Job Satisfaction:
An analysis of middle managers in the South African Police Service

Renate Bellingan -Timmer- (SAPS.)

The organised crime units in the South African Police Service (SAPS) have experienced major restructuring over the past two years. The impact which the restructuring would have on the middle managers was never determined This unique organisational situation provided the foundation for the consideration of measuring which factors would impact on the job satisfaction of middle managers.

The middle manager serves as an intermediary between top management and lower levels, and is influenced by organisational factors (the organisational climate, policies, and procedures) and individual factors (i.e. needs, abilities, role perception, and values). These factors cause the middle manager to develop a certain attitude towards his work and, given the effort he exerts, a certain level of performance will be reached. This performance is rewarded intrinsically and/or extrinsically and, if the reward is equitably perceived, the middle manager will experience feelings of satisfaction which would impact positively on the management of lower levels in the organisation, thereby increasing overall work efficiency.

Keywords: Job-satisfaction, middle managers, restructuring.

INTRODUCTION

Work satisfaction can be defined as an affective or emotional response towards various facets of an employee's work (Lancero and Gerber, 1995: 46). The probable causes of this work satisfaction include status, supervision, peer relationships, job content, wages and other extrinsic rewards, promotion and physical conditions of work, and possibly organisational structure. Conversely, organisational structure can also be the source of dissatisfaction (Spector,1997: 2).

The bureaucratic organisational structure defines work relationships along structured formal hierarchical lines, which are guided by rules and regulations to ensure standardised behaviour. This type of management approach promotes efficient performance of routine organisational activities, while simultaneously eliminating subjective judgement by management and employees. This structure ignores the importance of people and interpersonal relationships and power is one of the major building blocks of the management style (Bateman & Snell, 2001: 42).

The role of policing in the changing and democratic South Africa is both demanding and challenging and a healthy and satisfied workforce is an essential ingredient in the achievement of excellence in policing standards. The middle manager in the SAPS is located in the organisation's hierarchy between top-level managers and frontline (tactical/operational) managers. They are responsible for the translation of the general goals and plans developed by strategic managers into more specific objectives. The majority of these officers had already attained certain ranks while they were members of the former South African Police (SAP). Their style of policing then was predominately autocratic. Policing was selective and in general it was perceived to be the apartheid arm of the former government. The first democratic elections of 1994 ushered in a Constitution, which sought to democratise policing in a manner, which would be accountable and responsive to the needs of the community while upholding the bill of rights.

In the new bureaucratic SAPS, the middle manager is constantly placed under pressure from top management to bring crime levels down and from junior management to find the necessary resources to accomplish the crime reduction strategy. It is therefore necessary to

evaluate what factors influence these managers' job satisfaction levels in the new SAPS, as satisfied managers will be able to better cope with the pressures exerted by top and junior management for increased overall efficiency.

OBJECTIVE OF THE ARTICLE

The primary objective of this article is to investigate the factors that play a role in the satisfaction amongst middle managers in a bureaucratic organisation. These factors can then be applied to middle managers in the SAPS to investigate how they can be used to increase their satisfaction and subsequent efficiency and effectiveness in their roles in the new democratic police department.

DEFINING JOB SATISFACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF POLICING

Due to the fact that the SAPS is a parliamentary organisation, leadership is primarily demonstrated through command and control. This style of leadership, which could be deemed to represent a bureaucracy, is restrictive in nature in that it limits interaction between employees and management.

Any organisation, which is driven by people, would need to consider their people as their most valuable asset (Tozi, Rizzo and Carroll, 1990: 137). The SAPS, being a law enforcement agency, is considered to be personnel- intensive, thus the well-being of every employee should be a matter of concern for all managers. The nature of police work is also considered to be rather stressful as compared to other fields of work therefore particular attention needs to be given to the emotions of employees, as well as to the understanding of how these emotions manifest themselves in the performance and attitudes of police officers.

The greatest challenge for many South African organisations is to make the organisation attractive to employees. People look at the corporate culture, lifestyle issues, the forward thinking of the top team, and how they fit into the overall picture. People are attracted by the calibre of persons/managers working for an organisation (Bennett, 2001).

