

FACTORS THAT AFFECT JOB SATISFACTION AT VODACOM SA

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Abstract – The purpose of study was to identify factors that undermine job satisfaction among employees working at Vodacom South Africa. The sample size of the study was equal to 146. Data was collected from employees by using a pretested, validated and standardised questionnaire of study. The degree of job satisfaction experienced by respondents was assessed by using a composite index developed by Ringle, Sarstedt, Mitchell and Gudergan (2020: 1617-1643) for conducting a similar study. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of data analyses was used in the study. Ordered logit analysis (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 2013), categorical data analysis (Agresti, 2018), Structural Equations Modelling (Byrne, 2013) and Partial Least Squares (Ringle, Sarstedt, Mitchell and Gudergan, 2020) were used for identifying and quantifying key predictors of job satisfaction and work-related stress among employees of Vodacom SA. The study found that about 76% of employees of Vodacom SA experienced job satisfaction, whereas the remaining 24% of employees did not experience job satisfaction. Results obtained from the study showed that the degree of job satisfaction of employees at Vodacom SA was significantly influenced by the provision of skills-related training opportunities. Similar findings were obtained from individual in-depth interviews conducted with 12 employees of Vodacom SA. Based on findings obtained from the study, a framework has been developed for improving job satisfaction in Vodacom SA.

Keywords: Vodacom SA, Job satisfaction, Structural Equations Modelling, Partial Least Squares

Introduction and background to study

The overall objective of the study is to identify and quantify the root causes of job dissatisfaction among employees of Vodacom SA. The study aims to assess Knowledge, Attitude, Behaviour and Perception (KABP) and develop a framework that could be used for mitigating and alleviating the underlying causes of job dissatisfaction, workplace stress and loss of productivity in Vodacom SA. There is a need for a framework of study that could be used for alleviating common causes of job dissatisfaction among employees working in Vodacom SA. The study will make an original contribution to the relevant literature. The study will improve the current degree of awareness about the root causes of job dissatisfaction, work related stress and loss of productivity among employees working in the South African telecommunications company Vodacom SA.

Vodacom South Africa (Vodacom SA , 2018) is a leading South African telecommunications company with total assets of R96.543 Billion that is listed on Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). The parent company of Vodacom SA is Vodafone of London. Vodafone is a British telecommunications enterprise. The global headquarters of Vodafone is in London. Vodafone operates in Europe, Africa, Asia, Europe and the 14 countries of Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, etc). Vodacom SA has a total equity of R131.365 Billion and 7, 554 employees.

Vodacom SA is a South African telecommunications enterprise which provides mobile telephone services. The services are provided on voice, messaging, data and converged platforms to about 55 million clients who live in South Africa, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Lesotho. Vodacom SA provides business related services to clients in 32 African countries.

Vodacom SA is owned in a 50/50 partnership by Telkom SA and Vodafone. As of the month of November 2008, Vodafone has increased its stake to 64.5%. Vodacom SA serves high points such as Kilimanjaro in Kenya by using GSM technology. Vodacom is the largest telecommunications company in the African continent with a 58% of market share and over 103 million clients in Africa (Vodacom SA, 2018).

Vodacom SA provides 3G, 4G, 5G, UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System), HSPA+ (High Speed Packet Access) at 21.1 Mbit/s, HSUPA (High Speed Uplink Packet Access) at 42 Mbit/s, 2100 MHz, Wi-Fi,

WiMAX, and Long Term Evolution (LTE) services. In the month of April 2017, Vodacom SA became the first South African telecommunications company to roll out fibre optic cable based services to South African clients. According to Vodacom SA (2018), Vodacom SA had total revenue of R86.370 Billion. Its operating income in 2018 was equal to R81.278 Billion. Its total asset was worth R96.543 billion.

