

Full Length Research Paper

Dysfunctional psychological aspects of working in a fast food industry

Nnenna E. Ukandu¹ and Wilfred I. Ukpere^{2*}

¹Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Business, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa.

²University of Johannesburg, Department of Industrial Psychology & People Management, Faculty of Management, Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa.

Accepted 3 November, 2011

The management within fast food industry has the ability to make their employees' jobs equal, either enjoyable and rewarding or miserable and boring. Employees are the striking force of an organization, and without them, the organization cannot not function. Therefore, giving employees some forms of autonomy and offering them challenging work can enhance their levels of motivation and satisfaction. Conversely, workers can portray a good mood, emotion and morale if there is positive feedback, good communication and supervision. A case study approach was employed, since the study covered only the fast food industry. Semi-structured interview was utilised to obtain information from senior and store managers, while closed-ended questionnaires were distributed to the rest of the staff members. This research focused on fast food workers that have at least six (6) months of experience to enable the researcher to obtain a valid result. This paper offers managements at fast food outlets in Cape Town insight into how to deal with the psychological problems that (their) employees face, and to prevent potential dangers that these problems are associated with in terms of workers.

Keywords: Stress, emotions, mood, anxiety, depression, morale.

INTRODUCTION

Studies concerning dysfunctional psychological aspects of fast food workers in Cape Town have been unclear. This could be as a result of inconsistency relating to various behaviours of employees in different organizations. However, fast food outlets in Cape Town desire good performance. This can be done by implementing policies that could support the motivation of employees. There is a saying that, 'a happy worker is equally a good performer'. Hence, it is imperative for managers of fast food outlets in Cape Town to identify those dysfunctional psychological aspects of their workers in order to stimulate higher performance amongst employees, whilst accomplishing organizational and individual goals. The way people feel in their workplace has a profound effect on their cognitive processes such as how to judge situations, decision-

making and behaviour. There is a need to innovate ways of solving the negative psychological problems of employees within the fast food outlets, in order to enable the industry to achieve its overall objectives.

Research problems

There are certain dysfunctional psychological aspects that affect the motivation, moral, performance and status of fast food employees in Cape Town, which has become the focus of this study.

Research questions

The research problem led to the following research questions:

(1) What are the dysfunctional psychological aspects

Corresponding author. E-mail: wilfredukpere@gmail.com.

of working in a fast food outlets in Cape Town?

(2) What are the impacts of the dysfunctional psychological aspects on employees' performance within the fast food outlets?

(3) What are the possible ways to overcome the problems of the above dysfunctional psychological aspects?

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To establish the dysfunctional psychological aspects of working in a fast food outlets in Cape Town.
2. To examine the impacts of the dysfunctional psychological aspects on employees' performance.
3. To propose ways that could generate positive behaviour amongst workers in the fast food outlets, in order to overcome the dysfunctional psychological aspects of working in the industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employees sometimes experience stress at work or outside their work environment, which impact on their job performance (Alam et al., 2010). This has a negative consequence on their physical, behavioural and psychological state of being. Behavioural consequences include overreacting, undernourishment, drowsiness, smoking, drinking and aggression (Cartwright and Cooper, 1997). Physical and consequences include headaches, migraine, hypertension and heart disease; while psychological consequences include feelings of helplessness, mood changes, anger, anxiety, worry, and depression (Cartwright and Cooper, 1997; Luthans, 2002; Quick et al., 1997). These psychological aspects are discussed subsequently as they affect fast food employees' levels of motivation.

Anxiety

Anxiety can be defined as a reaction to anticipated harm, whether it be physical or psychological such as loss of self esteem or loss of status (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman, 2007). It is also a feeling of not having appropriate responses or plans to deal with anticipated harm.

Job-related anxiety means that there are some functions in the workplace that negatively affect workers such as work conditions, tasks and demands, and/or related occupational stressors (Beaton, 2010). In addition, an overwhelming workload, the pace of work, deadlines and a perceived lack of personal control lead to employee anxiety. Workers, who are employed in a dangerous line of work, are likely to experience high risks of stress and anxiety. For example, law enforcement

agents and fire-fighters, who are more exposed to hazardous and more injurious activities (Beaton, 2010).

When somebody says that he/she is experiencing anxiety, it simply implies to having a sense of dread, foreboding and apprehension that grows within them and darkens their outlook on things, in general. "Threat of anxiety is vague, and the potential danger is unstructured or ambiguous" (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman, 2007). Exforsys Inc. (2000) maintains that the causes of work anxiety within the working environment include the nature of the job and the work environment, organizational roles, career development and relationships with co-workers.

