

**STAFF MORALE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS,  
KIMBERLEY REGIONAL OFFICE**

By

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## **DECLARATION**

“I declare that the field study hereby handed in for the qualification Master’s in Business Administration at the UFS Business School at the University of the Free State is my own independent work and that I have not previously submitted the same work, either as a whole or in part, for a qualification at/in another university / faculty.

I also hereby cede copyright of this work to the University of the Free State”

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## **Abstract**

This study aimed to evaluate the staff morale in the Department of Public Works Kimberley Regional Office. A sample of 20 participants was chosen to fully represent the staff. The data was collected through in-depth interviews and was analysed by means of content analysis. Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene theory forms the basis of the study by distinguishing the three different work environments that exist and the effects that these environments have on morale. The results of the study show that within the three work environments, the human and organisational environments have the most impact on morale. Within those two environments the main contributors to the low levels of morale are the lack of management and leadership, and aspects that relate to that. The possible contributors within the technical environment have virtually no effect on morale as they are considered hygiene factors by Herzberg.

**Key Words:** staff morale, working environments, motivation, job security, leadership, management

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1. Background

Today more than ever, the public sector, particularly the Department of Public Works (DPW) is characterised by unresponsiveness and inefficiencies. DPW faces growing pressure from both parliament and society at large to account for under-expenditure, inaccuracies of the immovable asset register, and fraud and corruption, particularly relating to leasing irregularities (Pressence, 2012). In 2010 in a media statement, President Zuma commented in saying that “unless attitudes in the public service change and delivery ethics improve, there will be no progress” (Hamlyn, 2010: para 8).

The DPW has received two audit disclaimers in as many financial years (as well as receiving eight qualified audit reports in the previous financial years). Lack of internal controls was mentioned as the main cause by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) in a hearing on Public Works and Property Management Trading Entity (PMTE) on 20 March 2013 (SCOPA, 2013). It becomes apparent that many if not all issues raised in the disclaimer are resultant of human errors or causes as opposed to policy or procedural faults. These human errors can be thought of as accidental, purposeful or due to ignorance.

Staff morale plays a vital role in the conduct and performance of staff in an organisation, and this has a direct impact on the number of human errors made. Clemmer (2011) and Savage (2011) suggests that staff that have high morale are more likely to have improved productivity, to take less leave days, pay greater attention to detail and have a higher quality of work overall. Improving and maintaining high employee morale is therefore a key factor to consider in the pursuit of departmental success. A hierarchical structure such as that of DPW has been found to be linked to employee dissatisfaction as well as to reduced customer satisfaction (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010).

Hierarchy as defined by Friesen, Kay, Eibach, & Galinsky (2014) is a universal system of human social organisation, implying that things or people are categorised according



to their importance. DPW consists of one Head Office based in Pretoria and eleven Regional Offices in the nine provinces, with Eastern Cape and Gauteng having two Regional Offices each (DPW 2009b). The Kimberley Regional Office (KRO) is situated in the Northern Cape (the largest province in South Africa), yet is one of the smallest Regional Offices with regard to the number of employees.

DPW KRO was once an office where employees took pride in their work, where leave was responsibly utilised and very few reports of tardiness were recorded. It was an office where employees worked on a rotational basis, meaning that employees were competent in more than just their current job description, and enjoyed the exposure to different fields. Currently DPW KRO is an office which is filled with gossip, back stabbing, unreasonable increases in absenteeism and reduced performance. This has resulted in employees operating in silos where they only perform the work that they were employed to do - an overall dysfunctional office.

DPW has undoubtedly been underperforming over the past years, resulting in it slowly losing its mandate as the custodian and manager of all of the state's fixed assets. This includes the acquisition, maintenance and disposal of these assets as well as the allocation of accommodation to its client departments and the rendering of expert built environment expertise (DPW, 2009a). Recently DPW's client departments find it more efficient to perform maintenance on the buildings themselves. If the DPW continues as it is, Parliament may abolish the Department as it no longer fulfils its mandate. Already the work performed by the DPW can be and is currently better performed by its clients.

The high staff turnover of the Department is also of major concern. In the 2011/2012 financial year the Department has had three Ministers and three Director Generals (SCOPA, 2013). Furthermore, in the same period, the Department has reshuffled top management twice. Similarly to the Head Office, the KRO has had three Regional Managers in the period 2007 to 2009 (DPW, 2009b). Collectively all of these movements have made the department highly unstable which negatively affects the morale of its staff.

The morale in the KRO has deteriorated over the years, resulting in lower client and employee satisfaction. The signs which emanated from this include a reduced work

ethic, increased absenteeism and sabotage. According to Viscuso and Viscuso (2011) the situation in the KRO may develop into one where employees will turn on one another and consequently play the blame game, which can then very easily spiral out of control to the detriment of the Department. The less than satisfactory situation that DPW KRO finds its self in today may be miniscule compared to how it might be in the future if not addressed.

## **1.2. Problem statement**

The problem is that the level of staff morale in the DPW KRO is of such a nature that its symptoms are causing adverse effects for the Office as a whole.

The problem statement then leads to the following research questions:

- i. What are the major reasons for low staff morale?
- ii. What corrective measures can be put in place to correct low morale at DPW KRO?

Subsequently to gauging the current level of morale, the causes and symptoms can be mitigated.

## **Research objectives**

The primary research objective of this study is:

- o To evaluate staff morale in the Department of Public Works, Kimberley Regional Office.

The secondary research objectives of the study include:

- i. To explore the major reasons for low staff morale
- ii. To determine the influence of staff morale on employees at the Department of Public Works, Kimberley.
- iii. To identify possible corrective measures to influence at the Department of Public Works, Kimberley

### 1.3. Preliminary literature review

McKnight, Ahmad and Schroeder (2001:467) describe morale as the “degree to which an employee feels good about his/her work and work environment”. In effect it is a state of mind and an emotion, affecting the willingness to work which in turn affects individual and organisational objectives.

Even though staff morale may be thought of as a group phenomenon, it remains an individual matter. Therefore in order to improve the morale of the group, the morale of each individual in the group must first be improved (Finger in Fink, 2011). Ewton (in Fink, 2011) eloquently describes morale as the fuel that drives an organisation forward, or it can fuel employee discontent, poor performance and absenteeism.

The effects of low morale as stated by Clemmer (2011) are that people will be less likely to make improvements to work processes because they are uninspired. Nophaket (2010) says that employees cannot do their best when they are fearful and frustrated, and when they feel as though there is little or no respect between themselves and their supervisors. Lee, Scheunemann, Hall and Payne (2012:3) explain that the organisational factors leading to low staff morale are founded upon the “perception of the level of respect that employees receive from the organisation in which they work”.

Since staff morale relates to how staff feels about an organisation, it is an important element in creating a healthy work environment (Lee *et al.* 2011), an environment that will benefit not only the employee but the organisation as well.

Clemmer (2011) argues that work ethic is not dead. Employees want to take pride in their work, want to belong to a winning team and want to be part of an organisation that they can believe in. Viscuso and Viscuso (2011) suggest that there is usually a minority of disgruntled employees who are often the most vocal, and they pass the negative attitude on to others. Millet (2010) lists six reasons why high staff morale is important, namely improved productivity, improved performance and creativity, less leave days taken, greater attention to detail, a safer workplace and an increase in the quality of work performed.

Fard, Ghatari and Hasiri (2010) associate high morale with job fulfilment, creativity and innovation, job honourability, commitment to the organisation, eagerness to satisfy group rather than individual objectives, and finally improving the organisational performance. They also go on to associate the following effects with low morale: an increase in costs associated with absenteeism, uncooperative attitudes, lack of motivation and interest, a decrease in creativity and innovation, preventing the satisfaction of organisational objectives, reduced efficiency, and burnout (Lee *et. al* 2012).

Lee *et al.* (2012:1) describes burnout as a “condition of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity”. Once burnout has been reached, it can influence the psychological health of staff which will increase the costs associated with low morale as described by Fard, Ghatari and Hasiri (2010).

The public and private sectors differ substantially in character, so the methods of improving morale in the two sectors differ greatly as well. Morale boosters in the private sector may therefore not be as effective (if at all) in the public sector. An example is the awarding of performance bonuses - in the public sector it is a system that benefits only some employees, as only a limited number can be awarded per annum based on the 1% of the total personal budget (RSA DPW PMDS 2007), resulting in employees feeling demoralised as the amount of effort put into the work has no relation to any reward. Also, as stated by Ferreira and Antwerpen (2011), the possibility of retrenchment and dismissal in the public sector is extremely small which in contrast means that employees have no desire to put in extra effort for fear of losing their jobs. In addition the Department requires highly technical expertise. The current retention policy is limited by the Public Service Act, and simply put, the Government cannot afford to pay highly skilled workers the same salary as they can otherwise earn in the private sector.

Wilby (in Ferreira & Antwerpen, 2011) points out that inefficient government departments are staffed by personnel who were not necessarily appointed for their skills. Kamoche (1997) and Kassiem (2007) indicate that in striving to achieve a complex set of socio-economic and political objectives, human resource concerns are all too often neglected. Employment equity does not mean putting an unskilled person in

a position where they cannot perform (Kassiem, 2007) as this results in people being wrongfully placed, adding to their frustration and invariably their low morale. Mhlanga (2006) states that institutions should effectively cater for all the needs of their administrative employees before transformation can be successfully carried out.

Novick (2010) states that certain motivational factors such as recognition of work, promotion and growth, are ways to improve morale. Yet because the Department of Public Works is bound by the Public Services Act, the factors listed are not possible for DPW, although in theory they work. Ferreira and Antwerpen (2011) state that because government departments lack incentives that are intrinsic to the private sector, they are inherently inefficient. Recommendations therefore need to be sought that will be effective in the public sector. Before recommendations can be made on how to rectify low morale, the concept first needs to be investigated.

Viscuso and Viscuso (2011) list the possible signs to look out for in trying to determine if low morale is affecting an organisation. These include reduced work ethic, increased absenteeism, sabotage, desire to quit, and employees turning on and blaming each other. Viscuso and Viscuso further set out to identify possible reasons for low morale including no professional growth prospects, employee-supervisor relationship degradation, no recognition for a job well done, gossip and rumours, no team spirit, no consistency and fairness (favouritism), and no communication. After the research for this study has been completed the researcher will be able to deduce what the main reasons are for the KRO employees' low morale, and if they are similar to those listed by the abovementioned authors

The improvement of these issues will not only produce happier and more productive employees, but will probably also lead to cost reduction and savings (specifically relating to costs associated with lost days due to absenteeism and high turnover i.e. advertising of positions, relocation, settlements, etc.) in the entire public sector of South Africa and specifically DPW KRO (Ferreira & Antwerpen, 2011).

#### **1.4. Research methodology**

The aim of this study is to examine the current situation at the DPW KRO and seek to find answers to the research objectives listed above.

The research paradigm utilised was post-positivistic. The researcher will attempt to identify any trends in the various responses to try and draw parallels between them in order to generate theory to understand human behaviour (staff morale) in the KRO (Ryan, 2006).

The research design employed was qualitative research, as in-depth knowledge relating to causes for employees' low morale was required. Cooper and Schindler (2011) describe qualitative research as a non-quantitative collection of data with the purpose of increasing one's understanding of a topic. This involved the qualitative analysis of the employees' stated views and opinions.

The data collection method utilised was that of in-depth, face to face interviews. The researcher sought to gain the highest response rates by being able to clarify ambiguous answers. The individual in-depth interviews with the assistance of a structured interview schedule began with a few specific questions but then followed the individual's tangent of thought. Slight intervention from the interviewer (Cooper & Schindler, 2011) allowed the interviewer to obtain this understanding of the situation in the KRO. The participants were interviewed in a purposive, judgmental manner and included employees from the core as well as the support functions within the KRO. The population size of DPW KRO is 193, with 4 distinct sub-populations: 7 top management, 17 middle management, 161 staff between the levels of 3 and 8, and 8 cleaners. The staff employed by DPW KRO but who are not in Kimberley have been excluded from this study as they are not susceptible to the same triggers of low morale as staff within the Office. Of the sub-populations the researcher interviewed 2 top management (Deputy Directors, level 12), 6 middle management (Assistant Directors, Levels 9-10), 10 general staff (levels 4 and 8), and 2 cleaners (level 3). A limit of 20 employees across the sub-populations was decided upon due to the extensive amounts of time that it took to conduct the interview as well as to analyse the information obtained. Participants were carefully chosen to

ensure that their knowledge and experience fully encompass the scope of this study. Interviews continued until the limit or theoretical saturation was reached.

The sampling strategy employed was purposive non-probability (due to time and cost) judgment sampling as the researcher aimed to select participants who conform to certain criteria within the target population. The researcher wanted to ensure that the participants chosen have either experienced or are experiencing low morale, or have experienced or are experiencing high morale in order to distinguish between the reasons for the differences in morale.

The self-developed interview schedule was based upon the research objectives in order to answer the research problem.

### **1.5. Ethical considerations**

Cooper and Schindler (2011) state that research must be designed in such a manner that the participant does not suffer any pain, discomfort, physical harm, embarrassment and most importantly loss of privacy.

It is in this light that the following ethical concerns were taken into consideration:

- Objectivity because the researcher is the participants' colleague, who herself is subject to all issues raised. The question schedule was therefore be drawn up so as to take this into account and to ensure that bias did not form part of the questions.
  - Participation was voluntary and no one was misled or coerced into answering in a biased fashion.
  - Participants were fully informed as to the nature and purpose of the research, and to indicate their understanding of such, participants were required to sign a consent form.
- 
- All participants as well as the researcher work under the same conditions, which could be made worse if the data from this research is leaked. It was therefore of the utmost importance to the researcher to ensure the confidentiality of all information received as well as to ensure data integrity during and after the conclusion of the research.

## **1.6. Demarcation of field of study**

This study aims to examine the reasons for low staff morale in the DPW KRO. Once the reasons have been identified, recommendations will be developed to be presented to DPW's top management for implementation in order to rectify and avoid such occurrences in the future. The field of study will be in human resource management as the study deals with staff wellbeing. The study will take place at the DPW KRO, Northern Cape, South Africa.

## **1.7. Conclusion**

This study aims to find the reasons of low morale in the DPW KRO and to develop recommendations on how to mitigate, as far as possible, the effects that it has caused in order to avoid its recurrence.

Chapter 2 elaborates on the theoretical analysis of employee morale by explaining its definition, causes and symptoms. Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory forms the basis of the chapter by distinguishing the three different work environments that exist and the effects that these environments have on morale.



## Chapter 2

### Staff morale

#### 2.1. Introduction

Emergent research indicates that an alarming number of workers globally as well as in South Africa are disengaged and unfocused on the job. They are disinterested, unmotivated and uncommitted - they simply go about doing what they are contractually bound to do (Leblebici, 2012).

For the majority of the working population the workplace can be a daunting environment. There are many factors that can contribute to this being true, such as difficult co-workers, an unhealthy relationship with one's supervisor, lack of appreciation, confined working conditions, uncertain job security, dead-end jobs etc., all of which can negatively contribute to one's morale in the workplace (Ramsey, 2013). As described by Nel *et al.* (2004) a favourable work environment is the most important characteristic of job satisfaction that South African employees desire.

In addition to low morale affecting an individual's work environment, it can also have severe consequences on the productivity of an organisation. An organisation which suffers from low morale will not succeed, it will not thrive and it will not survive over time (Ramsey, 2013). It is therefore of critical importance that organisations are firstly able to identify low morale with the aim of finding possible solutions in order to lessen its detrimental effects. Secondly it is important to implement changes where necessary to avoid the occurrence of low morale as far as possible. A successful organisation requires workers who are inspired, who take pride and who are excited to about coming to work for the most part (Ramsey, 2013). Chapter 2 will begin by defining and reviewing employee morale. Secondly it will clarify and evaluate job satisfaction using Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory as basis. In this Herzberg makes a distinction between the two, stating that motivators are the intrinsic factors which improve job performance while hygiene factors are extrinsic and can erase dissatisfaction but are not motivational (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010). The motivators include but are not limited to responsibility, recognition, achievement and the work itself, while the hygiene factors

encompass policies, salary, interpersonal relationships, working conditions and supervision. Thirdly this chapter will investigate if any differences exist between motivators for the private sector and for the public sector. The chapter will then progress into the three work environments described by Ainsworth and Smith (1993), specifically human, technical and organisational environments, allowing for a thorough discussion into the factors that could potentially affect employee morale within each environment.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish which factors and/or which environments contribute the most to employee morale with the intention of eliciting management intervention as a means of improving morale. Before interventions of how to improve morale can be established, it is necessary to first define morale.