Vodacom SA uses state-of-the-art technologies in the course of providing telecommunications services, and uses 5G technology and fibre optic cable connections to its customers. Vodacom SA is one of the most advanced telecommunications companies in the world. The company uses the services of the worlds most highly qualified and experienced telecommunications technicians, hardware and software engineers, computer programmers and network operators and internet specialists for providing services to its customers. Vodacom SA has invested heavily on infrastructural development in areas such as signal boosters and radio wave transmitters. In South Africa, Vodacom SA has the widest possible signal reception coverage and bands. As a result, Vodacom SA has the biggest potential for connecting people within South Africa at any time by using the most advanced telecommunications technology and infrastructure. Vodacom SA provides the most reliable telecommunications service in all parts of South Africa.

Vodacom SA is a listed and audited company that pays tax to SARS. The company also makes a meaningful contribution to the South African economy by employing 7, 554 employees (Vodacom SA, 2018). The study was conducted in Vodacom South Africa (Vodacom SA) in order to explore and describe socioeconomic determinants of productivity and job satisfaction among the 7, 554 employees of the company. Employees are most productive and creative when they feel happy. Such employees are satisfied with the way their services are appreciated and valued at the workplace. This motivates them to stay along and refrain from quitting. Employees are most motivated when they work under an honest employer who is sincere and values their contribution.

Research works conducted by Jahanbakht and Mostafa (2020), Frimpong, Lazarova and Gyamerah (2019) have found that employees working in the South African telecommunications industry require a constant improvement of technical skills and work-related education in order to cope with the demand for highly specialised services. This finding shows that there is a need for maintaining employee morale at the workplace on a constant basis.

Vodacom SA uses the world's most advanced technological equipment, hardware and software in the course of service delivery. Accordingly, employees of Vodacom SA need to keep up with technological advancements and developments on a daily basis. The need to cope with such a working environment places a great deal of stress and pressure on employees at the workplace (Sartor & Beamish, 2019). Accordingly, it is necessary to keep up employee morale and workplace productivity on a regular basis. That is, there is a need for a balanced working environment in Vodacom SA as a means of ensuring employee morale and overall productivity. The study was prompted by the need for an empirical study that could be used for developing a practical framework that could be used for mitigating and alleviating the underlying causes of job dissatisfaction, workplace stress and loss of productivity in Vodacom SA. There is a need for a framework of study that could be used for alleviating common causes of job dissatisfaction among employees working in Vodacom SA. The study will make an original contribution to the relevant literature. The study will improve the current degree of awareness about the root causes of job dissatisfaction, work related stress and loss of productivity among employees working in the South African telecommunications company Vodacom SA.

Objective of study

The overall objective of the study is to identify and quantify the root causes of job dissatisfaction and loss of productivity among employees of Vodacom SA. The study aims to assess Knowledge, Attitude, Behaviour and Perception (KABP) and develop a framework that could be used for mitigating and alleviating the underlying causes of job dissatisfaction, workplace stress and loss of productivity in Vodacom SA. There is a need for a framework of study that could be used for alleviating common causes of job dissatisfaction among employees working in Vodacom SA. The study will make an original contribution to the relevant literature. The study will improve the current degree of awareness about the root causes of job dissatisfaction, work related stress and loss of productivity among employees working in the South African telecommunications company Vodacom SA.

Methods and materials of study

The study was conducted by collecting data from 146 employees of Vodacom SA at Midrand, South Africa. Additional data was collected from 12 employees of Vodacom SA by using individual in-depth interviews. The following statistical methods of data analyses were used in the study:

- Frequency tables for categorical variables of study
- Summary statistics for continuous variables of study
- Pie charts and bar charts
- Cross-tab analyses or Pearson’s chi-square tests of association (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2013)
- Structural Equations Modelling (Byrne, 2013; Agresti, 2018)

The dependent variable of study (Y) was a measure of job satisfaction experienced by employees. It was defined based on a composite index developed by Ringle, Sarstedt, Mitchell and Gudergan (2020) for measuring the degree of job satisfaction of employees in high performance institutions. Work-related stress was measured by using a composite index developed by Blomsma and Brennan (2017: 603-614) for the measurement of work-related stress in high performance institutions.

