

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OFFICE COMPETENCIES AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT PERSONNEL

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between office competencies and job satisfaction among the Administrative Support Personnel (ASP) in Katsina State tertiary institutions. Office competencies required to operate as ASP in Nigerian context are considered. These needed competencies are the email, internet, word processing, spreadsheet, database, communication and teamwork. Satisfied workers tend to put in their best resulting in the mass production of goods and services. Variables of job satisfaction, according to Herzberg's motivation/hygiene theory are the motivators called satisfiers which include responsibility, advancement, achievement, recognition, and the work itself. The hygiene factors he referred to as dissatisfies are the organizational policy, supervision, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, and salary. Based on the literature, the paper concluded that office competencies lead to job satisfaction.

**KEYWORDS:** Job Satisfaction, Administrative Support Personnel, Competencies

### INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to discuss the theoretical basis of the relationship between office competencies and job satisfaction among administrative support personnel working in Katsina State tertiary institutions, Nigeria. Thus the paper discussed the origin of studies related to job satisfaction. Motivation theories which management of an organization utilizes to attain workers' job satisfaction are discussed. Literature on Administrative Support Personnel competencies and its relationship with job satisfaction are also brought to light. Administrative support personnel could be identified through the functions they perform in any organization they work. Their main function in any organization is to provide support to the executives to whom they are attached. Their main job in supporting the management includes making and receiving telephone calls, correspondences, coordinating meetings, minutes taking at meetings, maintaining filing systems, using document production through the use of word processing application. Typing at a speed of 50 words per minute, taking dictation in shorthand at a speed of 120 words per minute and transcribing same, making travel arrangements for the executive, conducting online and offline research, database creation and maintenance, making schedules for manager's office work, maintaining office calendar, making office supplies and inventories, operating office equipment, as well as other duties as they may be assigned by the officer they serve (Tamim, 2007; Porter, 2014).

Administrative Support Personnel needed office competencies in order to provide for the kind of administrative support required in the office of today. These competencies according to Nigeria's peculiarities include word processing, internet, email, spreadsheet, database, basic computer operations, teamwork and communication. However, in Nigeria these office workers lack adequate training to work effectively and efficiently according to the demands of modern office

(Onamade and Temitayo, 2012; Okwuanaso & Ohakwe, 2007; Onifade, 2009; Abolade, 2013; Akpomi and Ordu, 2009). Inappropriate training is as a result of lack of updated curriculum, lack of continuous power supply and inadequate or outdated training equipment. In Nigerian context the qualifications of administrative support personnel ranged from Commercial Secondary School Certificate, National Diploma (ND), Higher National Diploma (HND), National Certificate of Education (NCE) in Business Education, and Bachelor's Degree in Secretarial Studies or Office Education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Brief & Weiss (2002) referred to job satisfaction as the pleasurable and positive emotional state realized from an appraisal of the employee's job experiences. Hence job satisfaction is a situation where an employee is contented with the affairs of his job. Brief & Weiss's (2002) definition of job satisfaction was in terms of the overall job satisfaction. But, Hajiha, Jasbi, & Ghaffari (2014) define job satisfaction separate from its facet definitions. Their opinion on job satisfaction is that it refers to a worker's overall attitude towards his job. They contended that when an employee is satisfied with his job he will have positive attitude on the job and vice versa. However, an employee may be satisfied with a particular facet and may be dissatisfied with another different facet of his job satisfaction. In this case, an employee may be satisfied or dissatisfied with one or more other facets like the work itself, organizational policies, advancement, responsibility, and achievement, organizational policies, interpersonal relationship, pay, working conditions and supervision. In their contribution, Greenberg and Baron (2003) define job satisfaction as a worker's affective, cognitive, and evaluative emotional reactions regarding their jobs. Moreover, job satisfaction reflects the extent to which workers are contented with their jobs and the sense of fulfillment that is derived from their job tasks (Griffin and Moorhead, 2007).

