

## Job Satisfaction Mechanisms: A Panacea for Workers' High Productivity in State Owned Enterprises in Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

*Job satisfaction is increasingly becoming important in the workplace. Employers now recognize that the “happier” their employees are; the better will be employees’ attitude towards the work, the higher their motivation the better their performance. The level of satisfaction a worker receives from his work place has a great influence on how such a worker responds to business activities and that will leads to high rate of productivity, growth, and development of the enterprise. This paper therefore examines job satisfaction among workers as a panacea for high productivity in State owned Enterprises in Nigeria. This is carried out by examining the importance of job satisfaction generally and the effects of high productivity to an enterprise. This paper recommends among others that a concerted effort should be made by state governments to enhance the constructs that encourage workers’ job satisfaction in order to ensure high productivity for national development.*

**Keywords:** Job Satisfaction, Productivity, National Development.

### **Introduction**

Job satisfaction otherwise known as employee satisfaction has been defined in many different ways by different people. Some view it as how content on individual is with his or her job, while others believe it is not so simple as the first view suggests but instead, it involves multi-dimensional psychological responses to one’s job. Researchers such Hulin and Judge (2003) have also noticed that job satisfaction measure vary in the extent to which they measure feelings about the job (affective job satisfaction), or cognitions about the job (cognitive job satisfaction).

The concept of job satisfaction has been developed in many ways by different researchers and practitioners. One of the most widely used definitions in organizational research is that of Locke (2006), who defines job satisfaction as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences”. Others have defined it as simply how content an individual is with his or her job; whether he or she likes the job or not. It is assessed at both the global level (whether or not the individual is satisfied with the job overall), or the fact level (whether or not the individual is satisfied with different aspect of the job).

Spector (2007) listed 14 common facets of job satisfaction: appreciation, communication, lawmakers, fringe benefits, job conditions, nature of the work, organization, personal growth, policies and procedures, promotion opportunities, recognition, security, and supervision. A more recent definition of the concept of job satisfaction is from Hulin and

Judge (2003), who have noted that job satisfaction includes multi-dimensional psychological responses to an individual's job, and that these personal responses have cognitive (evaluative), affective (emotional), or/and behavioural components. Job satisfaction scales vary in the extent to which they assess the affective feelings about the job or the cognitive assessment of the job. Affective job satisfaction is a subjective construct representing an emotional feeling individuals have about their job. Hence, affective job satisfaction for individuals reflects the degree of pleasure or happiness their job in general induces. Cognitive job satisfaction is a more objective and logical evaluation of various facets of a job. Cognitive job satisfaction can be un-dimensional if it comprises evaluation of just one facet of a job, such as pay or maternity leave, or multi-dimensional if two or more facets of a job are simultaneously evaluated (Mullins, 2005). Cognitive job satisfaction does not assess the degree of pleasure or happiness that arises from specific job facets, but rather gauges the extent to which those job facets are judged by the job holder to be satisfactory in comparison with objectives they themselves set or with other jobs. While cognitive job satisfaction might help to bring about affective job satisfaction, the two constructs are distinct, not necessarily directly related, and have different antecedents and consequences.

Job satisfaction can also be seen within the broader context of the range of issues which affect an individual's experience of work, or their quality of working life (Kaliski, 2007). Job satisfaction can be understood in terms of its relationships with other key factors, such as general well-being, stress at work, control at work, home-work interface, and working conditions. A study titled "Analysis of factors affecting job satisfaction of employees in public and private sector in India" revealed that employees tend to love their job if they get what they believe is an important attribute of a good job. However, the author of this work sees job satisfaction in line with the researcher quoted in the study.