The dependent variable of study (Y) has only 2 possible values.

Y: Experience of job satisfaction by employee of Vodacom SA

$$Y = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if Yes} \\ 2 & \text{if No} \end{cases}$$

Independent variables of study (X1, X2, ..., Xk)

The independent variables of study are all those variables that affect the degree of job satisfaction experienced by the 146 employees who took part in the study. The complete list of these variables is shown in the questionnaire of study (Appendix A). The mathematical expression of the logistic regression model (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 2013) is given by the following equation:

$\log it(p_i)$ = the natural logarithm of the ratio of probabilities where:

$$\log it(p_i) = \ln\left(\frac{p_i}{1-p_i}\right) = \hat{\beta}_0 + \hat{\beta}_1 X_1 + \dots + \hat{\beta}_k X_k$$

At the 5% level of significance, influential predictor variables are characterised by odds ratios that are significantly different from 1, P-values that are smaller than 0.05, and 95% confidence intervals of odds ratios that do not contain 1. Two-by-two crosstab analyses (Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, 2013) were performed in order to screen variables based on significant association with job satisfaction and work-related stress. Ordered logit analysis (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 2013), categorical data analysis (Agresti, 2018), Structural Equations Modelling (Byrne, 2013) and Partial Least Squares (Ringle, Sarstedt, Mitchell and Gudergan, 2020) were used for identifying and quantifying key predictors of job satisfaction and work-related stress among employees of Vodacom SA.

Results of data analyses

Table 1 shows the demographic information of workers according to gender, race and years of experience at Vodacom SA. Most of the participants were males (63.7%), while the least were females (36.3%). With regard to racial distribution, the majority of workers were Black (79.2%), followed by White (11.8%), Coloured (6.9%) and others (2.1%). This implies that the workers are unequally distributed concerning their race. With reference to working experience, the highest number of participants was from 6–10 years age group (50.7%), while the fewest were from 11+ years (5.8%). This demonstrates that most workers were not highly experienced.

TABLE 1: GENDER, RACE AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE OF PARTICIPANTS (N=146)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	93	63.7
Female	53	36.3
Race:		
Black	114	79.2
White	60	11.8
Coloured	27	6.9
Other	2	2.1
Years of experience:		
1–5 years	60	43.5
6–10 years	70	50.7
11+ years	8	5.8

Table 2 summarises the highest academic qualifications among workers. Sixty-six (46.2%) workers had diplomas as the highest qualification, 33 (23.1%) had bachelor’s degree, and 28 (19.6%) obtained certificate. The fewest number of participants were in position of master’s degree (0.7%) and doctoral degree (2.1%).

TABLE 2: HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS AMONG PARTICIPANTS (N=146)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Matric or less	12	8.4
Certificate	28	19.6
Diploma	66	46.2
Bachelor's degree	33	23.1
Master's degree	1	0.7
Doctoral degree	3	2.1

Table 3 shows information on the job designation of the workers. Most of the participants were working as Specialist technician (30%), junior technician (23%), Customer care staff (8%) and Support staff (8%), while the least were Mechanic or driver (0.7%), Security Staff (0.7%) and Lawyer (0.7%).

TABLE 3: WORKERS' JOB DESIGNATION (N=146)

	Frequency	Percentage
Specialist technician	45	30
Junior technician	34	23
Customer care staff	13	8
Support staff	13	8
Quality control or assurance staff	6	4
Operations staff	6	4.1
Administrator	5	3
Sales person	4	2
Others	4	2.7
Switchboard operator	3	2.0
Secretary or personal assistant	2	1.4
Cleaner or Gardner	2	1.4
Maintenance staff	2	1.4
Accountant or auditor	2	1.4
Trade union representative	2	1.4
Mechanic or driver	1	0.7
Security staff	1	0.7
Lawyer	1	0.7

Table 4 shows participants' work-related performance, promotion and abuse. Most of the participants indicated that they received awards (74.3%) and bonuses (72.9%) for performing well. Of great concern is that majority of participants (88.9%) were not promoted since they started working at Vodacom SA. An encouraging finding is that the participants reported that abuse from fellow colleagues was very low at Vodacom SA (4.2%).

