

Employees' Perceptions of Job Satisfaction in Local Government Authorities: A Focus on Context-Specific Factors in Ileje and Handeni Districts, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study investigated about employees' perceptions of job satisfaction, based on contextual work factors in Ileje and Handeni Districts of Tanzania. The study used the case study design with a sample of 76 employees from the districts, who participated through an interview schedule. Conceptual analysis was involved in the analysis of data to determine context-specific factors that determined the employees' job satisfaction. Based on the findings, the study concludes that job satisfaction is shaped not only by traditional organizational factors, such as salary and workload, but also by deeper, context-specific factors, such as favoritism, tribalism and logistical challenges. Due to these findings, LGAs should develop incentive programs for remote posting to make the employees feel more appealing to stay and work. There is a need to introduce housing allowances and to improve infrastructure systems, social amenities and recreational facilities to enhance the quality of life in the studied areas. Provision of transportation allowances is also essential.

Keyword: Job satisfaction; Contextual work factors; Ileje; Handeni; Tanzania.

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Introduction

Job satisfaction has become a matter of great concern for all types of organizations (Sree & Satyavathi, 2017). This is simply because employees are considered to be the most valuable assets in organizations, as their performance directly impacts overall organizational success (Collins, 2021). According to Hristov and Chirico (2019) and McPhail et al. (2015), organizations should prioritize the employee job satisfaction as a key strategy for improving performance and achieving long-term success.

On the other hand, when employees are not satisfied with their jobs, several negative outcomes can arise, leading to increased labor turnover and employee mobility. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to ensure employees' job satisfaction in order to retain staff and enhance performance.

According to Kurdi et al. (2020), the process of recruiting and developing new employees to replace those who leave can be costly and a burden for many organizations.

In this world of competition, organizations irrespective of their field of working intend to retain their workforce for the purpose of improving performance (Shaju & Subhashini, 2017). Managers face significant challenges in hiring, retaining and ensuring employees' satisfaction, which are crucial for maintaining a productive and stable workforce. Local Government Authorities (LGAs) are not immune to the struggle for performance improvement, employee retention and job satisfaction.

Third-world countries, like Tanzania, are always under pressure to enhance the performance of LGAs

that are currently underperforming in their roles. This is evident in a number of areas, such as community satisfaction and service delivery, especially in schools and health facilities. As per Ajagbe et al. (2020), schools and health centers are devoid of basic facilities like electricity, clean water, hygienic conditions, low student achievement, high dropout rates and well-maintained road system. According to Naburi et al. (2017), the reason for the mentioned inadequate performance can be attributed to high employee labor turnover and mobility. Hence, these factors are also cited as contributing factor towards the said low job satisfaction among employees (Mrope, 2023).

According to Gupta (2013) and Prasad (2014), there are a number of factors that determine job satisfaction. Some of the factors are such as organizational structure, job itself, pay, promotion, co-workers' relationship, operating procedures opportunity for advancement, leadership style, company policy, achievement, communication working conditions and supervision. Moreover, studies show that job satisfaction is determined by numerous variables, such as work conditions, pay, job security, interpersonal relationship, organization policy, modes of communication and social support (Kefyalew et al., 2020; Prajapati & Khuju, 2023).

Conversely, Mbungu (2015) demonstrated that poor office facilities and shortage of working tools are internal work factors that can be used to determine employees' job satisfaction. Similarly, De Klerk et al., (2023) established that shortage of social amenities, such as water, electricity, houses, health facilities, education facilities and market are other factors that are close to work environment that can determine the level of job satisfaction between employees of a particular organization.

Literature, therefore, shows that both work, environment and context specific factors can determine employees' job satisfaction in organization; however limited qualitative studies have been done in the Tanzanian LGAs on employees' job satisfaction and context specific factors (Mbungu (2015), Kasanga (2017), Mbonea, et al. (2021). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to come up with insights into factors determining job satisfaction among employees in selected districts in Tanzanian.

Literature Review

Job satisfaction refers to the overall emotional and attitudinal response individuals have towards their

job. Armstrong (2014) defined job satisfaction as the feelings and attitudes individuals have towards their work. Prasad (2014) define job satisfaction as a mental feeling of favourableness that an individual hold towards their job. Mbungu (2015) refers to job satisfaction as the extent to which employees like or dislike their job. Imran et al. (2020) refers to job satisfaction as the degree to which employees' expectations about their work are fulfilled. The present study refers job satisfaction as positive or negative perceptions, emotions and attitudes individual have towards their work contexts.

