

Employee Perceptions on Recognition and Opportunity for Advancement: The Case of a Financial Institution in Ghana

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Abstract: Recognition and opportunity for advancement are facets of motivation that affect employee satisfaction at the workplace. For management to adequately attend to these, there is the need to know how the employees themselves feel about such issues. This study was conducted to assess the perceptions of employees of a financial institution in Ghana regarding recognition and opportunity for advancement. Survey with questionnaire and interview were used to collect data from 61 employees. Descriptive statistics and chi-square at 0.05 level of significance were used to analyze the data. The findings indicated that majority of the respondents (55.7%) appeared satisfied with recognition accorded them at the workplace. There was no significant difference among respondents categorized according to gender regarding recognition. However, senior staff appeared to feel more recognized by management than junior staff. Regarding adequacy of opportunity for advancement, majority of the respondents (77.0%) found it to be inadequate. Employees would like to have in-service training, study leave with pay and reimbursement of subscriptions and examination fees for membership of professional bodies. The study also showed no difference of opinion among respondents categorized according to gender. When categorized according to status, senior staff appeared to be more satisfied with opportunity for advancement than junior staff. It is recommended that management should strive to maintain the existing conditions that make both male and female employees feel equally treated, while trying to bridge the gap between senior and junior staff regarding recognition and opportunity for advancement.

Keywords: Employee motivation, Ghana, job satisfaction, management, workplace

INTRODUCTION

Opportunity for advancement and the recognition accorded employees at the workplace are among the motivators of Frederick Herzberg's hygiene theory and have been studied extensively by researchers in human resource management and organizational behavior. Opportunity for growth and advancement and recognition are intrinsic factors of motivation and are seen by Wong *et al.* (1999) as the true and forceful motivators that generate job satisfaction. The presence of opportunity for advancement and recognition keeps employees satisfied in their jobs and could probably lead to enhanced job performance and subsequent organizational effectiveness and efficiency. In the study of Lindner (1998) that examined the ranked importance of 10 motivational factors of employees at The Ohio State University's Piketon Research and Extension Centre and Enterprise Centre, it was found that appreciation for work done (recognition) was ranked third and promotion and growth (opportunity for advancement) in the organization was ranked sixth. In another study by Stuart (1992), recognition for a job well done was the top motivator of employee performance. Similarly, recognition was ranked first in a study by Rijalu *et al.* (2014) that investigated the role

of five components of compensation towards academic staffs work motivation in Jimma University, Ethiopia. On the other hand, 288 employees selected from 15 companies in Nigeria ranked full appreciation of work done (recognition) as sixth among seven motivating factors (Aworemi *et al.*, 2011). A study conducted by Luk and Arnold (1989) about the motivations and job satisfaction of women in Hong Kong found that the respondents rated chance for promotion and advancement as important job motivators. On the contrary, Aworemi *et al.* (2011) reported promotion and growth (opportunity for advancement) in the organization being ranked fifth among seven motivating factors by 288 employees selected from 15 companies in Nigeria.

Research problem: As indicated earlier, recognition and opportunity for advancement are important aspects of employee motivation. These facets of motivation affect the satisfaction employees get from the jobs they perform. Therefore, these facets of motivation need to be attended to by management if the organization is to achieve its stated objectives/goals. For management to adequately attend to such issues there is the need to know how the employees themselves feel about the issues. It is therefore necessary to study these aspects of motivation to enable management have empirical data

to inform their decisions regarding employee motivation at the workplace.

Objectives of the study: This study is part of a larger study that investigated labor-management related problems within a Ghanaian financial institution. This sub-study sought to determine:

- How the employees perceive the recognition accorded them by management.
- The views of employees regarding the adequacy of opportunity for advancement.
- To determine how background characteristics influence the perception of employees regarding recognition and opportunity for advancement.

METHODOLOGY

Research design: The research was a case study of a public-private owned financial institution in Ghana. The research design was a descriptive study, which sought to gather information to describe the perception of employees of the financial institution regarding labor issues such as recognition and opportunity for advancement which form the focus of this study.

Participants of the study: The population for the study comprised 150 workers of the headquarters, Accra ($N_1 = 100$) and the second largest branch, Kumasi ($N_2 = 50$). It consisted of 100 males and 50 females; 50 senior staff and 100 junior staff. One hundred workers representing 66.7% of the population were selected for the study using simple random sampling technique. Table 1 presents the breakdown of participants according to the selected background characteristics.

Date collection procedures: The instruments used to gather information for the research were questionnaire and interview schedule. The questionnaires for the headquarters were administered and collected upon completion by an official of the financial institution. Those for Kumasi branch were administered and collected personally by the researcher. In all 61 completed questionnaires were returned representing 61% return rate. One-on-one interview was conducted with 10 participants from each of the two branches of the financial institution. The interview was used to complement the responses obtained through the questionnaire.