According to Drucker (1961: 122), the middle manager is a crucial asset in the bureaucratic organisation since he is the buffer between the strategic direction given by top management and the operational performance of the lower levels in the organisation. Figure 1 demonstrates this relationship.

Job satisfaction amongst middle managers is defined in this article in terms of a conceptual framework, which represents the middle manager as an intermediary between top management and lower levels. Top management creates the organisational climate, policies and procedures within a given organisational structure (Robbins 1987: 232). According to Dawies and Lofquist (1984: 63), the factors which impact on the middle manager and are inherent to the individual, are needs, abilities, role perception and values. The middle manager would develop a certain attitude towards his work and given the effort he exerts, a certain level of performance will be reached. This performance is rewarded intrinsically and/or extrinsically, which requires the middle manager to evaluate the reward. Given the fact that the reward is equitably perceived, the middle manager will experience feelings of satisfaction which would impact positively on the management of lower levels in the organisation.

Porter and Lawler (1968: 178) have found that those types of needs that could be primarily satisfied by intrinsic rewards (i.e. the higher order needs such as autonomy and self-actualisation) are more likely to produce attitudes about satisfaction that are significantly related to performance than are needs which can be primarily satisfied by extrinsic rewards (i.e. social and security needs). Top management must be in touch with the feelings of middle managers to enable them to gauge whether the policies that they have put in place are in fact leading to the desired satisfaction levels with the resulting performance pay-off.

According to Whisenand (1971: 231), satisfied and sufficiently rewarded managers are more

Figure 1: CONCEPTUAL JOB SATISFACTION FRAMEWORK FOR MIDDLE MANAGERS
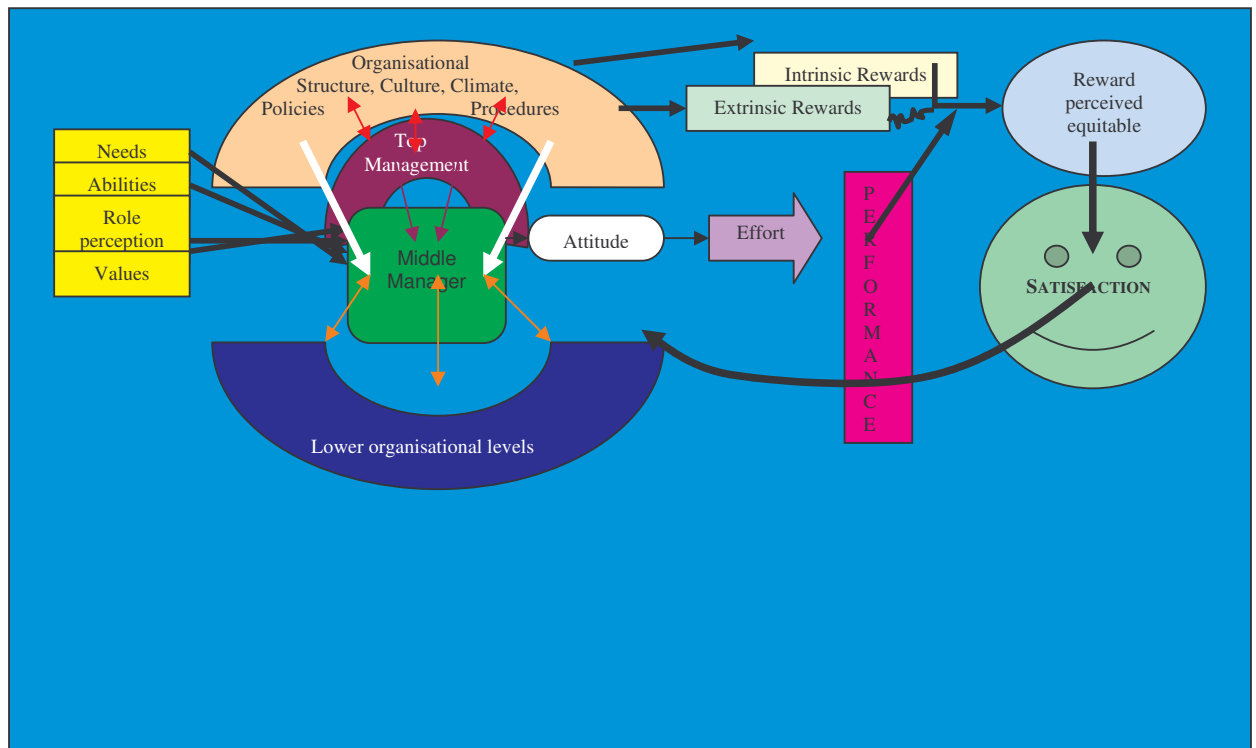
Source: Adapted from Porter and Lawler (1968: 165).

