



# **JOB DISSATISFACTION INFLUENCE ON CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYEE ABSENTEEISM AND TURNOVER**

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This study examines the influence of job dissatisfaction on absenteeism and employee turnover. This is because it has been observed that many construction projects are facing challenges relating to the delivering of defective work, delayed project completion and cost overruns in most cases; and job dissatisfaction has been identified as one of the factors contributing to these challenges encountered in the construction industry. The study was conducted with reference to existing theoretical literature (secondary data) and the use of a structured questionnaire survey for the primary data collection. The questionnaire survey was distributed amongst construction professional in the South African construction industry. The findings from the questionnaire survey revealed that the aspects associated with job dissatisfaction which brings about absenteeism and employee low productivity include: salary issues, incentives, professional growth, working relationship as well as enforcement of fair policies. These factors were rated by the study respondents as the most influential factors of absenteeism and employee turnover in the South African construction industry. This study contribute to the body of knowledge relating to the influence of job dissatisfaction on absenteeism and employee turnover in the South African construction industry.

*Keywords:* Construction Psychology, Employee turnover, Job satisfaction.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Within each and every sector in South Africa, new companies are established every year and this may lead to an increase in competition within those sectors. Therefore, it is the manager's task to ensure that employees within a given organization have the drive to perform their tasks to reach the organizational goals in order to have a competitive advantage over other organizations. According to Deeprose (2003), as a manager, there are many ways that one can use to create an environment where employees are most likely to feel motivated to take actions that contribute to organizational goals. However, senior management in a given organization tends to ignore the issue of motivation of employees in the workplace. Moreover, some find it difficult to address the issue of employee motivation in their organization since it entails studying behavior of each and every employee and identifying causes of such behaviors.

Bernold and AbouRizk (2010) emphasized that construction is performed by different employees including laborers, engineers, specialists, etc. which have their own reasons to perform in a particular way with varying degrees of energy and enthusiasm. The ability to have a comprehensive understanding of basic things that keep an employee motivated thereby improving

their level of satisfaction, will have a significant positive impact in their performance of job tasks. The study illustrates that when employees are happy and satisfied in their jobs, their level of motivation is high and they perform at peak all the time (Tyilana 2005).

Moreover, an employee will only be committed to their job if they are happy about their duties and feeling content with rendering job tasks. If employers want to inspire people to give their best and most committed effort in support of the organizational goals, they should relate those goals to something more compelling than simple satisfaction, something that people spend a lifetime pursuing: happiness (Walters 2010). In their book, Bernold and AbouRizk (2010) argue that personal desires are the fundamental motivation behind all human actions. In that regard, it can be said that individual needs, serve as a form of motivation that will determine a level of satisfaction an employee may have with regard to their job. This is because Lavender (1996) has argued that an individual's behavior is affected by their motivation. Hence, it is important to fulfill those needs as this will help to stimulate an individual's interest in their job and it will in turn serve as motivation.

In the research conducted by CIDB (2013), it was observed that many construction projects in South Africa are faced with challenges such as client's dissatisfaction with work rendered by contractors in respect of delivering defective work not completed within budget and on time. This may be due to experiences of absenteeism and employee turnover within a given project. As a result; these two factors according to Rojas (2008) tend to reduce productivity as construction industry has traditionally paid little attention to these problems.

Rojas (2008) mentioned job satisfaction among other factors as determinants of absenteeism and turnover. In that regard, Schaffer (2001) argued that in order to achieve high productivity, members of management as well as the entire workforce need to be highly motivated, positive, and totally committed. It is because of the aforementioned challenges that this paper attempts to explore the concept of motivation and job satisfaction. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore the determinants of job satisfaction in the construction industry as well as the influence of factors leading to dissatisfaction on absenteeism and employee turnover. Firstly, this paper starts with an overview of determinants of job satisfaction. Subsequently, a brief discussion of the influence of dissatisfaction on absenteeism and employee turnover will be provided.

## **2 INFLUENCE OF JOB DISSATISFACTION ON ABSENTEEISM AND EMPLOYEE TURNOVER**

Labor costs for contractors can reach as much as 40% to 60% of total construction costs (Rojas 2008). In that regards, it is of paramount importance that contractors ensure that each employee has the ability to perform their tasks to the contractor's expectations, as their performance contributes to productivity. According to Rojas (2008), research has found that absenteeism and employee turnover reduce productivity, while the construction industry is traditionally paying little attention to these problems. In order to address this issue, contractors need to understand why employees are deciding not to come to work and the reason for some of them quitting their jobs.