These definitions are concerned with the overall job satisfaction of an employee. Some literature considered job satisfaction as an equity resulting from employees' comparison between the earnings of his co-workers of the level and that of his own (Tutuncu and Kozak, 2007). Similarly, Griffin and Morehead (2007), and Greenberg and Baron (2003) definitions viewed job satisfaction cumulatively/overall. Tutuncu and Kozak's definitions of job satisfaction is based on the workers equity/inequity judgment of an employee. That is, a worker is satisfied or unsatisfied with his job when he compares the values he derives from the job in comparison with what other workers of the same level get by doing the same job. In their contribution, George and Jones (2008) indicated that job satisfaction is the beliefs and feelings that workers have concerning their jobs and that workers' levels of job satisfaction can be ranged from extreme dissatisfaction to extreme satisfaction. This implies that workers job satisfaction or dissatisfaction could be in levels. In his view, Robbins (2001) defined job satisfaction as worker's general attitude towards his job. This is in conformity with Mullins (2005) who confirms that job satisfaction is rather more of a worker's attitude towards his work. By implication, workers' job satisfaction could be seen from their attitude to their work. It could be related to a worker's feeling of achievement that could either be quantitative or qualitative. However, job satisfaction is a multifaceted and complex concept which means different things to different individuals. From the opinions of the forgone researchers, job satisfaction could either be viewed on the overall job or a particular facet of the job.

Peretomode (2006) sees job satisfaction as fulfillment acquired in terms of job experience, activities and rewards. He stated further that job satisfaction is the feeling about responses to the aspects of the work environment. Advancing his argument, Riggio & Freedman (2000) asserted that job satisfaction is the feelings and attitudes one has about his job. He further believes that good or bad, positive or negative aspects of a job are likely to contribute to the development of

feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of an employee. Arnold and Feldman (1986) shared the same view with Riggio (2000) that job satisfaction is the amount of overall positive feelings that individuals have towards their jobs. Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000) held a contrary view from some scholars as they emphasized that job satisfaction is more than the feelings and attitude towards employees' job. However, Rose (2001) introduced a bi-dimensional concept of job satisfaction consisting of intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction dimensions. Intrinsic sources of satisfaction depend on the individual traits of the person, such as the ability to use initiative, or relations with supervisors. An extrinsic source of satisfaction is situational and depends on the context of an environment such as pay, promotion or job security. All these are the financial and other material reward or advantage of a job that powered satisfaction of an employees' job. This is in agreement with Luthans, (2006), Griffen and Moorhead, (2009) that the nature of the work performed by employees has a significant effect on their level of job satisfaction. Robbins (2001), and Luthans, (2006) supported the fact that pay has a significant influence on job performance. Robbins (2003) was of the opinion that most employees will look for payment systems that they believe to be fair, definite, and in line with their expectations.

It is obvious that satisfied workers are happy and it follows that happy workers are only productive when they are happy with their jobs (Saari & Judge, 2004, p. 395). This means that when workers are happy with their job massive production of goods and services will be realized which is the ultimate goal of any organization. Job satisfaction/dissatisfaction applies to all types of employees, regardless of the type of work they do. Attitudes of employees towards their jobs can be positive when they are satisfied with their job and negative when they are dissatisfied with their jobs. Numerous factors contribute to job satisfaction. The worker's competency in his job is one of the factors leading to job satisfaction. This is because competent worker can confidently accomplish the tasks of his job and the result will be a happy worker. Literature supported that worker's job competency leads to job satisfaction. Similarly incompetent worker is dissatisfied with his job and could not be able to put up his best and this leads to lower production (Wagner, 2007). Since various literatures supported that there is a relationship between competency and job satisfaction, then the administrative support staff's office competencies could lead to their job satisfaction.