A fast food worker may develop anxiety if the workload is too heavy or too light for the person to handle. Also, when he/she does not contribute to decision making in the area of work, anxiety may surface especially when there is a system that instructs the worker on how to do the job. This is the case in fast food employment within Cape Town and South Africa, as a whole. According to Leidner (2009), fast food work is highly routinised and involves long hours. Employees' office location is another factor that can cause anxiety and stress. In some cases, a worker may have more than two supervisors, which imply that he/she has double tasks to perform. Role ambiguity, unclear delegation of work and not setting proper work expectations contribute to work anxiety, which is peculiar to most fast food outlets. In addition, lack of career opportunities can decrease employee motivation, especially in the fast food industry, where job losses and retrenchments are high. Poor performance evaluation, poor compensation and poor performance recognition are other factors that may cause work anxiety in the fast food industry. Furthermore, relationships with other workers can also cause anxiety (Grigoryan, 2010). A fast food worker that has a difficult boss or co-worker might be demoralized in terms of performing his/her job (English, 2010). Office threats, harassment and bullying could lead to work anxiety.

Other causes of work anxiety have been listed by Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2007). These include differences in the power relationship in the fast food industry within the Cape Town municipal council, which leave employees with a feeling of vulnerability to administrative decisions; frequent changes in organizations, which make existing behaviour plans obsolete, in addition to work competition, which creates the inevitability that some persons lose face, esteem and status, which can lead to depression.

Depression

This is the normal range of human experience, which often results in frustration and disappointment (Vogel, 2006). These include common life events such as significant personal, interpersonal, or economic losses (Butcher, 2004). Fast food workers experience feelings of

sadness, discouragement, pessimism, and hopelessness as a result of job stress and depression. Normal depression is caused by stress such as the loss of a loved one, loss of a favoured status or position, separation or divorce, financial loss and others (Butcher, 2004), which impact on the emotions of an employee. Fast-food employees may experience depression on the bases of loss of favour status or position in society due to the nature of work. Workers within this sector may also experience depression owing to financial constraint due to the meagre pay to workers within the fast food industrial set up.

Emotions

Emotions are intense feelings that are directed at someone or something (Robbins et al., 2007). Emotions can be experienced in three different ways, namely when you are happy with someone, angry at someone or afraid of someone. It is the complex combination of feelings and moods that involves subtle psychological reactions and is expressed by displaying characteristic patterns of behaviour (Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman, 2007).

Gaining increasing importance in the fast food industry is a term called emotional labour. Employees expend on physical and mental energy when they put their bodies and their cognitive capabilities into their jobs (Robbins et al., 2007). Emotional labour can also be experienced when an employee displays a particular emotional state as a part of their job (Ashkanasy et al., 2002).

Emotions contribute to the structure of the fast food industry. They use emotions to motivate their employees to perform (Zeus and Skiffington, 2008). Many activities in the fast food industry in Cape Town involve emotions and also have a tendency to affect a worker's sense of satisfaction. An instance is a case where the management of the fast food outlet expects an employee to perform the duties of two or more people that have quit and have not been replaced (Inglis, 2010). Rules have been established to control emotions in the fast food industry, and these rules serve as an organizing force in regulating them, and are also used to create their organizational structure and shape employees' behaviour (Inglis, 2010).

Emotions can be manifested in two ways, namely, by way of negative and positive emotions. Positive emotions can manifest in the form of happiness, while negative emotions manifest in the form of anger (Robbins et al., 2007). Negative emotions result in a limited search for new jobs and less vigilant use of information, while positive emotions increase the problem of solving and facilitating the integration of information. Negative emotions can also cause deviant workplace behaviours. Examples include leaving early, intentionally working slowly, sabotage, stealing, gossiping amongst co-workers and verbal abuse (Robbins et al., 2007). Emotional labour can cause emotional exhaustion and burnout. It

can lead employees to serious disorders such as hypertension and cancer. Furthermore, it can lead to restlessness and fatigue (Ashkanasy and Daus, 1993), which is endemic within the fast food industry, and have negative effects on morale.

Morale

Morale is defined as a feeling, a state of mind, a mental attitude and an emotional attitude (Mendel, 1987 cited in Lumsden, 2001). Morale is the feeling that a worker has about his/her job based on how the worker perceives himself in the organization, and also the extent to which the organization is viewed as meeting the worker's own needs and expectations (Washington and Watson, 1976 cited in Lumsden, 2001). Morale is the behaviour of employees who want to belong to the organization and who are happy with their organization (O'Connor, 2006). The truth is that there are basic organizational problems, which create both low productivity and low morale (O'Connor, 2006). These problems include employees' lack of certainty about their jobs; and failure of employees to buy into the mission statement and goals of the organisation. A survey conducted at some fast food outlets in Cape Town showed that the fast food industry is undergoing downsizing, job outsourcing, decreasing profits, increasing corporate competition and mergers. As a result, employees continue to search for new jobs. Other problems may emerge, which are not motivational problems. Motivation is the willingness of employees to work. Morale is a collective and systematic phenomenon, which cannot be increased through training or motivation. Morale is not the same as job satisfaction, but it is a collective counterpart of job satisfaction. Organizational morale is high only when the individual employee's morale is high.

