

# “Job Satisfaction of Secondary School Principal”: A test of Theories Process

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## ABSTRACT

The study examines the job satisfaction of previously disadvantaged Secondary School principals. A mixed-method approach comprising of both qualitative and quantitative methods was used for the study. Structured interviews were conducted purposefully with selected principals from the original sample. The results show that principals in the study perceived that the prizes they procure as a form of output were not equitable to their input efforts. In the end, the paper made a number of proposals and suggestions to school authorities to enhance the job satisfaction of school principals.

**Keyword:-** Principal, Job satisfaction, Equity theory, Expectancy theory

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## INTRODUCTION

Effective principals are essential for effective organization. The duty of a principal of the secondary school is foremost to the proper functioning of the school. The principal is considered as a true leader and the manager of an organization who is supposed to give direction towards the goals and its success of the institution.

A principal is the key agent of a school. The principal needs to interact with supervisors, educators, parents and learners within an organizational institution by performing the role of a manager, disciplinarian, visionary, facilitator, transformer, instructional expert. Sometimes the experience of Principals conflicts while trying to meet everyone's expectations. This conflict reduces the effectiveness of principals. Besides, external forces for learner's outcomes and performances cause exertions which can result in job dissatisfaction. All the same, school principals are faced with a number of other challenges in their profession that have a major impact on their performance. Increased responsibilities, continuous work load, rigorous parents as well as tough school board make the position of a principal less attractive. This study adds to the ongoing discourse on job satisfaction of school principals through an in-depth investigation into the job satisfaction of principals of previously disadvantaged Secondary schools where they face many challenges due to the lack of facilities and resources. It is due to the fact that the schools are predominantly in rural areas. The paper uses process theories as conceptual framework. The equity theories and expectancy theories that make up the process theories are given attention in the ensuing discussion.

### Conceptual framework: Process theories

People have different desires and expectations, and make the definition of job satisfaction difficult to define. One can define job satisfaction, looking at the perception that individuals have in relation to what they bring into the job and what they get out of it. This means that job satisfaction follows if there is a perfect balance between the input and the output of the individual. Maforah (2010, p.11) defines job satisfaction as the sense of fulfillment brought about by a feeling of achievement and recognition. When people perform any duty, they have certain expectations in the form of reward for the job they have done. The reward that the individual gets is a form of recognition for the work done by and can result in either job satisfaction or dissatisfaction depending on the expectations of the individual. According to process theories there is a significant relationship between human psychology and certain variables such as personality, values, attitudes and expectations that may affect the degree of job satisfaction of an individual. The researcher will deal with the equity and valence theories.

### **The equity theory**

The equity theory deals with the process of social comparison or exchange of reward. Social relationships can be regarded as exchange processes where an individual performs a specific act in exchange for a specific expected reward. It is because in work people never remains a passive observers rather they observe and learn that certain actions lead to certain reactions, and that leads them how they behave. It is the general suggestion of the equity theory that the way people evaluate their jobs is largely influenced by their perceived treatment in comparison to others in a similar situation (Sell & Shipley, 1979, p.59). People always calculate the value of their contributions at work, and how their contributions should be rewarded. They expect a fair treatment in relation to their contributions. People always have high regard about their contribution in a workplace and they consider their contribution as a profitable input. There are various kinds of inputs like educational performances, experiences, skills, IQ, training, age and effort etc. Different people recognize different inputs and whenever two individuals exchange their inputs, there is a possibility that one or both will feel that the exchange was in equitable. The important characteristic of an input is that it must be relevant.

So it can be said that what people receive as a reward for their efforts is regarded as an outcome. For school principals, the rewards or outcomes like salary, opportunity to learn, physical privileges are the main outcomes of job satisfaction. It is believed that if the outcome befits the input, then equity or satisfaction has been reached. If an individual feels that the outcome is not equivalent to the input, then a state of inequity or dissatisfaction began. The state of equity or inequity is always based on an individual's perceived value of the input, and the value of the output in comparison to others. Inequity creates tension in an individual that causes job dissatisfaction.

There are different measures that an individual can take to reduce the tension caused by inequality. Some of the actions as indicated by Adams can be guided by their specific circumstances by altering the inputs, by altering the outcomes, by misrepresenting the inputs and outcomes, by quitting the job.

### **Expectancy/valence theory**

The expectancy/valence theory on the other hand, views individuals as thinking beings with beliefs and anticipations for the future. As such, the theory posits that human behavior is a result of some of the products determined by an individual's characteristics or internal forces and the perceived environment (Steers, 1979, p.210). The expectancy theory is based on the following assumptions:

- 1.The combination of individual and environmental factors determines the behavior. The specific needs of the people influenced by their experience in life. How an individual reacts depends on their work environment.
- 2.Different people place different values on the same things, as different people have different needs and goals.
- 3.People generally avoid the things which causes undesirable outcomes.