Factors Determining Job Satisfaction

Employees within organizations can experience different levels of job satisfaction, even when working in similar environments. This variation is due to multiple factors that influence job satisfaction, including the nature of the job, the work environment, and individual characteristics. According to Prasad (2014), job satisfaction is determined by individual factors, such as level of education, age, social and family life. On the other hand, job satisfaction is influenced by the nature of the work, which encompasses occupational levels and job content, including elements of job enlargement and job enrichment. These factors play a significant role in shaping employees' overall satisfaction with their roles. Additionally, situational factors, which are contextual elements, have also been identified as related to job satisfaction. These situational factors include working conditions, supervision, equitable rewards, opportunities for promotion, and collaborative group work.

According to Gupta (2013), job satisfaction can be influenced by two major factors: environment factors and personal factors. Environment factors are contextual factors, such as job content, that can be measured in terms of achievement, recognition, advancement, responsibility and work itself. The author also considers factors such as occupational level, pay and promotion, work group and supervision to be among of environment factors that enhance job satisfaction among workers. On the other hand, the elements of personal characteristics, such as age, sex, education level, marital status and experience are shown to have significant influence on employee's job satisfaction.

According to Mbungu (2015), Kasanga (2017) and De Klerk et al., (2023), context-specific factors influence how satisfied people are with their jobs. The elements pertaining to a particular work

organization comprise the context-specific factors. They are called context-specific factors because organizations differ in terms of access to the need. Therefore, with regards to context-specific factors, job satisfaction is affected by the need for social amenities, for instance, water, health services, good education and transport, access to electricity, markets, and accommodation. Conversely, factors that contribute to contextual hardship include poor road conditions, work pressure, remote offices and the organization's socio-economic status, can have an impact on individuals' job satisfaction.

Herzberg Two Factor Theory

Fredric Herzberg proposed two-factor theory in the 1950s. According to Kelemnesh (2020), Herzberg's two-factor theory is a theory with two sets of needs: motivational needs and hygiene needs. According to George and Jones (2012), motivation needs are employee needs related to nature of work and its challenges. The needs are such as achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement and growth, as well as company policy and administration. On the other hand, hygiene needs are employees' needs related to physical and physiological contexts in which work is performed. Therefore, hygiene needs are satisfied by outcomes such as good working conditions, pay, job security, good worker relationships and supervision. The theory has been used to explore aspects of motivation and job satisfaction among employees (Yousaf, 2020). Mitsakis and Galanakis (2022) acknowledge that Herzberg's motivational and hygiene factors play significant contributions to enhancing employees' job satisfaction as the theory tries to identify work and context factors related to employees' job satisfaction.

Lee et al. (2022) provided a critic to Herzberg two factor theory that beside the theory trying to come up with context factors related to job satisfaction that are applied in general environment, it does not provide insights to context specific factors that fit specific environments. Context specific factors, such as the need of all-weather roads, need of clean water, electricity, good health service, good house and education, among others, are good predictors of employee's job satisfaction. Therefore, management should not rely on only motivation and hygiene factors too influence employee's job satisfaction. Context specific work factors should also be considered as among factors that affect employee's job satisfaction. Hence, this study set to

surveys context specific work factors influence job satisfaction in the LGAs.

According to Prajapati and Khuju (2023), employees' job satisfaction at the Bhaktapur Municipality Office in Nepal is influenced by factors such as work environment, nature of work, job security and wages. These elements have a significant impact on overall job satisfaction. On the other side, the study found that recognition and supervision do not have effect towards employees' job satisfaction. In his study, context-specific work aspects were not examined, highlighting the need for further research in this area. Such studies are important for providing complementary solutions and employing various strategies to enhance employees job satisfaction.

In China, Shi et al. (2023) found that, job satisfaction level among medical staffs was almost average (48.4%) as nearly half of the medical professionals were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their jobs. Interpersonal relationships was ranked the highest scoring factor towards job satisfaction (3.83 ± 0.73) while salary and benefits were ranked the lowest factors (3.13 ± 0.94). Job satisfaction among the medical staff was associated with having education above-undergraduate level of education (OR = 1.857), having higher income (OR = 1.369) and having fewer monthly overtime shifts (OR = 0.735–0.543). The study recommended enriching medical workers' job satisfaction by enhancing their remuneration, reducing work pressure and meeting their needs.

