

Customer Service on the Menu: Work Engagement of Waiters in Windhoek

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ABSTRACT

In order for restaurants to make a profit, apart from providing delicious and nutritious food, restaurants need to provide quality service to their customers. Work engagement is a positive work-related state that impacts on productivity, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. This study aims to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement. Another objective is to identify whether job satisfaction and/or organisational commitment are indeed predictors of work engagement amongst some waiters in Windhoek restaurants. Job satisfaction is regarded as the overall evaluation of employees regarding how pleasurable their jobs are. Organisational commitment is characterised by employees wanting to remain with the organisation. Participants were sourced from different restaurants in Windhoek (n=158). The participants comprised of 53 (33.5%) males and 105 (66.5%) females, mostly between the ages of 31 to 40 years (43.7%). Intrinsic job satisfaction ($r = 0,56$, $p < 0,05$), extrinsic job satisfaction ($r = 0,29$, $p < 0,05$) and organisational commitment ($r = 0,45$, $p < 0,05$) were positively related to work engagement. Intrinsic job satisfaction and organisational commitment were found to be significant predictors of work engagement. Having disengaged waiters could result in poor service delivery and customer dissatisfaction. Restaurants need to regularly assess job attitudes, provide role clarity and supervisory support, minimise work-related stress and provide regular training opportunities. This study will add to the existing knowledge of Industrial/Organisational Psychology and spark interest for future research and intervention on waiters in Namibia.

Key words: *predictor, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, work engagement*

INTRODUCTION

Bettencourt and Brown (1997) found that customer satisfaction and loyalty depends on the manner in which the organisation interacts with clients. This interaction could result in customers coming back to the organisation or taking their business elsewhere.

Tourist arrivals have increased from 984 099 in 2010 to 1 387 773 in 2015. In 2015, 539 399 of these tourists who visited Namibia were on holiday, making use of our businesses including restaurants (Tourist Statistical Report, 2015). Honourable Pohamba Shifeta, the Minister of Environment and Tourism, indicated that in order for the Namibian tourism sector to succeed, the sector needs to provide an outstanding experience and value for the money spent by travellers.

According to the Namibian Statistics Agency in 2009/2010, 15.3% of the total income of urban households was spent on food and beverages

(<http://cms.my.na/assets/documents/p19dmrae8os57rbnfuvbrgoae1.pdf>). This is a significant percentage which also includes eating out.

It was noted that some of the reviews posted about restaurants indicated that the food was excellent, but the customer service from waiters was either average or poor (www.tripadvisor.com). A review from a customer stated that as a result of this poor customer service, they would prefer visiting another restaurant instead of having such a negative experience again.

Work engagement is an energetic force characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption in work (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). Mohamed and Anisa (2013) found that when employees are engaged, they are more likely to also be committed to other positive work-related behaviour and enhance their work performance.

Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012) defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable emotion related to work, being impacted by aspects of the job such as the type of work, meaning attached to the work, remuneration, relations with colleagues and an overall evaluation based on expectations and outcomes. Pieters (2015) found that when employees experience job satisfaction they are also likely to become more committed to the organisation.

Organisational commitment is defined as the desire to remain with the organisation, identifying with the goals and values of the organisation, characterised by normative, continuance and affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Simons and Buitendach (2013) found that employees who are committed tend to also be more engaged in their work.

Work engagement

Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002) defined work engagement as a positive, fulfilling, and work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption. It has also been defined as the degree of commitment that one has to an organisation and it takes on an emotional and intellectual form (Shaw, 2005).

Opportunities that lead to the build-up of job resources can grow psychological capacities of employees. Extreme job demands are associated with employees experiencing pressure whereas extreme supply of job resources is associated with an employee's overall development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). When employers stimulate conditions that increase job resource opportunities, employees will be less susceptible to burnout and more prone to experience engagement (Trépanier, Fernet, Austin, Forest, & Vallerand, 2014). When employees feel that they are delivering high-quality outputs, they are more likely to be immersed in it for long periods of time and those who experience a sense of harmonious passion have higher levels of emotional energy than those who do not.