The expectations of the people that good performance will make them succeed and will be rewarded accordingly is the core of the expectancy theory. People perceive outcomes as related to behavior. They always look at possible outcomes to behavior before making choices, and will choose the most favorable outcome as a premise for their behavior (Roos, 2005, p.32; Thomas, 2000, p.10). The assumption is that people choose behaviors' based on the anticipated consequences or outcomes. Thus according to Lawler III (in Gruneberg, 1976, p.90), an employee's behavior is determined by two variables, namely:

1. Effort-reward probability: The probability of effort will lead to performance and performance will lead to reward or success.
2. Valance: valance is the value places by the individual's performance which results expected rewards in the form of salary, security, acceptance, satisfaction in self esteem and self actualization.

The theory explains how individuals do their jobs with a certain amount of effort, taking into consideration the probability that their performance will lead to a desirable outcome. The study will thus observe how principal's performance is linked to the rewards that they obtain.

### **Research method and data collection:**

The study followed both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This indicates that implementation of mixed methods strengthens the study at hand, as well as the internal validity of the research. The researcher used a quantitative approach in the first part of data collection for their study. The sample comprised of purposefully selected Secondary School principals. Principals were requested to complete a questionnaire. The questions were clustered together to address the

following variables: the nature of the work; physical working conditions; role conflict; recognition and self-actualization; salary; and interpersonal relations. The questionnaire consisted of open-ended structured questions meant to describe the daily activities in the working lives of a principal that brings about either satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

The second phase of the research was qualitative, with an aim to seek clarity on some of the observed trends from the results of the quantitative phase. The questions were related to the factors that somehow influence the job satisfaction of the school principals. Some of the questions that the principals were asked was to determine their expectations and experiences when they were first appointed and in subsequent years. Principals were also requested to give their views on the type of recognition principals get for the work they do. All interviews were recorded with permission from the respondents. The data was collected over a long period to ensure the reliability and validity of the results. This gave the researcher the opportunity to continually analyze data and compare and refine ideas.

## **RESULTS**

As highlighted by the process theories, the factors that influence job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction have been used as key elements for presentation of the results. The theories propound that the output should always benefit the input and the rewards should live up to expectations. It was used to measure the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of principals in both the quantitative and qualitative phases.

### ***Equity***

There is a positive correlation between general job satisfaction and salary. It means that the lower the salary the higher the level of job dissatisfaction and the higher the salary the lower the level of job dissatisfaction.

### ***Expectancy***

The principals had various expectations when they were first appointed which included - support from the Department of Basic Education; being able to address challenges; good remuneration, co-operation with others and guidance from role models. The reaction was different from each respondent based on experience, age and expectations. The study shows that the newer appointees felt that they were getting some form of support, while the principals with longer service felt that they were getting limited support from the Department.

### ***Valence***

Valence is the value and importance that an individual places on an expected outcome. All principals agreed that their work as principals is important.

In the qualitative data, the responses from the respondents show that they placed high value in working with learners, for example:

*“The fact that I am dealing with young minds, guiding them and advising them gives me such great pleasure.” (M)*

*“Developing the precious minds of African learners ignites a determination and passion for work.”*

*“When my learners have passed I get so happy.”*

## **DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS**

The study proves the equity and expectancy theories that job satisfaction of principals are in relation to what they bring to work and what they get in return as reward. In this study Principals perceived their experience, expertise and qualifications as valuable input. Most principals felt that the rewards they obtain as a form of output is not equitable to their input. The highest positive correlation seems to be between salary and job satisfaction. Principals have expressed their dissatisfaction with their salaries in this study. The lower the salary levels, the higher the job dissatisfaction. Principals in the study have compared their salaries to certain elements of their perceived job characteristics, such as the level of difficulty of the job, the time spent on the job and the responsibilities attached to the job and found a notable gap between their salaries and what is expected from them in terms of performance. Accordingly an increase in remuneration is expected by employees who undertake the increases in responsibilities. Principals in the study indicated how their responsibilities have increased and their work having become more complex, and yet their salaries were not commensurate with their responsibilities. This then creates what Pinter (2008) refers to as tension. The tension resulted in change in behavior, where a large number of principals felt de-motivated and commitment levels low due to what they regard as poor working conditions.

Age is regarded by principals as an input because with age comes experience and qualifications.

Principals in the study have indicated that although the extrinsic factors like salary, resources, and incentives are externally motivated and result in their job dissatisfaction, the intrinsic factors that are internally motivated are the ones keeping them in their jobs.

Behavior of the principals is influenced by their expectations that they place on intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Here behavior has been altered to reduce the imbalance.

In terms of results in schools is a source of concern for the government. School principals play a significant role in making sure that schools operate efficiently.

School managers play an important role in enhancing the job satisfaction of principals. The following recommendations were deduced from the study :

1. Recognize the effort and performance of the secondary school principals by external rewards.
2. The study shows that the remuneration package of principals is important for job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction.
3. Principals should be given autonomy to make decisions and operate their schools in the best way because principals are the ones with direct contact with the challenges that schools face, so their voice add real value to any discourse on education related matters.

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