## **2.2. Morale defined**

Morale is a mental disposition which can be attributed to one's internal health and wellbeing (Ali, 2013). Morale is often deliberated as an elusive quality which is created within each employee. Ali (2013) sets out to describe employee morale as the feelings and attitudes towards one's job, work environment, team members, managers and the organisation as a whole. White (2011) corroborates Ali (2013) by stating that morale is an entire thought process and that it goes beyond people being happy to go to work each day. High employee morale is characterised by self-reliance, self-control and an enthusiasm to achieve, and generally means that employees are happy to come to work every day. They are comfortable in the nature of their work and with their co-workers, they are also optimistic and confident with what they are able to achieve. Ali (2013) further states that high employee morale is essential to success in the workplace and that morale is primarily influenced from top-down as opposed to bottom up. Lee (2004: 1) states that "morale affects every aspect of a company's competitive advantage". In the process of improving organisational success via its objectives i.e. increasing quality, productivity and customer loyalty, the organisation is in effect also influencing morale i.e. reduced turnover and absenteeism, through the pursuance of these objectives. Therefore, keeping morale high should be on every manager's radar.

The benefits of high employee morale are infinite, however the key benefits include, firstly, more efficient production from each employee. When employees enjoy their work environment and have a positive attitude towards their work, their production is usually higher. For managers this is desirable as it assists in achieving departmental and organisational objectives. For the employee, higher levels of production often lead to increased compensation and promotion opportunities (Milkovich, Newman & Gerhart, 2014)

The second key benefit of high employee morale is that it will reduce absenteeism amongst employees. According to Kokemuller (2013), employees with higher morale have significantly lower rates of absenteeism relative to employees with low morale. Absenteeism results in lower production rates for that specific employee and lower revenue for the organisation. Less absenteeism can minimise stress for the employee by not falling behind with work and being able to improve their relationships with their colleagues through them simply being present at work.

Thirdly, it improves collaboration between employees and management. High employee morale usually associates with greater feelings of teamwork and shared vision. In an environment with high employee morale, employees are likely to be more comfortable with others and share a willingness to work together towards common goals.

Lastly, it leads to increased self-esteem and satisfaction for both employees and management. With higher levels of production and high levels of morale, managers and employees tend to have high self-esteem. When good results are produced and recognised by the manager, the employee will want to repeat the exercise. This ultimately results in greater satisfaction in the workplace, working relationships and with the position itself. Thus the organisation will heighten feelings of esteem and provide a meaningful, pleasing work experience.

Once the definition of morale is understood and the benefits explained, the impact of morale on the organisation will give further insight into its importance.

### **2.2.1. Relationship between morale and job satisfaction**

The usual approach to understanding morale and job satisfaction is that a person who is satisfied with their job will have high morale (Evans, 1998). The two are often used interchangeably, though differences do exist within their definitions. Evans (2000) distinguished between the two by stating that:

*“job satisfaction is present-orientated, while morale is future-orientated. Both are states of mind, but satisfaction is a response to a situation whereas morale is anticipatory. It is dependent upon, and guided by, past events which provide a basis for anticipation of the future”.*

It is with this definition in mind that the concepts of morale and job satisfaction will not necessarily be used interchangeably. It does however imply that if an employee is experiencing job satisfaction, this satisfaction will lead to higher morale in the future.

### **2.2.2. Factors that influence morale in an organisation**

Maintaining high levels of employee morale is important for any organisation as it benefits from less work hours lost due to unscheduled absenteeism and increased productivity due to satisfied employees. Low employee morale conversely causes additional expenses, such as high employee turnover due to unsatisfied employees seeking alternative employment. A drop in production means a drop in revenue. Root (2013) states that it is important to understand the key factors that affect employee morale in an organisation and they are as follows:

#### **Changes in Management**

Employees become accustomed to the practises and procedures of a particular manager, so it can have a negative effect on morale when there is a change in management. The circumstances surrounding the change can also negatively affect morale. If a manager was perceived as being effective and was appreciated by employees and no explanation was given to employees as to why that manager was laid off, this can have many repercussions within the organisation. If this was to happen,

rumours would make it difficult for the incumbent to implement his ideas and plans, as the employees' focus has shifted to the fate of the outgoing manager.

### **Employment opportunity**

Employee morale is influenced by the opportunities and recognition that the company offers. If an employee is recognised for his/her hard work through a promotion or a raise, this signals to the rest of the staff that hard work pays off and this then becomes the culture of the organisation. Conversely morale can be decreased if employees feel that the organisation does not recognise hard work, loyalty and dedication, and offers no advancement in their career path.

To understand how to retain the best employees and how to attract top performers, employers need to understand what people want and need from their employer (Thompson, 2005). Thompson further sets out that top performers want to be challenged, they want to earn a competitive salary and most of all they want to develop their careers.

Equally if you have high staff turnover it is likely that your employees do not know what is expected of them and they do not feel valued because they cannot see what rewards their successes will bring them.

## **Confidence in management**

If employees feel that management is competent in fulfilling their duties, the staff then maintains their expectation that the company's success will remain intact. When management proves to be or is perceived as being incompetent then morale plummets to a state where it is considered to be counterproductive.

## **Communication**

An organisation has many levels of communication: top down, between management, between employees and rarely bottom up. Without proper communication, rumours become rife which inadvertently damages morale.

Next, Herzberg's motivator-hygiene theory will be used to clarify and evaluate job satisfaction, taking into account the key factors that affect morale.

## **2.3. Theories of motivation**

Motivation represents "those psychological processes that cause the arousal, direction and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal directed" (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010:212). Two general categories of motivation have been identified by researchers to explain the psychological processes underlying employee motivation. These are content theories and process theories (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010: 212).

As explained by Kreitner and Kinicki (2010), content theories identify internal factors that influence motivation. Included here are Maslow's Need Hierarchy, Alderfer's ERG, and Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene theories. Content theory helps explain needs, and people do what they need to do in order to satisfy a need. "People want job satisfaction, and they will leave one organisation for another to meet this need" (Achua & Lussier, 2013: 78). Process theories identify the process by which internal factors and cognitions influence motivation (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010).

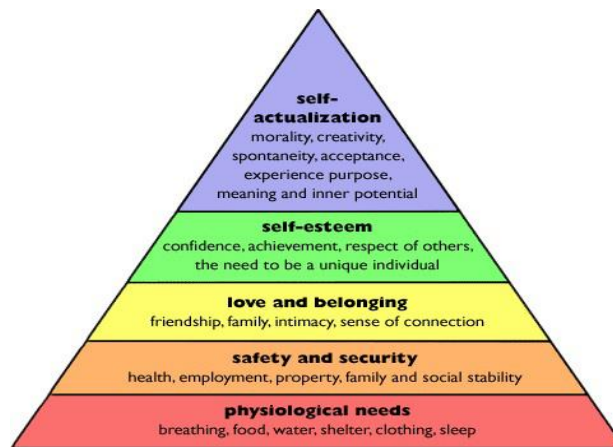
Achua and Lussier (2013) explain that content motivation theories focus on identifying and understanding people's needs, whereas process motivation theories are more elaborate in that they attempt to understand why people have different needs, why their

needs change, how and why people choose to try to satisfy needs in different ways, the mental processes people go through as they understand situations, and how they evaluate their need satisfaction. For the purpose of this study the focus will only be on content motivation as the researcher aims to determine the internal factors that influence motivation/job satisfaction/morale.

### 2.3.1. Maslow's Need Hierarchy

Maslow's Need Hierarchy centres around five basic needs, namely:

1. Physiological: most basic needs i.e. food, air and water to survive.
2. Safety: the need to be safe from physical and psychological harm.
3. Love: the desire to be loved and to love, includes the need for affection and belonging.
4. Esteem: Need for reputation, recognition from others and prestige, includes self-confidence and strength.
5. Self-actualisation: the desire for self-fulfilment: to become the best one is capable of becoming.



*Figure 2.1. Maslow's Need Hierarchy*

Source: Krietner and Kinicki (2010)

Maslow's model as depicted in figure 2.1 specifies that basic, low-level needs such as physiological requirements and safety must be satisfied before higher-level needs such as self-fulfilment are pursued.

Table 2.1 draws a correlation between the needs of a person as a whole to the needs in the workplace, as referred to by Maslow.

Table: 2.1. Maslow's Need Hierarchy

| Need                      | Home  | Job  |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Self-actualisation</b> | education, religion, hobbies, personal growth | Development of employees' skills, promotions, the ability to have complete control over their jobs.            |
| <b>Esteem</b>             | approval of family, friends, community        | Satisfaction of completing the job itself, merit pay, recognition and change for advancement.                  |
| <b>Social</b>             | family, friends, clubs                        | Opportunity to interact with others, to be accepted, to have friends. Activities include parties, picnics etc. |
| <b>Safety</b>             | freedom from war, poison, violence            | Safe working conditions, salary increases to meet inflation, job security and fringe benefits.                 |
| <b>Physiological</b>      | food, water, sex                              | Salary, leave days and working conditions.   |

Source: Adapted from Achua and Lussier (2013:81)

Once the psychological needs of a job are satisfied (basic salary), the desire to achieve safety needs (health insurance, job security) would then become apparent and so on. When a person's needs are satisfied in the workplace, job satisfaction is achieved. The major recommendation for leaders is to satisfy employees' lower level needs in order for them not to dominate the motivational process of employees (Achua & Lussier, 2013). Maslow's theory centres around 5 basic needs which are hierarchically satisfied, Alderfer simplifies the theory by stating that there are only 3 core needs that explain behaviour, and that these needs do not have to be satisfied in any particular order (unlike that of Maslow).

### 2.3.2. Alderfer's ERG Theory

Alderfer concluded that behaviour can be explained through three core needs. Existence – the desire for physiological and materialistic wellbeing, Relatedness - the



desire to have meaningful relationships with significant others and Growth - the desire to grow as a human being and to use one's abilities to their fullest potential (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010).



Figure 2.2 Alderfer's ERG Theory  
Source: Sayenko (2014)

Alderfer's theory differs from that of Maslow in that he uses a smaller set of core needs. Secondly, the theory does not assume needs are related to each other in a stair-step hierarchy as depicted in figure 2.2. Alderfer believes that more than one need can be activated at a time. Thirdly, the ERG theory contains a satisfaction-progression and a frustration-regression component, i.e. frustration of higher-order needs can influence the desire for lower-order needs. An example of this is when employees demand higher pay when they are dissatisfied with their relationships at work (relatedness needs (Sayenko 2014)).

Needs, according to Alderfer, do not necessarily have to be satisfied in any particular order. A higher order need partly satisfied could still lead to job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction, depending on the satisfaction-progression and the frustration-regression components. Herzberg takes the theory further by indicating that satisfied needs do not necessarily imply satisfaction, but rather a decrease in dissatisfaction. These are what Herzberg calls hygiene factors.

### **2.3.3. Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory**

Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) classified Herzberg's theory as a content theory by indicating that employees have basic needs (hygiene needs) which, when not met, cause employees to be dissatisfied. Meeting these needs does not make employees satisfied, it merely prevents them from becoming dissatisfied. An employee's motivation is influenced by his/her needs: unmet needs motivate employees to satisfy them. Conversely, employees' satisfied needs no longer motivates them (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010). Another set of needs called motivators, when resolved, does satisfy employees. Interestingly Herzberg found that the two sets of needs do not form part of the same continuum, so for an organisation to resolve the dissatisfying hygiene factors they would not necessarily create satisfaction.

After evaluating the theories of motivation, Herzberg's theory was chosen as the basis of this study as it applies more realistically to a workplace study. The ERG theory is an extension of Maslow in that motivation is a function of basic needs. Although this would be excellent for evaluating human behaviour as whole, Herzberg better postulates that the very basic needs are hygiene factors and they by themselves are not sufficient to motivate.

Bearing in mind the public sector environment in South Africa, with generally well-paid employees and job security, Maslow's first three tiers (as explained in table 2.1.) of the hierarchy are irrelevant or play an insignificant role in identifying the reasons for low morale and/or job dissatisfaction. For this reason Herzberg's theory of motivation will form the focus of this study in that Herzberg believes that job satisfaction motivates better performance (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010). Also, Herzberg's theory specifically relates to job satisfaction as opposed to the other theories, where inferences would have to be drawn about job satisfaction from the needs hypothesis.

### **2.4. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, with associated fundamentals of attitudes and their connection to industrial mental health, is largely related to Maslow's theory of motivation. According to both Maslow and Herzberg, individuals are not content with the

satisfaction of lower-end needs at work such as salary, environment etc, but rather that they look for gratification of higher-level psychological needs such as recognition, responsibility, advancement and the nature of the work itself. Up to this point, both of these theories run parallel with each other.

However, Herzberg added a new dimension to this theory by theorising that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction act independently of each other, and that each is determined by a separate set of job characteristics. As explained in figure 2.3. Herzberg theorises that satisfaction and dissatisfaction do not form part of the same continuum as illustrated in the traditional view, but rather that the opposite of satisfaction is no satisfaction and not dissatisfaction.

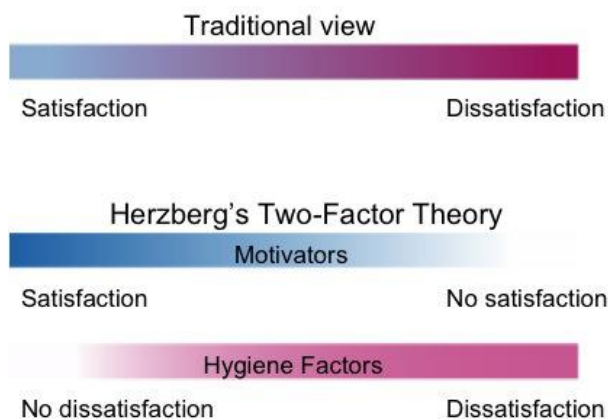


Figure 2.3. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory  
Source: Adapted from Heinzmann (2009)

Herzberg's theory proposes that in order to improve job attitudes and productivity, organisations must recognise and attend to both sets of characteristics and not assume that an increase in satisfaction leads to a decrease in dissatisfaction. Herzberg's theory of motivation is a popular theory on employee satisfaction, though it is marred with controversy. It has long been at the centre of debates that focused on its conceptual and methodological problems (Sachau, 2007). The Herzberg theory has for over thirty years being considered obsolete. New research in the field of positive psychology has however found surprisingly consistent tenets of Herzberg's theory (Sachau, 2007).

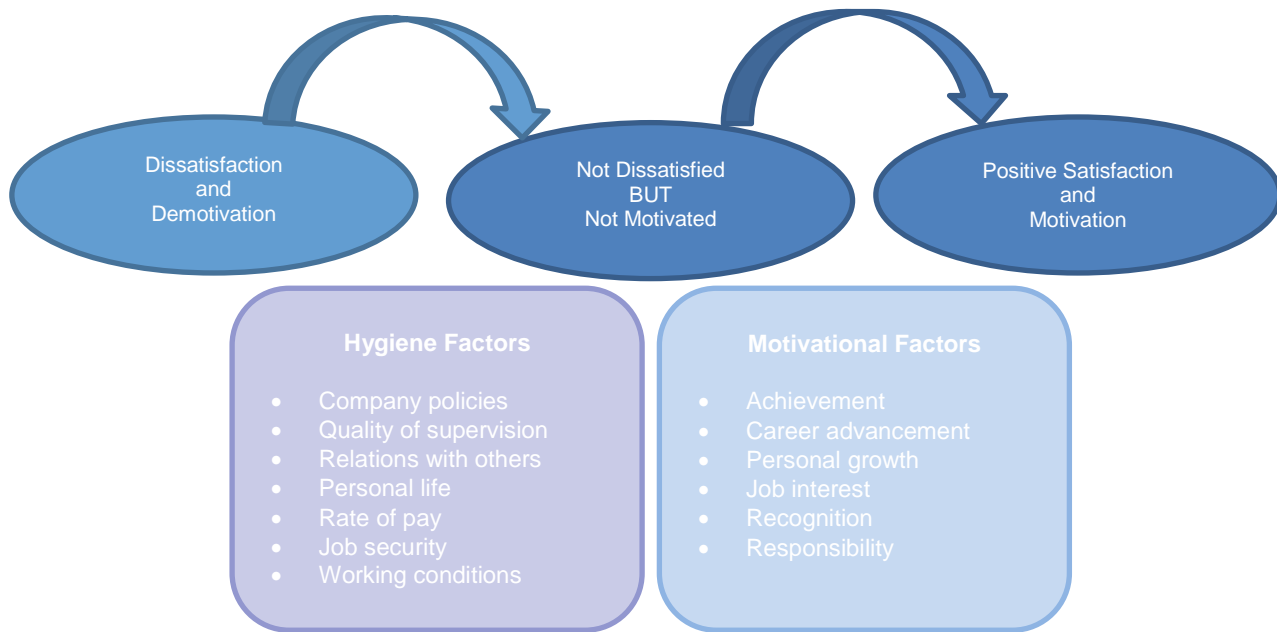


Figure 2.4: Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Factors  
 Source: Kreitner and Kinicki (2010)

Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) explain that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not polar opposites of each other and that in fact the opposite of satisfaction is no satisfaction and the opposite of dissatisfaction is no dissatisfaction (depicted in figure 2.3.). Moving away from dissatisfaction and demotivation are achieved by fulfilling the hygiene factors which will only move an employee to not dissatisfied and not motivated. In order to then progress to satisfaction and motivation, the motivational factors will have to be fulfilled. An example of why salary is considered a hygiene factor is that if one's salary is not received on time this will make you unhappy (dissatisfaction), however if received on time, this will not increase your satisfaction. Sachau (2007) explained that when Herzberg interviewed his research participants he found that the effects of the motivator factors lasted relatively longer than the effects of the hygiene factors.