TABLE 4: WORK-RELATED PERFORMANCE OF WORKERS (N=146)

Questionnaire item	Frequency	Percentage
Have you ever received workplace training so far?		
Yes	57	39.9
No	86	60.1
Have you ever received an award for work-related performance?		
Yes	107	74.3

No	37	25.7
Have you ever received work-related or performance bonus so far?		
Yes	105	72.9
No	39	27.1
Have you ever been promoted since you were employed by Vodacom SA ?		
Yes	16	11.1
No	128	88.9
Have you ever experienced workplace abuse from your fellow colleagues at work?		
Yes	6	4.2
No	138	95.8
Have you ever experienced gender-related abuse from your fellow colleagues at work?		
Yes	5	3.5
No	137	96.5
Has your work-related suggestion or recommendation been unfairly rejected by your line function manager or fellow colleagues at work?		
Yes	10	6.9
No	133	93.1

Table 5 shows results obtained from reliability tests.

TABLE 5: RELIABILITY ANALYSES OF FAIRNESS AND OBJECTIVITY (N=146)

Variable	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
The assessment of performance enables Vodacom SA to reward employees according to performance	0.63	0.85
Performance assessment is implemented uniformly or similarly across all departments	0.51	0.84
There is no favouritism in the way performance assessment is conducted in Vodacom SA	0.41	0.85
Only excellent performers or hard workers are rewarded	0.32	0.86
I am satisfied with the salary I am paid by Vodacom SA	0.46	0.85

My working conditions are fair and objective enough	0.56	0.84
I am appreciated whenever I do a good job for customers	0.52	0.84
Fairness and objectivity	$\alpha = 0.86$	
I am happy with the way my performance is evaluated at Vodacom SA	0.35	0.69
I feel loyal to Vodacom SA	0.55	0.62
My contributions for Vodacom SA are valued and appreciated	0.71	0.56
I have been able to make positive difference by working hard	0.49	0.65
I always do what is best for customers of Vodacom SA	0.12	0.74
I am proud of the Vodacom SA brand	0.41	0.67
Employee job satisfaction	$\alpha = 0.70$	

α = Cronbach’s alpha

Table 6 shows workers’ perceptions of their Performance review and Workplace training opportunities. The most important Performance review factors identified by workers were ‘The manager is competent in making decisions’ (M = 3.76, SD = 0.67), ‘Performance management implementation increases or improves communication between employees and line function managers’ (M = 3.72, SD = 0.76) and ‘The manager handles his/her workers in a professional manner’ (M = 3.70, SD = 0.70).

TABLE 6: PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND WORKPLACE TRAINING (N=146)

Variable	M (SD)
Performance review	
The manager is competent in making decisions	3.76 (0.67)
Performance management implementation increases or improves communication between employees and line function managers	3.72 (0.76)
The manager handles his/her workers in a professional manner	3.70 (0.70)
Policies of Vodacom SA are put into appropriately	3.66 (0.68)
Performance reviews are done regularly	3.46 (0.86)
Assessment reports arising from performance reviews are given to employees promptly in writing	3.44 (0.88)
Workplace training opportunities	
My technical skills have improved significantly since I joined Vodacom SA	3.97 (0.83)
I am loyal to Vodacom SA as a result of access to skills-based training opportunities	3.83 (0.75)
The policy on workplace training is fair and objective to all deserving employees	3.76 (0.77)
Workplace training opportunities are provided to employees based on work-related need and merit	3.75 (0.79)

Workplace training is an incentive for me at Vodacom SA	3.74 (0.81)
My line function manager encourages me to improve my technical skills by acquiring workplace training	3.67 (0.85)
I am encouraged by my line function manager to ask for training on tasks that are related to my job description	3.52(0.72)

M=Mean. SD = Standard deviation

Table 6 shows results obtained from correlation analysis. The correlations show that there is a significant positive relationship between performance and workplace training opportunities.