De Lange, De Witte and Notelaers (2008) confirm the relevance of maintaining departmental resources in addition to job autonomy and already existing work engagement with regard to reducing turnover intention amongst employees. They state that these factors are significant predictors of turnover intentions amongst employees. Thus, organisations should strive to

retain their employees by encouraging factors that lead to work engagement such as task variety and autonomy.

Kim, Tracy, Biegel, Min and Munson (2015) explained the importance of an individual's job position being multi-faceted in order for work engagement to be effectively maintained. They found that once an individual is able to do more than just a routine series of tasks, they are more likely to display higher levels of engagement when offering their services. Waiters doing monotonous work could become less engaged, emphasising the importance of task variety.

In a study done by Silman (2014) in Turkey, it was stated that there is a positive relationship between relatedness, competency, autonomy and work engagement. This indicates that when employees experience satisfaction in terms of relatedness, having good relations with colleagues and supervisors, competence, experiencing a match between job expectation and capabilities, and autonomy, being included in decision making and being able to direct work activities, employees would become more engaged in their work.

The impact that co-workers and supervisors have on work engagement can also influence the mental state of employees (Villotti, Balducci, Zaniboni, Corbière, & Fraccaroli, 2014). Good relations with colleagues can impact on work engagement and self-efficacy.

Wang and Hsieh (2013) explained the relationship between supervisor interactions and how engaged employees become based on the social exchange theory. They emphasised the importance of equity - the more equity employees perceive from their supervisors, the more effort they will put in (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009). When supervisors provide the necessary resources with the necessary guidance and support, are fair and practise equality, employees are more likely to become more engaged.

Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) also highlighted the unique relationship that exists between how employees' level of engagement and job embeddedness affects their intentions to leave their organisation and the degree to which they perform their jobs. When employees experience a fit (between values, goals, job expectations and their capabilities of employee) and links (good relations with colleagues), they would become more engaged in their work and want to remain with the organisation.

Work engagement has a domino effect that results in other desired organisational outcomes. Mohamed and Anisa (2013) found that work engagement is positively related to organisational citizenship behaviour, which in turn is positively related to job performance. This means that engaged employees would engage in extra-role behaviour, going beyond their call of duty. Organisational citizenship behaviour results in higher levels of productivity.

A lack of work engagement can lead to several negative outcomes, such as burnout and turnover intention. Du Plooy and Roodt (2010) found that there is a relationship between work engagement as a predictor and turnover intention as an outcome as well as work engagement as a predictor and burnout as a mediator. Once employees do not feel engaged in their work, experience too many job demands or lack of job resources, they consider finding other organisations to invest their skills in or they experience burnout. Shuck, Reio and Rocco

(2011) stressed the importance of regular monitoring and evaluation of work engagement to prevent turnover intention.

Job Satisfaction

“Job satisfaction describes how much extent an individual is pleased, comfortable or satisfied with his or her job. It is a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (Ali, 2016, p.100). This definition highlights the importance of the employees’ evaluation and the extent to which the outcomes meet their expectations.

Buitendach and De Witte (2005), and Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012) made a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. Extrinsic job satisfaction deals with satisfaction in terms of remuneration, fringe benefits, the working conditions and relations with co-workers. Intrinsic job satisfaction, on the other hand deals with the pleasurable emotions attached to the execution of the job tasks themselves, advancement, perceived competence or the meaning attached to it.

A positive relationship exists between well-being, health of employees and job satisfaction (Ajala, 2013). This means that once employees experience job satisfaction they would be also more likely to experience well-being and good health. When employers can assess and improve on the job satisfaction of employees, they would also have healthier employees who are able to work longer periods instead of experiencing ill health and absenteeism.

Job satisfaction is not only affected by internal factors but also the interaction between supervisors and colleagues (Wai, Dandar, Radosevich, Brubaker, & Kuo, 2014). Experiencing job dissatisfaction and negative collegial relations may also contribute to negative organisational outcomes. Wai et al. (2014) found that job satisfaction may also be impacted by the work environment, the institutional culture, how the organisation is run and the mission of the organisation.