The most significant difference between motivator and hygiene factors is that motivator factors comprise psychological growth while hygiene factors comprise physical and psychological pain avoidance (Sachau, 2007).

Herzberg (1982) and Manisera, Dusseldorp and Van der Kooij (2005) argued that the organisation's administration of motivator and hygiene factors should be kept separate. He stated that managers should not offer employees higher wages, better benefits or performance bonuses with the intention of motivating them. Instead management should motivate employees by offering training, or giving them interesting work with more responsibility. Herzberg's concern with this was that management would manipulate rewards rather than improving opportunities offered to employees.

Therefore, the basic premise of the Two-Factor Theory is that if an employer or manager is trying to increase job satisfaction, job performance and ultimately employee morale, he/she needs to address those factors that affect the employee's satisfaction. The most direct approach to do this is to work on the intrinsic, motivating factors. Giving the employee encouragement and recognition helps him/her to feel more valued within the organisation, as well as giving them a sense of achievement and responsibility.

Job satisfaction has a major if not the most important influence on employee morale - in fact the two are inextricably linked (Riley, 2005). The more satisfied you are in your professional capacity, the more likely that your morale will be high and your productivity levels will also be elevated.

Following the motivational theories and how they apply to the workplace, specifically Herzberg's theory, the study will now move on to the difference between the public and private sectors in order to establish if differences will exist when applying this theory in the public sector as opposed to the private sector from which it is derived.

## **2.5. Morale in the Public versus private sector**

It is generally understood that public sector and private sector organisations operate differently to each other in that there are differences regarding the ownership, management and accountability of the two sectors (Baarspul & Wilderom, 2011).

Baarspul and Wilderom (2011) conducted a study where they found significant differences between motivating factors for public employees and private employees.

Wang, Yang and Wang (2012) found that job satisfaction is lower in the public sector than in the private sector which is due to the public sector lacking motivating potential i.e. lower rewards. Pillay (2009) corroborates this in his South African comparative analysis of the private and public sectors.

It can therefore be suggested that if differences exist in what motivates employees, given that motivation is a determinant of morale, then the solutions to improving morale within a public organisation will also differ between the types of organisations due to the perceptions of various types of rewards (Newstrom, Reif & Monczka, 1976; Moon, 2000). Renumeration is a much greater motivator for private sector employees (Jurkiewicz, Massey, & Brown, 1998). Unlike private sector managers, public sector managers are not strongly motivated by pay expectancy (Moon, 2000).

Research has found that civil servants place more emphasis on intrinsic factors such as job security and performing work that is important than on extrinsic factors such as higher pay (Baldwin, 1987; Houston, 2006; Wang, Yang & Wang, 2012). Both Bogg and Cooper (1995) and Aryee (1992) found that private sector managers show a higher level of job satisfaction compared to their public counterparts. Civil servants are not as unconditionally committed to their work as private sector employees, due to their values being less compatible with that of the organisation (Buelens & van den Broeck, 2007; Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006; Goulet & Frank, 2002).

It should be noted however that Baarspul and Wilderom's sector-comparative study is based on the premise that employees bring their personal values to the job and not vice versa (Baarspul & Wilderom, 2011).

It was further found that public managers' job satisfaction level is lower due to them having a lesser degree of managerial autonomy compared to private employees (Irum *et al.* 2012). In fact Rainy and Bozeman (2000) listed managers' autonomy and the restrictions placed on it as a reason why public sector employees experience less extrinsic job satisfaction.

Wang, Yang and Wang (2012) found that the negative relationship that exists between job satisfaction and turnover intentions is weaker in the public sector due to the stronger need for job security in the public sector. This low level of turnover suppresses the

productivity of the organisation by impeding the opportunities for internal promotions and by not allowing new blood from external labour markets.

Since the advent of democracy in 1994 the public sector in South Africa has faced immense pressure to improve their performance (Mafini & Pooe, 2013). Subsequently the public sector has continued to receive constant criticism over poor service delivery, corruption, financial mismanagement and poor corporate governance (van der Heijen & Mlandi, 2005), resulting in them not being able to perform most disciplines (Mafini & Pooe, 2013). This negative stereotyping has created a poor image of public employees as well as of their jobs (Newstrom, Reif & Monczka 1976; Wright, 2001). This has contributed to the lowering of job satisfaction experienced by public employees. To enable organisations to improve their performance, they need to develop and implement strategies that will increase their employees' satisfaction and, in turn, their own performance.

In conclusion it is clear that public sector employees' experience less job satisfaction compared to their private sector counterparts. Significant differences exist between what motivates public and private sector employees, so the solutions to improve morale will also be different. A possible reason for these occurrences could be that public sector employees' values and the values of the public sector department are not necessarily compatible with each other. Another possible reason could be that public sector employees experience less managerial autonomy.

Although differences exist in what motivates public and private sector employees, the determinants of morale are the same between both sectors. These determinants will be discussed using the different workplace environments and what factors affect each environment.

## **2.6. Workplace environments**

Many managers are under the mistaken impression that the level of employee performance is directly related to the employee's compensation package. As indicated by Herzberg, this is only one of the extrinsic motivational tools and its positive effects are short-lived. Workplace environments encompass all aspects of the workplace that

can affect morale and job satisfaction. An improved workplace environment is a widely accepted assumption to motivate employees, increase job satisfaction and to increase productivity (Leblebici, 2012) and is described in terms of physical and behavioural components.

Haynes (2008) explains that the behavioural component of the workplace environment has the greatest impact on the organisation’s productivity. Illustrated in figure 2.5. are the behavioural factors which either lead to engagement (including job satisfaction) or disengagement (including dissatisfaction). All nine factors encourage communication within the workplace (Chandrasekar, 2011).

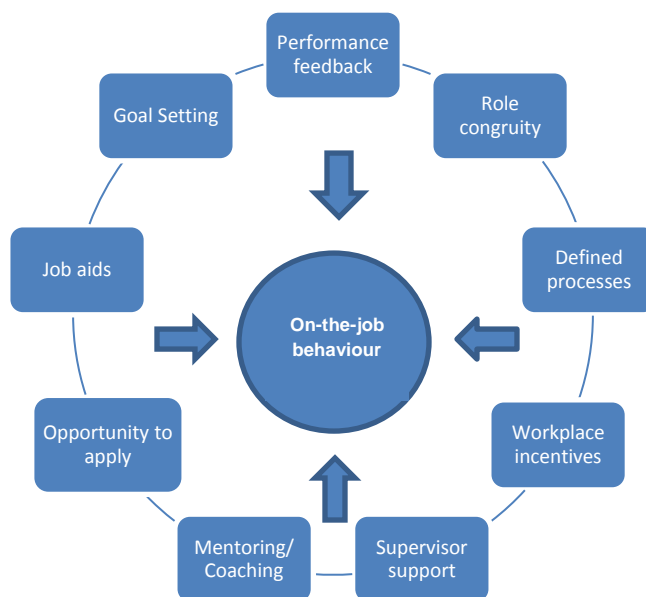


Figure 2.5: Workplace factors affecting employee performance  
Source: Chandrasekar 2011

In figure 2.5 Chandrasekar (2011) illustrates that employee performance and subsequent on-the-job behaviour are influenced by 9 factors. If all or most of the factors are successfully achieved/implemented, employees will become engaged. The on-the-job behaviour will be positively affected, which will improve employees’ performance, leading to increased job satisfaction and morale. The 9 factors are explained by Chandrasekar (2011) as the following:

**Goal setting:** the two important purposes of goal setting are to guide the behaviour of individuals and to motivate them into performing at higher levels of effectiveness. This



can take place informally between the employee and his/her immediate supervisor, or formally, as part of the organisation's performance management process.

**Performance feedback:** a regular exchange of performance information between the employee and his/her direct supervisor consisting of both positive and negative feedback

**Role congruity:** the role of the employee is in line with the expectations that he/she had when joining the organisation. The tasks allocated to the employee by the immediate supervisor are in line with the role expectations of the organisation.

**Defined processes:** ensuring that the work processes are documented and communicated, which is the responsibility of the organisation.

**Supervisor support:** supervisors need to gather and distribute the required resources and act as advocates to encourage positive relations with employees, and to increase employees' self-confidence in order for them to do a good job.

**Mentoring/Coaching:** suitable skilled people need to be available to help employees in their current roles and to further develop them in future roles.

**Opportunity to apply:** employees should not be hindered from applying newly acquired skills.

**Job aids:** workplace aids should not hinder processes and should be readily available to minimise error rates and customer dissatisfaction.

**Environmental factors:** factors such as lighting, temperature and ventilation can directly impact on health, causing heat stress or exhaustion.

**Physical factors:** factors such as overcrowding or poor layout can lead to frustration and common types of accidents.

Workplace environments can influence employee morale, productivity and engagement either positively or negatively. Motivation and subsequent job satisfaction are mainly influenced by the quality of the employee's workplace environments (Chandrasekar, 2011; Leblebici, 2012).

The ability of an organisation to recruit and retain talented employees is largely dependent on the quality of the workplace environments (Leblebici, 2012). Workplace environments have increasingly been thought of as the root cause of employee disengagement. The relationship between the workplace and the tools of work has therefore become an integral part of the work itself and the subsequent level of job satisfaction experienced.

Workplace environments also play a role in the level of sickness absence utilised by employees. Research has indicated that physical exposure in the workplace is to some extent directly associated with absences due to sickness (Lund *et al.*, 2006). Ergonomic conditions such as heavy physical work, uncomfortable working conditions and monotonous movements have all been linked to different definitions of sickness absence.

This research will focus on factors which influence morale within the three aspects of the workplace environment depicted in figure 2.6. These are the human environment, which will comprise of relationships and communication between colleagues and management, the technical (physical) environment, which will include the office layout, the working conditions and availability and access to resources, and lastly the organisational environment, which comprises of the work itself, policies and procedures, career growth opportunities and reward and recognition.

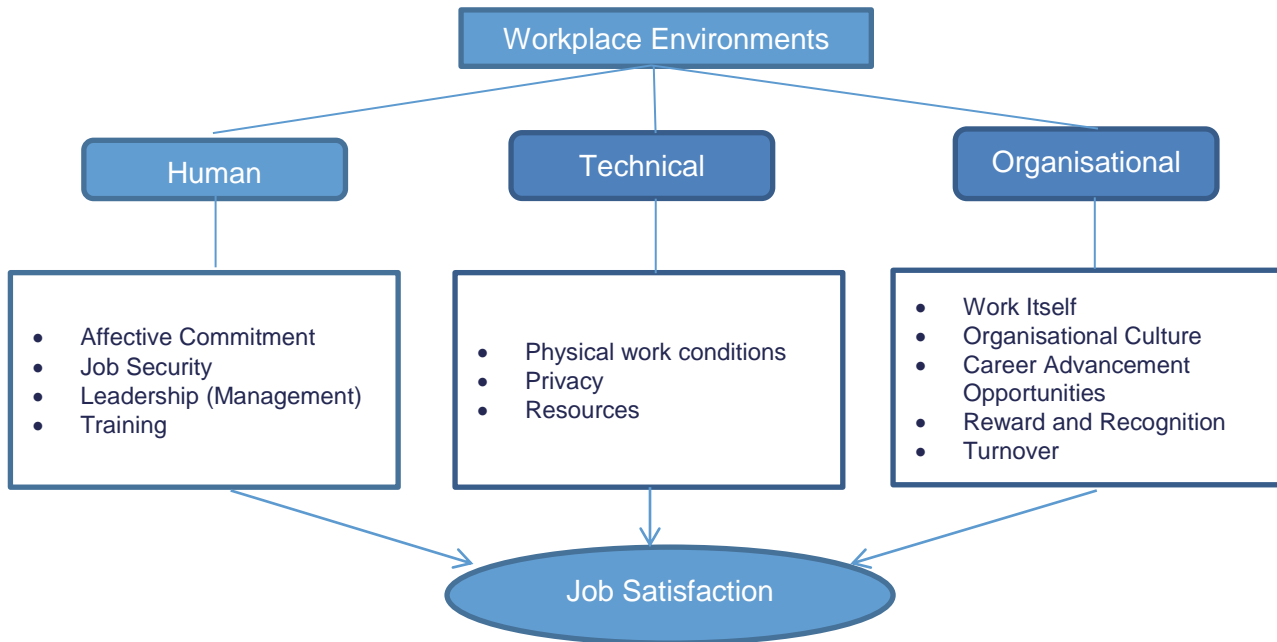


Figure 2.6. Workplace environments

### 2.6.1. Human environment

The human environment consists of various aspects relating to human behaviour and its effects on morale/job satisfaction. It has long been said that employees are an organisation’s greatest resource (McCrarey, 2005). An organisation’s success depends on its employees. Regardless of job design, no job can overcome an employee’s lack of interest, and motivation is the key driving force for human resources (Grobler *et al*, 2011).



Figure 2.7..How the human environment relates to morale

Chandrasekar (2011) specified that due to the changing human environment, managers must create an environment which yields productivity and increases job satisfaction. This includes altering their management style to suit the various types of personalities which are within the working environment. Ramasodi (2010) infers that the human environment influences the quality and quantity of output delivered by employees. The main aspects relating to human behaviour include affective commitment, job security, leadership and training as depicted in figure 2.7.

### 2.6.1.1. Affective commitment

Affective commitment is the psychological attachment to one's organisation and it has long been considered an important determinant for dedication and loyalty (Rhoades, Eisenberger & Armeli, 2001; Ito & Brotheridge, 2005). Rhoades *et al.* (2005) sets out to explain: employees that are affectively committed are usually seen as having a sense of belonging to and identifies with the organisation. This increases their involvement in the organisation's activities, achieving the organisation's goals as well as a desire to remain with the organisation Many researchers (Mathieu & Zajack, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday, Porter & Steers,1982) are in agreement with this view, stating that there is a strong correlation between affective commitment and absenteeism, performance and turnover, with turnover being the most correlated to affective commitment. High levels of

affective commitment are expected to lead to employees being loyal and committed to the organisation, reducing the possibility of them leaving (Pitt *et al*, 1995; Meyer & Allen, 1997).

In recent years employees have been encouraged to become more career-resilient and to participate in career strengthening activities to deal with on-going fluctuations in what is considered to be prerequisite knowledge, skills and abilities in order to accelerate their mobility (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005). Ito and Brotheridge (2005) found that participation in decision making, autonomy and supervisory career support was positively related to commitment and thus negatively related to intentions to leave. They however also found that career adaptability was positively related to both commitment and to intentions to leave, thus suggesting that there are some inadvertent consequences for managers that support employees' career adaptability. The incipient predicament is that the same actions that are intended to foster commitment of valued employees as a means of motivating and retaining them may also increase their opportunities for employment in other organisations (Capelli, 1999).

Value congruence occurs when personal and organisational values align and it has become increasingly important to ensure that this exists when accepting new job opportunities (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010).

### **2.6.2. Job security**

Historically human resource professionals and employees have disagreed about the importance of the various contributors to job satisfaction. The argument has only focused around two contributors, namely job security and the relationship with direct supervisor (Leonard, 2009).

Job insecurity is defined by Jordan, Ashkanasy and Hartel (2002) as the discrepancy between the job security that employees desire and the level of security that they perceive to exist. Galup *et al.* (1997) and Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) report that the presence of job insecurity results in increased effort and involvement at work. It can therefore be reasoned that the contrary is true - that job security reduces effort and involvement at work.

It has however also been claimed that job insecurity increases stress and decreases performance (Reisel *et al*, 2007). Therefore job security should decrease stress, increase performance and increase job satisfaction.

Employment security is defined as the marketability of an individual (Fatimah *et al*, 2012). In a study conducted by Fatimah *et al* they found that workers who perceived their employment security to be high, were not concerned with job security as they had alternative employment possibilities. It therefore did not influence their job satisfaction and wellbeing.

In the South African public sector, job security is virtually guaranteed, thus implying a high level of perceived and actual security. Based on the research of Fatimah *et al*. (2012), this will have no additional positive influence on job satisfaction or wellbeing of public sector employees.

### **2.6.3. Leadership (Management)**

Leader-member exchange theory, also known as the vertical dyad linkage theory, explores how supervisors develop relationships with subordinates (Loi, Ngo, Zhang & Law, 2011; Lunenburg, 2010). It explains how those relationships can either grow or hold individuals back. Leader member communication behaviour as explained by Kumari and Pandey (2011) has an important influence on job satisfaction. Communication behaviour includes facial expressions, body movement, eye contact and vocal expression, and is sometimes more important than the verbal content.

Each linkage has differing qualities and so the same manager can have poor social relations with some subordinates and open and trusting relations with others. The theory states that individuals go through three stages with their managers: role taking, role making and routinisation. During the role making stage, individuals are classified as being part of the in-group or the out-group. Individuals in the in-group typically receive more favourable attention, and more responsibility, support and opportunities. This is often then reciprocated by subordinates with greater than necessary expenditures of their time and effort for the sake of organisational success (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

In contrast, out-group members are often ignored and have fewer opportunities (Lunenburg, 2010). The manager will provide support, consideration and assistance, but only in so far as it is mandated by duty and will often not go beyond this. In return out-group members will perform the bare minimum and little beyond that (Lunenburg, 2010).