TABLE 6: CORRELATIONS AMONG SUBSCALES (N=146)

Variable	Gender	Age	Performance review	Workplace training opportunities	Fairness and objectivity	Employee job satisfaction
Gender	–					
Age	-.23**					
Performance review	-0.02	0.12				
Workplace training opportunities	0.05	0.20*	0.44**			
Fairness and objectivity	-0.01	0.21*	0.55**	0.51**		
Employee job satisfaction	0.01	0.10	0.26**	0.33**	0.34**	–

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 shows results obtained from partial least squares regression analysis. It can be seen that the most influential predictor variable of job satisfaction at Vodacom SA is the provision of training opportunities to employees.

Table 7: Estimates from partial least square regression analysis (n=146)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	P
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.89	0.20		19.66	0.00
	Gender	0.03	0.09	0.04	0.40	0.69

	Age	0.07	0.05	0.11	1.25	0.21
2	(Constant)	2.80	0.30		9.26	0.00
	Gender	0.01	0.08	0.01	0.06	0.95
	Age	0.01	0.05	0.01	0.14	0.89
	Performance review	0.05	0.07	0.07	0.71	0.48
	Workplace training opportunities	0.16	0.08	0.20	2.09	0.04
	Fairness and objectivity	0.14	0.07	0.20	1.92	0.06

a. Dependent Variable: Employee job satisfaction

Results from in-depth interviews

Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 respondents by using a recording device. The recorded interviews were then transcribed, coded and grouped into themes. Below is a discussion of the key findings obtained from in-depth interviews. All respondents interviewed were key decision makers who are required to make decisions in their current positions. The type of decisions ranges all the way from operational strategic decisions across various functional areas. A few respondents are required to make decisions around project feasibility, resource allocations, marketing strategies, technology investments and brand positioning. In addition to being decision makers, all respondents interviewed are required to present to executive committee’s and steering committees and track various key performance indicators. Acknowledging that they are decision makers at various levels, it was mentioned that a lack of information support is still their biggest challenge within the organisation. Supporting decision making requires the use of multiple information sources within the organisation. Interpersonal support for decision making still lacks from an engagement perspective.

Most respondents feel that Vodacom SA does not place enough emphasis on data driven decision making, while few agree that there is emphasis on data driven decisions, but the doubt the execution there off. The view that Vodacom does not place enough emphasis on data driven decision making is driven by the perception that the business often does not make decisions based on data but instead operates more on gut and is product driven. It is interesting to note that although respondents do not see data driven decision making at Vodacom SA, they individually appreciate the value and role of data in decision making with respondents saying things like “in our decisions data is everything”. General support exists for data driven decision making, but still hindered or negatively impacted by the lack of decision information support. As much as it is agreed that decision making should be data driven, it was also mentioned that the availability of data drives productivity within certain business units such as the customer care areas where data is used for daily planning and scheduling. It was mentioned that the lack of information makes it difficult for managers and supervisors to measure productivity of employees thereby impacting performance reviews and the identification of development areas for employees.

The difficulty in accessing information needed for presentations and reports was a major problem cited by many of the respondents. The lack of easily accessible information has a direct impact on employee productivity as readily available information is required to perform certain functions and make certain operational decisions, especially within the customer care environment around agent performance, daily planning, and agent behaviours. Again, the inability to measure actual productivity came through strongly. Most respondents find it difficult to access the information they need because the information is often not readily available, and they cannot access it when they need it.