According to Hadebe (2001), when employees are dissatisfied with their jobs, they try to find ways of reducing exposure. That is, to stay away from the jobs. In addition, Rojas (2008) has informed that researchers agree that companies can divide the factors causing absenteeism and turnover into controllable and uncontrollable. Controllable factors include: site management capabilities, teamwork, excessive rework, and job satisfaction (Rojas 2008). Similarly, Horner and Talhouni (1984) identified factors such as unsafe working conditions and lack of job security as having effect on absenteeism.

In addition, job satisfaction also emerges as an important factor in turnover (Rojas 2008). Therefore, it can be deduced that job dissatisfaction have an influence on absenteeism and employee turnover. This is because, Rojas (2008) has identified factors such as organizational factors (pay, company size, responsibilities, tasks, and worker commitment) and worker's personal factors (age and tenure) as having effects on absenteeism and employee turnover.

Furthermore, the work of Sichani (2010) considered the following as the top 10 causes of absenteeism: long commuting hours / distance to jobsite, transportation issues to site, lack of recognition/incentives; personal safety concerns, child care, illness/school, other family responsibility, already planned time off, bad weather for working, personal appointment, personal injury/illness. Whilst, Cheney (1984) identified the following (structure, participation, consideration, and feedback) as the organizational factors that affected productivity and job satisfaction. Likewise, Tnay *et al.* (2013) concluded that pay and supervisory support act as a crucial factor in affecting employee's turnover intention. In this regard, it is important that employees get involved in the decision making process, thereby making them to feel like part of the team as this is important in reducing absenteeism and employee turnover within the organization.

### **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted with reference to existing theoretical literature and the use of a structured questionnaire survey. The existing literatures were obtained from published and unpublished sources. Since the population surveyed was already identified, the researcher adopted the stratified sampling. In this type of random sampling, a researcher first divides the population into subpopulations (strata) on the basis of supplementary information and subsequently, the researcher then draws a random sample from each subpopulation (Neuman 2000). This allows each respondent within each subpopulation to have equal chance to be selected. The population comprised of professional team members within both consulting and contracting firms, working in Johannesburg, South Africa. The respondents were randomly selected from each subpopulation to make up a sample of 50. However, due to time limitation and low response rate, the final sample size used for analysis purpose, based on the acceptable questionnaires completed by the respondents, was 40. This was considered adequate for the analysis based on the assertion by Moser and Kalton (1971) that the result of a survey could be considered as biased and of little value if the return rate was lower than 30–40%. The data presentation and analysis made use of frequency distributions and percentages of all the respondents.

#### **3.1 Mean Item Score (MIS)**

A five point Likert scale was used to determine the causes of construction project cost overruns in Gauteng province with regards to the identified factors from the reviewed literature. The adopted scales was as follows:

1 = Strongly disagreed; 2 = Disagreed; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agreed and 5 = Strongly agreed

The five-point scale was transformed to mean item score (MIS) for each of the factors of causes of cost overruns as assessed by the respondents. The indices were then used to determine the rank of each item. The ranking made it possible to cross compare the relative importance of the items as perceived by the respondents. This method was used to analyze the data collected from the questionnaires survey. The mean item score (MIS) was calculated for each item as follows;

$$MIS = \frac{1n1 + 2n2 + 3n3 + 4n4 + 5n5}{\sum N} \quad (1)$$

Where: n1= Not at all influential; n2= Slightly /Somewhat influential; n3= Neutral; n4= Very influential; n5= Extremely influential; n1= Not important at all; n2= Unimportant; n3= Neutral; n4= Important; n5= Very important; N = Total number of respondents

After mathematical computations, the factors were then ranked in descending order of their mean item score (from the highest to the lowest). An internal consistence check was conducted using the consistence and reliability statistic measure of the Cronbach's Alpha.

## 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Biographical Data

The findings from the analyzed questionnaire revealed that 52.5% of the respondents were female while 47.4% were male. Also, in terms of age group, it was found that that the majority (47.5%) of respondents were between the age of 21 and 25 years; 20.0% were between 26-30 years; 17.5% were between 31-35 years with 17.50%; 2.5% were between 41-45 years; and 5.0% were above 55 years. Furthermore, the findings reveal that 50.0% of the respondents have diploma, while 45.0% have bachelor's degree, and 5.0% have master's degree. Findings relating to the years of experience revealed that 7.5% have less than a year of experience, 62.5% have 1-5 years of experience, 17.5% have 6-10 years of experience, 5.0% have 11-15 years of experience and 17.5% have more than 16 years of experience. Lastly, of 40 respondents that participated, 70% of them were quantity surveyors, 5% were construction managers, 5% were construction project managers, 2.5% were structural engineers, 10% were construction project managers and 7.5% were architects.

