

INCREASING JOB SATISFACTION AMONG EMPLOYEES DUE TO
COMMUNICATION BARRIER BY IMPROVING THE WORKPLACE CULTURE IN
91 DPOD, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE MALAYSIA

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DEDICATION

This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to:

My father, S.Raman, who taught me to value myself.

*My mother and parents in law for continually provide their support morally,
spiritually and emotionally.*

*My husband who shared his words of encouragement to finish my study and provide
financial support.*

My sons for being so understandable.

*My siblings, sister in law and brother in law for continuous support, encouraging
words and endless love.*

My supervisor for all the guidance, I deeply grateful to my supervisor.

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Thirdly, I am thankful to 91DPOD, Mindef, Malaysia for participating in this research project. Besides, I would like to express my gratitude to all the respondents who willing to spare their time to answer all the questions during interview sessions and group discussions. Their contribution and cooperation eased my data collection process and I managed to analyze the gathered data within a short period of time.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to my family who never failed to encourage me morally, emotionally and spiritually. Their words of encouragement mean a lot for me. Thank you for being so understandable in every situation while I am conducting my research paper.

ABSTRACT

In any organization, communication barriers are becoming the main challenges. The barriers of communication decrease the level of job satisfaction among employees. There are several barriers to effective communication and persuasion which includes lack of credibility, lack of leadership skill, lack of focus due to overloaded information, distractions and working environment. All these factors are inter-related with workplace culture. Thus, by improving the workplace culture, communication barriers can be overcome and as a result, level of job satisfaction can be increased. The purpose of this action research is to identify factors which influence communication barrier and decrease level of job satisfaction among employees in 91DPOD, Mindef. The researcher aims to propose training and development programs (workshops and seminars) as an intervention to be implemented in order to improve the workplace culture of the organization. After the transformation process, the output of the proposed intervention to be evaluated to analyze the effectiveness of the intervention. Herzberg's Motivation Theory and a framework developed by Jose R. Goris in his is used in this research to prove that growth need strength and job scope are interacts with the direction of communication in order to forecast job satisfaction and job performance. This research using mixed method approach through semi-standardized interviews, focus group discussion and observation with a total of 15 respondents participating in this study. The overall findings of the study indicate that there is significant relationship between job satisfaction and workplace culture, and communication barriers proven to decrease the job satisfaction level in the organization. A good practice of workplace culture breaks the barrier for a good communication.

ABSTRAK

Komunikasi adalah satu elemen yang penting dan mencabar dalam sesuatu organisasi. Kemahiran berkomunikasi memainkan peranan penting dalam mempengaruhi kepuasan kerja di kalangan pekerja. Halangan kepada sistem komunikasi yang berkesan akan mengurangkan tahap kepuasan kerja di kalangan pekerja. Kekurangan kemahiran kepimpinan, kekurangan kredibiliti, kehilangan fokus bekerja akibat bebanan tugas yang tinggi dan suasana persekitaran kerja adalah antara halangan kepada sistem komunikasi yang baik dan berkesan. Kesemua faktor tersebut mempunyai hubungan dengan budaya kerja. Oleh yang demikian, dengan memperbaiki budaya kerja di organisasi, komunikasi yang baik terjalin dan dengan itu kepuasan kerja di kalangan pekerja akan meningkat. Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi komunikasi dan kepuasan kerja di kalangan pekerja di 91DPOD, Mindef. Pada masa yang sama, penyelidikan ini adalah bertujuan untuk mencadangkan program latihan dan pembangunan (seminar dan kursus) sebagai rancangan intervensi dalam organisasi dan seterusnya menilai keberkesanan rancangan tersebut dalam meningkatkan kepuasan kerja. Herzberg's Teori Motivasi dan kerangka yang di rekabentuk oleh Jose R. Goris digunakan sebagai asas kepada penyelidikan ini. Pendekatan kaedah campuran diterapkan dalam penyelidikan ini adalah menggunakan kaedah temu bual, perbincangan dengan kumpulan bersasar dan pemerhatian terhadap 15 responden. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa kepuasan kerja dipengaruhi oleh komunikasi dan komunikasi dipengaruhi oleh budaya kerja. Dengan memperbaiki budaya kerja, kepuasan kerja dapat dicapai di kalangan pekerja di 91DPOD.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DPOD	Depot Pusat Kor Odrnans Diraja
INTAN	National Institute of Public Administration
MINDEF	Ministry of Defense
HRMIS	Human Resource Management Information System
SAO	Senior Army Officer
CAQDAS	Computer-assisted (or aided) qualitative data analysis software