### **Origin of Job Satisfaction Studies**

Studies in the area of job satisfaction were pioneered by the Hawthorne studies by Elton Mayo (1924 – 1933) from the Harvard School of Business. The purpose of these studies was to find out the effect of a number of conditions leading to an employee's happiness in his job which eventually leads to higher productivity. It was found out that changes in conditions of work increase productivity temporarily and this is referred to as the Hawthorne effect. However, it was later noticed that the increase in productivity by the employees was as a result of the knowledge they have that they were being observed at work. This triggered researchers to take into consideration of various factors that can affect and stabilize workers' job satisfaction. Prior to the researches in Job satisfaction, scientific management, which started from the work of Taylor (1919), maintained that there was one best way to perform work tasks. Thus, earlier attempts by scientific management were that workers were forced to work at a faster rate and increase in productivity was realized, but workers were found to be dissatisfied with their job due to exhaustion and burnout. Later, researchers in management engage in further research looking for the solution on how best to induce and maintain workers' job satisfaction that can bring about better productivity.

Job satisfaction is defined as an employee's feeling towards his job (Clark, 2006). But this author has not

recognized that the feeling towards an employees' job could either be a feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. To Locke (2002), job satisfaction is a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the employee's job appraisal. But Spector (1997) argued that Job satisfaction is the degree to which people like their jobs. However, the positive feeling of an employee towards his job is what Wright & Cropanzan (2000, p. 85) defined as job satisfaction. This implies that negative feeling of employees' job could be termed to be a feeling of dissatisfaction. Collectively, these researchers' definitions agreed that job satisfaction is a kind of feeling in favor of a worker's job.

Many classical literatures serve as a prelude to job satisfaction. For instance, Kornhauser (1930) was of the opinion that the major objective of labor management and employees' work can be to heighten workers' morale. Organizations, academicians and other stakeholders continue to have been conducting studies on job satisfaction for a very long time to find out how best to improve the morale of workers believing that job satisfaction is thought to predict workers' efficiency and effectiveness (Hersy, 1929). During the early days, the studies of McMurr (1932, p. 202) was outstanding as it attempted to determine the relationship between job satisfaction and employee efficiency. Other historically recognized researchers that conducted their studies on workers' job satisfaction as it relates to productivity were Hoppock and Spiegler (1938); and Brayfield and Crockett (1955). Researchers like Allport (1930) claimed that studies on workers' attitude in relation to job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction of workers started in 1888. Taylor (1919) and Gilbreth (1911) argued that successful implementation of scientific management principles requires a mental revolution on the part of the management. This implies that the operators of the scientific management need to set the type of organizational environment for employees' contentment that has a positive effect on their output. Munsterberg (1913) was a contemporary industrial psychologist of Taylor, and argued that mental monotony cause job dissatisfaction. However, Taylor believed that when an employee agreed with the scientific management's philosophy of an organization that contained minimum mental and physical fatigue, such a worker will emerge to be satisfied and productive in his work (Tylor, 1919).

Still searching for ways to please workers to put in their best for better output, Hawthorne studies were conducted in 1920s. The Hawthorne investigation was based on the effects of such factors that alleviate employee monotony and fatigue so as to bring about satisfaction in their job. When the outcome of the Hawthorne studies failed to make workers respond positively in the expected way, researchers shifted their study on the employees' attitude. The Hawthorne researchers were able to identify that the employees are capable of reasoning and their work appraisal determined on how they act or behave (Mayo, 1933).

Organ and Near (1985) was prompted to observe the work of Roethlisberger and Dickson's (1939) work "Management and the worker". However, workers' job satisfaction has not been addressed by Roethlisberger and Dickson's (1939) studies because they use the terms 'tone' and 'sentiments' in their work studies terminologies instead of job satisfaction. Close to the study on job satisfaction was the work of Thorndike (1917) which was based on what he termed satisfyingness of employees. The first article by Robert Hoppok on job satisfaction was published in 1937 in the Journal of Applied Psychology. Hoppock reported the levels of job satisfaction in his work.