Yagil (2006) set out to study the effects of supervisors' abusive and supportive behaviours on employee burnout. She found that supervisor's abusive behaviour was positively correlated to employee burnout, where she describes burnout as emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation.

Tepper (2000) defines burnout as the subordinate's "perception" (subjective assessment) of the extent to which his supervisor engages in a continued display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours (publicly belittling subordinates in order to hurt their feelings). This may or may not involve hostility, but it does not include physical contact. Tepper (2000) further noted that the more perceived abuse the subordinate received from the supervisor, the greater the emotional exhaustion he reported. This was often linked to lower job and life satisfaction and lower affective commitment, as well as increased work, family and psychological distress.

As a result of the higher status of the supervisor, the abusive behaviour need not be extreme and can include ridiculing or lying to subordinates, which reduces trust and causes stress. Tepper (2000) goes on to state that abusive supervision is likely to cause chronic stress as it continues until the abuser modifies his behaviour or until the relationship is terminated. Subordinates often remain in the abusive status quo because the supervisor reinforces the subordinate's hope that the abuse will end by interspersing the abusive behaviour with normal behaviour (Tepper, 2000).

The enduring quality of abusive relationships is derived from several features as explained by Tepper (2000). Firstly, subordinates feel powerless to take corrective steps against their supervisor and are usually economically dependent on the abusers. Furthermore, the fear of the unknown, associated with the separation, may be greater than the fear of the abuse itself. The abuser usually fails to take responsibility for his abusive behaviour or may even fail to recognise it. Tepper (2000) found that individuals

who have less job mobility often experience more pronounced effects of the abusive supervision.

The consequence of abusive supervision is that it spawns resentment and antagonism, which is likely to generate a desire to retaliate and chastise the supervisor. Subordinates indirectly resist downward influence attempts by their supervisors as a way to express their resentment towards their abusive supervisor (Tepper, Duffy & Shaw, 2001).

Yagil (2006), Tepper (2000) and Duffy, Gangster and Pagon (2002) furthermore found that abusive supervision in a mild degree was able to coexist with supportive leadership, and that it had a positive influence on the supervisor-subordinate relationship. Duffy *et al* (2002) explains that social undermining and social support are not polar opposites of each other. Given that social undermining is negative and social support is positive, people often receive both from the same person, their supervisor.

On the contrary, however, support from co-workers and supervisors were found to be negatively related to burnout, and positively related to satisfaction and productivity (Baruch-Feldman *et al.* 2002).

The results of Yagil's (2006) research lead to the conclusion that upward influence tactics used by subordinates are in response to abusive leadership. The recommendations made therefore include that organisational intervention in this regard should be directed at the supervisor-subordinate dyad rather than placing the sole focus on the subordinate.

Tepper (2000) further elaborates using the justice theory model. He explains that the subordinate's understanding of fairness is drawn from the perceptions of distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice. Distributive justice is experienced when individuals compare their inputs and outcomes with others. Procedural justice is experienced when the individual feels that the organisation has not done an adequate job of enforcing processes that discipline abusers or that protects the targets of abuse. Interactional justice is experienced when individuals feel that organisations fail to treat them with respect, honesty, and sensitivity to their personal needs.



In addition, management and the relationship that employees have with management, as well as the training opportunities offered to employees, also plays a significant role in the level of morale experienced by employees.

#### **2.6.4. Training**

Globally, organisations are changing rapidly. They are required to be more competitive, resulting in increased demands on employees to be on top of their jobs and to continuously learn. Employee training is linked to improved business results, but it is also considered a powerful factor in shaping employee attitudes. Training creates a satisfaction for career development and ultimately leads to job satisfaction, motivation and performance (Latif, Jan & Shaheen, 2013).

The ultimate objective is to create an engaged and committed employee base resulting in better performance of the employees and the organisation as a whole. This is achieved by enhancing learning that stimulates better performance in order to improve business processes.

Training as defined by Grober *et al.* (2011: 340) is a “process whereby people acquire capabilities to aid in the achievement of organisational goals” while development is defined as “the managerial function of preserving and enhancing employees’ competence in their jobs by improving their knowledge, skills, abilities and characteristics”. Development activities are usually aimed at the long run and focus on a broad range of skills, whereas training programs concentrate on the short run and has a more precise focus on a few technical skills.

Training is a precursor to learning. Learning and development are important elements in creating a sense of advancement and purpose that leads to organisational commitment (Armstrong, 2009). Training reduces the probability of failure as it affects performance, increases the skills base and develops the level of competence (Michael & Combs, 2008). Acton and Golden (2003) found that not only was training positively related to job performance but it also aided in improving employee ability to manage stress at work.

Chandraseker (2011) reasons that management must create a human environment which yields productivity, while Ramasodi (2010) further elaborates that the human

environment influences the quality and quantity of output delivered by employees. By improving the components of the human environment, the quality and quantity of output will also increase.

Affective commitment ensures that employees have a sense of belonging with the organisation, and it increases their desire to stay with the organisation. Job insecurity results in increased effort and involvement at work due to fear of losing their jobs. Management/leadership has probably the most pivotal role in the level of morale experienced by employees. If management/leadership styles are not properly aligned to the diversity of employees, this could result in upward influence tactics by subordinates. The ultimate objective is to create engaged employees which will result in better performance of both the employee and the organisation as a whole. Enhanced learning or training is used to achieve this.

The main aspects of the human environment have been discussed relating to relationships and communication with management and colleagues. The next environment to be discussed is that of the technical environment, which includes the physical working conditions and resources available to execute duties.

## **2.7. Technical environment**

Employee behaviour is affected by the physical environment of the workplace (Leblebici, 2012). Leblebici reiterates the sentiments of Brill (1990) that improvements in the physical design of a workplace can improve productivity by 5 -10 percent. Vischer (2007) states that the physical environment in which people work affects their job performance and job satisfaction. Increasingly organisations' physical layout has been designed around maximising productivity and satisfaction. In order to achieve high levels of employee productivity, management must ensure that the physical environment is conducive to the organisational needs of facilitating interactions and privacy, formality and informality, functionality and cross-disciplinarily.

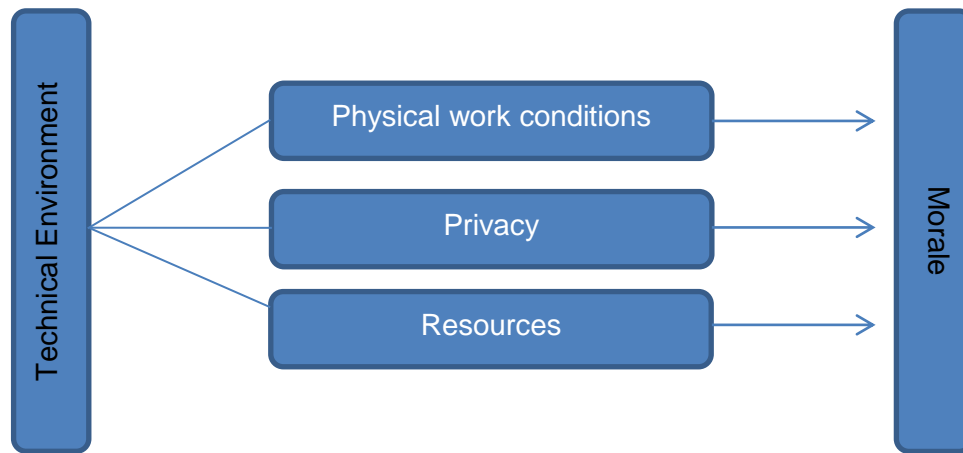


Figure 2.8.: How the technical environment relates to morale

Increasingly, researchers are finding that employee health is related to psychical conditions at work, such as ergonomic furniture, indoor air quality and lighting. The following three technical environment components will be discussed: physical work conditions, privacy and resources available as depicted in figure 2.8.

### 2.7.1. Physical work conditions

The optimum physical situation for learning, working and achieving is said to be achieved when employees find working situations that suit their physical and mental abilities without it causing adverse health consequences. The correct fit between person and task should be found (Westerman & Yamamura, 2006).

The appropriate design of the workplace environment should be taken into consideration when the organisation tries to accommodate a broad variety of human characteristics such as age, gender, experience, etc. (DETE, 2012)

The physical aspects of a workplace environment have been found to have a direct impact on the productivity, health and safety, comfort, job satisfaction and morale of employees (Leblebici, 2012).

Langston, Song and Purdey (2008) have found that government employees show lower levels of satisfaction with their physical workplace environment.

The physical work conditions include the building design and age, workspace layout, workstation set-up, furniture and equipment design and quality, temperature, ventilation, lighting, noise and air quality (Danielsson, 2010).

Four main categories of physical characteristics that need to be considered in the work environment as described by DETE (2012) are as follows:

- Clearance: headroom, legroom, elbowroom, access
- Arm reach: which has a bearing on the storage of materials
- Posture: heights of working stations
- Strength

The physical environment must be aligned so as to optimise the physical and mental state of employees. This will positively impact on the productivity and morale of employees.

The physical layout of the workplace is directly related to the amount of privacy experienced by employees.

### **2.7.2. Privacy**

Privacy is defined as a physical feature of the environment and a psychological state. Altmann (2000) describes privacy as an individual's ability to regulate the interaction between themselves and other individuals and/or environmental stimuli.

The perceived amount of privacy received in a work environment can have psychological effects on the employees. The amount of physical privacy is determined by the workspace layout and it is associated with job satisfaction. Employees need to have sufficient privacy at work for them to be effective (Bates, 2006).

A feeling of dissatisfaction among employees is usually experienced when they feel they are in a less than optimal situation. Visual and acoustical privacy has been a major cause of complaints for job satisfaction and performance (Bellinger & Kupritz, 2006).

An organisation either has an open-plan or a conventional layout, and each has its own positive and negative aspects. The open-plan environment encourages feedback

through open communication and teamwork, which will improve and enable the development of relationships amongst employees. The more conventional layout promotes privacy by offering more personal space and leads to less distraction, which can improve performance. However the conventional set-up can cause a feeling of isolation due to too little social contact, whereas the open-plan set-up can be considered to be too social (Eisinger, 2002).

The level of perceived privacy is subjective per person and varies between different jobs. This is why it is of crucial importance for privacy to be tailored to an individual in a specific job. The challenge in designing workspaces as explained by Haynes (2008) is that a delicate balance must be achieved between encouraging constructive interactions while at the same time reducing destructive distractions.

The physical layout and the subsequent level of privacy experienced relates to the physical surroundings of a workplace. The actual tools available for the employee to conduct their duties are what is considered resources, what is required and in what quantities.

### **2.7.3. Resources**

Employees require resources in order to work effectively. Resources in this sense refer to organisational aspects of a job that are functional in achieving work goals. The business dictionary defines a resource as an economic or productive factor, required to accomplish a desired outcome. The availability of resources also contributes to increased motivation and personal growth (Salanova, Agut & Peiro, 2005). Resources can take the form of either tangible (cars, cell phones, laptops etc.) or intangible (software) items. Employees need sufficient resources in order to perform their daily duties, and without it their productivity is reduced, and eventually also their job satisfaction.

The most important resource for any organisation is its human resource, which includes their skills and creativity. It is therefore imperative to employ the correct people for the job. When people are appointed for a job they are appointed for all that they can offer

the organisation. This includes their knowledge, so they should not keep the knowledge to themselves (Armstrong, 2006).

The optimal use of resources will benefit the organisation in terms of cost cutting, increased productivity and job satisfaction.

The technical environment comprises the physical layout of the workplace and the subsequent privacy experienced by this. The environment also includes the physical resources available for employees to fulfil their duties.

In short, the human environment is made up of relationships, while the technical environment comprises the physical aspects of the workplace. Next the organisational environment will be discussed. This includes the work itself, the culture of the organisation, the opportunities offered for career advancement, the reward and recognition received by or offered to employees, as well as the level of turnover.

## **2.8. Organisational environment**

Employees usually spend eight hours a day at work, so the organisation and the relationship with the organisation is central to an employee's workday. In the organisation's work environment, different types of personalities (different habits, ethics and a difference of opinion) are grouped together, which can lead to conflict. (Zia & Syed, 2013).



Figure 2.9: How the organisational environment relates to morale

Conflict is an unavoidable occurrence in the workplace and it is vital that the appropriate policies and procedures are in place to mediate the potential conflict situation. Clear practices and procedures need to be established and adhered to in order to create and sustain a harmonious environment (Brevis, 2001). Public sector organisations are characterised by numerous bureaucratic structures, undefined goals and several procedural restrictions on action. These structures play an important role in determining employee satisfaction and performance. Employees have shown to lose faith in an organisation's capabilities if the organisational environment is not easily adaptable (Masuda *et al.* 2008).

The hierarchical structure and organisational culture of a public sector organisation does not allow employee initiative because of the bureaucracy, and offers no autonomy in the work itself (Wang, Yang & Wang, 2012).

There are many aspects of the organisational environment that are considered to be important. These include: the work itself, the organisational culture, career advancement opportunities, reward and recognition and turnover. When evaluating job satisfaction, the work itself is by far the best predictor of job satisfaction.

### **2.8.1. Work itself**

Herzberg suggested that employees want to feel that their work has meaning, and that this is a prerequisite for job satisfaction (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010). Work that is interesting has long been considered the most preferred job attribute in the working environment. Employees prefer jobs which make use of their skills and abilities, and which are considered to be challenging jobs. The level of perceived job importance is directly proportional to the level of job satisfaction experienced. Newly appointed employees are also usually more satisfied as they find the work more interesting. Conversely, employees who have been in the same position for years are less satisfied because their jobs are no longer interesting or challenging, but are rather carried out automatically. Employees who can find an organisation whose values match their own (value congruence) and who will carry out important, interesting work, are likely to be more loyal, service orientated and perform better overall (Ulrich & Lake, 1991).

Managers should explain the importance of each employee's job and describe how each employee is contributing to the total functionality of the organisation. By doing so the employee confirms for himself that he is performing meaningful work and will then feel more valued by the organisation (Dhladhla, 2011).

The work itself as described above relates, in short, to the feelings experienced by the individual employee. When individuals form groups, their feelings are what form the organisational culture of the organisation.

### **2.8.2. Organisational culture**

Organisational culture is defined by Kreitner and Kinicki (2010: 64) as "the shared values and beliefs that underlie a company's identity". In other words it is the embedded, taken-for-granted, assumptions that a group shares. It determines how the group identifies, thinks about and responds to different environments. There are three important characteristics of organisational culture. The first is that it is transferred to new employees by a process known as socialisation. Secondly, it determines how employees behave at work. Lastly, it functions at various levels throughout the



organisation. Research suggests that organisational culture has a meaningful influence on job satisfaction and therefore also on employee turnover (Medina, 2012).

Three fundamental layers of organisational culture as set out by Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) are observable artefacts, espoused values and basic assumptions. Observable artefacts refer to the visible level and include acronyms, manner of dress, myths and stories, ceremonies and rituals, and so forth. Espoused values refer to the stated values and norms that are preferred by an organisation. Basic assumptions are unobservable and have become so taken-for-granted over the years that they guide behaviour, and thus they are also resistant to change.

The four functions of organisational culture as described by Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) are firstly to give members an organisational identity; secondly, to facilitate collective commitment; thirdly, to promote social system stability; and lastly, to shape behaviour by helping members make sense of their surroundings.

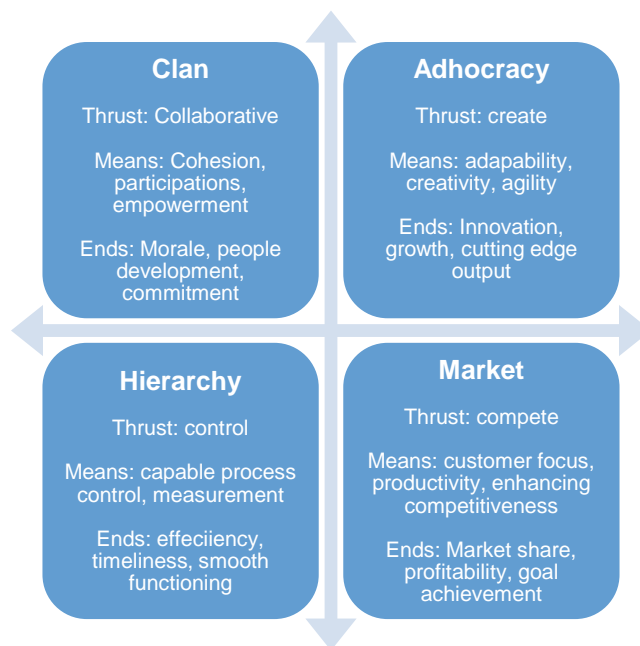


Figure 2.10: Competing Values Framework  
Source: Kreitner and Kinicki (2010)

As depicted in figure 2.7, Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) developed the competing values framework which categorises organisational culture into 4 sections, stating that

organisational culture will either fall into one of these sections or will be a combination of these sections. Each section is further elaborated on below.