Organisational Commitment

Allen and Meyer (1990) indicated that organisational commitment deals with the extent to which the employee wants to remain part of the organisation and remain productive. Organisational commitment consists of affective, normative and continuance commitment. Affective commitment is an emotional attachment that an employee has to the organisation, whilst normative commitment deals with commitment due to feeling obligated to stay and continuance commitment is when employees remain due to the cost of leaving being too high.

Prabhakar and Ram (2011) found that continuance commitment is negatively related to turnover intention. This means that when employees experience higher continuance commitment (lose a lot when planning to leave), the lower the possibility that employees will want to leave. Dey, Kumar and Kumar (2014) found that even though there are three dimensions of organisational commitment, they do not exist in equal quantities within an employee.

A strong relationship was found between affective commitment and job embeddedness in relation to job crafting (Qi, Li, & Zhang, 2014). This means that when employees are able to actively change tasks and interactions with employees at work, they would experience higher levels of fit with their jobs, improved relations at work and affective commitment.

Cox, Marchington and Suter (2009) found a positive relationship exist between how managers implement employee involvement and participation strategies and how the employees perceive their competency in implementing those strategies. By having managers who involve employees when developing and implementing tasks, employees will experience a higher level of competence and improve performance.

The retention of employees is important as it is expensive to continually train new employees and this process makes use of resources that could be invested elsewhere. Good leadership, experiencing job satisfaction, being able to attend training, and workplace relationships are factors that prevent turnover intention. The absence of these factors may also lead to high turnover intention amongst employees (Lam, Lo, & Chan, 2002).

Chih and Lin (2009) stated that leadership style is significantly correlated to organisational commitment. This means that the organisation will have a higher level of retention of its employees when they have competent and effective leaders. They found that transformational leadership results in continuous improvement within an organisation. Leadership also enhances affective commitment amongst employees (Javaid, Luqman, Amir, & Umair, 2015).

Factors such as job security, pay satisfaction and work environment as well as the opportunity to partake in decision making were found to be positively related to high levels of organisational commitment, with job security being the highest (Ramay, 2012). Prabhakar and Ram (2011) found that training is linked to an increase in competence amongst employees. Having a clearly defined job description, enables proper use of skills and knowledge, including employees in decision making, are vital to the success of an organisation and foster organisational commitment.

Relationship between job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement

Silman (2014) stated that there is a positive relationship between basic psychological needs satisfaction (autonomy, competence and relatedness) and work engagement. Brunetto, Teo, Shacklock and Farr-Wharton (2012) found a positive correlation between job satisfaction and work engagement as well as between work engagement and affective commitment. This positive trend was also found to lead to a decrease in turnover intentions amongst the participants. Organisational commitment and work engagement has a positive relationship (Simons & Buitendach, 2013).

Lunenburg (2011) suggested that job enrichment results in job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engaged. Wamundila and Ngulube (2011) found that a lack of proper procedures, lack of proper knowledge auditing, regular training and development significantly impacted on job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and work engagement.

Based on the literature about job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement, the following hypotheses have been developed; *Hypothesis 1: Job satisfaction has a positive relationship with work engagement. Hypothesis 2: Intrinsic job satisfaction and extrinsic job satisfaction are significant predictors of work engagement. Hypothesis 3: Organisational commitment has a positive relationship with work engagement. Hypothesis 4: Organisational commitment is a significant predictor of work engagement.*

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study made use of a survey. Questionnaires were used to collect data on the biographical variables of the employees, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement.

Research method

Participants

The participants for this study were from different restaurants in Windhoek (n=158). Making use of convenience sampling, all waiters who were willing, available and able to read and write in English were approached to be part of this study. The sample consisted of 53 males and 105 females with 43.7% (69) of these employees being between the ages of 31-40. The participants were also asked about their marital status, number of children, employment contracts, tenure, highest qualification obtained and wages earned per month. The rest of the information is displayed in table 1 below.