effective in servicing lower managers and subsequent front-line employees/officers (this includes being more understanding of and attentive to individual needs). This, combined with their satisfaction in their roles, projects a favourable image of the SAPS to current and potential employees and increases desire to work for the organisation.

The Conceptual Framework For Job Satisfaction Of The Middle Managers

The middle manager has certain needs, abilities, values, as well as perceptions of his role in the organisation. All these characteristics have an influence on the attitude, which the middle manager will display towards his work, and this affects the effort that the middle manager will spend in reaching the organisational goals of the organisation. This effort will result in performance, which the organisation can then reward intrinsically or extrinsically. When the middle manager perceives this reward as equitable he would experience a feeling of satisfaction with his work in general (Mintzberg, 1973: 43).

There might be certain factors which he would be more satisfied with than others, but overall he would be satisfied. These satisfaction factors are important for top management to have information on to enable them to be aware of how to improve the performance of the middle manager and thereby boost the performance of the entire organisation (SAPS).

What Are The Problems Faced By The Middle Manager In The Saps

Transformation and restructuring in the SAPS has left many officers de-motivated and uncertain about their future (one component of the restructuring has been the development of special organised crime units).   It falls to the middle managers to translate these changes

and resulting new policies and procedures into meaningful terms for frontline employees. The extent to which they will be successful in this is dependent on their own satisfaction.

Middle managers in the newly structured organised crime units feel that they are being bombarded with requests from lower managers and orders from top management. Various factors contribute towards their satisfaction and dissatisfaction; which ultimately determines the efficiency with which they perform their cohesive function between the two ranks in the SAPS.

RESEARCH METHOD

The sample used consisted of middle managers (Captains, Superintendents and Senior Superintendents) from all nine provincial offices as well as the head office component of the SAPS. A total of 235 questionnaires were distributed to all middle managers in the organised crime units nationally. 159 Questionnaires were returned, indicative of a response rate of 67 percent.

The Measuring Instrument

The measuring instrument used to determine the job satisfaction of the middle managers in the SAPS organised crime units, was the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (initially developed by Dawies and Lofquist, 1967): Long Form which was adapted for South African conditions by the researcher.

The MSQ measured job satisfaction according to 20 key factors, including: advancement opportunities; activity; ability utilisation; achievement; authority; company policies and practices; compensation; co-workers; creativity; independence; moral values; recognition; responsibility; security; social services; social status; supervision (technical and human relations); variety; and working conditions.

These key factors are representative of the organisational and individual factors that influence the level of job satisfaction of the middle managers in the SAPS.

FINDINGS

The MSQ factors which showed a significant difference between the respondents (middle managers in the SAPS organised crime division) in terms of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction were: advancement; activity; company policies and practices; compensation; independence; moral values, social service; social status; and supervision-human relations.

In addition, the findings indicated that the African speaking middle managers are more dissatisfied with the SAPS company policies and practices, as well as with their activity levels. It was also discovered that the middle managers with over five years of service in their current rank are more dissatisfied with their advancement and independence in the organisation. The middle managers with less than five years service are also more dissatisfied with their activity levels in the work, with the middle managers with five years and more service in the current rank being more satisfied with the supervision in terms of human relations.