Ranganayakulu (2005) states that several authors have attempted to define morale. Morale is the attitude of an employee or a group, which determines their willingness to cooperate. It is viewed as the sum of several psychic qualities, which include courage, fortitude, resolution and above all confidence. Furthermore, morale is a state of mind and emotions, which affect attitude and willingness to work, which in turn, affect individual and organizational objectives. Morale is the capacity of people to pull together persistently and consistently in the pursuit of a common purpose. Lastly, it refers to the overall tone, climate or atmosphere of work sensed by the members. It is the readiness to cooperate warmly in the tasks and purposes of a given organization. There is good and bad morale. Morale is the fuel that drives an organization forward or the fuel that feeds the fires of employee discontent, poor performance, and absenteeism (Ewton, 2007). Morale can also be high or low depending on the circumstances.

An unchallenging work environment with little or no opportunities for professional growth and advancement

Table 1: Mood and Emotions.

MOOD	EMOTIONS
These are long-term emotions seen in people such as pessimism, optimism, anxiety and resentment	These are responses to specific events
They have a major bearing on a person's emotional response to what is happening around them	Emotional skills create a positive and productive result in the organization

Source: Zeus and Skiffington (2008).

often leads to low employee morale (Fink, 2010). This can be said of the fast food employment. In addition, poor communication, lack of empowerment, lack of energizing staff, distrust of management, poor interpersonal relations and inflexible working conditions can contribute to low morale (Dye and Garman, 2006). Furthermore, workplace situations that can lead to low morale include departmental layoffs or closures, labour negotiations and contract disputes, high employee turnover rates, changes in leadership, and unclear expectations and corporate direction (Fink, 2010).

According to Terry (2009), some causes of low employee morale in the fast food industry include poor leadership, which can manifest itself through bullying employees; heavy workloads, which lead to loss of jobs and work related stress, which also increases the attrition rate. It is assumed that some employees in the fast food industry usually display signs such as increased absenteeism, conflict with co-workers, insubordination, decreased productivity and disorganized and untidy work environments when their morale is low (Fink, 2010).

Emotion and mood have been distinguished in Table 1.

Mood

Moods are generalized feelings or states that are not typically identified with a particular stimulus and sufficiently intense to interrupt ongoing thought processes (Brief and Weiss, 2002). Mood influences how and what employees think (Forgas and George, 2001). It is also a feeling that tends to be less intense than emotions, and which lack a contextual stimulus (Robbins et al., 2007). Mood underpins a person's morale, desire for improvement, commitment to the process of change, their ability to problem-solving and their creative and innovative thinking (Zeus and Skiffington, 2008).

Some fast food staff members have reported that tiredness and negative moods associated with long working hours has a negative impact on their relationships at home. They further states that their working hours ranged from zero to 73 h/week. Moreover, not only do they work long hours, but their work is on daily and weekly basis, which is very intensive (Bohle et al., 2004). Significantly, studies have proved that some fast food staff members do not have control over their work hours, which results in greater work-life conflict, and

in turn, leads to poor health in terms of fatigue, physical ailments and psychological problems. Evidence shows that work-life conflict arising from long or socially undesirable working hours affects their health and safety (Bohle, 2004).

Indeed, as stated earlier, fast food managers have the ability to make their employees' job enjoyable and rewarding or miserable and boring. Giving employees autonomy and offering them challenging work can enhance their level of motivation and satisfaction (Bolchover, 2008). The workers, on the other hand, can portray a better mood if there is positive feedback. Timothy Judge of the University of Florida, cited in Bolchover (2008), summarized his research on the effects of managerial feedback on mood, and states that 'positive performance feedback enhances motivation'.

Stress

Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand relating to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important (Robbins et al., 2007). It is also the pattern of emotional states, cognitions, and physiological reactions occurring in response to external demands. Job stress is a big concern among fast food workers in South Africa. The causes of this can include domestic and foreign competition, lay-offs and merger activities, technological changes, tension among diverse groups of employees, and increased demand for higher quality products and services (Grobler et al., 2005). Some fast food outlets in South Africa have the interest of reducing the stress levels of their employees, while others do not bother about that. High job stress levels can result in low productivity, increased absenteeism and employee turnover. In addition, it can lead to employee alcoholism, drug abuse, hypertension and cardiovascular problems (Grobler et al., 2006).

Work-related stress is the response that workers have when faced with challenges in their workplace such as work demands and pressures that do not match their knowledge and abilities (Leka et al., 2003). This can be seen in the fast food industry, as corroborated by various researches. Workloads and intense work hours practiced

is endemic in the fast food industry in South Africa.