	Frequency:	Percentage:
Sex: Male	53	33.5
Female	105	66.5
Age(in years): 20-30	46	29.1
31-40	69	43.7
41-50	2	18.4
51 and above	14	8.9
Marital status: Single	140	88.6
Married	12	7.6
Divorced	3	1.9
Widowed	3	1.9
Number of dependents:		
No children	63	39.9
1-2 Children	75	47.5
3-4 Children	9	5.7
5-6 Children		
7 and more children		
Tenure: Less than 1 year	68	43.0
1-2 years	53	33.5

3-4 years	20	12.7
5 and more	17	10.8
Highest qualification obtained:		
Grade 10	49	31.0
Grade 12	61	38.6
Certificate	23	14.6
Diploma	17	10.8
Degree	8	5.1
Wages earned per month:		
Commission only	2	1.3
Below N\$500	6	3.8
N\$501- N\$1000	15	9.5
N\$1001-N\$1499	44	27.8
N\$1500- N\$2000	37	23.4
N\$2001 and more	54	34.2
Employment contract:		
Casual	42	26.5
Part-time	22	13.9
Full-time	94	59.5
TOTAL:	158	100

Table 1: Biographical details of sample (N= 158).

Measuring instrument

The biographical questionnaire was developed by the researchers to get information on gender, age, marital status, number of children, employment contract, tenure, highest qualification obtained, and wages earned.

To measure job satisfaction, the *Revised Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (JSQ)* developed by Weiss, Davis, England and Lofquist (1967) was used. The questionnaire has 20 items, sample items that include, “The working conditions”, “The praise I get for doing a good job”, measuring intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, responses ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. Pieters (2015) found Cronbach’s alphas ranging between .70 to .77 for autonomy, social, advancement and intrinsic job satisfaction.

Organisational commitment was measured using the *Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)* developed by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) and revised by Meyer and Allen (1984). The questionnaire makes use of 18 items; sample items include continuance (“one of the few negative consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives”), normative (“I would feel guilty if I leave my organisation right now”) and affective (“I do not feel like ‘part of the family’ at my organisation”) commitment. This is a self-report questionnaire with responses ranging from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Pieters (2015) also found acceptable Cronbach’s alpha of .71 for affective, continuance and normative commitment each.

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)* was used to measure work engagement as developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). The UWES measures vigour (“I am bursting with energy in my work”), dedication (“I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose”) and absorption (“Time flies when I am working”) with responses ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). Du Plooy and Roodt (2010) found Cronbach’s alpha of .95 when making use of the UWES.

Statistical analysis

The data was analysed by making use of SPSS Version 24.0 (SPSS, 2016). SPSS has been used to describe the data, assess correlations and make inferences.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and correlations

The means, standard deviation and Cronbach’s alpha were analysed and reported in table 2 below.

A mean score of 22.00 was recorded for intrinsic job satisfaction, 18.64 for extrinsic job satisfaction, 33.22 for organisational commitment and 58.86 for work engagement. Standard deviations were also recorded, 5.14 for intrinsic job satisfaction, 6.67 for extrinsic job satisfaction, 8.12 for organisational commitment and 23.39 for work engagement.

Cronbach’s alphas of all instruments were acceptable, .72 for intrinsic job satisfaction, .85 for extrinsic job satisfaction, .80 for organisational commitment and .91 for work engagement.

Making use of Pearson correlation coefficient, it was also found that intrinsic job satisfaction ($r = 0,56$, $p < 0,05$; large effect) and extrinsic job satisfaction ($r = 0,29$, $p < 0,05$; statistical significant) have a positive relationship with work engagement, accepting hypothesis 1 of this study. Organisational commitment was also found to have a positive relationship with work engagement ($r = 0,45$, $p < 0,05$; medium effect), accepting hypothesis 3.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient* Statistically significant: $p \leq 0,05$ + Practically significant correlation (medium effect): $0,30 \leq r \leq 0,49$ ++ Practically significant correlation (large effect): $r \geq 0,50$

Job satisfaction; IJS = Intrinsic job satisfaction, EJS = Extrinsic job satisfaction.

Organisational commitment; OC = Organisational commitment.

Work engagement; WE = Work engagement.