Clan: has an internal focus (employee orientated) and values flexibility rather than stability and control. This type of culture resembles a family type organisation where employees work together and share problems. This culture uses employee involvement to instil cohesion through job satisfaction and commitment (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010).

Adhocracy: has an external focus (customer orientated) and values flexibility. This type of culture fosters the creation of innovative products and services by being adaptable and fast to respond to changes in the market (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010).

Market: has a strong external focus and values stability and control. This culture is driven by completion and has a strong desire to deliver results and accomplish goals. Precedence is given to customers and profit and not to employee development and satisfaction (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010).

Hierarchy: has an internal focus and values stability and control over flexibility. The driving force of this culture is control. This culture has a formalised, structured work environment. Effectiveness in this culture is measured by efficiency, timeliness and reliability. This culture is often linked to decreased job satisfaction (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010).

Culture is important in all organisations because high performing cultures produce consistently excellent results, it attracts, motivates and is able to retain talented employees. Silverthorne (2004) found that bureaucratic culture often led to lower levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment relative to innovative and supportive cultures.

As explained earlier, organisational culture refers to the shared values and beliefs/assumptions about an organisation. Some of its functions as described by Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) include the promotion of social system stability and the facilitation of collective commitment. These functions can be achieved through career advancement opportunities.

### **2.8.3. Career advancement opportunities**

Secure, lifetime employment with predictable advancement and stable pay used to be considered the traditional type of employment, however this is no longer true (Cappeilli, 2000).

Employment security refers to the individual's ability to be able to find employment and to maintain this employment in a job that is relevant to the labour market (Clarke, 2008). It also refers to the marketability of the employee in the existing labour market (Fatimah *et al.* 2012).

Career advancement practices represent the organisation's investment in their employees' internal mobility that goes beyond their current job (Gong & Chang, 2008). An organisation has not only better equipped them for their current jobs, but also for prospective external jobs. The organisation has in fact increased their employment security.

More and more employees in today's economy feel that they are trapped in dead-end jobs, with no growth opportunities or career advancement opportunities (Ramsey, 2013). Having career growth prospects available increases the employee's job mobility which subsequently increases his current job satisfaction. Gong and Chang (2008) found that there is a strong positive relationship between the organisation's performance and the provision of career advancement opportunities, which ultimately increases organisational commitment and citizen behaviour of employees.

This being said, however, the provision of career advancement opportunities by an organisation may very well create problems such as lower levels of loyalty and increased turnover intention (Cappeilli, 2000)

In order for an organisation to provide career advancement opportunities, it would have to develop a way in which to measure employee performance, and in measuring this they would be able to reward the employees accordingly.

#### **2.8.4. Reward and recognition**

Homsey (2011: ¶2) states that a common trait of successful companies is that they have “great people who are truly motivated”. Employee recognition programs are effective ways to show employees that an organisation appreciates their hard work, and this in turn boosts morale (Green & Haywood, 2008). Not only does this benefit the employee but it also assists to motivate and encourage co-workers to achieve higher productivity so that they too can receive recognition (Nelson, 2003). McCraey (2005) states that recognition programs, aside from being fun, can result in a more motivated, loyal and productive workforce.

Nelson (2003) highlights the importance of organisations using recognition positively and consistently to reinforce high performance rather than intermittently to manipulate employees into accomplishing short term performance targets.

Nelson (2003) further sets out to say that most managers feel that, firstly, recognition is commonplace in the workplace and they falsely believe that their organisation already rewards and recognises achievements adequately. Secondly, and most unfortunately, others believe that the fact that the employee has a job is reward enough. Nelson adds that employee loyalty is being negatively affected by the failure of managers to make the connection between pay and performance.

Performance incentives have changed over the years and what was once acceptable by employees, is probably not anymore. Nelson (2003) points out some key trends influencing the importance of recognition in today’s work environment. Traditional incentives such as cash have lost its power as it fails to distinguish and encourage high performance on an extensive basis.

Cash incentives have a demotivating effect as it reduces teamwork due to employees focusing on individual gains. Also when pay and performance are tied together, many employees feel demoralised as they do not have control over aspects that they have to manage.

If reward and recognition is not properly institutionalised, it could lead to increased turnover.

### **2.8.5. Turnover**

High employee turnover has a direct impact on organisational performance, staff motivation and group cohesion (Singh & Loncar, 2010). Satisfied employees are less likely to seek alternative employment. Yücil (2012) explains that the humanitarian perspective of employee turnover proposes that employees deserve to be treated equitably and appropriately, and that the levels of satisfaction experienced by employees reflect the extent to which they experience good or bad treatment in an organisation. It is also indicative of the psychological and emotional well-being of the employees (Yücil, 2012).

For many organisations, employee turnover is of vital importance because of the explicit and implicit costs associated with addressing it. An organisation is forced to spend scarce resources when an employee leaves because it either needs to replace the employee or to get others to cover his work. The implicit costs are not always easy to quantify in monetary terms (Singh & Loncar, 2010). These include costs such as disruptions to daily operations and emotional stress experienced by remaining staff due to increased workload. Another consequence of undesirable turnover is that it projects a negative image of the organisation both internally and externally.

The primary affect-based predictors of voluntary turnover include job dissatisfaction, intention to quit, organisational support and affective commitment (Yücil, 2012; Hom & Kinicki, 2001; Trevor, 2001). Even at low levels of job satisfaction, however, public sector employees were found to continue to stay at their respective jobs because of their stronger desire for job security. Wang, Yang and Wang (2012) state that the negative relationship that exists between job satisfaction and turnover rate is lower in the public sector than it is in the private sector.

Within the organisational environment, the work itself is therefore considered to be the most important factor of job satisfaction, as employees want meaningful, challenging work.

The organisational culture determines many factors of job satisfaction, including career advancement opportunities. This is positively related to the organisation's performance

as it increases organisational commitment. No career advancement opportunities can exist if the organisation is not able to recognise and reward employees for work performed well. In fact lack of reward and recognition will lead to an increase in employee turnover.

The literature review highlights the different workplace environments within an organisation and further explains how each environment (human, technical and organisational), along with their components, either positively or negatively affects job satisfaction and morale.

The underlying assertion is that management has some degree of control over all three workplace environments. Although satisfaction cannot be created, management has the ability to create an environment which will foster satisfaction, which will ultimately lead to increased morale.

## **2.9. Conclusion**

The literature review clearly indicates that through job satisfaction, morale is unquestionably a point of interest for any organisation, be it in the private or public sector.

The various components of the environment in which an employee works has many aspects which all contribute to the level of job satisfaction felt by employees. Although aspects such as training, privacy, and availability of resources have a direct impact on the level of job satisfaction, these are considered by Herzberg as minor hygiene factors. They contribute to the level of dissatisfaction experienced, but by themselves are not sufficient to cause satisfaction. Job security, leadership, the work itself and career advancement are considered to be the major motivating factors that directly influence the level of job satisfaction.

The purpose of this literature review was to understand the various environments in a workplace and the factors within each environment which contribute to job satisfaction. With this understanding, enlightened questions can then be developed to put to staff of

the DPW KRO in order to gain insight into the true reasons for the low morale currently experienced by the Office.

The chapter to follow will explain and analyse the research methodology used in this study, paying particular attention to research design, sampling methodology, data collection, data analysis, research ethics, delimitations and lastly the trustworthiness of the research.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter deals with the research methodology used in this study. The blueprint for which the collection, measurement and analysis of data is based upon in a study is called the research design (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). Cooper and Schindler (2011) further explain that a research design's objective is to obtain answers to the research questions and thus it is the plan and structure of the investigation. It therefore serves as an outline for the investigator starting from the writing of the hypothesis to the analysis of the data.

Firstly the research design is explained where it is clarified as to why it is the optimal design for the study. Secondly the sampling and the data collection strategy is explained where the size of the sample and reasons for the sample size are given. The chapter then elaborates on how the data will be analysed as well as listing the ethical implications that affected this study.

#### **3.2. Research design**

The research design employed in this study was qualitative, in order to gain "an in-depth understanding" (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:160). The researcher's aim was to delve deeper into understanding the different meanings and reasons for human behaviour within DPW KRO as well as understanding the hidden interpretations and motivations for that behaviour to give insight as to why and how morale is what it is in the office, as well as giving possible indications into what can be done to correct the situation. As described by Cooper and Schindler (2011), qualitative research is a method used to extract feelings, emotions, motivations and perceptions. It is "designed to tell the researcher how (process) and why (meaning) things happen as they do" (Cooper & Schindler, 2011:160). The changes in behaviour that is evident within the KRO is suspected to be due to the low morale, what the researcher aimed to achieve was to identify the cause/s and to give possible for these changes. Quantitative research lends



insight into what happened, or how often things happen (Cooper & Schindler, 2011) rather than the reasons for and remedies to them.

The research paradigm utilised was post-positivistic (interpretivism). Interpretivism focuses on understanding human behaviour. The paradigm is based on the assumption that the nature of social action is subjective and that people and organisations are fundamentally different (Ryan, 2006). Therefore the researcher has attempted to identify trends in the various responses to try and draw parallels between them in order to generate theory to understand human behaviour (staff morale) in the KRO (Ryan, 2006).

Following the choice of research design, given its merits, the sample size and strategy need to be decided upon in order to extract relevant data that will give the most explanatory results.

### **3.3. Sampling strategy**

The population size of DPW KRO is 193, with 4 distinct sub-populations: 7 top management, 17 middle management, 161 staff between the levels of 3 and 8, and 8 cleaners. The staff employed by DPW KRO but who are not in Kimberley have been excluded from this study due to the fact that they are not subjected to the environment of the KRO in which the low morale has been identified. They have very little or no contact with the Office other than logistically. Of the sub-populations 2 top management, 6 middle management, 9 between the levels of 3 and 8, and 3 cleaners were interviewed. The sampling type that was employed was non-probability, purposive, stratified sampling, which allowed the researcher to control the size of the sample for increased statistical efficiency. A limit of twenty employees across the sub-populations were selected due to the time-intensive character of interviews and data analysis.

The sample type employed was non-probability, purposive, stratified sampling. Each aspect is further explained below: *Non-probability sampling* is when subjective methods are used to decide which elements are included in the sample. No attempt is made to select a random sample (Battaglia, 2011). The main advantage of non-probability sampling is that it can be implemented more quickly and it is generally less expensive

than probability sampling. Within non-probability sampling, the method of purposive sampling was specifically used. The primary aim of purposive sampling is to produce a sample that is representative of the population - it represents a cross-section of the population (Battaglia, 2011). *Stratified* sampling divides the population into sub-populations and uses simple random sampling (where each sub-population element has an equal probability of being chosen) on each sub-population (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). The advantages of this method are that the researcher is able to control the sample size, there is increased statistical efficiency, and this method provides data in order to represent and analyse sub-populations (Cooper & Schindler, 2011).

Participants were carefully chosen to ensure that their knowledge and experience fully encompass the scope of this study. The interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached.

Although the number of each sub-population interviewed was listed above, only participants who were willing to participate were used for this study.

### **3.4. Data collection strategy**

Data for this study was only sought from participants within the DPW KRO that are stationed in the Kimberley Office. All of the participants as well as management were made aware of what is required for the study as well as the purpose of the study.

The data collection method was that of individual interviews as the researcher sought to gain the highest response rates by being able to clarify ambiguous answers. Cooper and Schindler (2011) define individual interviews as “an interaction between an individual interviewer and a single participant” (Cooper & Schindler, 2011: 172). Participants for individual interviews are chosen not necessarily because their views and opinions represent the dominant opinion but rather because their attitudes and experiences fully encompass the issue under study (Cooper & Schindler, 2011).

The content of the semi-structured interview schedule was developed based on the three workplace environment components listed in the theoretical overview in Chapter 2. Because the collection strategy was individual interviews, this has allowed for

elements not already listed in Chapter 2 to come to surface and to be discussed thus giving a holistic view of the actual happenings in the Office.

The interviews first began by determining how important each element within the workplace environments is. This enabled the researcher to distinguish between the elements which have the greatest impact on staff morale.

The subsequent questions then followed the semi-structured interview schedule but allowed for the individual's tangent of thought. Slight intervention from the interviewer (Cooper & Schindler, 2011) allowed the interviewer to obtain a better understanding of the situation in the KRO and to identify patterns in the responses from the participants.

### **3.5. Data analysis**

The data obtained from the study was qualitative, so content analysis was used to analyse the data. Content analysis as explained by Elo and Kyngas (2007) is a methodical and impartial means of describing and quantifying matters. It is a "method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages" (Elo & Kyngas, 2007: 107). It allows the researcher to test theoretical matters.

No predetermined limit for the number of main elements was decided upon as the researcher did not want to inhibit the findings of the study.

### **3.6. Ethical implications**

Cooper and Schindler (2011) states that research must be designed in such a manner that the participant does not suffer any pain, discomfort, physical harm, embarrassment or loss of privacy. It is in this light that the following ethical concerns were taken into consideration:

- *Conflict of interest:* The researcher is the participants' colleague and herself subject to all issues raised (Polonsky & Waller, 2014). The interview schedule was drawn up so as to take this into account, and bias did not form part of the questions or answers. Findings were based solely on responses received from participants and not on any preconceived notions of the researcher.

- *Voluntary participation:* Participation was voluntary and no one was misled or coerced into answering (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). Consent forms were signed in this regard.
- *Informed consent:* Participants were fully informed as to the nature and purpose of the research and had to indicate their understanding of such by signing a consent form (Cooper & Schindler, 2011).
- *Confidentiality and anonymity:* All participants as well as the researcher work under the same conditions, which can be made worse if some of the data from this research is leaked. It was therefore of the utmost importance to the researcher to ensure the confidentiality of all information received as well as to ensure data integrity during and after the research (Polonsky & Waller, 2014).
- *Potential for harm:* Participants can be harmed in a number of ways, such as physical harm, psychological harm, emotional harm, embarrassment and so on. Any potential for harm was identified and mitigated (Polonsky & Waller, 2014).
- *Permission from organisation:* Written permission from DPW KRO was obtained prior to conducting any interviews.
- *Communicating results:* The three broad ethical considerations taken into account concerning the communication of results were plagiarism, academic fraud and misrepresenting the results (Polonsky & Waller, 2014).
- *Audio taping:* all participants were made aware before the interview begun that the interview would be audio taped, and this was also contained in the consent form (Polonsky & Waller, 2014).

All participants have remained anonymous and no means of identification were made available to any person. Management will receive a copy of the findings once the study has been completed. The researcher was wary of providing information regarding the study while it was in process due to possible interference from management who might have felt that the study was not in their favour (Ponterotto, 2013).

### **3.7. Conclusion**

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the research design gives the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data for this study. This chapter outlines the methodology and research design that will be used in this study with the aim of obtaining answers to the research questions posed in Chapter 1.

The research paradigm to be utilised in this study is post-positivistic and the research design is qualitative. Due to the size KRO and the existence of sub-populations, the chosen sampling strategy is non-probability stratified. The study will be conducted as individual interviews. The chosen methodologies and sample size for this study was with the purpose of extracting the most complete and reliable information from the best (most knowledgeable and expressive) participants.

The next chapter will focus on presenting and analysing the findings of the study.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Research Findings and Analysis**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

The research problem as well as an overview of the facets of staff morale was discussed in Chapter 1. An in-depth literature review was presented in Chapter 2, where the facets relating specifically to morale were further elaborated upon. The chapter also focused on the three working environments (human, technical and organisational) which influence morale in the workplace. Chapter 3 described the research methodology of the study.

The interview schedule was designed based on the three work environments as discussed in Chapter 2, with the intention of addressing the research problems given in Chapter 1. The results of the interviews will be discussed and categorised per work environment in order to deduce the importance of the specific working environment and the effect it has on morale. The interview schedule was developed using the literature review as its basis. The questions were derived so as to directly relate to the objectives of this study. The questions were formulated in a semi-structured manner to allow individual participants to elaborate further if they felt it necessary.

Forty-five minute appointments were made with each of the participants to allow for a comprehensive session. Participants were initially informed about the purpose of the interview, and they were also questioned about their willingness to participate in the study.

Before conducting the interview the researcher once again explained the purpose of the study and the necessity for the interview to be recorded. This was also included in the consent form which all participants were requested to sign. The participants were reassured about the confidentiality and anonymity of all responses.

During the interviews the questions were posed to the participants allowing them to elaborate on personal experiences as well as affording them an opportunity to list possible remedies to the low morale experienced in the Office.

As described in Chapters 1 and 3, the sample size was 20, divided according to rank levels: two Deputy Directors (on level 12), six Assistant Directors (on levels 9-10), ten general staff (on level 4 -8) and two cleaners (on level 3). The participants were chosen for their job levels as well as for their gender, race, age and years within DPW KRO in order to get an all-inclusive view of the state of morale within DPW KRO.

The sample size was 20 participants of which theoretical saturation was reached after the thirteenth interview, where no new information was attained. This was realised in retrospect after all 20 participants were interviewed.

The biographical information of the 20 participants is listed and summarised below.