### **Theories of Motivation**

Numerous motivation theories were developed by various researchers to help management of organizations to find solutions to their workers' job satisfaction problems. Notable among these motivation theories are the "Hierarchy of

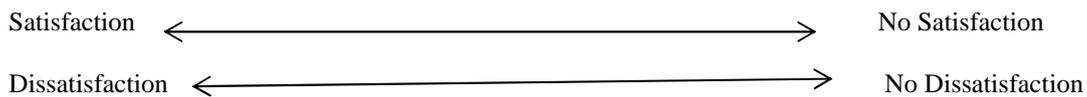
needs” by Abraham Maslow, the “Existence, Relatedness and Growth (ERG)” by Clayton Alderfer, the “Range of Affect” by Edwin A. Locke, the “two-factor” theory by Frederick Herzberg, the “Acquired Need” theory by David I. McClelland, the “Equity” theory by Stancy Adams, and the “Expectancy” theory by Victor Vroom. However, this paper considers the theory of motivation advanced by Frederic Herzberg.

**Table 1: A Comparison between Alderfer’s ERG Theory and Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs**

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs	Alderfer’s ERG
5. Self-actualization 4. Self-esteem	Growth
3. Belongingness 2. Safety	Relatedness
1. Physiological needs	Existence

**Frederic Herzberg’s Motivator/Hygiene Theory of Motivation**

This theory is referred to as two-factor, dual factor, intrinsic/extrinsic or motivator/hygiene/maintenance theory of motivation. The motivation/hygiene theory is known to be one of the most researched theories of modern management utilized to find solutions to the problems of employees’ job satisfaction (Behling, Labovitz, and Kosmo, 1968). A research was conducted on engineers and accounting respondents to recall a time when they felt exceptionally good about their jobs and when they felt exceptionally bad, including the events that transpired to return them to their normal or regular feeling about their job (House & Wigdor, 1967). The study resulted in coming up with two distinct and separate dimensions of satisfaction. The first set of dimensions was the “motivators/satisfies or intrinsic” factors. The availability of these factors leads to “satisfaction”. And the absence of these motivating factors leads to “no job satisfaction” and not dissatisfaction. The other dimensions were the “dissatisfiers/extrinsic/hygiene/maintenance” factors. The presence of these factors leads to “no dissatisfaction”. This indicated that the opposite of “satisfaction” is “no satisfaction” and not dissatisfaction while the opposite of dissatisfaction is not satisfaction but “no dissatisfaction.”



**Table 2: Dimensions of Job Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction by Frederic Herzberg**

Intrinsic/Motivation Factor	Extrinsic/Hygiene/Maintenance Factors
Achievement	Company policy & administration
Recognition	Supervision
Advancement	Interpersonal relations
Work Itself	Salary
Possibility for Growth	Job security
Responsibility	Working conditions
	Status

Motivation factors are based on the work performed as well as the rewards of the work performed (House & Wigdor, 1967; Ramasamy, 2010). These intrinsic factors of responsibility, advancement, achievement, recognition, and the work itself activate the need for self-realization and self-actualization at work. Lasting attitude change is promoted by advancement and Job responsibility while achievement was related to work itself and responsibility (Bassett-Jones & Lloyd, 2005; House & Wigdor, 1967). Recognition on the job by a supervisor, subordinates, or peers

enhanced positive feelings on the job and can as well provide additional satisfaction when based on achievement (House & Wigdor, 1967).

On the other hand, extrinsic factors, referred to as dissatisfiers, hygiene or maintenance factors are based on the employee-relationship with the work environment (House & Wigdor, 1967; Ramasamy, 2010). Such hygiene factors include organizational policy, supervision, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, and salary (House & Wigdor, 1967).

