
Antecedents of Job Satisfaction. A Case of Universities in the Gauteng Province of South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The interest in job satisfaction has increased during the last two decades and many studies attempted to identify the various factors that influence the satisfaction of employees. Job satisfaction is a critical issue for every organization, higher institution inclusive because satisfied employees are reportedly known for good performance and are committed to their jobs. The academic staff within any higher education institutions are key resources and therefore, have a major role in achieving the objectives of the institution. Moreover, the performance of the academic staff depends on their job satisfaction which determines much of the students' success and has an impact on student learning. A quantitative method using Smart PLS was employed to test the relationships among the three hypotheses. The results showed that there is a positive relationship between the three proposed hypotheses. Based on the findings, recommendations will be made to both the university policy makers and the university academic staff for efficacy reasons. The proposed study is expected to have practical and theoretical implications to policy makers for the university and university employees. In addition, it will provide added insights and added new knowledge to the existing body of literature hitherto not studied extensively in South African Universities.

Keywords: Employee development, Employee communication, Employee motivation, Job satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Employee job satisfaction can be referred to as how individuals feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs (Hedge & Borman 2012). Employee job satisfaction is the extent to which individuals like or abhorrence their jobs and the degree to which they feel positively or negatively about various aspects of their jobs. The assumption behind this definition is that people are able to balance their specific satisfactions and dissatisfactions and arrive at a general degree of satisfaction with their jobs and also believed that specific individual and situational characteristics influence job satisfaction (Salazar, Pfaffenberg, & Salazar 2006).

Furthermore, for a business to be successful, organizations must consider the employees as the crucial source of productivity and also regarded the employees as an asset to the organization and once employees are satisfied with their job, the employees inclined to be more energetic, enthusiastic, inspired and committed to their work (Qasim, Cheema & Syed 2013). Employee job satisfaction is one key element of general satisfaction which gives employees motivation to perform and continue doing the job satisfactorily. Employee job satisfaction regulates the peace of mind, foster relaxation that leads to more enthusiasm and more innovative work (Malik, Wan, Dar, Akbar & Naseem 2013).

Given this background, this study work will be aimed at the influence of employees' development, motivation and communication towards job satisfaction a case study of university staff in the Gauteng province of South Africa and provides the research model and hypotheses development. Also the methodology, data analysis and results interpretation is provided at the end.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Development

Employee development is vital in maintaining and developing the capabilities of both individual employees and the organization as a whole (Lee & Bruvold 2003:981). When organisations invest in their employees in the form of developmental opportunities, employees tend to reciprocate in positive ways and desire to expend effort to benefit the organization. The employee development process involves identifying developmental goals, determining how to best accomplish those goals, and

evaluating the results (Hayes & Ninemeier 2009). Developmental activities focused on new learning opportunities and result in true employee development by helping the employee develop the confidence and ability to engage in more complex and challenging job tasks (Tansky & Cohen 2001; Maurer, Pierce, & Shore 2002, Costen, Johanson & Poisson 2010).

Training and development practices constitute one of the most important ways to assist employees in acquiring new knowledge and skills required to adhere to competitive standards (Tsai & Tai 2003). As gaining knowledge is vital for organisations, appropriate training and development practices are decisive factors in an organization's or institution's success (Martin, Pate & McGoldrick 1999). Lee and Bruvold (2003) proposed that investing in employee development may create a dynamic relationship where employees may work harder and called for research on other important outcomes such as in-role performance and helping behaviour. Employee development plays an important role in helping to develop employees' skills and to maintain employee effectiveness in an organization.

Motivation

Employee motivation is quite an important issue related to high corporate performance (Usugami & Park 2006). According to Robbins and Judge (2007), motivation can be referred to as a process that elucidates the intensity, direction and persistence of an individual to attain a target goal. Motivation in relation to work, it can be defined as the availability of an individual to work intensely and consistently in order to realize the organizational objectives, with the hope that the effort made will lead to the realization of some individual objectives. These individual objectives generated, finally by the needs that the individual feels, are veritable reasons determining him to act and work in organizations (Zlatea & Cucuib 2015). In order for an organization to perform well, individual motivation is very essential (Muslim, Dean & Cohen 2016).