Stress can be caused by pressure at the workplace (Grobler, 2005). Fast food jobs can lead to high stress level, because of the nature of the work. Employees find it difficult to cope with job stress, and this is the more reason why they are always looking for other opportunities (Greenberg and Baron, 1997). Another aspect relating to job stress, is poor employee compensation. For example, in the South African Police Services, employees retire early due to poor compensation, while in fast food outlets employees resign early for similar reason. In addition, work-related stress can be caused by poor work organization (the way jobs are designed in the organization), the work system and the way an organization is managed (Leka et al., 2003). Poor management and unsatisfactory working conditions without enough support from colleagues within the organization can also result to work stress (Leka et al., 2003).

According to Leka et al. (2003), work stress can lead to increased distress, irritability, lack of concentration, difficulty to think logically in terms of decision making, apathy towards work, lack of commitment towards the organisation and work, fatigue, depression, dizziness and anxiety. Conversely, stress affects the organization in several ways, such as increases absenteeism amongst employees, decreases commitment of workers, increases staff turnover, impairs productivity and performance and could damage the organization's image both internally and externally.

Negative effects of psychological problems on fast food workers

In the fast food industry, employee emotional labour have led to job tensions and stress, job dissatisfaction, poor quality service and negative customer relations (Shuler and Sypher, 2000; Grandey, 2000; Morris and Feldman, 1996; Ashford and Humphrey, 1993).

There are different factors that contribute to psychological problems (stress, anxiety, low morale, poor emotions, depression and bad mood) faced by fast food employees in their workplace, which include concerns about how they feel about their job, the degree of satisfaction with the organization they work for, the value that the organisation places on them and growth patterns in the organisation (Michailids and E-ali Elwkai, 2003). Fast food managers have complained that, the way employees behave has to do with their ambitions and personality type. These also affect their work responsibility, assertiveness and short and long term planning. Moreover, workers also experience stress and pressure in their job tasks/demands (Michailids and E-ali Elwkai, 2003).

Another factor, which contributes to negative stress amongst fast food employees, is pressure from their job. In a study conducted within the fast food industry, it

appears that female workers experience negative stress in the organisational climate such as risks, variety, changing tasks, an inability to delegate and conflicting job tasks. Their male counterparts are affected mostly by work-home interference (absence of stability at home – not being able to switch off at home).

Low employee morale tears an organisation apart and reduces its productivity and profitability (Ogletree, 2009). Low employee morale in the fast food industry is caused by poor fitness of workers, the organisation's culture, inadequate employee training, non-competitive compensation and inadequate organizational practices such as recognition, performance evaluations and vacation/leave policies (Brannick Human Resource Connections, 2006). It has been mentioned previously that fast food employees are not well remunerated, recognised and do not have enough holidays, which impacts on morale, with adverse effects on their job performance.

The employees perceive their work environment as a hostile, from the angle that they are treated as machines because of overtime and routinized work. This type of environment contributes to low employee morale (Ogletree, 2009). Employees are forced to sabotage the organization's mission when they have low morale. There is a need to motivate fast food employees by using intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to enable them to perform exceptionally. If they are not comfortable in their workplace, there will definitely be low morale and demotivation (Ogletree, 2009).

Despite inadequacies within the fast food industry, the industry continues to expand in other foreign countries. Schlosser (2001) describes the growth of the fast food industry as being driven by fundamental changes in society. In his research on the global expansion of the fast food industry, he found that in Australia the number of fast food outlets tripled during the 1990s. In addition, the expansion has extended to Beijing and Germany.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: SAMPLE AND RESEARCH PROCESS

A case study approach was utilised in this research because it was dealing with a specific industry, namely, the fast food outlets in Cape Town. The research relied on both the qualitative and quantitative methods, which is popularly known as Triangulation. The research intends to identify the impact of dysfunctional psychological aspects on fast food workers. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed and only 123 employees responded and this was used for the analysis. Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted with few staff members and managers of the fast food industry from different outlets, and corrections were made before distributing it to the other respondents. This measure was undertaken to ensure reliability and validity. Also, open-ended, semi-structured interview questions were administered face-to-face to the senior and store managers, while a closed-ended questionnaire was distributed to the other staff members. This is to know their opinion with regards to the psychological aspect of their workplace and how they have been affected. As mentioned previously, the total population sampled was 200. The selected sample composed of all the staff that has at least six (6) months