**Table 4.1. Biographical information**

| #Participant | Age | Gender | Race  | Salary level | Highest qualification obtained | Years of service within DPW KRO                             | Are you the breadwinner in your home? | What are your reasons for staying with DPW?                          | How would you gauge your level of morale? |
|--------------|-----|--------|-------|--------------|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1            | 48  | Female | White | 7            | Std 8                          | 30  | No                                    | lack of qualifications thus no opportunists exist for placement      | Low                                       |
| 2            | 49  | Female | White | 10           | post matric certificate        | 28  | No                                    | lack of qualifications thus no opportunities exist for placement     | high                                      |
| 3            | 38  | Male   | Black | 12           | LLB Degree                     | 2years within DPW KRO and an additional 4yrs at Head Office | Yes                                   | being applying for alternative positions but has not been successful | Very low                                  |
| 4            | 36  | Female | Black | 9            | BTech Degree                   | 6 months  | Yes                                   | being applying for alternative positions but has not been successful | Low                                       |
| 5            | 33  | Female | Black | 8            | BTech Degree                   | 7   | No                                    | being applying for alternative positions but has not been successful | Low                                       |

|    |    |        |          |    |                        |  |     |  |          |
|----|----|--------|----------|----|------------------------|--|-----|--|----------|
| 6  | 45 | Male   | Coloured | 10 | National Diploma       | 6 yrs within DPW KRO and an additional 11 years within DPW | Yes | Comfort Zone   | Low      |
| 7  | 38 | Female | Coloured | 10 | Diploma                | 17   | No  | Comfort Zone, enjoys her friends and the working environment                                 | Very low |
| 8  | 39 | Male   | Black    | 10 | BTech Degree           | 3  | Yes | being applying for alternative positions but has not been successful                         | Low      |
| 9  | 49 | Male   | Indian   | 8  | Diploma                | 5  | No  | Comfort Zone   | Low      |
| 10 | 60 | Female | Black    | 3  | Std 5                  | 31   | Yes | lack of qualifications thus no opportunities exist for placement                             | Very low |
| 11 | 48 | Female | White    | 7  | Matric                 | 25   | Yes | lack of qualifications thus no opportunities exist for placement as well as in comfort zone  | Very low |
| 12 | 38 | Female | Indian   | 7  | Matric                 | 15   | No  | applied for resignation, however it was not approved   | Very low |
| 13 | 31 | Female | Indian   | 6  | BCom                   | 9  | No  | lack of qualifications thus no opportunities exist for placement                             | Low      |
| 14 | 38 | Female | Coloured | 7  | National Diploma       | 9 years, 7 months  | No  | being applying for alternative positions but has not been successful                         | Low      |
| 15 | 48 | Male   | Coloured | 8  | Trade Test Certificate | 5  | No  | being applying for alternative positions but has not been successful                         | Low      |
| 16 | 30 | Male   | Coloured | 6  | Diploma                | 6  | Yes | being applying for alternative positions but has not been successful                         | Low      |
| 17 | 32 | Female | Black    | 10 | BTech Degree           | 3  | No  | being applying for alternative positions but has not been successful                         | Low      |
| 18 | 55 | Male   | White    | 12 | Masters X2             | 23   | Yes | being applying for alternative positions but has not been successful                         | Very low |
| 19 | 52 | Female | Black    | 3  | Std 7                  | 30   | no  | lack of qualifications thus no opportunities exist for placement thus waiting for retirement | Very low |



|    |    |        |       |   |                      |   |    |  |          |
|----|----|--------|-------|---|----------------------|---|----|--|----------|
| 20 | 29 | Female | Black | 7 | National Certificate | 7 | No | being applying for alternative positions but has not been successful due to lack of qualifications | Very low |
|----|----|--------|-------|---|----------------------|---|----|--|----------|

Table 4.1 implies that the participants interviewed are a fair representation of the Office. All age groups were interviewed, with the majority being between the ages of 30-50. More females than males were interviewed, while the participants were racially representative with the majority being black followed by coloured, then white then Indian. Participants varied with regards to the number of years served at the Office, with the majority being 0-10 years followed by more than 20 years. The majority of participants have a qualification of a diploma or higher while five have only matric or lower, and the majority of the participants are not the breadwinners in their homes. The most prominent reasons for staying at DPW KRO are firstly unsuccessful applications elsewhere followed by a lack of appropriate qualifications. The majority of participants indicated that their current level of morale is low.

The data derived from the interviews is listed according to the work environments and then related to the research questions of the study. This was to enable the researcher to determine which environment (by evaluating the factors within each environment) has the greatest impact on morale.

## 4.2. Human environment

### 1. *How dedicated/loyal are you to DPW KRO?*

#### ***Findings***

The majority of participants answered by saying that they are dedicated/loyal to DPW KRO. This was interpreted by the researcher to mean that they are dedicated to the work that they have been tasked to perform. The majority of those participants are over 40 years of age with more than 10 years of service. The reason they are dedicated is because they are people with a certain unyielding character and not because DPW KRO has earned their level of dedication. One participant further stated that loyalty is a two-way street and that loyalty from the DPW KRO is not forthcoming, so he questioned

why he should then be loyal to the Department. Of the participants just over a quarter of them indicated that they are not dedicated to DPW KRO. Their reasons included that their dedication/loyalty is not reciprocated, and in fact there is no respect between the management of DPW KRO and officials. One participant was recently suspended for certain suspected behaviour. She perceives the investigation as a witch-hunt, yet she still indicated that she is extremely loyal to the Department, but again her reasons are that she is a good-natured person. She stated:

*“I am too loyal, especially after what they did to me but because of my personality and the type of person that I am. It’s not about DPW it’s about me as a person”.*

While a few responded by saying that although they are dedicated and loyal, their level of loyalty is not what it used to be. They are simply as dedicated as they need to be in order to perform the duties that they are paid for and they indicated that they are no longer willing to go the extra mile for the Department:

*“I am just here to do my job because I get my salary. The extra-mile... no, I don’t do that anymore, I do just what I need to do”.*

The participants who indicated that they are not dedicated or loyal explained that this was because there is nothing to look forward to concerning their future in the Department. How they perceive other officials to be ill-treated by the Department also diminishes any hope that they might have had towards their future in the Department:

*“I see what’s happening to other people and the way that other people are treated. Loyalty is a two-way street... for me. You are loyal to a company or department because you know that they will back you up, but since there is nothing, I’m not loyal at all. If I find a job tomorrow, I am out of here”.*

## ***Interpretation***

This question was chosen to measure the level of affective commitment. As explained in the literary review (item 2.6.1.1) affective commitment is the psychological attachment to one's organisation, and it has long been considered an important determinant for dedication and loyalty. So although the majority of participants are dedicated and loyal, affective commitment is not present as their dedication and loyalty is not aimed at the Department but rather it is a by-product of their personalities. They have no commitment to remain with the Department or to involve themselves with the Department's activities or in achieving the Department's goals.

The lack of affective commitment in the Office does appear to be a cause of the low morale experienced by the Office.

### ***2. How does the fact that DPW KRO offers job security (that is inherent to working for the government) affect your morale?***

#### ***Findings***

Half of the participants indicated that the job security offered by government has no effect on their morale (as they have only ever worked or the majority of their working careers have been in government and they have never experienced not having job security). Less than half of the participants indicated that their morale is positively affected by job security as it lowers stress levels of not having to worry about losing their jobs or their pension:

*"It affects my morale in a positive way because I know at least I have a job. I don't always have to be stressed thinking that at any time I may lose my job."*

One participant indicated that it negatively affects their morale in that they feel demotivated by it. Only one of the participants indicated that it has no effect, further elaborating by saying that he does not view the supposed job security as actual job security based on the recent occurrences in the Office, stating that one's position in government is just as easily lost as in the private sector. Another participant also

indicated that it has no effect because she is nearing retirement and has no reason to believe that she will lose her job before then.

### ***Interpretation***

The majority of the participants are unaffected by the job security they have. This reiterates the conclusion made by Herzberg in Chapter 2, that job satisfaction is considered to be a hygiene factor. According to Herzberg, hygiene factors are lower end needs and their satisfaction does not imply job satisfaction or improved morale. Without it, yes, job satisfaction and morale will be decreased, but it in itself will not improve morale. In the case of the remaining nine participants who indicated that job security improves their morale, the researcher believes that their response is based on the struggling economy, and that they are grateful to have a steady, reliable income. The participant who indicated that having job security decreases her morale is because there is no motivation to do better than the minimum required. She feels that she is guaranteed her salary and continued employment, which makes a person lazy to such an extent that the person starts to question her self-worth and her abilities.

The presence of job security in the Office does not appear to be a cause of the low morale experienced by the Office.

### ***3. How does management/leadership within the office affect your morale? What changes would you expect in order for your morale to improve?***

#### ***Findings***

All but one participant indicated that the current level of management/leadership in the Office negatively affects their morale. The main reasons cited by the participants were that they feel as though the current managers in the Office are not fit (in the sense of possessing appropriate managerial skills and attributes) to manage an office. They feel that managers in this Office manage autocratically, there is very little communication between management and staff, there is no consistency in their decision-making, they offer no constructive criticism, there is no fairness and they don't encourage teamwork:

*“Big time, negatively. We don’t have people who have managerial skills. The focus is totally wrong; the focus is on me, myself and I and not on team. Everybody is working against someone else. Yet here as opposed to the private sector, in order to get something done, you need all units and yet all of them are just out for themselves”.*

The consequence of this is that an environment is fostered of blaming each other (between managers and ultimately amongst staff) which effectively forces staff to choose sides between managers:

*“due to them [managers] not working as a team, they work in silos and blame each other, as officials we sometimes have to take sides. The fact that they are not working as a team results in splits in the office.”*

Furthermore it was noted that managers do not offer support and guidance to their staff, and they also don’t motivate their staff. There are areas of concern amongst the staff that they feel require management’s intervention, but this intervention is not forthcoming. Staff feel as though they are being ignored by management:

*“they [management] don’t even motivate in any which way, my morale where they are concerned, they not fit to be managers, they cannot motivate anybody... whatever problem I have, nobody else can solve and people at management level who can actually my problem, they are ignoring me.”*

Other participants indicated that they feel abused and misused by management in the sense that when a position is vacant, the staff are good enough to perform those functions, but when the time comes for the interviews of that vacant position, they are not shortlisted:

*“they [management] just abuse people, use and abuse. Where you are good enough to do the work but you are not actually good enough to get the post. They would rather promote outsiders”.*

Also stated by the participants is that management, through their actions, communicate that they are not interested in the development of their staff. In fact it seems as though management is actively trying to impede their career growth for reasons stated above.

As mentioned in question 1 the majority of participants indicated that they are dedicated/loyal to the Office, and many of them still “go the extra mile”. When question 3 was posed to them, however, it was stated that the effort they gave in achieving the extra mile, was often thrown back into their faces by managers forbidding that behaviour as it creates an expectation for one day being placed in a certain position:

*“a person tries to go beyond what you are required to do then it gets thrown into your face saying that you’re not supposed to do it. The IT post was advertised, when I applied I wasn’t even shortlisted but now that that post is vacant, I am still being approached by management to assist with IT”.*

Another cause of concern was that many participants felt as though the Regional Manager (the head of the Office) valued some managers’ opinions more (favoritism) than the rest of the managers:

*“I am in management and I think there are only certain people that have an input in the management team. I feel that whether I have inputs or not, it doesn’t matter, it’s not taken into consideration”.*

This creates a hostile environment amongst managers themselves as well as amongst staff.

The one participant who indicated that management/leadership has a positive effect on her level of morale, explained that although she has a similar view than the rest of the participants (inadequate managerial skills), she is motivated to proving them wrong and sees this a challenge:

*“I’m motivated, they have challenged me. The type of leadership we have in this office, no, I can’t say the type of leadership, we don’t have leadership in this office at all. They increase my morale because I’m able to show them that they will not get to me, they not be able to break me or destroy me or try to get rid of me, because I will not allow it”.*

The changes that the staff would like to see in the management of this Office include: the replacement of the entire management team with better qualified persons, but since their complete removal from the Office is highly unlikely the following has been listed as alternatives: increasing honest communication between management and staff, consistency in decision-making, for the Office to function as a team as opposed to working in silos, support and advancement of loyal and able employees.

### ***Interpretation***

This question, when posed to the participants, caused the most emotional discomfort. Some were apprehensive in answering it as they felt that they might be victimised for giving the information. The researcher had to reassure them that management would not be able to distinguish what information was given by whom. Others got visibly excited at the thought of airing their views. This appeared to be a consequence of abusive behaviour as explained by Tepper, Duffy and Shaw (2001). The consequence of abusive supervision is that it spawns resentment and antagonism which is likely to generate a desire to retaliate and chastise the supervisor. The researcher viewed this as the participants’ retaliation to management, where some expected a positive outcome (a change in management) and other feared a negative outcome (victimisation) from the interview.

The leader-member exchange theory states that communication behaviour has an important influence on job satisfaction. Participants felt that there was not sufficient communication between management and staff and that management only offered criticism and not support, which results in lower job satisfaction.

The fact that many of the participants indicated that they have no confidence in management's abilities and that there is no strong leadership in the Office is said to have a strong correlation to low employee morale.

Another important aspect that affects both job satisfaction and morale is employees feeling valued and respected, and the participants responded that they don't feel this. It was explicitly stated by participants that they feel undervalued by management, and the fact that their managers do not support them going on training implies that the managers are not interested in staff development.

The lack of consistency regarding managers' decision-making leaves the employees feeling unsure of themselves and unable to take initiative or to be proactive in the working environment. This results in less productivity which is then worsened by management criticizing staff and not offering support and guidance. This then ultimately leads to staff being afraid to approach management to request guidance which eventually turns into a vicious cycle. Staff are afraid to request guidance, and management criticizes mistakes, which fuels the staff's apprehensiveness to approach management.

The amount of perceived fairness is explained by Tepper (2000) as being determined by distributive, procedural and interactional justice as explained in Chapter 2. Participants feel that management is not fair regarding the treatment of some staff members (distributive justice). Procedural justice is also not experienced by staff, as they report their manager's behaviour to the Regional Manager, but nothing ever comes of it. Participants furthermore experience interactional justice, meaning they feel that the Office is not honest with them or sensitive towards their personal needs.

In lieu of the interpretation above, it is clear that the participants would consider themselves to form part of the "out-group" as explained by Lunenburg (2010). Lunenburg (2010) states that out-group members are ignored and have fewer opportunities than the in-group members. The manager will provide support, consideration and assistance only in so far as they are mandated by duty to perform



and will not go beyond this. In return out-group members will perform only the bare minimum and little beyond that. This is reiterated by the participants saying that although they are dedicated/loyal to the office, they are no longer willing to go the extra mile.

Management, who comprise 2/20 of the participants, also made reference to the fact that they too feel like out-group members with their direct supervisor, the Regional Manager. They clearly perceive that favouritism exists between the RM and a few of the other managers in the Office. They as management feel the same towards their manager as their subordinates feel towards them. These managers also reiterate the need for increased communication between the RM and her managers in the form of regular management meetings, and with management and the staff in the form of regular staff meetings. It seems as if the managerial problems experienced by the Office are not isolated to the lower levels, but are experienced throughout the Office, across all levels. The reasons for this could be explained by Tepper (2000) where he states that management (abusive supervisors) might even fail to recognise their abusive behaviour, let alone taking responsibility for its effects.

Furthermore, the one participant who indicated that management/leadership has a positive effect on her morale, came across as defiant of management. Tepper, Duffy and Shaw (2001) describe this as the official resisting downward influence from management to express her resentment towards them. So although her response was in the managers' favour, her justification thereof was clearly to their detriment.

It is reasonable then to expect that the participants' suggestions on how to improve morale would include the remedying of the problems listed above. The participants overtly said that the entire management should be replaced with capable and willing managers. This was justified by the participants by stating that they feel as though the current managers in the Office are already accustomed to mismanaging the Office, and even if they were to go on training they would eventually revert back to their old ways. All participants felt that although they could list item by item what management would need to change in order to improve morale, the process of changing management and

having a new capable management would mean that all items of concern would automatically correct themselves. Considering that this is unlikely to happen, the alternative suggestions included improving communication and being consistent in decision-making, which, if management is able to achieve this, should have a similar effect to changing management. Increased communication (top-down and bottom-up) could solve the concerns of fairness as the merits of each case can then be discussed and understood. Management would then be more approachable which would correct the criticisms and encourage support, guidance and constructive criticism. Management might gain a better understanding of employees' personal and professional needs, which would then encourage them to support and develop staff. Management would also then see that their staff can add value to the Department and is able to work independently. Management would be able to relax their autocratic leadership which in turn would give officials more responsibility where they would be able to feel valued and appreciated by the Office. They would therefore feel part of the "in-group" and offer greater than necessary expenditure of their time and effort, which will ultimately improve the performance of the Office.

The lack of proper management in the Office does appear to be a major cause of the low morale experienced by its employees.