### **State Owned Enterprises (SOEs)**

A State Owned Enterprise (SOE), otherwise known as a state-owned company, state-owned entity, state enterprise, is a legal entity that undertakes commercial activities on behalf of government. Examples are; Akwa Ibom Transport Company Ltd., Akwa Loan Saving Limited, Akwa Ibom State Water Cooperation, Akwa Ibom State Peacock Paint Ltd., Akwa Ibom State Chicken Hatchery Ltd., Le Meridien Ibom Hotel & Golf Resort, Champion Breweries etc. The legal status of SOEs is that they have distinct legal form being a part of the government to being stock companies with the state as a regular stockholder. The defining characteristic of SOEs is that they have a distinct legal form and they are established to operate in commercial capacities. While they may also have public policy objectives, SOEs are different from other forms of government agencies or State entities as they pursue purely non-financial objectives.

**Job Satisfactory Strategies:** Below are some job satisfactory strategies.

### **Range of Affect Strategy**

Locke propounded Range of Affect strategies in 1976. It is arguably the most famous job satisfaction theory. The main premise of these strategies is that satisfaction is determined by a discrepancy between what one wants in a job and what one has in a job. Further, the strategies states that how much one values a given facet of work (e.g. the degree of autonomy in a position) moderates how satisfied or dissatisfied one becomes when expectations are or are not met. When a person values a particular facet of a job, his satisfaction is more greatly impacted both positively (when expectations are met) and negatively (when expectations are not met), compared to one who does not value that facet. For example, if employee A values autonomy in the workplace and employee B is indifferent about autonomy, then employee A would be more satisfied in a position that offers a high degree of autonomy and less satisfied in a position with little or no autonomy compared to employee B. This strategy also states that too much of a particular facet will produce stronger feelings of dissatisfaction the more a worker values that facet.

### **Dispositional Strategy**

The dispositional strategy was propounded by Judge in 1997. It suggested that individuals vary in their tendency to be satisfied with their jobs. In other words, job satisfaction to some extent is an individual trait. These strategies became a notable explanation of job satisfaction in the light of evidence that job satisfaction tends to be stable over time and across careers and job. Research also indicates that identical twins raised apart have similar levels of job satisfaction

A significant model that narrowed the scope of the dispositional strategies was the core self-evaluation model, proposed by Judge, Locke, and Durham in 1997. Judge et al argued that there are three core self evaluations that determine one's disposition towards job satisfaction. Self esteem, general self-efficacy, and locus of control. This model states that higher levels of self-esteem (the value one places on his self) and general self efficacy (the belief in one's own competence) lead to increase in job productivity. Having an internal locus of control (believing on ones personal control over his/her own life, as opposed to outside forces having control), leads to higher job satisfaction.

### **Equity Strategy**

An equity strategy was propounded by Borman in 2003. It shows how a person views fairness in regard to social relationship such that it would bring the best and this would lead to high productivity in the work place. A person identifies the amount of input (things gained) from a relationship compared to the output (Things given) to produce an input/output ratio. Then compare this ratio to the ratio of other people in deciding whether or not they have an equitable relationship. Equity strategy suggests that if an individual thinks there is an inequality between two social groups or individuals, the person is likely to be distressed and this can lead to inefficiency in production, because the ratio between the input and the output are not equal. For example, consider two employees who work the same job and receive the

same pay and benefits. If one individual gets a pay rise for doing the same work as the other, then the less benefited individual will become distressed in his workplace. If on the other hand, both individuals get pay rises and new responsibilities, then the feeling of equity will be maintained and the tendency to be efficient in productivity is there.

### **PersonalityStrategy**

Hulin and Judge (2003) propounded personality strategies in 2003 and suggests an association between personality and job satisfaction. This research describes the role of negative affectivity and positive affectivity. Negative affectivity is rejected strongly to the personality trait of neuroticism. Individuals high in negative affectivity are more prone to experience less job satisfaction. Positive affectivity is related strongly to the personality trait of extraversion. Those high in positive affectivity are more prone to be satisfied in most dimensions of their life, including their job. Differences in affectivity likely impact how individuals will perceive objective job circumstances like pay and working conditions thus affecting their satisfaction in that job.