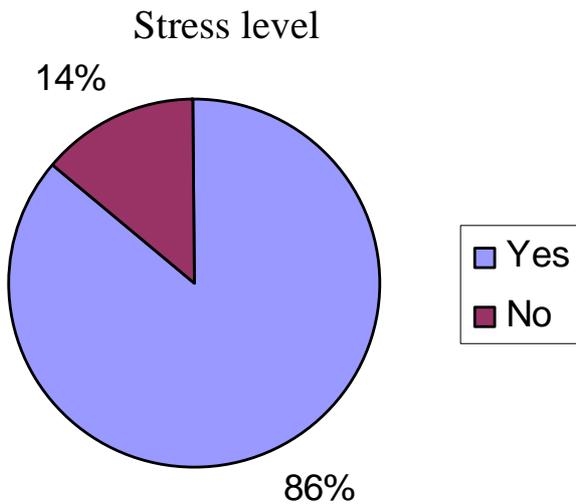


Figure 1. Pie Chart of employee stress levels (n= 123).

of work experience. This was done to enable the researcher to obtain valid and reliable information. A report was made from the information obtained from the interviewees on their psychological state based on how they have been affected by the working environment. A high ethical standard was maintained as far as the information is concerned.

Data analysis

To ascertain the psychological states of the fast food workers, the researcher posed some questions and statements. In analysing the data obtained, content analysis was used. Information from other sources was also incorporated into the analysis for validity and reliability. The responses received from the respondents are subsequently discussed.

Figure 1 shows that 86.2% of respondents agreed that they experienced stress related to their work. This reason the respondents gave was as a result of too much work and high pressure with less pay. Table 2 showed responses that were provided by the interviewees. These include the following main reasons: getting less money and more work; they do not feel free at work because of their employers; having less sleep; long hours of work; lots of work; too much pressure at work; no holidays; no time to rest; no feelings of welcome at work because of employers; overworked; too little money; too much overtime; too much pressure at work; colleagues are not helpful and make you feel that you are working alone; the staff's unfriendliness; till shortages, and hence monies are deducted from workers' salaries; too much work for little salary; there is no money for over-time; workers do not have a say in decision making; and employers make all the decisions for workers. Other staff members stated that they experience bad moods, emotions and stress when they receive an unexpected salary, or have an overload of work. In addition, they noted that a lack of communication amongst workers was one of their major problems. The reasons why fast food workers in Cape Town experience stress are listed previously. This provides solid proof that the workers are stressed and this has affected their work negatively. Though lunch breaks are provided for them, these are not enough for the hours worked. The staff members also mentioned that they had less sleep, which could be as a result of extensive overtime work.

How do you view the moods, emotions and morale of your employees? Please explain briefly

One of the fast food managers interviewed stated that since most of his employees are all Christian, they believe in taking things one day at a time. Another said that in most times employees are moody and their morale low. The managers added that the staff age ranges mainly between 18 to 25 years which means that they are still trying to find their fits and positions. They further commented that some of the staff do not have much to care about and do not think much of their future; instead, they are comfortable in their positions. Another manager stated that staff moods, emotions and morale differ, since they come from different background and cultures. Lastly, an interviewee noted that every one of the employees becomes moody at one time or another, but they learn to control it because they are in the workplace. In addition, employees' moods, emotions and morale are sometimes low, but they advise them to change it for the sake of their customers. The above is a testimony that most workers at the fast food outlets in Cape Town exhibit some level of negative moods and emotions, which adversely impact on morale in the workplace.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis, it has been established that the fast food workers exhibit some level of negative mood, emotion and morale. In addition, they are overstressed in the workplace. Findings from the interviews conducted revealed that these negative psychological aspects affect the level of motivation of fast food worker within the workplace. Also, when they are passing through stress, they tend to exhibit unhappiness. No wonder some workers in the industry are sometimes aggressive and unfriendly towards their customers. The interviewees revealed that stress was a major problem in the workplace. They further identified areas in which they have experienced additional stress. They noted that they have less sleep, their working hours were long, they do not have enough time to rest and moreover, they are overworked. The interviewees also revealed that they get less money for more work. Other interviewees noted that they are stressed when they receive unexpected salary. Some managers explained that the staff moods, emotions and morale differ, since they come from different background and cultures. They added that the workers sometimes have negative mood, emotions and low morale, most especially when a staff or customer insults them. However, other managers noted that since the employees' moods, emotions and morale are sometimes low, they have advised them to change it for the sake of their customers. Therefore, it is can be deduced that most fast food workers in Cape Town display some negative psychological aspects of their character. This could be as a result of external demands such as an increased demand for high quality products and services by the management and supervisors. Literature revealed that most fast food workers in Cape Town are faced with challenges in their workplaces, which has to do with demands and pressures that is not commensurate with their knowledge and abilities. Hence,