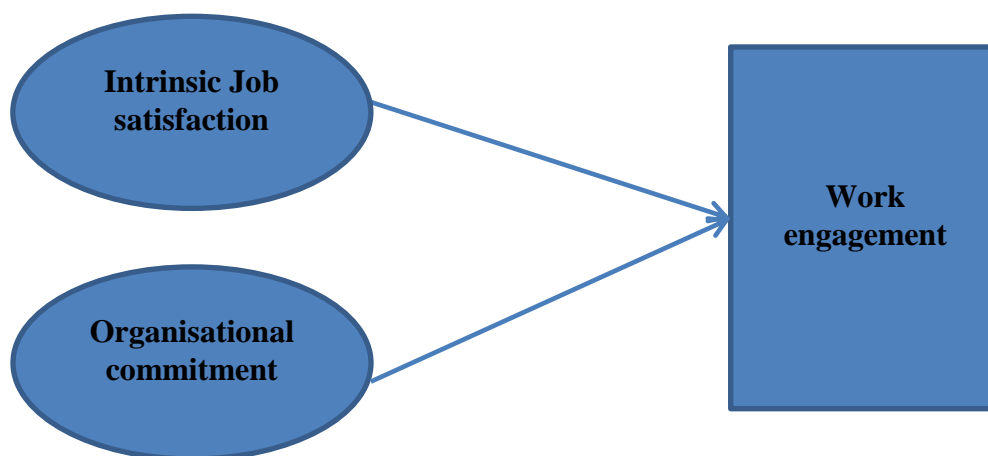
Multiple regression analysis

Multiple regression analyses were used to test hypotheses 2 and 4. Multiple regression analyses were performed with intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction being the independent variables with work engagement being the dependent variable (model 1).

Item:	Total:		α	1	2	3	4
	Mean	<i>SD</i>					
Job satisfaction:							
1. IJS	22.00	5.14	.72	-	-	-	-
2. EJS	18.64	6.67	.85	.42*+	-	-	-
Organisational commitment:							
3. OC	33.22	8.12	.80	.50++	.40*+	-	-
Work engagement:							
4. WE	58.86	23.39	.91	.56++	.29*	.45*+	-

Organisational commitment was also introduced in model 2; the results are presented in table 3 below.

As can be seen from Table 3, entry of intrinsic job satisfaction and extrinsic job satisfaction at the first step of the regression analysis produced a statistically insignificant model ($F_{(2,146)} = 34,10$; $p < 0,81$) and account for 31% of the variance. It appears that extrinsic job satisfaction ($\beta = 0,07$; $t = 0,92$; $p < 0,36$) is not a significant predictor and that intrinsic job satisfaction ($\beta = 0,53$; $t = 7,08$; $p < 0,00$) is a significant predictor of work engagement, partly supporting hypothesis 2. In the second step of the regression analysis, organisational commitment was entered into the model that produced a statistical insignificant model. With organisational commitment being part of the model, ($F_{(3,145)} = 25,92$; $p < 0,39$), which explained 34% of the total variance. Looking at this together with organisational commitment, intrinsic job satisfaction ($\beta = 0,45$; $t = 5,55$; $p < 0,00$) and organisational commitment ($\beta = 0,21$; $t = 2,62$; $p < 0,10$) significantly predicted work engagement. Extrinsic job satisfaction did not significantly predict work engagement ($\beta = 0,02$; $t = 0,30$; $p < 0,77$). These results support hypothesis 4.



Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Δ <i>R</i> ²
	B	SE	Beta					
1						34.10	0.32	0.31
						(<i>p</i> < 0.00)		
(Constant)	1.78	7.23		0.25	0.81			
Intrinsic job satisfaction	2.41	0.34	0.53	7.08	0.00*			
Extrinsic job satisfaction	0.24	0.26	0.07	0.92	0.36			
2						25.92	0.35	0.34
						(<i>p</i> < 0.00)		
(Constant)	-6.68	7.79		-0.86	0.39			
Intrinsic job satisfaction	2.02	0.37	0.45	5.55	0.00*			
Extrinsic job satisfaction	0.08	0.27	0.02	0.30	0.77			
Organisational commitment	0.60	0.23	0.21	2.62	0.10*			

Figure 1: Significant predictors of work engagement.

Table 3:

Multiple Regression analysis with work engagement being the dependant variable and intrinsic job satisfaction, extrinsic job satisfaction and organisational commitment the independent variables.

t , test; p , probability value; F , overall significance; R^2 , percentage variance explained; ΔR^2 , change in percentage variance explained; B , regression coefficient; SE , standard error.