In South Africa, a scoping review to improve job satisfaction of school teachers was done by De Klerk et al. (2023). Findings show that job satisfaction among teachers are presently inhibited by several internal and external school contextual factors. According to the study, internal school factors are such as poor office facilities, lack of maintenance, shortage of water and poor roads to schools. The factors have proved to affect teachers' job satisfaction among school teachers. Moreover, monetary rewards and job security were considered as external school factors that affect teachers' job satisfaction.

Kefyalew et al. (2020) examined factors influencing job satisfaction among employees in Assosa, Ethiopia. The study found that employees were generally dissatisfied with the organization's location and various work facets, which affected their job satisfaction. Key factors contributing to the dissatisfaction included lack of recognition, limited

advancement opportunities, insufficient pay, poor working conditions, ineffective supervision and strained interpersonal relationships. Mbonea et al. (2021) found that job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Lushoto District, Tanzania, is determined by motivation and environmental factors, such as pay, opportunity for promotion, job condition, house and job security. Kasanga (2017) explored factors altering job satisfaction among nurses working in public health facilities in Kisarawe District, Tanzania. The study revealed the level of nurses' job satisfaction to be very low. This was contributed by such factors as low wages, unpaid benefits and allowances and working environment. The present study conducted in district headquarters to provide a broader understanding of the factors influencing job satisfaction outside the context of education and health.

Methodology

Design

This study used a case study design. The design is highly effective when exploring and explaining context-specific factors that determine job satisfaction among employees in natural environments.

Population and Sampling

The study's target population consisted of 114 employees from Ileje and Handeni District headquarters, including officers and heads of departments, units and sections. A sample of 76 employees was selected, comprising 38 heads of departments, units and sections, and 38 council officers. The heads of departments, units, and sections were purposefully chosen for their expertise, ensuring valuable insights. Council officers were randomly selected to ensure proper representation, avoid bias, and enhance the accuracy and reliability of the results.

Instruments

The study used an interview schedule as the primary data collection tool. A set of structured questions was designed to cover all relevant information about work-related factors affecting job satisfaction in the LGAs. These questions ensured consistency in data collection across different participants. All interviewers asked the same set of questions in the same order to maintain uniformity. Additionally, follow-up questions were used after each main question to provide depth, rich and comparable data from all interviews.

Treatment of Data

Conceptual analysis was involved in the analysis of data to determine context-specific work factors that determined employees' job satisfaction in the study area.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to carry this study was obtained from Tanga and Songwe Regional Administrative Secretaries from which the two districts were selected. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of any provided information. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from the interviewees prior to the interview schedules.

Finding and Discussions

This section provides results about context-specific work factors determining job satisfaction in the LGAs. The results are guided by the following research question: What are the context-specific work factors that determine employees' job satisfaction in the LGAs in Ileje and Handeni Districts?

The research question sought to explore context-specific work factors that determine employees' job satisfaction in Ileje and Handeni districts. When respondents were asked about context specific work factors on employees' job satisfaction, they identified political influence, tribalism, LGA status, witchcraft, housing and public transportation as key context-specific factors affecting job satisfaction, with remoteness ranking as a major influence.

Respondents reported that they work in remote areas with limited opportunities for professional growth and social interaction with co-workers. The environment in such districts influences solitary mind set and slows job advancement by creating isolation, which limits networking and mentorship opportunities. The lack of connection hampers professional growth and reduces job satisfaction. One of the interviewees reported, "Ileje District is located very far interior and a large portion of the district is covered by forests, something that limits even co-workers' interaction." Another respondent added, "Ileje District feels more like a hub of isolation rather than a district headquarters," emphasizing the district's remoteness and the many challenges that come with it, such as inadequate communication, transportation barriers, lack of access to facilities like healthcare, education and markets. The findings align with those of De Klerk et al. (2023), who found that remoteness significantly

affects employees' job satisfaction. In their study, the researchers observed that employees working in remote areas often face challenges, such as limited access to professional development opportunities, reduced social interaction and fewer amenities, which can lead to feelings of isolation and job dissatisfaction. Additionally, the lack of infrastructure and services in remote regions often creates a work environment that is less supportive, making it difficult for employees to balance their professional and personal lives. These factors combined can negatively influence employees' overall morale and satisfaction with their jobs, as seen in the Ileje district case.