It was mentioned that the difficulty to access information puts them in position where they have to make decisions on gut feel or previous experience, not really based on the trends shown in the actual information. Some respondents cited the fact that there was no single data source to support decisions at Vodacom as a big challenge to accessing information. Other barriers to accessing information include the inability to provide data in real time and the fact that data is often not located in one place but are instead disbursed. There is a perception that although the information is there, it is not accessible suggesting the need for a consolidated accessible source. This suggests that it is not that Vodacom SA does not have data; it is more about structuring the data and simplifying how it is

accessed. On average respondents rate the ease of accessing information as 5/10, which is neutral and suggests that although information is not readily available it is also not completely inaccessible? This rating was largely because of the negative impact the lack of information in some areas has on their ability to make decisions faster or at all.

The 12 employees of Vodacom SA who were interviewed personally as part of the study indicated that decisions were taken at Vodacom SA mostly by gut feeling and personal discretion rather than empirical evidence obtained from scientific surveys. The respondents indicated that the majority of employees of Vodacom SA were satisfied with their working conditions and the manner in which they were treated by their line function managers at the workplace. The 12 respondents confirmed clearly that they were proud to be employees of Vodacom SA. They also indicated that Vodacom SA dutifully respected the labour and constitutional rights of employees, and that employees were given ample opportunities to acquire skills-based training opportunities at the expense of Vodacom SA.

The 12 respondents indicated that Vodacom SA was committed to transformation at the workplace and that the quality of leadership shown by their employer was quite good in the eyes of employees. With regards to work-related stress, the respondents indicated that Vodacom SA was a highly competitive company and that employees were under a constant state of pressure and massive workload at all times. Three of the 12 respondents recommended the recruitment of additional employees as a means of alleviating workload.

With regards to mitigating and alleviating workplace stress, the 12 respondents indicated that Vodacom SA should encourage its employees who require counselling services to come forward openly and ask for professional assistance. The respondents indicated that it was vital for performance reviews to be based strictly on pre-determined and well-defined performance-related outcomes, key performance indicators and key performance areas. The respondents indicated the need for moderation of performance appraisals by independent bodies. It was indicated that incentives such as financial rewards and advanced training opportunities should be given to top-performing employees.

The 12 respondents indicated that Vodacom SA had a huge market opportunity both within and outside South Africa, and that the company should work with the South African Government in setting up shops in every African country as a means of growing its market share. The respondents indicated that doing business outside South Africa would require a lot of help from African telecommunications companies. They indicated that the telecommunications industry in the rest of Africa was highly regulated and fraught with cumbersome regulation, bureaucracy, redtape, unnecessary administrative regulations, corruption, lack of good leadership, lack of transparency, difficulty in clearing with customs officials, excessive tax and political interference.

As a result of these obstacles, telecommunications operators such as Vodacom SA stood to lose massive resources such as valuable money, time, manpower and logistical resources. It was pointed out that obstacles such as language barriers, fluctuations in currency rates, tight exchange control regulations, cumbersome regulations at border controls and difficulty in the repatriation of profits may hamper efforts by Vodacom SA to open up shop in every African country. It was indicated that the South African Government needs to play a critical role in encouraging African countries to abide by rules and regulations issued by CRASA (Communications Regulators' Association of Southern Africa) as a means of enabling Vodacom SA to expand its services successfully into every African country in the continent. In general, findings obtained from personal interviews were quite similar to those obtained from univariate, bivariate and multivariate data analyses.

Framework of study

Based on findings obtained from the study, the following framework has been constructed in order to enhance job satisfaction among employees working in Vodacom SA.