Table 2. Stress experience.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	37	30.1	30.1	30.1
As a cashier, I was always having shortage of money which leads to deduction from my salary	1	0.8	0.8	30.9
Because I love my job	1	0.8	0.8	31.7
Because of my employer	1	0.8	0.8	32.5
Because of my salary	1	0.8	0.8	33.3
Because sometimes customers make my work difficult	1	0.8	0.8	34.1
Because the people I work with are not co-operative and customers cause trouble	1	0.8	0.8	35.0
Because there are too many hours and a small wage	1	0.8	0.8	35.8
Break is not long enough	1	0.8	0.8	36.6
Because I always work at my best when I am at work	1	0.8	0.8	37.4
Combining work with my studies makes me sick	1	0.8	0.8	38.2
Customers who don't understand what they want and are not open to suggestions	1	0.8	0.8	39.0
Customers cause trouble	1	0.8	0.8	39.8
Getting less money and more work	1	0.8	0.8	40.7
It is because there is discrimination	1	0.8	0.8	41.5
Because I work with people	1	0.8	0.8	42.3
I am a hard worker and am not overloaded at work	1	0.8	0.8	43.1
I do not feel free at work because of my employer	1	0.8	0.8	43.9
Less money more work	1	0.8	0.8	44.7
Less sleep	3	2.4	2.4	47.2
Long hours of work	2	1.6	1.6	48.8
Lots of work	1	0.8	0.8	49.6
Lots of work and little money	2	1.6	1.6	51.2
Money and too much pressure	1	0.8	0.8	52.0
Money is not enough	1	0.8	0.8	52.8
Management is strict with work and they want us to be punctual	1	0.8	0.8	53.7
Needs better pay	1	0.8	0.8	54.5
New challenges	1	0.8	0.8	55.3
No holiday	1	0.8	0.8	56.1
No money	1	0.8	0.8	56.9
No reason	1	0.8	0.8	57.7
No time to rest	1	0.8	0.8	58.5
Do not feel welcome at work because of employers	1	0.8	0.8	59.3
Overworked	5	4.1	4.1	63.4
Pay is not enough	1	0.8	0.8	64.2
Little money and too much over-time	1	0.8	0.8	65.0
Little money and too much pressure	1	0.8	0.8	65.9
Little money and too much work	1	0.8	0.8	66.7
Sometimes staff, but most of the time it is the customers	1	0.8	0.8	67.5
Sometimes staff, but most times it is customers	2	10.6	10.6	69.1
Sometimes customers, but most of the time it is staff	1	0.8	0.8	69.9
Sometimes it is the workload	1	0.8	0.8	70.7
Sometimes you serve rude customers who are stubborn	1	0.8	0.8	71.5
Staff and supervisors are lazy and playful	1	0.8	0.8	72.4
Colleagues do not co-operate and you feel that you are working alone	1	0.8	0.8	73.2
Customers frustrate me	1	0.8	0.8	74.0
Customers are rude	1	0.8	0.8	74.8

Table 2. Contd.

Customers stress me	1	0.8	0.8	75.6
Managers are too abusive	1	0.8	0.8	76.4
The reason	1	0.8	0.8	77.2
Staff's unfriendliness stress me	1	0.8	0.8	78.0
There is a lot of work and too little pay	1	0.8	0.8	78.9
There are no holidays	1	0.8	0.8	79.7
Till shortages	2	1.6	1.6	81.3
Time is too little	1	0.8	0.8	82.1
Too much over-time work	2	1.6	1.6	83.7
Too much pressure and little money	3	2.4	2.4	86.2
Too much work	2	1.6	1.6	87.8
Too much work	5	4.1	4.1	91.9
Too much work for less money, there is no money for over-time	1	0.8	0.8	92.7
Heavy workload	2	1.6	1.6	94.3
We do not have a say in decision making; management makes all the decisions for us	1	0.8	0.8	95.1
When I receive unexpected salary	1	0.8	0.8	95.9
When there is a lack of communication between myself and other employees	1	0.8	0.8	96.7
When time is limited or something goes wrong in the workplace	1	0.8	0.8	97.6
Work overload	3	2.4	2.4	100.0
Total	123	100.0	100.0	

(n= 123)

workloads and intense work hours is a major problem within the fast food industry in Cape Town.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher encountered some delays during the data collection process as a result of the schedules of the respondents' business. Fast food outlets are usually busy, and so respondents were limited in terms of time. Also, the researcher took time to explain the questionnaires to each staff member, as most of the staff members were not properly educated, and therefore, could not read or write as well. Some staff members were sick at work and could not read. Therefore, the researcher had to read and explain the questionnaire to them. Besides, some store managers and franchisees were difficult to approach, as one of them refused to respond to the interview questions. The researcher was also obstructed from obtaining information from some outlets, while other store managers warned us before-hand not to bring questions from certain areas of study. Moreover, some of the fast food outlets did not grant permission to conduct the research on their outlets. In addition, some workers did not respond to the questions, which resulted in some missing negligible data, which did not however, affect the results.