Data analysis: For the larger study, the variables used and analyzed were motivation, absenteeism, supervision, work environment, promotion, communication, collective bargaining, grievance handling and performance appraisal. The focus of this study was however on two aspects of motivation:

Table 1: Distribution of sample according to background characteristics

| Characteristics | Frequency |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Location | |
| Accra | 70 |
| Kumasi | 30 |
| Gender | |
| Male | 63 |
| Female | 37 |
| Status | |
| Senior staff | 25 |
| Junior staff | 75 |

recognition and opportunity for advancement. The researcher used descriptive statistics (percentages and frequency) and chi-square to analyze the data. Chi-square at 0.05 level of significance was used to compare the responses of respondents categorized according to gender and status (junior and senior staff) to determine whether their perceptions differed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Recognition: The distribution of the responses according to gender and status is presented in Table 2. In all, 34 (55.7%) of the respondents reported being satisfied with the recognition accorded them at the workplace whilst the remaining 27 (44.3%) were dissatisfied with the recognition accorded them. The present finding is similar to that of Alsabri and Ramesh (2012) who reported that majority of banking industry employees in India agreed that management recognized and acknowledged their work. Generally, majority of the respondents of the present study appeared satisfied with the recognition accorded them at the workplace. From the interviews, it was learnt that any work well done went with a reward of some kind. Deserving employees have been recognized through regular promotions, award of certificates and monetary rewards. Aside motivating employees, recognition could promote and enhance healthy labor-management relationship. The finding differs from the study by Rijalu *et al.* (2014) who reported that respondents indicated Jimma University did not recognize good performing employees for the work they do. However, it was revealed in their study that recognition in the form of appreciation of performance, expressing of gratitude for extra effort done by employees, acknowledgement of successful completion of organizational goals was the most preferred motivational factors to the academic staffs of the University.

With regard to gender, it is seen from Table 2 that 21 (56.8%) out of the total of 37 males stated that they are recognized at the workplace, whilst the remaining 16 (43.2%) thought otherwise. To them no recognition is accorded them at the workplace. Thus, majority of the males felt recognized at the workplace. With regard to the females, 13 (54.2%) out of 24 indicated that they were recognized at the workplace, whilst the remaining 11 (45.8%) thought otherwise. Generally, majority of

Table 2: Distribution of responses on recognition according to gender and status

| Characteristics | Responses | | Total | p-value |
|-----------------|------------|----------------|-------|---------------------|
| | Recognized | Not recognized | | |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 21 | 16 | 37 | 0.0323 [†] |
| Female | 13 | 11 | 24 | |
| Total | 34 | 27 | 61 | |
| Status | | | | |
| Senior staff | 16 | 5 | 21 | 0.8415* |
| Junior staff | 18 | 22 | 40 | |
| Total | 34 | 27 | 61 | |

[†]Significant; $X^2 = 4.58$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.0323$; * Non significant; $X^2 = 0.04$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.8415$

Table 3: Distribution of responses on opportunity for advancement according to gender and status

| Characteristics | Responses | | Total | p-value |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|-------|---------------------|
| | Adequate | Inadequate | | |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 7 | 30 | 37 | 0.3532* |
| Female | 7 | 17 | 24 | |
| Total | 14 | 47 | 61 | |
| Status | | | | |
| Senior staff | 8 | 13 | 21 | 0.0416 [†] |
| Junior staff | 6 | 34 | 40 | |
| Total | 14 | 47 | 61 | |

*Non significant; $X^2 = 0.8621$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.3532$; [†] Significant; $X^2 = 4.15$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.0416$

the females appeared satisfied with the recognition accorded them at the workplace.

From the distribution of responses according to gender and status (Table 2), there appeared to be differences in the perceptions of respondents as regards recognition for work done. To ascertain this, chi-square analysis of the responses categorized according to gender was performed. A calculated chi-square value of 0.04 was obtained as compared to a critical value of 3.841 required for significance at 0.05 level and one degree of freedom. Thus, there was no significant difference among the respondents categorized according to gender. The present finding is contrary to that of Wong *et al.* (1999). In their study regarding the impact of demographic factors on Hong Kong hotel employees' choice of job-related motivators, it was established that female staff preferred more care and recognition from employers than their male counterparts.