#### ***4. How do the training opportunities offered to you affect your morale?***

##### ***Findings***

More than half of the participants indicated that the lack of appropriate training negatively affects their morale. Officials are required to indicate on their Personal Development Plan (PDP – a component of PMDS) the training that they require in order to better perform their duties. These are however rarely looked at, let alone prioritised on the training plan for the year. Participants indicated that the training they identified on their PDPs are ignored and the majority are not trained at all, or they are forced to attend training that they did not request and has no bearing on how they perform their duties i.e. disability management training for administrative clerks:

*“the training that I want to attend, is not approved, it simply goes again to the issue of management/leadership, it’s autocratic. Yes I am going on training but it’s not the training that I want. The training that I want to attend, I pay for from my pocket because I know it won’t be approved”.*

They feel as though they were only sent on those courses because officials in Human Resource Management wanted to perform well on one of their KPAs. A few officials have gone a step further to specifically identify a training course that they would like to attend, for which they submitted a formal application. These we were all rejected due to budgetary constraints. Budgetary constraints do not apply to the training that no one has identified (the forced training by HR):

*“it really doesn’t make sense – when you want to go on training there is no budget but at the end of the financial year, you are sent on training that you don’t want to attend because they need to spend the budget – it decreases my morale.”*

Others who have indicated that training negatively effects their morale said that they have either never been on training or that the training took place many years ago (i.e. first aid and fire fighting) and the validity has expired, and it is now meaningless. Some indicated that on the odd occasion that beneficial training is identified by HR, they are somehow disadvantaged due to the qualifying criteria set by this Office, so they are often unable to attend:

*“there aren’t many training opportunities and if there are, then we are somehow disadvantage, like with the IE-Works training: I was good enough to attend the first training but not the consecutive training session which are continuous. But because we [participant and her manager] had a disagreement during the week, now I’m not going”.*

This appears to have bred a feeling of discontentment in that management does not care about the officials’ development.

A quarter of the participants indicated that training has no effect on their morale as they are accustomed to their training needs being ignored. One of the participants based his view on this due to the fact that he is the most highly qualified person in this office and that no one-year-course will improve his curriculum vitae.

A few of the participants indicated that although they are not attending training, they are attending workshops, and those workshops are beneficial, which improves their morale.

### ***Interpretation***

Training is classified as short courses that span from one day to one year. One or more years is considered a bursary.

The majority of participants indicated that the training offered by the Office negatively affects their morale. They don't feel that they are being sent on the appropriate training, if at all. Latif, Jan and Shaheen (2013) consider training to be a powerful factor in shaping employee attitudes in that it creates satisfaction for career development. In this case training has created dissatisfaction for career development.

Grobler *et al.* (2011) defined development as a managerial function which preserves and enhances employees' capabilities in their job by improving their skills, knowledge, abilities and characteristics. The participants' view is that if their managers do not support them in their training endeavours to improve their skills and knowledge, they are not performing their managerial function of staff development. This once again alludes to the fact that the management in this Office does not possess the necessary skills and attributes to be effective managers. Armstrong states that development is an important element in creating a sense of purpose for staff and that it leads to organisational commitment. The participants of this study are obviously lacking this, seeing as though 18/20 have intentions to leave this office, mainly due to their level of morale (as explained in question 13).

When individuals request specific training, they are told that there are budgetary constraints which won't allow their training to be approved. However subsequent to their requests, within the same financial year HR identified mass ( $\pm 20$  officials) training

amounting to ±R4 000.00 per official, which was not requested by the officials. This leaves officials feeling betrayed by management, as training which could be beneficial to them being able to better perform their duties is rejected while training for the sole purpose of improving one unit's KPA scores are approved. This again speaks to favouritism by the RM. This might very well not be the justification behind why their training was not approved, but based on the information that the participants received from management this is what they perceive to be true.

Proper communication from management through which they explain to staff the true, full reason why their training has been rejected, will definitely assist staff in better understanding and accepting the reason for rejection.

The lack of appropriate training taking place in the Office does appear to be a major cause of the low morale experienced by the staff.

Overall, the factors within the human environment contribute significantly to the low level of morale, particularly due to lack of effective management and training opportunities.

### **4.3. Technical environment**

***5. How do the physical work conditions of DPW KRO affect your morale? What changes if any would you like to see in order to improve your morale?***

#### ***Findings***

Almost all of the participants indicated that the physical work conditions have no effect on their level of morale as it is satisfactory for them to be able to carry out their daily duties and no changes are necessary.

The remaining participants indicated that their morale is negatively affected by the physical work conditions, although these were individual specific occurrences. Two of the participants indicated the operator chairs and a ceiling light that were flashing. The remaining participant, due to the nature of her work, has an office that is completely bullet proof, which means that there is no air circulation other than that created by an air

conditioner. In addition, due to the nature of her work, no person other than herself is allowed in her office and she experiences feelings of loneliness:

*“there is not enough air circulation because everything is bullet proofed, putting the aircon on makes me sick to be honest. For the fact that nobody can come into my office, is lonely in a way”.*

### **Interpretation**

Considering that the majority of the participants feel that the physical work conditions has no effect on their morale, is conducive to Herzberg’s theory that physical work conditions are regarded as hygiene factors.

The reasons quoted by the two participants who feel that it negatively affects their morale are temporary (purchasing of new operator chairs and fixing the light). The participant who works in a bullet proof office with no unauthorised access is placed there due to the nature of her work, and it cannot be changed.

Physical work conditions do not appear to be a major contributor to the low morale experienced in the Office.

### **6. How does the level of physical privacy offered by DPW KRO affect your morale?**

#### **Findings**

Just more than half of the participants indicated that their morale is negatively affected by the level of privacy experienced in the Office and stated that they would appreciate more professional courtesy:

*“even the management, your supervisors, they don’t even respect your privacy. I would like that actually, a more professional approach like a knock on the door or ‘may I come in’”.*

Of those participants, seven are in open plan offices while four have their own offices. Negative issues included people not knocking when entering offices, people not respecting the fact that employees might be busy with phone calls or meetings when managers enter and remain in the office. The participants who shared offices listed issues such as sharing colleagues not quieting down when an employee is on the phone, sharing colleagues playing the radio too loud, adjusting the air conditioner either too hot or too cold, etc. The two cleaners indicated that they would appreciate more privacy, specifically relating to having a changing room. Currently they have a multi-purpose communal break room that they also use to change in.

The remaining (just less than half) participants indicated that privacy has no effect on their level of morale. Either privacy is not a concern of theirs or they feel that their post level does not warrant the level of privacy that they desire:

*“I think on my level, I’m not at that point where I need more privacy. The type of work that I do, it’s not like I’m on a schedule, so long as I’m in the office – I work.”*

### ***Interpretation***

Altmann (2000) describes privacy as an individual’s ability to regulate the interaction between themselves and other individuals and/or environmental stimuli. Bates (2006) states that employees need to have sufficient privacy at work in order for them to be effective. According to the participants, the majority indicated that they do not have sufficient privacy. Of those participants, the majority are in open plan offices and experience the expected privacy issues related to open plan offices.

All participants (even those who indicated that it doesn’t affect their morale) did however that the main reason for stating that it affects them is due to a feeling of not being respected by their colleagues. This is derived from the occurrence of other officials entering offices without knocking and remaining there even if the official is engaged in a conversation either physically or on the telephone.

Just less than half of the participants indicated that privacy has no effect on their morale. They too experience the situations mentioned above but due to the office having an open door policy and the majority of them not performing confidential work, it has no real effect on them

Thus privacy does not appear to be a contributor to the low morale experienced in the Office.

**7. How do the resources at your disposal i.e. cars, cell phones, laptops, stationery etc. (in order to perform your job) affect your morale?**

***Findings***

More than half of the participants stated that the level of resources available in this Office negatively affects their morale. Although all of the basic resources are available the quality is questionable and the turnaround time to receive them is too long i.e. stationery, cleaning materials, etc.:

*“it takes, I’m exaggerating a little, 6 months before you can get a pen, half the time we have to buy our own stationery.”*

Currently all officials in the DPW are being issued with new laptops when previously the desktops were only replaced after approximately  $\pm 7$  years. One participant said that she feels unsafe using pool cars as the cars are not properly checked after they are returned by one official before used by the next official.

All participants mentioned that the working Telkom telephone system was replaced with a newer more economical Cisco IP telephone which from its inception has been problematic. Participants feel that this severely hampers service delivery. Alternative means of communication are then required either visiting colleagues or clients personally or relying on email which both have their own drawbacks:



*“the telephones for example, at this stage it shows link down, you cannot use it. It has forced us to follow different channels. In my work, I have to call contractors to give them order numbers but when the phones don’t work, it delays the process. I have to revert to email but not all contractors have email.”*

Another concern was that the IT software of the department is not upgraded as regularly as it should be which is frustrating when dealing with consultants who email documents in the latest software which DPW officials are unable to open.

Eight of the participants felt that the level of resources, other than the ill functioning telephone system, are satisfactory and has no effect on their level of morale.

### ***Interpretation***

The quality of the resources seems to be affecting the participants’ morale more so than their availability, which already seems to have been addressed by the Department by issuing all officials with laptops.

The manner in which pool cars are allocated leaves the one participant feeling that the Department doesn’t care about her safety or wellbeing, but only in service delivery.

The main concern raised by all officials is the telephone system, which they believe is severely hampering service delivery. The IP link is constantly down or it will cut during a call, leaving the person on the other side thinking that the phone was put down on purpose. Many officials have already been reported to their managers for poor telephone etiquette, however when this was raised with management, they were told that it was a head office intervention and that there was nothing that could be done at regional level. Officials feel despondent as they are blamed for poor telephone etiquette due to a system that does not work and which they have reported to management but which does not seem to have a remedy in the foreseeable future. The lack of a proper telephone system means that officials need to find alternative means of communicating with other officials and stakeholders, which can sometimes be more time consuming. This lowers productivity which has knock-on effects for the rest of the Office.

Resources therefore do appear to be a contributor to the low morale experienced in the office.

The technical environment does not appear to contribute significantly to the low levels of morale experienced in the Office as all factors discussed are considered to be hygiene factors which will not improve job satisfaction and thus morale. They will contribute to officials not being dissatisfied.

#### **4.4. Organisational environment**

***8. What type of culture would you say exists within DPW KRO, how does that culture affect your morale? What effect does gossip have on your morale?***

##### ***Findings***

The majority of the participants indicated that the culture within the Office negatively affects their morale. The main reason was bureaucratic culture, which highlighted the inadequacies of management:

*“I feel that within a department you are supposed to have proper channels to follow and I feel that if the channels were put in place, then we are supposed to abide by these channels, not to bypass anyone. I look [at the culture] in a negative light because if I’m for example the Regional Manager’s favourite, I will bypass everybody, she has the final say, she can approve my things. This is what is happening in this office”.*

The participants feel that management’s internal focus is too strict, with flexibility and initiative by officials are criticised. The rigid manner in which management manages the Office forces units into isolation, which inevitably causes the formation of sub-groups within the office. The presence of sub-groups undermines the team spirit that employees long for with managers. The participants feel that the Regional Manager’s (RM) favouritism of some managers also causes contention amongst staff because her decisions are not perceived as consistent.

Less than half of the participants indicate that the culture has no effect on their morale in that they choose to ignore the effects, rather than being oblivious to it. One participant said that the state of the Office culture has become a norm over the past years, and that officials have no choice but to adapt to it:

*“I don’t think that I’m affected anymore, it’s become a norm, she [the RM] decides and that’s the end of the story. The RM doesn’t manage herself, she listens too much to other people, it’s like she can’t think for herself”.*

### **Interpretation**

The culture was described by the participants as hierarchical (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010). In such a culture stability and control are valued over flexibility, and control is the driving force. Effectiveness in this culture is measured by efficiency, timeliness and reliability. Silverthorne found that bureaucratic cultures, such as , within government, often lead to lower levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment, relative to innovative and supportive cultures.

The fact that some participants indicated that the culture within the office has no effect on their morale, can be linked to Kreitner and Kinicki (2010). They explain that organisational culture has three fundamental layers: observable artefacts, espoused values and basic assumptions. This case (where participants indicated that culture has no effect) would be an example of basic assumptions: unobservable, and have become so taken-for-granted over the years that they guide behaviour and are therefore resistant to change. The culture of this Office, regardless of its state, has become taken-for granted, and employees have adapted to it. Managements’ resistance to communication has fostered a bureaucratic environment to which officials have become so accustomed that it has become a way of life and they know exactly what to do and what not to do in order to get through every day. Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) state that this culture is often linked to decreased job satisfaction and morale, which is echoed in this study.

The presence of a bureaucratic culture in the office does appear to be a major cause of the low morale experienced by the Office.

**9. Do you feel as though you are rewarded and recognised for a job well done? If you were, would this improve your morale?**

***Findings***

All but one of the participants indicated that they very rarely or never get thanked or recognised for a job well done, let alone rewarded for it:

*“No! It would be nice, you don’t even need money, a verbal thank you would be enough, just for the fact that they are recognising that you are doing something, or going the extra mile, but you don’t get recognised here”.*

Supervisors feel that it is unnecessary to thank an employee for a job that he/she gets paid to do, even if the employee goes the extra mile - receiving their salary is thanks enough:

*“Well most people say I get my salary therefore that is my thanks and reward. But I do extra, but I don’t get thanked or rewarded for the extra work. A pat on the back now and again would be nice.”*

Of those participants, four participants indicated that if they are recognised it is only from their direct supervisors or colleagues and not from their managers. The participant who indicated that she does get recognised from all officials and management is a cleaner.

There is a Performance Management Development System in place which allows for performance bonuses to be paid to employees, but all the participants seem very negative about the system because they have to justify their performance accompanied by a portfolio of evidence which they feel is unnecessary if their managers knew what they did and managed them properly. Just more than a quarter of the participants received a performance bonus in the previous financial year, but they too seemed despondent about. They feel that not only did they have to go the extra mile in performing their duties, they now too have to “fight” to convince management that they did in fact go the extra mile:

*“No, never, PMDS you have to prove that you have done this. The system that we have here is very archaic, why do I have to prove it, it should be seen that you have achieved. The system is very biased because if I like you, I will push you, if I don’t like you, then I don’t. Irrespective of how hard you worked – it’s never reflected”.*

In response to a question about whether morale will be boosted if this were to start happening, all participants answered saying yes. Recognition without reward is sufficient to drastically improve morale, to let employees know that they are valued and appreciated. One participant further stated that if this were to occur officials would be more willing to go the extra mile in future:

*“In terms of recognition it really would improve your morale because sometimes you go beyond what you need to do, a simple thank you would mean that at least they notice what you have done. That is all a person actually needs. It will strengthen your morale to try and do better”.*

Currently only wrongdoing and mistakes are recognised and made public, which humiliates officials and makes them feel inadequate.

### ***Interpretation***

Barry (2014) states that employee recognition programs signal to employees that the organisation appreciates their hard work, which in turn boosts morale. Almost all participants said that they are not recognised for a job well done, and all have the view that their managers will not thank them because receiving their salaries is thanks enough. Nelson (2003) states that most managers believe the fact that the employee has a job is reward enough, which seems to be what is occurring in this Office. Nelson (2003) further states that management’s failure to make the connection between reward and performance is negatively affecting employee loyalty, which is evident from question 1: how dedicated/loyal are you to DPW KRO?

The PMDS bonus is calculated and paid once a year, which is insufficient to motivate officials on a daily or weekly basis. Nelson in addition states that cash incentives have a

demotivational effect as it reduces teamwork due to employees focusing on individual gains. This system seems to be encouraging and enabling the silo environment already created by management. It further seems to exacerbate the odium that officials have towards management, as their performance is judged by managers who have no interaction with them, leaving officials feeling victimised, isolated and inadequate.

The lack of recognition by management does appear to be a major contributor of low morale in the Office.

#### **10. How does the level of turnover within DPW KRO affect your morale?**

##### ***Findings***

The majority of participants indicated that their morale is negatively affected by the rate of turnover within the Office. The participants had questioned previous employees on their reasons for leaving, which were usually due to them being unhappy in the workplace. This made the participants question their own feelings toward the workplace. Others felt negative towards this because as employees leave, the workload of the remaining employees increases by either having to pick up the slack or by having to train new employees appointed in their positions:

*“We keep on getting new people from outside and the people in this office don’t get the opportunities to move forward. Here are people with 15-20 years’ service and yet they must train someone just because they have a degree. I feel very strongly about that and that brings down my morale”.*

One participant said that the high rate of turnover is disheartening to him because it signals that DPW is happy to let go of staff as the retention policy is not utilised:

*“In terms of no retention policy, if you get a position somewhere else, it’s fine, you can go. That is how a person feels with this department. It’s like they don’t try. You that is left behind has to pick up the slack for however long it takes to appoint someone new in that post. This includes training the new person to get*

*onto the level where you already are. You have to advise someone who is appointed above you how to do his or her work”.*

Nine out of the fourteen participants stated that the main reason for turnover negatively affecting their morale is that they feel that they were overlooked for a position when it was advertised, even though they have the qualification or the experience. When the post was vacant they were good enough to act in that post but not to be awarded the post. One Coloured participant indicated that although the level of turnover is high, he feels that the equity quota requirements will never be in his favour:

*“The processes related to equity means that we are anyway disadvantaged, I'm sorry to say that but if you are not black enough you will not get that post.”*

On the other hand one of the fourteen indicated that although the level of turnover has no direct effect on her, the fact that she loses friends negatively affects her morale:

*“People who are leaving, are in other sections and I don't do their work so it doesn't affect me. It's just that we are losing people who we came a long way with, we are losing friends.”*

Less than a quarter of the participants indicated that the level of turnover has no effect on their morale as they have never experienced any negative consequences from employees leaving or resuming duties.