There are two personality factors related to job satisfaction alienation and focus of control. Employees who have an internal focus of control and feel less alienated are more likely to experience job satisfaction, job involvement and organizational commitment. A meta-analysis of 187 studies of job satisfaction concluded that high satisfaction was positively associated with internal focus of control. The study also showed characteristics like high Machiavellianism, narcissism, trait anger, type A personality dimensions of achievement striving and impatience/irritability, are also related to job satisfaction.

### **Job satisfaction versus Production**

Much research evidence shows that employees who experience high levels of job satisfaction are also more productive. Studies conducted in 1980s show links between employees' satisfaction and productivity. Employees who are happy in their job tend to work harder and are more motivated in their work – leading to greater productivity (George and Jones, 2008). One key element for businesses seeking an increase in productivity is to find out what makes employees satisfied with their jobs.

### **Importance of Job Satisfaction**

In emphasizing the importance of employees' motivation to job satisfaction, Aziri (2008) opined that employees are the number one factor to success of any business endeavor. There is little doubt that great employees are an organization's number one resource. Keeping workers happy helps strengthen an enterprise in many ways, these include the following as opined by Aziri (2008):

**Lower Labour Turnover:** Turnover can be one of the highest costs attributed to the human resources department. Retaining workers helps create a better environment, and makes it

easier to recruit quality talent and save money. The bottom line is that satisfied employees are typically much less likely to leave.

**Higher Productivity:** Irrespective of job title and pay grade, employees who report high job satisfaction tend to achieve higher productivity.

**Increased Profit:** Keeping employees safe and satisfied can lead to higher sales, lower costs and a stronger bottom line.

**Loyalty:** When employees feel the company has their best interests at heart, they often support its mission and work hard to help achieve its objectives. And they may be more likely to tell their friends, which helps spread goodwill.

### **Job Satisfaction Mechanisms**

Armstrong (2006) listed some factors that contribute in making a person to love his or her job and also bring job satisfaction and endless efficiency on the job; these include the following:

**Monetary Benefits:** No matter how much one loves his work, unless and until you get paid according to your caliber, job satisfaction would never come.

**Appreciation of Workers:** Human race loves to get appreciated. When one gets appreciated in front of everyone; it gives up a boost to their morale. When appreciation leads to encouragement, the ultimate result is reflected in the efficiency of work automatically. Therefore, the level of job satisfaction is always higher whenever appreciation is higher.

**Fairness to Workers:** It is highly noticed that whenever the organization tends to be partial between employees, the level of job satisfaction drastically falls down. It is not only for the worker towards whom the organization is partial, but also among others. When one realizes that no matter what and how the performance is, the organization is going to be biased, the employee begins to feel detached to the organization which supposedly brings the level of satisfaction down. On the contrary, if an organization is entirely fair towards each individual, the job satisfaction is grown since this brings a trust in employees that their performance gets the necessary recognition.

**The Feeling of Belongings:** If an employee feels that he is considered as an important part of the team, he belongs to the organization, then there are higher chances of job satisfaction.

**Anticipated Growth:** Each employee work to get better pay, if he or she is kept in one place for a longer period of time, then, it is natural that the employee won't feel good. The seed of bitterness towards the organization would be sown. Whereas, if an employee gets recognition for his or her hard work, his or her promotion or increment is done, he or she will feel satisfied with their jobs. They will see to it as if they are getting the fruits of their hard work which will further inspire them to do more.

**Adequate Working Conditions:** Having a proper working condition adds up to the level of job satisfaction.

**Addressing Grievances:** In an organization, where the workforce is always blamed and their grievances are never answered, chances of low job satisfaction are more amongst the workers.

**Initiation and Leadership:** If an employee is given an equal number of opportunities to showcase their talent, take the lead and initiate project, then the chances of having a higher level of job satisfaction is more.

**Access to Credits Facilities:** This is certainly more important than monetary benefits given to workers. If an employee is rewarded and given due credit for the dedicated hard work that he or she has put into the project, then the level of satisfaction is brought in by the feeling of confidence and accomplishment.