Motivation is one of the major issues in behavioural sciences and based on the crucial position and important role of human resources in achieving organizational objectives (Barzoki Attafar, & Jannati 2008). Highly motivated employees appear to develop positive work-related attitudes and behaviours such as: they exhibit higher levels of organizational commitment (Pandey, Wright, & Moynihan 2008). Motivated employees are needed to ensure the operational health of each organization, because motivated employees help businesses to succeed, as they are more productive (Almacik, Alnaçik, Akçin, & Erat 2012). Hence, motivated employees can contribute to making an organisation more valuable and profitable (McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz 2014).

Communication

Communication role is regarded as an important factor in the understanding of the value of intangible organisational assets (Ritter 2003). Communication within organisations can be linked to higher levels of performance and service (Tourish & Hargie 2009:15) thereby generating communication capital (Malmelin 2007) and social capital (Lee 2009), grounded in organisational relationships. Communication buttresses organisational effectiveness since it contributes to positive internal relationships by enabling communication between senior managers and employees. Successful internal communication can promote employee awareness of opportunities and threats, and develop employee understanding of their organisation's changing priorities (Welch 2012).

According to Vercic, Vercic, and Sriramesh (2012:225), internal communication, often perceived as a synonym for intra-organizational communication, is quite often equated with employee communication. Internal communication has been consistently identified as a key area of communication practice, growing in importance (Zerfass, Tench, Verhoeven, Vercic, & Moreno 2010). The need for research in this area is emphasised by Hargie and Tourish (2009:419) who argue that internal communication is: 'increasingly recognized as a crucial variable in determining organizational success, and as a vital issue requiring further research'. Boxall and Purcell (2003:107) espoused that information and communication flows from top management usually increase to raise awareness of customer needs, quality and overall organization performance, and the aim is to gain higher levels of commitment to the work process, the end user and the organization as a whole.

Employee Job Satisfaction

Employee job satisfaction is the feelings and thoughts of employees about their work and place of work. In result, job satisfaction is all about to satisfy the one's needs in working place (Togia, Koustelios, & Tsigilis 2004). Job satisfaction is a specific job attitude relating to the reaction an

individual has to either their work overall or specific facets of the job (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller 2012). Employee job satisfaction has been shown to be an important outcome for organizations as it is related to the performance on the job (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton 2001; Riketta 2008). Job satisfaction is a result of employee's perception of how well his job provides those things that are viewed as important.

Furthermore, according to Khuong and Tien (2013:82) there is still no agreement in the definition of employee job satisfaction, employee job satisfaction can be understood as the ability of an employee to give an opinion about general emotion and their thinking forms about their job and workplace as the result of the comparison to others. Job satisfaction deals with the feelings that an individual has about his or her job. Organizational behaviour research has revealed that individuals who express high satisfaction in their jobs are likely to be more productive, have higher involvement and are less likely to resign than employees with less satisfaction (Qasim, *et al*, 2013). Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction does not only depends on the nature of the job, but it also depends on the expectation on what's the job supply to an employee (Hussami 2008:287).