The research results also indicated that the province respondents who are more dissatisfied in terms of general job satisfaction include Head Office, the Free State, Gauteng, and the Northern Cape. It was further revealed that the superintendent / senior superintendent grouping are more dissatisfied with the SAPS policies and practices as well as with moral values; and that the captains are more satisfied with the moral values prevalent in the organisation. In addition, the Afrikaans and English speaking middle managers are more dissatisfied with their advancement in the organisation, and the Afrikaans middle managers are more dissatisfied with the moral values prevalent in the organisation and more satisfied with the opportunity to render a social service to the community. Finally, the English middle managers are more satisfied with their social status in the community.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The MSQ factor of company rules and regulations represents one of the major organisational factors that contribute to job satisfaction/dissatisfaction. In the SAPS the rules and regulations, which are put in place, are multiple and governmental involvement in terms of legislation is large. The African language-speaking respondents were significantly more dissatisfied with the company policies and practices than the Afrikaans and English-speaking respondents. This can be explained due to the fact that in most cases the Afrikaans and English speaking respondents are those with the experience in terms of organised crime investigations and the African speaking respondents are being tasked by them to do certain parts of the investigation. The parts which the African speaking respondents are dealing with are being regulated by the Afrikaans and English speaking respondents in such a way that everything has to be done by the "book".
Rules and regulations often have to be bent in the organised crime environment to enable the successful investigation of a crime syndicate. The African speaking respondents feel that the restrictiveness of these rules are hampering their effectiveness, whereas the Afrikaans and English speaking respondents have learned through years of experience how not to get themselves into trouble by bending the rules slightly.

The inappropriate application of rules and regulations is one of the consequences of a bureaucracy and, in the organised crime environment, this is one of the major hampering factors to effectiveness. This hindrance consequently leads to reduced levels of job satisfaction (particularly amongst the African middle managers).
The findings also indicated significant differences between the advancement, activity, and supervision: human relations factors. A significant difference was found in terms of this dimension where the respondents with more than five years of service in their current rank were more satisfied than those with less than five years of service in their current rank in terms of the dimension of supervision: human relations. This can be attributed to the experience and knowledge, which the officers with more than five years experience in the rank have in the organised crime environment. They are capable of dealing with the operational side of the work very well and top management feels that if the work is done successfully and effectively they leave the middle managers alone. Those respondents with less than five years experience in their current rank are still targeted by management because they are closely supervised for possible mistakes which could be detrimental to an entire operation. This causes them to be dissatisfied with the way management handles them. In this instance communication would be of crucial importance to ensure a healthy flow of information from the lower levels up and from the top management down. This would facilitate open debate and could relay the fears and dissatisfaction that the younger officers in the rank have (Hochstedler and Dunning,1983:60).

The findings also uncovered a significant difference among the respondents regarding the moral values factor. Every person has a value system, which affects his choices and behaviour. Every middle manager will thus bring his own value system into the SAPS. This value system will define the way he reacts in certain situations, for example the way he solves problems, the way he deals with his personnel, and the way he deals with the public. The superintendent / senior superintendent group felt significantly more dissatisfied with the moral values in the organisation than the captains because at the level of superintendent / senior superintendent, a manager has a minimum of ten years of service. This means that he would have joined the SAPS before the democratic elections and the values, which were advocated by the former SAP, and those advocated by the new SAPS are different in many respects. One example is that in the former SAP, people were promoted according to their ability to abide by the rules of the SAP, now the criterion for promotion is more focussed on the way that a manager can impress an interviewing panel in a promotional interview: performance is subsequently not taken into account.