A, Dependent variable: Work engagement.

DISCUSSION

The objectives of this study include: investigating the relationship between job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement. Another objective of this study was to assess whether job satisfaction and/or organisational commitment are significant predictors of work engagement of waiters in Windhoek.

This study found that extrinsic job satisfaction and intrinsic job satisfaction had positive relationships with work engagement. Intrinsic job satisfaction was found to have a stronger correlation with work engagement. Between extrinsic and intrinsic job satisfaction, intrinsic job satisfaction was found to be the only significant predictor of work engagement in this study. These findings support the studies conducted by Brunetto et al. (2012), Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008), Silman (2014), Villotti et al. (2014), Wang and Hsieh (2013), reporting a positive relationship between satisfaction and work engagement. This indicates that when employees are satisfied with aspects such as pay, benefits, working conditions, relations with colleagues, opportunities for advancement, feeling competent and experience meaning in task execution, they would be more engaged in their work. Since the organisation is attending to the needs and expectations of employees, they become willing to do more and work harder towards achieving the goals and objectives of the organisation.

A positive relationship was also found between extrinsic job satisfaction, intrinsic job satisfaction and organisational commitment. These results support the findings by Pieters (2015) and Ramay (2012). Experiencing job satisfaction, employees would become more committed towards the organisation, wanting to remain with the organisation and work towards the success of the organisation. When organisations cater for the expectations and needs of employees, employees would experience a higher emotional identification with the organisation and want to stay with the organisation.

This study also found a positive relationship between organisational commitment and work engagement. Organisational commitment was also found to be a significant predictor of work engagement. These findings are supported by Brunetto et al. (2012) and Simons and Buitendach (2013). This indicates that employees who develop an emotional identification with the organisation would also become more engaged, wanting to work hard towards the success of the organisation. Since the organisation is catering for the employees' needs, they would also become more willing and engaged to work towards organisational goals and increase productivity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Prabhakar and Ram (2011) indicated that employers should monitor and evaluate employees' job attitudes since it may have positive individual and organisational outcomes. These attitudes include job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement. Doing regular monitoring and evaluation, employers will be able to identify possible problems in advance and be better equipped to develop effective interventions.

Employees are more likely to be committed once their roles are clearly defined (Javaid et al., 2015). This will lead to an increase in work knowledge which will result in an increase in perceived competence of work duties that in turn will lead to higher levels of work engagement (Silman, 2014). When employees know what to do and what their role expectations are, they would better understand what is expected, clarify if they do not understand and complete their role as part of the overall organisational goals.

Both Ajala (2013) and Okediji, Etuk and Anthony (2011) have shown that supervisory support has a significant impact on the job satisfaction of employees. Having a supervisor to talk to who is understanding, approachable and helpful when needed will result in employees feeling more committed to the organisation. When the supervisors cater for the needs of employees, employees would also be more open and willing to comply with the requests from the supervisor and assist when asked.

Employers need to monitor and minimise stress within their organisations. Kim, Im and Hwang (2015) found that when employees are exposed to too much stress, they are more likely to experience dissatisfaction and be less committed to the organisation. Organisations can also encourage stress management training or workshops (Oosthuizen & Berndt, 2008). Working with customers can be very demanding, but having the necessary training and knowledge about how to handle challenging customers, will also reduce stress of waiters.

Lunenburg (2011) suggested that job enrichment result in job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement. This would include allowing self-driven employees more autonomy, responsibility and introducing some new/different tasks into his/her work goals. Allowing for more challenging and less monotonous work will also result in higher levels of job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement.

Wamundila and Ngulube (2011) found that a lack of proper procedures, regular training and development significantly impacted on job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement. When employees are not clear about what to do or how to execute their duties, they would experience role ambiguity, resulting in job dissatisfaction, lower levels of organisational commitment and disengagement. Allowing employees to attend regular training and development opportunities will not only improve skills, competence and performance but positively impacts on job satisfaction, organisational commitment and work engagement.

Recommendations for future research include doing research on all waiters in Namibia. Perhaps future research could also investigate customer satisfaction and organisational productivity.

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