The study, on the other hand, revealed that the status of LGAs has emerged as a key factor influencing employees' job satisfaction. In Handeni District, poor working conditions and inadequate infrastructure make the environment unappealing. One respondent from Handeni expressed his frustration: "At home, life is better than it is here. Things that were once simple to get, like water, healthcare and other refreshments, are now difficult to access." This highlights how the lack of basic amenities leads to employees' dissatisfaction and a sense of isolation, which they perceive as a form of punishment for being assigned to such remote areas. The findings are consistent with Mbungu (2015), showing that inadequate infrastructure and social services in remote districts contribute to high levels of job dissatisfaction and turnover, directly affecting both employees' quality of life and their work performance.

The findings also indicated that unreliable public transportation significantly affects employees' job satisfaction. For example, respondents shared that they face transportation challenges, particularly when commuting from their homes to work or to the district office. Due to these difficulties, employees have been forced to find alternative ways to get to work each day, which has created a financial burden. One employee remarked, "Ileje District lacks reliable transportation." The person occasionally used tractors and motorcycles to get to offices and to district headquarters, thus lack of job satisfaction. These findings align with Kasanga (2017), who similarly found that poor public transportation negatively affects job satisfaction. The lack of reliable transport makes it difficult for employees to commute regularly, often leading to tardiness or missed work. Consequently, unreliable public transportation serves as a barrier to

employees' punctuality and attendance, while the financial strain of alternative transport options may lower morale and increase job dissatisfaction.

The findings further show that employees' job satisfaction within LGAs is significantly influenced by political factors. Specifically, promotions and demotions are sometimes determined by political connections, rather than merit. This political influence creates challenges for employees as one employee noted: "Very recently, three of our colleagues, including the head of department and two other officers, were suspended from work following resolutions by councilors. The employee also expressed frustration about the difficulties of working with councilors. These findings are consistent with those of Ridder et al. (2015), which reported the influence of political factors on job satisfaction within council operations. When council operations dictated by political favoritism rather than merit, the implication is that the council fosters an environment of unfairness and insecurity that can result in delayed promotions, unwarranted transfers and increased job insecurity, all of which contribute to lower job satisfaction.

In addition, the findings indicate that witchcraft affects employees' job satisfaction in the Ileje and Handeni districts. Witchcraft-related acts and experiences, such as students collapsing in schools, teachers being mysteriously attacked at night, sleeping outside their homes, groaning, speaking in unusual tones and mass hysterics are reported as common occurrences in these areas. During interviews, teachers in Ileje District expressed the challenges they face, one stating: "It is a big challenge to work here due to witchcraft acts and experiences..... students sometimes collapse in class...one of our colleagues vanished for three days before being found in a valley, and others have been bitten at night." In Handeni District, a health worker shared, "Health workers are chased away because they are not wanted at the centers. Sometimes, we find them sleeping in tall trees or outside their homes". Similar findings by Mhaka and Chiome (2015) and Boniface (2020) indicate that witchcraft lowers employees' job satisfaction in remote areas.

The findings from interview show that tribalism plays a significant role in determining employees' job satisfaction level, posing a serious risk to the wellbeing and safety of workers. One employee from Ileje District shared: "We are threatened by superstitions because the local natives don't like

having employees from other tribes serve them." Similarly, Tawana (2018) reported that tribalism is a key factor affecting job satisfaction. Tribalism often creates a hostile work environment, as local natives may resent being served by employees from other tribes, leading to social isolation and neglect of those workers. As a result, employees who feel marginalized due to tribalism may ultimately leave their positions, perceiving the work environment as unfair and difficult to navigate. The underlying hostility and discrimination foster feelings of alienation, reducing job satisfaction and engagement.

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concludes that job satisfaction in LGAs is shaped not only by traditional organizational factors, such as salary and workload, but also by deeper, context-specific factors. For instance, political favouritism undermines merit-based promotions. Witchcraft and tribalism, on the other hand, foster fear and exclusion. Finally, logistical challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure aggravate working conditions, leading to limited job satisfaction.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, LGAs should develop incentive programs for remote posting to make the employees feel more appealing to stay and work. There is a need to introduce housing allowances to help alleviate the burden of inadequate housing and improve living conditions for employees. There is a need to improve infrastructure systems, social amenities and recreational facilities to improve the quality of life in the studied areas. Provision of transportation allowances is also essential. LGAs should offer transportation allowances to mitigate commuting costs for employees. There is a need to ensure a clear separation between political influence and administrative functions to facilitate more decisive and fair decision-making. Finally, there is a need to create cultural platforms that foster harmonious community relationships, addressing local cultural concerns and promoting social integration.

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