-service training courses	-.1926	(.005)	S
Needs satisfaction	.5156	(.000)	S
Job involvement	.3682	(.000)	S
Organisational commitment	.6005	(.000)	S
Work Overload	.2282	(.001)	S
Personal importance	.0619	(.207)	NS
Job Challenge	.3888	(.000)	S
Realisation of expectations	.4871	(.000)	S
Co-worker relationship	.0346	(.324)	NS
Role clarity	.0380	(.308)	NS
Job performance	.1943	(.005)	S

() * figures in parentheses indicate associated probability levels
S := Significant at .05 level
NS := Not significant at .05 level.

Table 2 Multiple regression analysis: overall job satisfaction (dependent variable) with demographic and work experience factors.

Variable	Multiple R	R ²	Change in R ²
Need satisfaction	.79382	.63015	-
Job involvement	.83142	.69126	.0611
Organisational commitment	.85039	.72317	.0319
Co-worker relationships	.87788	.77067	.0475
Realisation of expectations	.89941	.80895	.0383
Job challenge	.91490	.83704	.0281
Role clarity	.93321	.87088	.0338
Work overload	.95174	.90581	.0349
Personal importance	.95816	.91807	.0123

Table 3 Variables in the prediction equation of job satisfaction (dependent variable) from demographic and work experience characteristics (independent variables) of respondents (n = 176).

Variable	B	SE B	Beta	T	Sig.T
Need satisfaction	-.80199	.03007	-2.55088	-26.670	.000
Job involvement	-.83050	0.04198	-0.73179	-19.782	0.000
Organisational commitment	-.82227	.04736	-0.86356	-17.364	.000
Co-worker relationships	-.82167	.06219	-0.32999	-13.213	.000
Realisation of expectations	-.76781	.07646	-0.34251	-10.043	.000
Job challenge	-.71148	.07963	-0.26173	-8.953	.000
Role clarity	-.87263	.09225	-0.23321	-9.459	.000
Work overload	-.64601	.07224	-0.2271	-8.943	.000
Personal importance	-.11980	.022411	-0.11655	-4.969	.000
(Constant)	-3.36586	1.01159		-3.327	.0011

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