From the on-going study, the authors are of the view

that future research would assist managements of the fast food outlets in Cape Town, in terms of making effective decision that could positively enhance the psychological well-being of their workers in order to obtain their full commitment towards the achievement of the organizational goals. In future, a detailed empirical study should be conducted on ways to improve the psychological states of fast food workers, in order to minimise the said psychological problems within the industry. Also, an investigation should be conducted to assess the position of fast food management in terms of increasing the quality of work life (QWL) of fast food employees.

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the causes of employee stress, low morale, bad mood, anxiety, depression, to mention a few, within the fast food outlets should be thoroughly assessed, in order to foster a harmonious working environment for the employees within the industry. Furthermore, work demand and pressures faced by the fast food workers, which are not commensurate with their knowledge, skills and ability, should as much as possible be avoided. Having established the dysfunctional psychological aspects of working in a fast food industry, some few recommendations have been charted

out to improve the current state of affairs.

A harmonious working environment should be promoted for fast food employees

It is the responsibility of managers to foster a harmonious working environment for workers. They should learn to trust their employees and establish a strong relationship with them. Employees prefer to be treated equally without favouritism. Therefore, treating them equally will go a long way towards improving harmony and levels of motivation at work. Fast food managers should learn to lead by example and ensure that double standards are not created at work. They should always respect their employees and treat them fairly.

It was also noted that some fast food workers experience some psychological problems because of the poor working conditions in their workplace such as stress, bad moods, low morale and anxiety disorders. It is important for the management of the fast food outlets to look into the causes of these problems, and perhaps appoint someone to whom workers can speak to when facing any psychological problem, as this will give workers some level of job satisfaction and motivation. The managers should be encouraged to have a friendly attitude towards their workers and to show concern when they approach them with their problems. Management should not make decisions that will negatively impact on their employees' status at work. Poor performers should be corrected in private, and not in public.

Quality of work life of fast food employees should be improved

The quality of employees' work-life should be improved to increase employee motivation. This research has shown that most fast food employees experience an abusive working relationship, poor working conditions, low wages, long working hours and less participation in the organisation's decision making; this has led to low motivation. It will be valued if managements at fast food outlets can monitor the quality of employees' work life in order to address problems that confront workers. These problems might be reduced by displaying confidence in the abilities of their employees and treating them with respect. Managements at fast food outlets should introduce different ways to improve employees' quality of work life including providing a relaxed dress code, exercise (gym) facilities to reduce stress, having open communication with workers, introducing mentoring programs, and fostering a better relationship among workers. Flexitime or flexible work hours should be offered to fast food employees. However, there should be a specified time for them, but they should not be mandated on the start and end time. Again flexible work schedules should be provided such as working for 5 days

a week. Flexible work time and a flexible work schedule can help to reduce employee stress and illness, which will lead to a favourable and comfortable work environment for employees within the industry.

REFERENCES

- Alam GM, Hoque KE, Ismail L, Mishra PK (2010). Do Developing Countries Need Education Laws To Manage Its System Or Are Ethics And A Market-Driven Approach Sufficient? *Afr. J. Bus. Manage.*, 4(15): 3406-3416
- Ashford B, Humphrey R (1993). Emotional labor in service roles: The influence of identity. *Acad. Manage. Rev.*, 18: 88-115.
- Ashkanasy NM, Daus CS (1993). Emotion in the workplace: The new Challenge for Managers. *Acad. Manage. Exec.*, 16(1): 76-86.
- Ashkanasy NM, Zerbe WJ, Hartel CEJ (2002). *Managing Emotions in the Workplace*. New York: Armonk.
- Beaton RD (2010). Work-related Anxiety. (Online) Available http://www.ilo.org/safework_bookshelf/english?content&nd=857170048 [15 March 2010].
- Bohle P, Quinlan M, Kennedy D, Williamson A (2004). Working hours, Work-life Conflict and health in precarious and permanent employment. *Revista de Saude Publica*. Vol. 38. Supplementary.
- Bolchover D (2008). Why Mood Matters. *Management Today* (UK), p. 46.
- Brannick Human Resource Connections (2006). Decreasing the Staggering costs of Turnover in your Organization. (Online) available: http://www.brannickhr.com/decreasing%20staggering_costs.html [22 March 2010].
- Brief AP, Weiss HM (2002). Organizational Behaviour: Affect in the workplace. *Annual Rev. Psychol.*, 53: 279-307.
- Butcher JN, Mineka S, Hooley JM (2004). *Abnormal Psychology*. (12th ed.) New York: Pearson Education.
- Cartwright S, Cooper CL (1997). *Managing Workplace Stress*. Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data. California: Sage Publication.
- Dye C, Garman A (2006). *Exceptional leadership*. Chicago: Health Administration Press.
- Ewton Z (2007). Sustaining Employee Morale: Keeping the peace or burning down the House. (Online) Available http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/164971/sustaining_employ ee_morale.html?cat=3 [17 April 2010].
- EXforsys Inc. Execution for System (2000). (Online) Available [H:/How to Handle workplace Anxiety.htm](http://www.exforsys.com/How_to_Handle_workplace_Anxiety.htm) [12 March 2010].
- Fink N (2010). The high Cost of Low Morale: How to Address Low Morale in the Workplace through Servant Leadership. *Lead. Edge J.*, 3(2). 1-10. Roberts Wesleyan College. Rochester, New York. Available Online. <http://www.roberts.edu/Academics/Journal/default.as> [4 May 2010].
- Forgas JP, George JM (2001). Affective influences on judgements and behaviour in organisations: An information processing perspectives. *Organ. Behav. Hum. Decis. Process.*, 86(1): 3-34.
- Grandey J (2000). The effects of emotional labour: Employee attitudes, stress and performance. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins.
- Greenberg J, Baron RA (1997). *Behaviour in Organizations: Understanding and Managing the Human side of work*. 6th ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Grigoryan AA (2010). New Approaches in the Theory of Economic Democracy. *Int. J. Appl. Econ. Finan.* 4(2): 67-81
- Grobler P, Warnich S, Carrell MR, Elbert NF, Hatfield RD (2005). *Human Resource Management in South Africa*. 2nd ed. London: Thomson Learning.
- Grobler P, Warnich S, Carrell MR, Elbert NF, Hatfield RD (2006). *Human Resource Management in South Africa*. 3rd ed. London: Thomson Learning.
- Inglish P (2010). Top 10 Reasons Employees Quit. *Hub Pages Elite*. America. (Online) Available: <http://hubpages.com/hub/quit>.