**Table 3: Relationship between the Motivation Theories**

Level	Maslow	Alderfer	Herzberg	McClelland
Higher -Order Needs	Self-actualization Esteem	Growth	Satisfiers/Motivators/ Intrinsic factors	Achievement Power
Lower- Order Needs	Social	Relatedness		
	Safety Physiological	Existence	Dissatisfiers/Hygiene/ Extrinsic factors	Affiliation

### Administrative Support Personnel

This is defined as an assistant to an executive, who possess office competencies and abilities to assume duties and responsibility without direct supervision, makes decisions on behalf of his executive, exercises judgment, and displays initiative within the scope of his authority (Onamade, 2012; Onifade, 2013). Administrative Support Personnel (ASP) are office workers that include secretaries, receptionists, clerks, office professionals, administrative professionals, IT/ICT professionals or IT/ICT end-users, administrative assistants, administrative secretaries, executive administrative assistants, executive assistants, senior administrative assistants or office managers. Whatever their names, their duties and responsibilities or function is to assist an executive in an organization to which they are attached. The functions of ASP are to perform office work that supports the management in the organization they work (Porter, 2014). These management support services include answering and handling telephone calls, composing business correspondences, planning and coordinating meetings, taking minutes of meetings, developing and maintaining electronic and paper filing systems, using word processing and creating reports, managing individual projects, typing documents at 50 words per minute, taking dictation at 120 words per minute, making travel arrangements, conducting research online and offline, creating and maintaining databases, scheduling for managers' and executives' office work, maintaining calendar systems for individuals and departments, ordering office supplies and maintaining inventories, maintaining and operating office equipment, and other duties as they may be assigned by their employer (Tamim, 2007; Porter, 2014).

Ezenwufor (2013) argued that competency is the ability of an employee to successfully accomplish any task as expected and added that competency is a human value acquired through training. A National ICT Competency Standards (NICS, 2012) defined competency as the abilities, skills, and knowledge associated with high job performance. Confirming NICS definition, Danner and Pessu, (2013) included attitude to the performance of tasks maximization, thus competency is the ability to exploit and extend relevant abilities, knowledge, skills and attitudes to maximize task performances.

### Relationship Between Competencies and Job Satisfaction

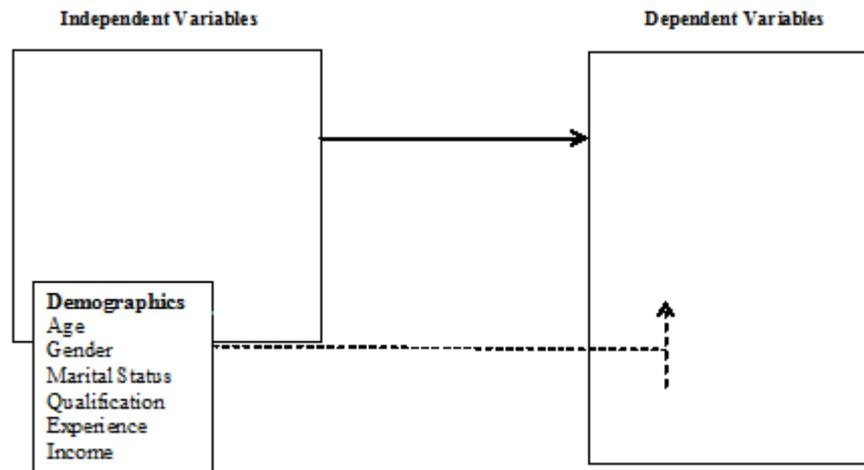
Grip, Sieben and Stevens (2006) conducted a study on the relationship between the competencies and job satisfaction of pharmacy assistants in the Netherlands. Findings indicated that there is relationship between the pharmaceutical assistants' communication competency and their job satisfaction. The study also revealed that workers that

perform tasks below their levels of competence are dissatisfied with their jobs. That is workers over-competence on the tasks they perform results to job dissatisfaction (Gordon, 2007). This is also substantiated by the study of Ganzach (2003). Workers' competency could be positive or negative on their job satisfaction (Gordon & Harvey 2008). This is in conformity with the literature that over-competent or incompetent employees are not satisfied with their jobs (Ganzach, 2003; Grip, Sievens & Stevens, 2006; Gordon, 2007). Studies have shown that there is relationship between the workers' level of education and their job satisfaction. Highly educated workers are found to be less satisfied with their job (Grip, Sievens & Steven, 2006). Perhaps this may be due the fact that highly educated and over-competent employees have high expectations. That is workers' job satisfaction, depends on the match between job characteristics and their aspirations. It is therefore important to match the job contents of employees with the employees' expectations (Harscher, 2010).