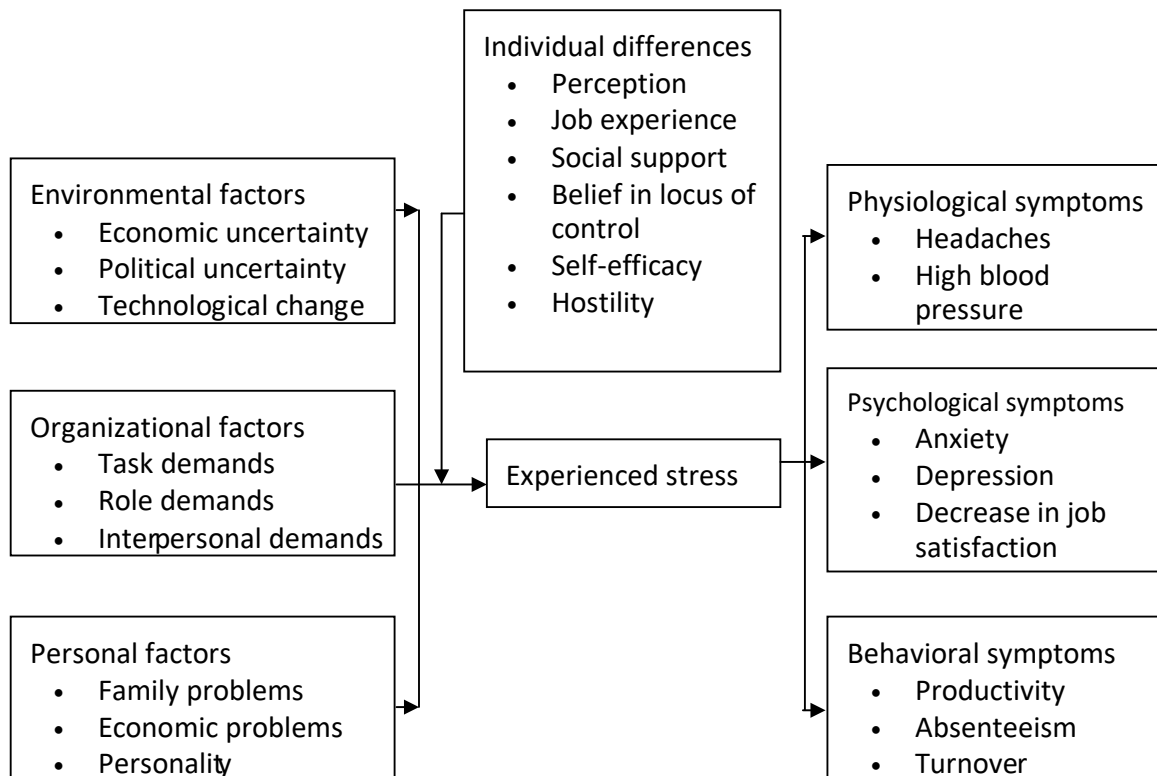


Figure 1: Framework for ensuring job satisfaction in Vodacom SA

The framework developed in Figure 1 consists of environmental, organisational and personal factors. The framework is suitable for providing tangible assistance to employees who experience job dissatisfaction in 3 sequential steps. Step 1 entails supporting all employees, line function managers and administrators of Vodacom SA by way of promoting awareness and health education about the common causes, early symptoms and consequences of work-related stress. This entails detecting and identifying early symptoms and common causes of work-related stress, monitoring and evaluating the overall wellbeing and productivity of employees on a regular basis. Step 2 of the framework entails mitigation based on guidelines that are developed by the World Health Organisation (2019). The guideline developed based on findings of this study has been used for setting up a draft policy for the early detection, mitigation and alleviation of work-related stress among employees. The draft policy document is currently being reviewed by all relevant stakeholders including employees, partners and the experts working in the South African Department of Health. Following the review process, the plan will be implemented by the leadership of Vodacom SA. Step 3 of the framework entails the alleviation of work-related stress among employees of Vodacom SA.

The framework developed by this study is consistent with recommendations made by the World Health Organisation (2019) in its annual report for 2017 and 2018. The WHO recommends that all employers assess the overall health condition, fitness and wellbeing of employees. National Departments of Health are encouraged by the WHO (2019) to adopt norms and standards for providing counselling, safety, health, occupational and mental health services to employees who are obliged to work under stressful conditions worldwide. The WHO (2019) works in partnership with National Departments of Health in all parts of the world.

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