Conceptual Model and Hypothesis Development

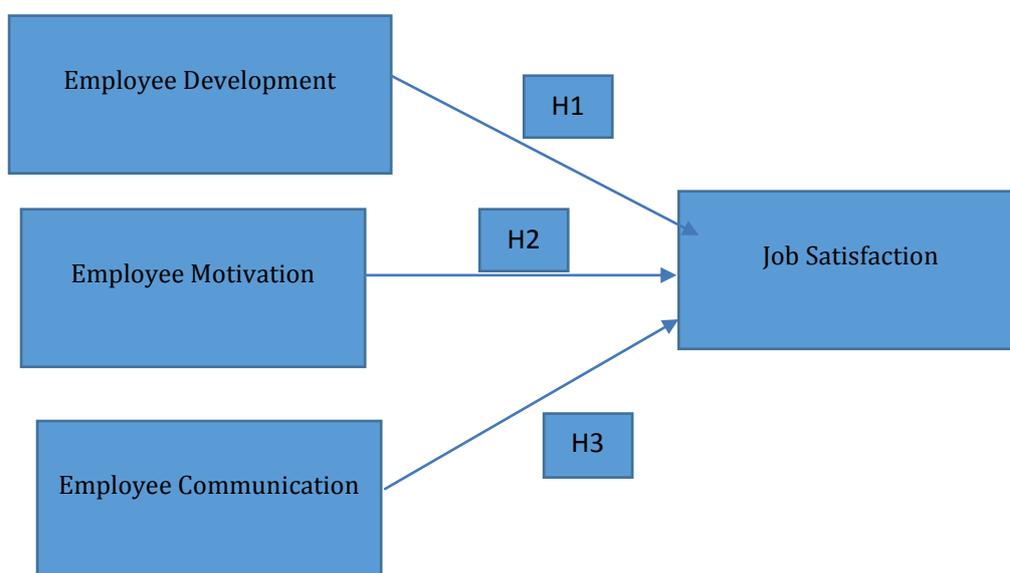


Figure1. Conceptual Model

Employee Development and Employee Job Satisfaction

The hypothesis developed for these concepts is based on the perceived effects employee development has on employee job satisfaction. Studies have shown that many directors does not recognize the real importance of employee development and its effect on job satisfaction. On the other hand some directors believe that by developing employees their authority will be reduced. According to Lee and Bruvold (2003: 985) employee development may result in increased job satisfaction for several reasons. Firstly, individuals may perceive the organization offering the employee development programmes as representing the organization's concern for their long-term growth. Secondly, development gives employees a greater sense of control over their career due to the opportunities to update old skills and gain new ones. Thirdly, having employee development programmes available in the organization improves employees' perceptions about their employer and increases employees' overall positive feeling towards the employer, which in turn may impact on job satisfaction.

Numerous studies have indicated that employee development positively affects levels of job satisfaction (Edgar & Geare 2005; Georgellis & Lange 2007). Therefore, it can be perceived that the level of job satisfaction is also affected by employee development. Employees who believe that dedicated organisations provide development opportunities for the benefit of the employees are expected to behave reciprocally (Eisenberger Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades 2001; Georgellis & Lange 2007).

Based on the above mentioned literature, this study posits that:

H1: *There is a positive relationship employee development and employee job satisfaction.*

Employee Motivation and Employee Job Satisfaction

According to Xie and Haidung (2013), job satisfaction is an individual's emotional response to his or her current job condition, while motivation is the driving force to pursue and satisfy one's needs. The time and the effort for performing work activities depend on employees' attitudes regarding the salary, relaxation, advantages and the impulse for working (Douglas & Morris 2006). Work motivation can be signified as a set of internal and external factors which initiate work behaviour and determine its direction, intensity and duration. Work motivation can be determined measuring job satisfaction and work performance.

Furthermore, for the employees to experience job satisfaction managers should focus attention on identifying the employees' needs and their requests regarding the characteristics of the work environment, in order to create a motivating workplace and to obtain high organizational outcomes (Seiler, Lent, Pinkowska, & Pinazza 2012). Motivation process and obtaining performance requires the correlation between necessities, aspirations and personnel's interests within the universities and achieving the objects and assignments completion, competences and responsibilities. The directors' role within the universities is to fulfil the organization's targets or objectives through its members. In order to obtain performance, the university managers have to motivate their employees, as motivation is a top priority for the university favourable climate (Zlatea & Cucuib 2015).

Based on the above mentioned literature, this study posits that:

H2: *There is a positive relationship employee motivation and employee job satisfaction.*

Employee Communication and Employee Job Satisfaction

Employee communication has been shown to increase job satisfaction and employee performance which result in organizational success (Ainspan & Dell 2000; Holtzhausen 2002). According to Fix and Sias (2006), employees who are more satisfied with their jobs believed that they had more opportunities for discussion with their superiors, more recognition of their opinions, and greater opportunities for self-disclosure. Miles, Patrick and King (1996) opines that both positive communication by seeking suggestions from subordinates, allowing member input on important decisions and upward openness in communication by providing members the opportunity to question a leader's instructions and disagree with the leader were positively related to member job satisfaction.

Numerous studies have linked employee communication and the degree to which employees are informed to job satisfaction and performance (Gray & Laidlaw 2002; Bartoo & Sias 2004; Rosenfeld, Richman, & May 2004; Zucker 2002; White, Vanc & Stafford 2010). Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002:487) stated that employees are more satisfied with information that helps them make sense of their situation by explaining how their jobs fit into the organizational mission, the organization's policies and plans, and the relationships with key constituencies in the organization's environment. Effective employee communication strengthens employees' identification with their organizations and contributes to organization's growth, facilitate engagement, building trust among the employees and sustained success (Smidts, Prunyn & van Riel 2001, Towers 2003, Grates 2006).