- Leidner R (2009). *Fast food, Fast Talk: Service Work and Routinization of Everyday Life*. University of California Press, Berkeley: CA.
- Leka S, Griffiths A, Cox T (2003). *Work Organization and Stress: Systematic Problem Approaches for Employers, Managers and Trade Union Representatives*. Protecting Workers' Health Series No. 3. World Health Organization's Publication. Nottingham: United Kingdom.
- Lumsden L (2001). Staff Morale. Reading for child and Youth Care Workers. Issue 29. ERIC Digest.
- Luthans F (2002). *Organisational Behaviour*. New York: McGraw – Hill.
- Mendel PC (1987). An investigation of factors that Influence Teacher Morale and Satisfaction with Work Conditions, Doctoral dissertation, Eugene, Oregon: Division of Educational Policy and Management, University of Oregon.
- Michailids MP, E-li Elwkai M 2003. Factors contributing to occupational stress experienced by individuals employed in the fast food industry. *Work: J. Prevention, Assessment and Rehabilitation*, 21(2): 125-140.
- Morris J, Feldman D (1996). The dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of emotional labour. *Acad. Manage. Rev.*, 21: 986-1010.
- O'Connor T (2006). Employee Morale Programs: You can't buy your Employee's enthusiasm, loyalty, hearts, minds, or souls. *Megalinks in criminal Justice*. (Online) Available <http://www.apsu.edu/oconnor/rest> of URL. [12 march 2010].
- Ogletree FT (2009). How a Hostile Environment Affects Employee Morale. (Online) Available: http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/2178931/how_a_hostile_environment_affects_employee_pg2.html?cat=3 [22 March 2010].
- Quick JC, Quick JD, Nelson DL (1997). *Preventive Stress Management in Organizations*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Ranganayakulu KCS (2005). *Organisational Behaviour*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers.
- Robbins SP, Odendaal A, Roodt G (2007). *Organizational Behaviour: Global and Southern African Perspectives*. 7th ed. Cape Town: Pearson Education.
- Schlosser E (2001). *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. Library of congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Shuler S, Sypher BD (2000). Seeking emotional labour: When managing the heart enhances the work experience. *Manage. Commun. Q.*, 14: 50-89.
- Terry C (2009). Low Morale in the workplace – Causes and Cures. Carew International, Inc. (Online) Available <http://bestchazterry.com/2009/12/18/low-morale-in-the-workplace-causes-and-cures> [12 April 2010].
- Vogel FR (2006). Stress in the workplace: The phenomenon, some key correlates and problem solving approaches. Doctoral Thesis. University of Pretoria, South Africa.
- Washington R, Watson HF (1976). Positive Teacher Morale: The Principal's Responsibility. "NASSP Bulletin". 60 (399), 4-6.
- Zastrow C, Kirst – Ashman KK (2007). *Understanding Human Behaviour and the Social Environment*. 7th ed. Belmont: Thomson Higher Education.
- Zeus P, Skiffington S (2008). *Emotion Management and Coaching*. Extract from new text book 'Behavioural Coaching'. New York: McGraw-Hill.