A few of the participants indicated that the level of turnover improves their morale. Of those three, two indicated this in the sense that if some officials are lucky enough to have an opportunity to leave, then their turn will also come. The remaining participant stated that her morale improved because the high rate of turnover is a product of low morale and hopefully management will get the message that something is not right:

*“I'm happy that people are leaving because these are the fruits of low morale, hopefully managers will see that people are not happy.”*

## ***Interpretation***

The majority of participants indicated that the turnover negatively affects their morale. Three of the participants indicated that the turnover improves their morale, but this was because they still viewed management in a negative light. This negativity is however converted into positive feelings for themselves. Overall it seems that the rate of turnover is negatively viewed by employees. The employees leaving the office are doing so because they are unhappy in the workplace. The employees who stay behind are experiencing an increase in workload, feelings of sadness as friends leave and are discouraged because of being ignored for potential vacancies.

One participant aptly put it by saying that the rate of turnover is a product of low morale, and hopefully management will get the message. This alludes to the fact that employees are desperate for a change in management and that they harbour no commitment to this Office.

The rate of turnover does appear to be a major cause of the low morale experienced in the Office.

The organisational environment appears to also significantly contribute to the low levels of morale experienced in the Office.

## **4.5. General**

***11. Other than was mentioned above, what other factor/s affects your morale, either positively or negatively?***

### ***Findings***

Factors mentioned by participants about what else negatively effects their morale includes the lack of strictness by management that used to exist with previous Regional Managers, no communication from management from meetings or about aspects that affect the Office, no direction given by management, the lack of proper management, management's attitude, and, in turn, employees' attitudes towards work and each other, management making promises then not living up to them, the fact that unqualified or



inexperienced people from other provinces are employed in positions when qualified experienced employees are within the Office (resulting in the lack of development/movement of employees within the Office), racist behaviour amongst employees and religious discrimination towards minority religions.

Factors that positively affect morale seemed few and far between; with three quarters of the participants indicating that nothing positively affects their morale. One participant said that the sport within the Office improves his morale. A few more participants listed the friends that they have within the Office as the only positive factor affecting their morale. The remaining participant was recently transferred to another unit and she indicated the fact that she is learning something new is what positively affects her morale.

### ***Interpretation***

The point that becomes evident with the responses to this question is that management within this Office is the major area of concern regarding low morale. Another alarming discovery about the responses is that very few factors actually improve morale. In fact all that was stated that improves morale is sports and friends made within the Office, which has no direct relation to management at all.

The responses to this question highlight the inadequacies of management which appears to be a major cause for low morale within the office.

### ***12. What suggestions do you have to improve staff morale at DPW KRO?***

### ***Findings***

All participants indicated that in order to improve their morale management needs an overhaul in terms of a complete replacement strategy or to improve their management skills by means of training or attitude adjustment. Other suggestions included increasing communication in the Office between management and staff, between managers and between staff themselves; create an environment that is conducive to better working relationships by means of teambuilding exercises; and placing management and staff

correctly according to their level of qualifications and experience. Participants also indicated that they would like to be recognised for the work that they do and to be afforded an opportunity to attend interviews when posts become vacant. The general consensus relayed by the participants is that if management is changed completely or their management skills improved, then all other factors lowering morale will be addressed. When management have the necessary training they will realise the importance of communication and recognition, and would behave in such a manner that conveys its importance to staff, and this in turn will improve their morale.

### ***Interpretation***

Not surprising, considering the responses to all of the above questions, is to find that all participants indicate that in order to improve morale, management needs to change. All other concerns mentioned by participants could have been avoided or can be corrected by having proper management in place, either through training or through a complete overhaul.

***13. Do you have any intention of leaving DPW KRO and is your level of morale, all else being equal, sufficient reason for you to want to leave?***

### ***Findings***

The majority of the participants indicated that they do intend to leave DPW KRO. The two participants who indicated that they have no such intention stated that their age, race and lack of qualifications are against them in this regard. These two participants are white females aged 48 and 49 years old. They are satisfied and grateful for the posts that they currently hold. Of the eighteen participants that indicated yes, thirteen said that their level of low morale is enough reason for them to want to leave. The remaining participants indicated that their level of morale is not sufficient to warrant them to leave the Department. Of these five, two participants stated that although their morale is low, they work with wonderful people and are comfortable in the environment. They also realise that the problems in this Office can easily be fixed, so their level of morale is not sufficient to warrant a desire to leave. The other three of the five indicated that although their morale is low, their personalities won't allow for their level of morale,

caused by DPW KRO, to dictate their future. They therefore also do not consider their level of morale to be sufficient to warrant a desire to leave.

### ***Interpretation***

It appears evident that all participants who are able to find alternative employment have an intention to leave this Office, and are only still here because their attempts to apply for other positions have failed. Of the eighteen, thirteen participants felt that their level of morale alone is sufficient for them to want to leave, which once again alludes to the fact that they have no organisational commitment to this Office.

Tepper (2000) found that individuals who have less job mobility are often more susceptible to the pronounced effects of abusive supervision. Of the eighteen participants who indicated that they have intentions to leave the office, all said that they have been applying for alternative positions, but none of their attempts have been successful. So although they have the qualifications and experience to allow them to be job mobile, the fact that they are not successful in their attempts leads this researcher to believe that in this instance they are considered to not have job mobility. They are therefore more susceptible to the effects of abusive management.

The remaining participants have stated that although their morale is low, they enjoy working with wonderful people and are comfortable in the environment, or their personalities won't allow for their low level of morale to dictate their future. This however doesn't take away from the fact that morale within the Office is still a cause for concern.

## **4.6. Conclusion**

The human and the organisational environments both contribute considerably to the low levels of morale. This appears to be so as the factors contained within these two environments are administered by management, and management within the Office seems to be the major area of concern. This specifically relates to the lack of management and leadership within the Office. This inadequacy means that staff have no confidence in management, which is resultant from them not feeling valued and respected by management, as well as management not being consistent in their

decision-making towards staff. Staff also indicated that they do not feel as though management is interested in their career development, as no assistance is forthcoming with regards to training. Another aspect of management which contributes towards the low level of morale is that management do not offer any form of reward or recognition.

The technical environment contains hygiene factors such as physical work conditions, level of privacy and the availability of resources. The presence of these will not necessarily improve morale, but they will decrease job dissatisfaction.

When developing remedies or recommendations in order to address the causes of low morale, these need to be aimed at the two major contributing environments, namely the human and organisational environments

## Chapter 5

### Recommendations and conclusions

Chapter 4 explained which work environment/s and specifically which factors within each work environment contribute the most to the low level of morale experienced within the DPW KRO. These various factors as well as their causes need management's urgent attention if the low level of morale is to be mitigated or removed.

The primary research objective of this study is:

- To evaluate staff morale in the Department of Public Works, Kimberley Regional Office.

The secondary research objectives of this study include:

1. To explore the major reasons for low staff morale
2. To determine the influence of staff morale on employees at the Department of Public Works, Kimberley Regional Office
3. To identify possible corrective measures to introduce at the Department of Public Works, Kimberley Regional Office

In the final chapter, Chapter 5, the researcher will make recommendations aimed at improving or resolving the major causes of low morale within the two work environments perceived to have the greatest influence on morale (human and organisational environments). The technical environment was identified as consisting of hygiene factors which will only assist in not exasperating job dissatisfaction, but will have no effect on improving morale.

### 5.1 Summary of findings

Within the human environment, the lack of proper management and training opportunities were the main contributors to the low levels of morale. Most of the participants felt that the managers within the office do not possess the proper skills and attributes that effective managers should. The lack of proper management had knock-

on effects related to the lack of training opportunities which they felt was due to managers not being interested in their development.

The technical environment consisted of hygiene factors which participants indicated that it has no effect on improving their morale but rather that it aids in not worsening job dissatisfaction. This said, however, the telephone system was mentioned by all as lowering service delivery, so in this way their morale is decreased.

All three factors within the organisational environment (culture, reward and recognition and the level of turnover) proved to significantly contribute towards low morale within the Office. The concerns regarding the culture were mostly related to the type of structure that exists, which is that of a government office. It is hierarchical, and has the type of leadership associated with that. The majority of participants stated that they have never received reward or recognition for a job well done, and most eluded to the fact that management see them receiving their salaries as reward enough. The level of turnover appears to be high, which lowers the morale in the Office as the majority of employees are concerned about the increased work load created as well as the reasons for staff leaving the office.

## **5.2. Recommendations**

### **5.2.1. Human environment**

There are a few areas of concern regarding the lack of proper management that contribute to this being true, namely communication, lack of confidence in management ability, employees not feeling valued and respected, lack of consistency in management's decision making, management criticising staff and not offering support and guidance, as well as management being perceived as unfair.

#### ***Recommendation 1: Complete removal of current management***

The recommendations regarding the lack of proper management overwhelmingly point to a complete replacement of the current management. This may be considered to be a too drastic and impractical solution, so there is little chance of that occurring. Other

remedies include sending management on management training courses to better equip them with the proper managerial skills and attributes.

***Recommendation 2: Management training to improve communication***

Any training or conscious effort from management's side would have to include improved communication. Communication seems key to what staff desires from management in order to mitigate most, if not all, areas of concern. If proper or more thorough communication takes place between management and staff, staff will feel valued and respected due to management taking the time and effort to explain to staff how and why certain things need or need not be done. Staff will not necessarily agree with management, but at least there will be a level of understanding conducive to proper leader-member exchange. Proper communication might also assist staff in understanding why management's decisions differ, as it was indicated that they are not consistent in this. Along with communication skills, management will understand that communication needs to be supported by positive reinforcement in order for it to be effective, and should not purely be used as a disciplinary measure. Support and guidance need to be forthcoming from management. In this sense communication can be in the form of regular unit meetings, management meetings, committee meetings, staff meetings, one-on-one meetings with employees' direct supervisors, and informal meetings.

***Recommendation 3: Management training to improve fairness***

Another area of concern is fairness. Management needs to learn to separate personal relationships from work relationships, and to do so conduct themselves in a procedurally fair manner for all staff. This will also lead to staff feeling more confident about what is expected from them, as well as what they can expect from management.

***Recommendation 4: Improve training opportunities for staff***

The lack of appropriate training has also been proven to be a major contributor of low morale. Improved or proper communication from management will greatly contribute to the alleviation of this. With communication, staff will be able to confidently and without

prejudice convey their desire to attend certain training, after which management will be able to explain the budgetary constraints and the training plan of the year. So in consultation with each other this plan can either be amended, or the employee will be able to at least gain understanding into why certain training can or cannot take place. This way the budget could be better utilised and the productivity of the Office improved through improved skills.

### **5.2.2. Organisational environment**

The inherent bureaucratic culture that exists within the Office is due to the nature of the organisation, which is a government department. Little can be done to correct this short of redesigning and restructuring the Department. However it was inferred from the participants that the bureaucratic culture was exacerbated by management's lack of ability to properly communicate.

#### ***Recommendation 5: Mediate the effects of a bureaucratic culture by improving communication***

Improved communication as stated in the human environment will also relieve the organisational environment's factor of bureaucratic culture, and will enhance morale.

#### ***Recommendation 6: Initiate reward and recognition programs***

Lack of recognition by management might not necessarily be a lack of recognition *per se*, but rather a lack in communicating the recognition of staff due to the limited number of meetings taking place. Once management improves communication with staff, they too will have a better understanding of what exactly it is that staff are doing correctly or incorrectly. If they identify positive behaviour then a simple "thank you" will suffice (as indicated by all participants), and if they identify negative behaviour this might confirm the need for additional training. If communication is improved and increased, as stated in the human environment, DPW KRO could implement an 'employee of the month' program where this will be announced at a monthly staff meeting, for example. This will boost staff confidence in themselves as well as in management, which will ultimately improve morale.



### ***Recommendation 7: Mitigate the effects and occurrence of employee turnover***

Once again, if communication was improved, the level of turnover might significantly be reduced. As indicated above, communication will improve staff morale through the various factors indicated. Once morale is improved, it implies that the level of turnover will also be reduced. It appears that a decreased level of turnover will have a knock-on effect. Where previously staff questioned the reasons for others leaving became aware of their own unhappiness in the Office, they will now question the reasons for other staff staying, and realising their own happiness within the Office.

### ***Recommendation 8: Enable the viability of internal staff to meet the requirements of advertised positions***

Another area of concern is that most participants feel that management is not interested in their development, so employees will never be in a position to get a higher post, and the trend of only employing external candidates will continue. Management should make a conscious effort to ensure that suitable internal candidates (specifically employees who are already doing the work required by that position) are in a position to apply for higher posts by either lowering the minimum requirements or providing suitable training..

### **5.3. Limitations of the study**

This qualitative study was conducted in the Kimberley Regional Office of the Department of Public Works. It is therefore intrinsically limited by the limitations of the qualitative paradigm. It might therefore be difficult to generalise this information as the dynamics might differ in other Regional Offices within the DPW, as well as in other government Departments.

The same interview questions were posed to participants at management level. Most participants identified management as the root cause of low morale. In retrospect the researcher should have posed different questions to management, primarily focused on whether they recognise their inadequacies and if they have any intention to correct them in the light of the low morale.

The sample size was relatively small (20 participants). This is not uncommon for a qualitative study where the focus is on collecting comprehensive data which reveals the views and experiences of the participants.

It has been proven that high employee morale is greatly beneficial to any organisation. An organisation which suffers from low morale will not succeed nor thrive. It is therefore of critical importance that organisations are firstly able to identify low morale with the aim of finding possible solutions in order to lessen its detrimental effects. Secondly they need to implement changes where necessary to avoid the occurrence of low morale as far as possible.

From this study it is evident that five factors throughout the three working environments negatively affect staff morale within DPW KRO. Most of these factors are inherent to large organisations, especially government departments, such as a lack of appropriate training, bureaucratic culture and the rate of turnover. It is evident from the study that the human environment has the greatest impact on the level of morale within the Office. The technical environment proved to be of least importance due to it consisting mostly of hygiene factors. The overall morale of employees is too low to be sustainable and will most likely result in employee burnout and a sharp decrease in productivity if not corrected.

In conclusion this study emphasises the importance of communication in an organisation. As indicated above, improved communication is the recommendation for almost all factors that contribute to the low levels of morale. Without it, an organisation will experience its negative consequences and lead to an office filled with gossip, backstabbing, unreasonable increases in absenteeism, insubordination and reduced performance.

The researcher achieved the objectives of the study in identifying the reasons for low morale in DPW KRO. The five major reasons for low morale have been identified as the following:

1. Lack of proper management
2. Lack of appropriate training
3. The presence of a bureaucratic culture

4. Lack of recognition by management
5. The high rate of turnover

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

The literature review served as the conceptual framework for the study which assisted with the empirical investigation as well as supporting the recommendations given.

Although this study was conducted only in the KRO, the researcher has an inclination that the situation is very similar in other regions. Future research could include conducting this study throughout the Department, in all eleven Regional Offices, as well as in Head Office. The situation might be endemic to the entire Department. Considering that each Office only has limited authority, the Director General could institute any changes required if the study was conducted throughout the entire Department,.

The recommendations signify the importance of appropriate communication. Only one of the recommendations involves spending money (on the training of management). None of the other recommendations have costs associated with them, and the implementation of the recommendations would only involve small changes in managers' behaviour, such as improving communication, recognising staff for a job well done, etc. These small changes could produce immense improvements in morale.

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## Appendix A

# STAFF MORALE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, KIMBERLEY REGIONAL OFFICE

## Questionnaire

### Biographic

- a) Age?
- b) Years of Service within DPW KRO?
- c) Gender?
- d) Race?
- e) Salary level?
- f) Highest level of qualification obtained?
- g) Are you the breadwinner in your home?
- h) What are your reasons for staying with DPW KRO?
- i) How would you gauge your level of morale currently?  
1: Very Low Morale, 2: Low Morale, 3: High Morale, 4: Vey High Morale

### Human Environment

1. How dedicated/loyal are you to DPW KRO?
2. How does the fact that DPW KRO offers job security (that is inherent to working for the government) affect your morale?
3. How does management/leadership within the office affect your morale? What changes would you expect in order for your morale to improve?
4. How do the training opportunities offered to you affect your morale?

### Technical Environment

5. How do the physical work conditions of DPW KRO affect your morale? What changes if any would you like to see in order to improve your morale?
6. How does the level of physical privacy offered by DPW KRO affect your morale?
7. How do the resources at your disposal i.e. cars, cellphones, laptops, stationery etc. (in order to perform your job) affect your morale?

### Organisational Environment

8. What type of culture would you say exists within DPW KRO, how does this culture affect your morale?
9. Do you feel as though you are rewarded and recognised for a job well done? If you were, would this improve your morale?
10. How does the level of turnover with DPW KRO affect your morale?



## General

11. Other than what was mentioned above, what other factor/s affects your morale, either positively or negatively?
12. What suggestions do you have to improve staff morale at DPW KRO