Based on the above mentioned literature, this study posits that:

H3: *There is a positive relationship employee communication and employee job satisfaction.*

Methodology

A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was used to describe the job satisfaction of employees and its relationship with three selected determinants, namely employee development, employee motivation and communication of employees. The study population was the academic workforce at Universities in the Gauteng province which includes Northwest University, Vaal University of Technology, University of Johannesburg and University of the Witwatersrand. Only those who are permanent employees and have been working there at least twelve months were included in this study population.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Measurement Instruments

Research scales were designed on the basis of previous work. Proper modifications were made in order to fit the current research context and purpose. Employee Development was measured using five-item scales adapted from Lee and Bruvold (2010). Employee motivation used a five-item scale measure adapted from Zamecnik (2014). Employee communication used a four-item scale measure adapted from White, Vanc and Stafford (2010). Job satisfaction was measured using a five-item scale, from Hasan and Kalidas (2015). Measurement scales were configured on a five-point Likert-type scale that was anchored by 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) in order to express the degree of agreement.

Sample Description

350 questionnaires were distributed to different Universities in the Gauteng Province in South Africa. 298 questionnaires were returned of which only 288 were usable. This yielded a valid response rate of 82%. Descriptive statistics in Table 1 show the gender, marital status, and age of higher education professional employees.

Table1. *Sample Demographic Characteristics*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	108	38%
Female	180	62%
Total	288	100%
Age	Frequency	Percentage
≤30	160	56%
31-60	80	28%
≥ 60	48	16%
Total	288	100%
Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	105	36%
Single	183	64%
Total	288	100%

As indicated in Table 1, more females participated in the study. They constituted 62% of the total population. This study shows that males only constituted 38% of the total respondents. In terms of the age groups of respondents, individuals who were less than 30 years of age were the greatest number (56%) in the study, followed by those aged between 31 and 60 (28%). Respondents who are married constituted 36% of the sample while those who were single, which constituted 64% of the sample.

Psychometric Properties of the Measurement Scale

Psychometric properties of the measurement scale are reported in Table 2, which presents the research constructs, Cronbach alpha test, composite reliability (CR), Average variance extracted (AVE) and item loadings.

Table2. *Measurement Accuracy Assessment and Descriptive Statistics*

Research constructs	Descriptive statistics*		Cronbach's test		C.R.	AVE	Item Loading
	Mean	SD	Item-total	α Value			
Employee Development (ED)							
ED 1			0.523	0.700	0.700	0.655	0.585
ED 2			0.598				0.605
ED 3	2.58	1.609	0.709				0.756
ED 4			0.609				0.694
ED 5			0.633				0.733
Employee Motivation (MN)							
MN 1			0.519				0.619
MN 2			0.611				0.627
MN 3	3.10	1.104	0.703	0.658	0.658	0.601	0.823
MN 4			0.692				0.726
MN 5			0.795				0.807

Employee communication (CN)							
CN 1			0.533				0.583
CN 2			0.670				0.681
CN 3	3.02	1.355	0.591	0.795	0.795	0.693	0.751
CN 4			0.601				0.791
Job Satisfaction (JS)							
JS 1			0.634				0.691
JS 2			0.625				0.660
JS 3	2.28	1.739	0.596	0.792	0.792	0.655	0.656
JS 4			0.705				0.820
JS 5			0.701				0.770

ED=Employee Development; MN= Employee motivation; CN=Employee communication; JS= Job Satisfaction

The lowest item to total loading observed was MN 1 with 0.519 and the highest was MN 5 with 0.795. The lowest factor loading observed was CN 1 with 0.583 and the highest is MN 3 with 0.823. This shows that the measurement instruments are valid. The lowest Cronbach alpha was 0.700 and the highest was 0.795 which shows that the constructs were internally consistent or reliable and explained more than 70% of the variance. All composite reliability values were above the recommended minimum of 0.7 (Bagozzi & Yi 1988), which further attests to the reliability of the measurement instrument used in the study. One of the methods used to ascertain the discriminant validity of the research constructs was the evaluation of whether the correlations among latent constructs were less than 0.60. These results are reported in Table 3.