### 4.2 Influence of Job Dissatisfaction on Absenteeism and Employee Turnover

Table 1 reveals that the first seven highly ranked factors having influence on absenteeism, are: too low wage level, lack of incentive; lack of development opportunities, not having enough work to do, lack of enforcement of fair policies for all; lack of monitoring of being absent; lack of motivation to come to work. On the other hand, personal safety concern, poor relation with co-workers, lack of clear target (deadlines), lack of recognition from boss; repetitive work, poor working condition, and unchallenging work, were ranked the least. Regardless of some factors being ranked the least, it should be noted that all factors recorded mean item score falling under "somewhat influential". Meaning that, all factors associated with dissatisfaction were perceived to have influence on absenteeism.

Table 1. Job dissatisfaction-related factors that contribute to absenteeism.

Job satisfaction related factors	MIS	SD	Rank
Too low wage level	2.50	1.18	1
Lack of development opportunities	2.48	1.01	2
Lack of incentive	2.48	1.06	2
Not having enough work to do	2.48	1.09	2
Lack of enforcement of fair policies for all	2.45	0.96	3
Lack of monitoring of being absent (feeling invisible)	2.43	1.03	4
Lack of motivation to come to work	2.4	0.98	5
Personal safety concerns	2.38	1.23	6
Poor relation with co-workers	2.33	0.97	7
Lack of clear target (deadlines)	2.31	1.08	8

Lack of recognition from boss	2.25	1.03	9
Repetitive work	2.23	1.03	10
Poor working conditions	2.18	1.10	11
Unchallenging work	2.13	0.97	12

These findings are supported by the work of Horner and Talhouni (1984), where factors such as unsafe working conditions and lack of job security were identified as factors that influences employee absenteeism. Similarly, Cheney (1984) identified organizational factors such as participation, consideration, feedback; while Rojas (2008) identified pay, company size, responsibilities, tasks and worker commitment as factors that influence absenteeism in the construction industry. As such, it can be deduced that construction job dissatisfaction have negative influence on absenteeism. According to Hadebe (2001), when employees are dissatisfied with their jobs, they try to find ways of reducing their exposure to them, and this will be to stay away from those jobs.

### 4.3 Factors that have Influence on Employee Turnover

Table 2 indicates that the first seven highly ranked as the influencers of employee turnover associated with dissatisfaction in the construction industry are: better benefits package elsewhere; lack of development opportunities; unchallenging work; poor relationship with boss; lack of recognition from boss; and lack of enforcement of fair policies for all. On the other hand, inadequate resources, lack of advanced technology, poor relationship with co-workers, safer site elsewhere, and clean job versus dirty job, were ranked the least.

Table 2. Job dissatisfaction-related factors that contribute to employee turnover.

<b>Job satisfaction related factors</b>	<b>MIS</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Better benefits package elsewhere	3.23	1.06	1
Lack of development opportunities	2.87	1.08	2
Poor relationship with boss	2.64	1.01	3
Unchallenging work	2.64	1.18	3
Lack of recognition from boss	2.59	1.04	4
Lack of enforcement of fair policies for all	2.5	1.13	5
Inadequate resources	2.44	1.10	6
Lack of advanced technology	2.08	1.02	7
Poor relationship with co-workers	2.00	1.00	8
Safer site elsewhere	1.83	0.98	9
Clean job versus dirty job	1.82	1.06	10

In support of these findings, Tnay *et al.* (2013) concluded that pay and supervisory support act as a crucial factors affecting employee’s turnover intention; while Sichani (2010) identified lack of recognition/incentives as other factors that influence employee turnover. Also, the findings were supported by the work of Rojas (2008) that, company, responsibilities, tasks and worker commitment, better benefit package elsewhere, lack of adequate tools and equipment, are factors that have a negative influence on employee turnover.

## 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper explored the determinants of job satisfaction in the construction industry as well as the influence of factors leading to dissatisfaction on absenteeism and employee turnover. The

findings revealed that, aspects associated with job dissatisfaction, such as: salary, incentives, professional growth, working relationship as well as enforcement of fair policies, were the most influential factors of absenteeism and employee turnover in the South African construction industry. Hence, it is recommended that, employers should from time to time, assign employees to different types of projects, such as residential, commercial, and civil works amongst others to gain a wider experience. This will help equip employees with different experiences; thereby ensuring continuous professional and personal development. Also, it is crucial for employees to be involved in projects from the start until completion. This will allow employers to have the holistic opportunity to monitor the performance and contribution of employees involved in such project. As a result, the employer personal's responsible for mentorship will be able to give feedback on employee's performance where necessary. This can assist with the rewarding of employee's through promotion (associated with salary increase), incentive bonus or an award as a way of appreciation. Also, the employers should improve the working environment to enable employees to perform tasks with comfort. This can be achieved by modifying and improving working environment through provision of adequate lighting, comfortable temperatures and ventilation, as well as access to eating area.

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