Unlike Grip, Sieben and Stevens (2006), Jung and Shin (2014) conducted their study on administrative staff with a view to find out the impact of their job competency and their job satisfaction in a Korean research university. The study conceptualized job satisfaction in to: Satisfaction in the workplace, satisfaction in the job field, and satisfaction with the actual task. Competency was taken to be the main independent variable. Their study is focused on whether competent employees are more satisfied with their jobs or not. Therefore a job satisfaction model was first developed and added competency factors in the model to test whether competent staff are satisfied with their jobs. With continuous environmental changes in all organizations, including tertiary institutions, the human resource section is being established and developed which find effective ways of increasing their staff members' job competency based on the competency models. For instance the University of Australia as a tertiary institution use competency models to assess and train its staff. The university defines staff competency as the task-performance ability that shares an organization's values and vision. The competency model was used for staff management, recruitment, selection, and promotion systems to integrate the mentioned definition into the organization's objectives.

These authors identified most relevant key competency with respect to tertiary institutions. This competency was the ICT competency which was needed in any knowledge-based society where the facilities used for carrying out assigned tasks changes with rapidity. Information technology is the most important competency confronting tertiary institutions (Green, 2011). They need to be current in terms of ICT should not be taken lightly at any tertiary institution (Rice and Miller 2001). Many previous studies have examined the relationship between competency and job satisfaction (Sekaran, 2005; Sullivan and Uhlin, 2002). However, findings from the study of Tharenou (2012) concluded that a higher level of competency leads to higher job satisfaction. This study has implications for leaders of tertiary institutions and policy makers because tertiary institution's leaders and policy makers are encouraged to consider how staff members' job competence and job satisfaction can be improved through reform initiatives and managerial strategies. If competent employees are satisfied with their jobs, managerial effectiveness will be facilitated through workers' increased job performance. As such finding ways to increase the job competency that leads to job satisfaction of workers will be crucial in any managerial reforms. Also a study was carried out in the United States by (Wang & Lee, 2009) where they analyze the interactive effects of job competence involving ICT professionals and ICT impact on job satisfaction. Findings indicated that job competency is positively related to job satisfaction. Competencies needed to operate as ASP in the modern office are the internet, email, word processing, database, spreadsheet, teamwork, and communication. The job dissatisfiers as highlighted by Herberg include the organizational policy, supervision, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, and salary. The satisfiers on the other hand include responsibility, advancement, achievement, recognition,

and the work itself. The diagram below depicts the conceptual framework of the study.



**Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework of the Relationship Between**

## DISCUSSIONS

The function of Administrative Support Personnel is basically to help or assist the officers to which they are attached. However, this assistance requires modern office competencies which include internet, email, word processing, spreadsheet, database, teamwork and communication. In Nigerian situation, many factors accrue to create bottlenecks towards the achievement of these competencies. These ranges from lack of curriculum update, lack of adequate facilities and equipment, sporadic power supplies to mention but a few. ASPs' qualification ranges from commercial school certificate, National Diploma, Higher National Diploma or Bachelor's degree. All organizations spire to gain competitive advantage by means of satisfied workers. Competent workers are satisfied worker because literature indicated that there is a relationship between competency and job satisfaction (Grip, Sieben and Stevens, 2006; Jung and Shin, 2014). One of the most researched theories of motivation is the motivation/hygiene theory developed by Herzberg. The theory assists the management of organizations to provide factors that can lead to worker satisfaction (motivation factors) and factors that can help avoid dissatisfaction (hygiene).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is highly recommended that workers are competent on the job they perform. This is because studies have proved that competent workers are satisfied while incompetent employees are actually not satisfied with their work. Impediments that arrest the ASPs' competency in Nigeria should be addressed so that this category of workers could meet up the challenges of the modern office operations.

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