Table3. *Inter-Construct Correlation Matrix*

VARIABLES	ED	MN	CN	JS
ED	0.555			
MN	0.493	0.593		
CN	0.345	0.560	0.455	
JS	0.479	0.491	0.445	0.564

ED=Employee Development; MN= Employee motivation; CN=Employee communication; JS= Job Satisfaction

A correlation value between constructs of less than 0.60 is recommended in the empirical literature to confirm the existence of discriminant validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). As can be observed from Table 3, all the correlations were below the acceptable level of 0.60. The diagonal values in bold are the Shared Variances (SV) for the respective research constructs. The Shared Variance is expected to be greater than the correlation coefficients of the corresponding research constructs. Drawing from Table 2 and 3 above, the results further confirm the existence of discriminant validity. To ascertain convergent validity, the factor loadings were considered in order to assess if they were above the recommended minimum value of 0.5 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The factor loadings for scale items (Table 2) were above the recommended 0.5, which indicated that the instruments were valid and converging well on the constructs that they were expected to measure.

Path Modelling Results

After confirming the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments (reported in Table 2), the study proceeded to test the proposed hypotheses. In total there are three hypotheses that are tested. In the path model, Employee Development (ED); Employee Motivation (MN) and Employee Communication (CN) are the predictor variables and Job Satisfaction (JS) is the outcome/dependent variable. Figure 2 provides the proposed hypotheses and the respective path coefficients. The same results of the path coefficients are tabulated in Table 2 depicting the Item to Total Correlations, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR) and Factor Loadings.

Path Model Results and Factor Loadings

Below is Figure 2, indicating the path modelling results and as well as the item loadings for the research constructs. In the figure, ED stand for Employee development; MN is the acronym for Employee motivation; CN stand for Employee communication; JS is the acronym for Job satisfaction.

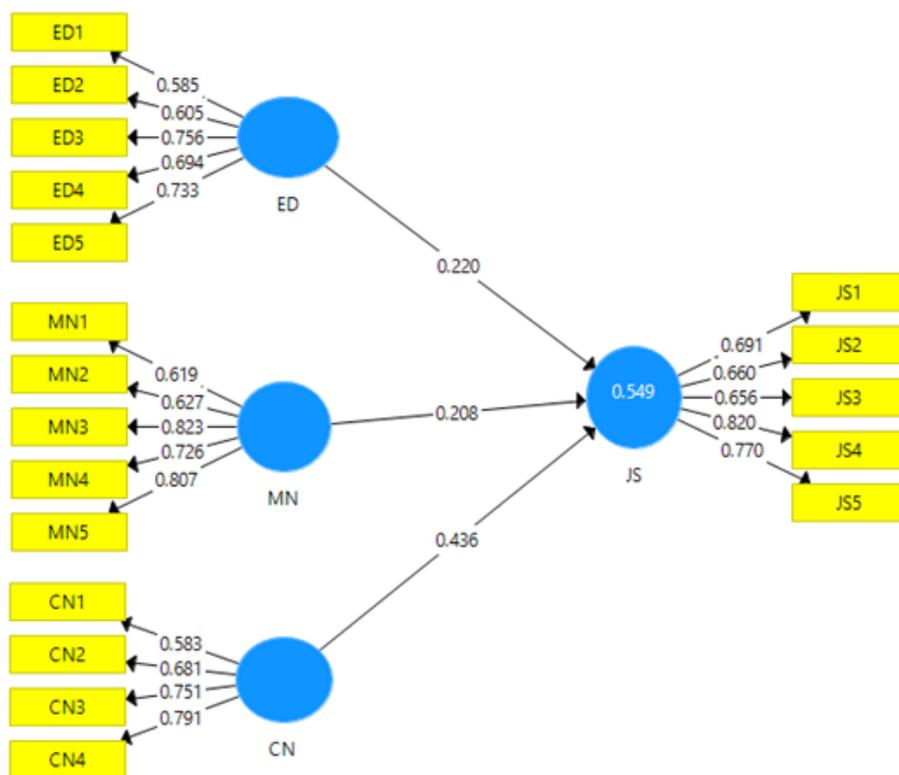


Figure2. Path Modelling and Factor Loading Results

Table4. Results of structural equation model analysis

Path	Hypothesis	Path coefficients (β)	T- Statistics	Decision on Hypotheses
Employee Development (ED) → Job Satisfaction (JS)	H1	0.220 ^a	3.483	Accept/ Significant
Employee Motivation (MN) → Job Satisfaction (JS)	H2	0.208 ^a	2.906	Accept/ Significant
Employee Communication (CN) → Job Satisfaction (JS)	H3	0.436 ^a	6.148	Accept/ Significant

^aSignificance Level $p < .10$; ^bSignificance Level $p < .05$; ^cSignificance Level $p < .01$.