To determine whether the senior and junior staff differed in their responses regarding recognition, their responses were analyzed according to status. Sixteen (76.2%) senior staff out of 21 indicated that management gave recognition to the work they do whereas five (23.8%) responded that management accorded them no recognition. On the same issue, 18 (45%) junior staff out of a total of 40 stated they were recognized for the work they perform with 22 (55%) indicating otherwise. The responses of the respondents, categorized according to status (senior and junior staff), were analyzed using chi-square to determine whether

the two groups differed. A calculated chi-square of 5.43 was obtained as compared to a critical value of 3.841 required for significance at 0.05 level and one degree of freedom. The analysis showed that there was significant difference among the respondents categorized according to status. Thus, senior staff appeared to feel more recognized by management than junior staff.

Opportunity for advancement: Another way of getting motivated employees is for management to provide them the opportunity for advancement. Therefore, the views of respondents regarding adequacy of opportunity for advancement was sought. The distribution of the responses on opportunity for advancement according to gender and status appears in Table 3. The responses indicated that 47 (77.0%) respondents found opportunity for advancement as inadequate while the remaining 14 (33.0%) respondents found opportunity for advancement to be adequate. From the interviews it emerged that the main opportunity for employee growth and advancement that employee would like to have at the workplace were: in-service training (both in-house and outside), study leave with pay and re-imbursement of subscription and examination fees for membership of professional bodies.

With regard to gender it could be seen from Table 3 that out of a total of 37 male respondents, seven (18.9%) responded that opportunity for advancement/development was adequate. The remaining 30 (81.1%) were of the view that opportunity for advancement/development was inadequate.

Similarly, seven (29.2%) female respondents out of a total of 24 perceived opportunity for advancement as adequate, whilst 17 (70.8%) viewed opportunity for advancement as inadequate. From the above there appeared to be differences in the responses of females and males. However, chi-square analysis gave a chi-square value of 0.862 for gender. This figure was less than a critical value of 3.841 required for significance at 0.05 level and a degree of freedom of one. This showed that there was no significant difference among males and females regarding their opinion about the adequacy of opportunity for advancement at the workplace. This finding is similar to that of Crossman and Abou-Zaki (2003) who reported in their study of job satisfaction and employee performance of Lebanese banking staff that males were more satisfied than females with the facet of promotion but not statistically significant.

The responses of respondents regarding opportunity for advancement at the workplace were analyzed according to status (senior and junior staff). Out of a total of 21 senior staff, eight (38.1%) viewed opportunity for advancement as adequate. The remaining 13 (61.9%) perceived opportunity for advancement as inadequate. Six (15.0%) out of 40 junior staff perceived opportunity for advancement as

adequate whilst 34 (85.0%) viewed opportunity for advancement as inadequate. From the foregoing, there appeared to be differences in the responses of senior and junior staff. A chi-square analysis was therefore conducted to establish whether the observed differences were significant. The analysis yielded a calculated chi-square of 4.15 compared to a critical value of 3.841 required for significance at 0.05 level and a degree of freedom of one. This suggested that there was a significant difference in the opinion of senior and junior staff as regards adequacy of opportunity for advancement. Senior staff appeared to be more satisfied with the adequacy of opportunity for advancement than junior staff as 38.1% of senior staff deemed opportunity for advancement as adequate as against 15.0% of junior staff.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to determine the perception of employees of a Ghanaian financial institution regarding recognition accorded them by management, adequacy of opportunity for advancement provided by management and the influence of background characteristics (employees' gender and status) on the aforementioned variables. The workers of the financial institution acknowledged being recognized by management for the work they perform. Once workers see themselves as being recognized by management, they are likely to be satisfied at the workplace. Thus, employee motivation would be high and they would give off their best output that could lead to organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Management must therefore ensure that the prevailing conditions that make workers feel recognized are maintained in order to sustain the current situation.

The findings also indicate that many of the respondents perceived opportunity for advancement at the workplace as inadequate. Such a situation does not auger well for productivity at the workplace as workers may not be fully committed to their work and productivity could thus suffer. Management of the financial institution must therefore create avenues for the advancement and growth of employees. Such opportunities could include continuing education courses/workshops, study leave and reimbursement of subscriptions and examination fees for membership of professional bodies.

When compared according to status, the findings indicated that, senior staff appeared to feel more recognized by management than junior staff. Also, senior staff generally appeared to be more satisfied with

the adequacy of opportunity for advancement at the workplace than junior staff. There will be the need for further study to determine what makes the senior staff feel recognized and also satisfied with the opportunity for advancement. This will enable management to put appropriate measures in place to enable junior staff feel recognized and also take advantage of opportunities that exist for employee advancement.

Regarding gender, the findings indicated that males and females did not differ in their perceptions about recognition accorded them by management. Also there was no significant difference between males and females in their opinion about the adequacy of opportunity for advancement at the workplace. This suggests that both males and females do not feel discriminated in any way by management. Management should therefore strive to maintain the existing conditions that make both male and female employees feel equally treated at the workplace.

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