Perceptions of the social service MSQ factor also differed significantly among respondents. The Afrikaans speaking respondents were more satisfied with their chance to be of service to

others than their African language-speaking counterparts, especially the Nguni speaking grouping. The significant difference could be attributed to the perceptions which exist in their respective communities. For an Afrikaans community, it is an honourable job to be a police officer whereas for the African speaking communities, the perception of the SAPS is still associated with being the apartheid arm of government due to the atrocities, which the SAP was involved in before 1994.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE JOB SATISFACTION OF MIDDLE MANAGERS IN THE SAPS

The impact that top management has on the job satisfaction of middle managers must never be underestimated as numerous benefits can be reaped from satisfied middle managers. On the middle manager side, managers will: believe the organisation to be satisfying in the long run leading to tenure; care about the quality of his work leading to increased effectiveness in the work environment; be more committed to the organisation; and be more productive. On the other hand, lower levels will experience higher levels of job satisfaction due to the improved and more passionate guidance given by the middle managers. Overall, this creates a more productive and effective workforce for increased overall organisational efficiency.

In order to ensure this job satisfaction, the following recommendations, in terms of organisational factors, top management, values, needs, and role perception, can be made.

Organisational Factors

The general job satisfaction of Head Office, the Free State, Gauteng, and the Northern Cape was lower than that of other provinces due to employee alienation and the inappropriate application of rules and regulations. African speaking superintendents were also more dissatisfied with SAPS policies and practices than English-and-Afrikaans speaking respondents – which can be attributed to the nature of organised crime work that requires the occasional bending of rules and regulations. The following recommendations can be made to resolve these issues:

- Middle managers at all provincial levels should be tasked specifically to identify their role in terms of the organised crime objectives. Sufficient budget and resources for these projects should be allocated to perform these functions.
- Rules and regulations which hamper the task of organised crime middle managers must be identified and revisited to facilitate effective investigation and service delivery.
- Head Office middle managers should be given more executive power in terms of decision-making and implementation.

Top Management

The Afrikaans-and-English speaking respondents were more disappointed with advancement opportunities than their African counterparts, primarily due to affirmative action initiatives from top management. The African speaking respondents were also more dissatisfied with their activity levels due to a lack of sufficient knowledge and experience in the organised crime environment, caused by fast tracked promotions driven by affirmative action initiatives. The following recommendations according to this dimension include:

- Promotions should be done from within the organised crime environment as far as possible.
- Middle managers who perform well must be rewarded with roles on interesting projects.
- Seasoned organised crime investigators must be utilised as mentors for novice organised crime investigators and a specific mentorship programme with specific target dates must be implemented.

Values

The Afrikaans speaking respondents and the superintendent/senior superintendent group felt more dissatisfied with the moral values prevalent in the organised crime environment than the Nguni group and captains. The following recommendation can be made to resolve this source of dissatisfaction:

- Facilitation of the cultural change process which is taking place in the SAPS through effective work sessions in order to create unity amongst all work groups in the SAPS.

Needs

The English speaking managers were more satisfied with their status in the community than their Sotho counterparts as they were treated with more respect. Middle managers with over five years experience felt they received insufficient independence to act based on their experience and were subsequently dissatisfied.   The following recommendations can be made:

- Top management must afford more opportunities for experienced investigators to work on their own and delegate the responsibility and accountability of the task.
- Marketing programmes must be conducted in the communities in order to achieve an outcome where the profession of a police officer is respected as a high profile position.

Role Perception

The Afrikaans speaking middle managers were more satisfied with their chance to render a service to the community than their African counterparts, due to the negative perceptions held by African communities regarding the SAPS. This can be resolved through:

- The conduction of continuous public relations exercises to change the perception of the public towards the police.
- The enforcement of stringent measures for police officers to act in a professional manner.

CONCLUSION

Top management creates the organisational climate, policies and procedures within a given organisational structure. The factors that impact on the middle manager are inherent to the individual and include needs, abilities, role perception and values. The middle manager will develop a certain attitude towards his work and given the effort he exerts, a certain level of performance will be reached. This performance is rewarded intrinsically and/or extrinsically and, given that the reward is equitably perceived, the middle manager will experience feelings of satisfaction which would have a positive impact on lower levels within the organisation.

It is therefore of utmost importance that the SAPS takes cognisance of the tendencies of job satisfaction amongst middle managers (indicated by the 20 MSQ factors) in order to build a healthy organisational climate and a productive work force which can give effect to the mission of the SAPS "to create a safe and secure environment for all people in South Africa".

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