Table 4 presents the three hypothesised relationships, path coefficients, the t-statistics and the decision criteria. The value of the t-statistic indicates whether the relationship is significant or not. A significant relationship is expected to have a t-statistics that is above 2. Drawing from the results provided in Table 4, three of the hypothesised relationships (H1, H2 and H3) were statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper was to examine the influence of employee development, employee motivation and employee communication on job satisfaction in Universities in the Gauteng province of South Africa. The first hypothesis stated that employee development has a positive influence on job satisfaction of employees. In this study, this hypothesis was supported. It can be observed in Figure 2 and Table 4 that employee development exerted a positive influence ($r = 0.220$) and was statistically significant ($t = 3.483$) in predicting job satisfaction of employees. This result implies that employee development directly influence job satisfaction of employees in a positive and significant fashion. The higher the level of employee development, the higher the level of job satisfaction of employees.

The second hypothesis suggested that employee motivation has a positive influence on job satisfaction of employees. This hypothesis was supported in this study. Figure 1 and Table 4, indicate that employee motivation H2 was supported. Employee motivation exerted a positive influence ($r = 0.208$) on job satisfaction of employees and was statistically significant ($t = 2.906$). This result denotes that employee motivation is positively and significantly related to job satisfaction of employees. Thus higher levels of employee motivation will lead to higher levels of job satisfaction of employees.

The third hypothesis, which advanced that employee communication exerts a positive influence on job satisfaction of employees was supported and accepted in this study. It is reported in Figure 1 and Table 4 that H3 employee communication exerts a positive ($r=0.436$) influence on job satisfaction of employees and that this influence is statistically significant ($t=6.148$). This result suggests that employee communication has a direct positive effect on job satisfaction of employees. Thus, the more effective the communication, the greater the positive job satisfaction of employees.

Employee communication ($r=0.436$) emerged as the highest scoring construct amongst the three factors influencing job satisfaction of employees. Perhaps, this result could be attributed to the fact that most higher education professions perform better and service delivery quality is at its peak when they have a good communication network with each other and management. Thus, in order to enhance good job satisfaction of employees, greater emphasis should be placed on employee communication which should be very efficient and effective at whatever cost.

Limitations and Future Research Direction

A number of limitations were observed during this research. First, the study was restricted to four factors only; namely Employee development, Employee motivation, Employee communication and Job satisfaction. Future research could also include the perceptions of students as well. This could provide a basis for comparing the views of both students and employees. Second, the results are based on a small sample of 288 respondents, which makes it difficult to generalise the results to other contexts of higher education institutions. Future studies could make use of amplified sample sizes in order to get views that are more representative. Since this study used a quantitative approach, future studies could also use a mixed method approach so that in depth views of higher education professionals can also be captured.

CONCLUSIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The study validates that factors such as employee development, employee motivation and employee communication are instrumental in stimulating job satisfaction. The study further validates that employee attitude towards work is good when the motivation and employee development is good and effective and efficient communication.

The study has both theoretical and managerial implications. Theoretically, this study makes a noteworthy progression in organisational behaviour theory by methodically examining the interplay between employee development, employee motivation and employee communication in stimulating employee job satisfaction. In this manner, the study is an important contributor to the existing literature on this subject. The study also underwrites a new direction in the research on consumer behaviour by opening up a discussion on the importance of organisational behaviour practices in the development and improvement of job satisfaction in Universities in the Gauteng province of South Africa.

On the practical front, employee development, employee motivation and employee communication exerted a positive influence on employee job satisfaction and improvements in each of these three factors could stimulate higher job satisfaction in Universities in South Africa. Employee development can be improved by paying salaries above poverty datum line and equity issues should be addressed. Also on the job training and outside training should be emphasized. Employees can be motivated by providing job security and other forms of remuneration like free education and fair policies. Communication can be improved by reducing the barriers to communication. Job satisfaction can be improved by avoiding organisational politics and good working environment.

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