**Frequent Changes of Workers:** It is going to be a huge turn off for any employee if he or she has to change the place of work frequently. People seek for a job because they want to gain stability in their lives. Most of the time, it is seen that people prefer having a fixed job, and a fixed place. Thus, if an employee is transferred every now and then, it in a way disturbs his or her routine as well as family set up. Most of the working professionals are having children and older aged parents to look after and in such cases, transferring or instability of work gives a tough time. Thus, when there is growth, but not instability and frequent changes in the working style and spirit, the chance of having a higher level of job satisfaction is more.

**Safety and Security of Workers:** If an employee doesn't feel safe and secured at the organization that he or she works in, the level of job satisfaction is ultimately going to fall. It is as necessary for an employee to have the safety and security of his career as it is to have monthly salary.

**Trust of Organization:** If the management or leaders begin to show that they trust the employees of the organization, their job satisfaction rises as compared to when there is no trust shown in employees. A person who works where management doesn't trust their own employee doesn't feel closely related to the organization. Therefore, it is important for an organization to show that they do trust their employees

**Sharing of Responsibility:** Sharing of responsibility suggests that the employee is given a bigger responsibility. It makes him or her to be conscious that the employer thinks he or she is trustworthy. Jobs where responsibility is involved always carry a higher level of satisfaction. If an employee is not given any responsibility to handle, ultimately, the result is that the person feels detached and doubt about self worth which immediately affects the job satisfaction. An employee handling number of responsibilities is always the one who is confident and hence feels satisfied with the job is compared to the one who hardly gets any responsibility to fulfill.

**Efficient Management:** If the organization is well managed, everything happens on time, there is less or no amount of miscommunication, management works tirelessly and motivates other employees as well, then the satisfaction level that any employee would get there would be much higher. On the other hand, if the management is least bothered and no work is done on time, then automatically, the satisfaction level of job comes down.

**Creativity in Job:** Job satisfaction is always higher wherever creativity is involved. If a person is involved in some creative jobs where he or she is supposed to be creative, the job satisfaction level will be high. The creative freedom gives a sense of fulfillment whenever any project is complete. It makes an employee feels as if the project belongs to them for their creativity is there. On the other hand, in jobs, which are monotonous, the employee won't feel like he or she belongs to the project. The alienation takes place and hence the job satisfaction level falls drastically.

### **Conclusion**

Job satisfaction is an important variable to consider when evaluating an organization's success. In order for an organization to be productive, the employees' concerns should be met. Questionnaires permit employer to determine employee job satisfaction. Employer can then act on these results to meet employee needs, which will enhance their performance for high productivity.

Job satisfaction and productivity are linked closely and must be monitored. Employers should set strategies in place to make sure that their employees are happy at their jobs and want to be productive. Unlike machines, people need incentives to get jobs done better and more quickly. When employers need to know what their employees need to be satisfied with their jobs, they should always go directly to the source. Some people would rather have a small raise than an extra day or two off work as a reward for going above and beyond their job description.

Business productivity is dependent on employees' job satisfaction. This is because when an employee is happy, feels secure with their job, and trust the company they work for, they will work harder. When a company treats his employees with respect, train them well, and let them know they are appreciated and valued, they will get high productivity, less turnover, increased job satisfaction and more in return. There is much to be said about giving employees incentives to work harder for the company and for their own benefit as well.

**Recommendations:** From the pointsdiscussed the followingwere suggested.

1. Employers should develop ways in which the workers should be respected and trust while working in a safe environment. These important factors can satisfy employees and help build a stronger, more stable and profitable future.
2. Employers should recognize that their workers are their best asset and invest in creating positive working environment, empowering them through trusted leaderships and offering secondary benefits that support employees work life, well-being and

interest. Creating an environment for success boosts morale, innovations and productivity.

3. Employers should provide means of encouraging his/her staff to bring the best in them. If job expectations are/or become too much for employees to handle, encouragement and extra training from managers, supervisors or other employees can help an individual keep his/her position and help them gain extra knowledge and skills for high productivity.
4. Supervisors, managers, and team leaders should always make guidelines clear in order to avoid confusion, miscommunication and ambiguity that can derail an entire organization

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