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Information About the Case Company

Depot Pusat Kor Ordnans Diraja (91DPOD) is under Lieutenant Colonel (Commanding Officer) and *Panglima Tentera Darat* (Chief of Army)'s ruling. 91DPOD is one of the main corps among 18 Corps and Regiments of The Malaysian Army. 91DPOD is using a rank structure inherited from the British Army which has 17 levels of ranking from Private to General. These ranks are divided into two main groups *Pegawai* (Officer) and *Lain-lain Pangkat* (Other Ranks). These ranking systems is the foundation of Army's structure where it indicated the role and degree of responsibility of an army.

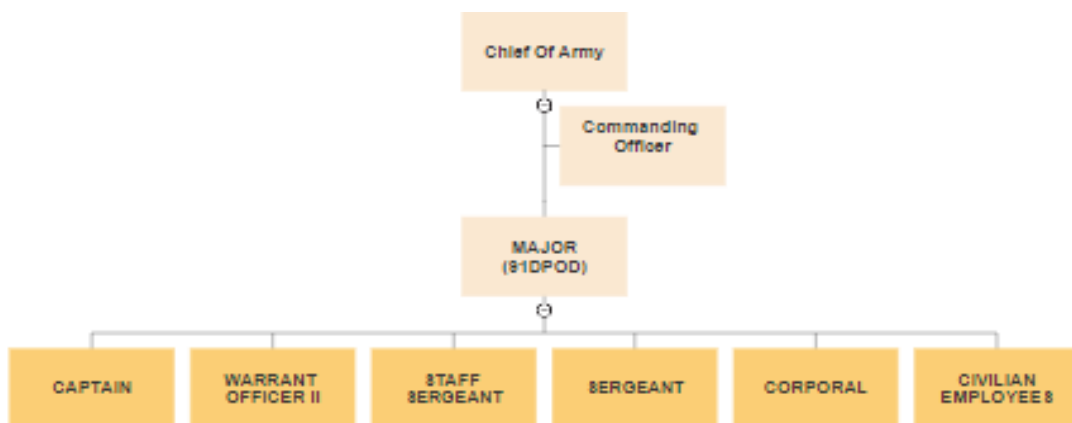


Figure 1.1: Structure of 91DPOD

91 DPOD is the main and largest depot which handling stores for the needs and necessities of the armed forces. They are responsible to get army equipment from contractors according to a legally enforceable agreement. The equipment received will be examined by technical and inspection team from headquarters and ensures that the equipment following specifications. Army-forced specifications are based on operational and technical requirements and standardization. Equipment which has passed the inspection can be supplied to all other divisions, ordnance and corps within Malaysia.

There are several stores under 91DPOD supervision which includes accommodation, clothing, general, machinery/transportation and technical. Civilian employees (non-army) are responsible on preparing related documentation to contractors and units. They are also managing clerical duties and human resource roles which includes planning, directing and coordinating the administrative functions of the organization. Head of department is military personnel. Civilian employees (non-army) must respect and obey their roles and job specifications. 91DPOD consists of one senior army officer, 9 LLP army officers and 5 civilian employees.

ARMY PERSONNEL		
SSM GRAD	RANKS	NO. OF PEOPLE
Z22	Major	1
Z10	Warrant Officer	1
Z6	Sergeant	4
Z4	Corporal	4
CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES		
N41	Executive Officer	1
N22	Chief Clerk	1
N17	Clerk	2
H14	Assistant	1

Table 1.1: Number of Employees based on Army Rankings

1.2 Problem Statement

1.2.1 Problem Formulation

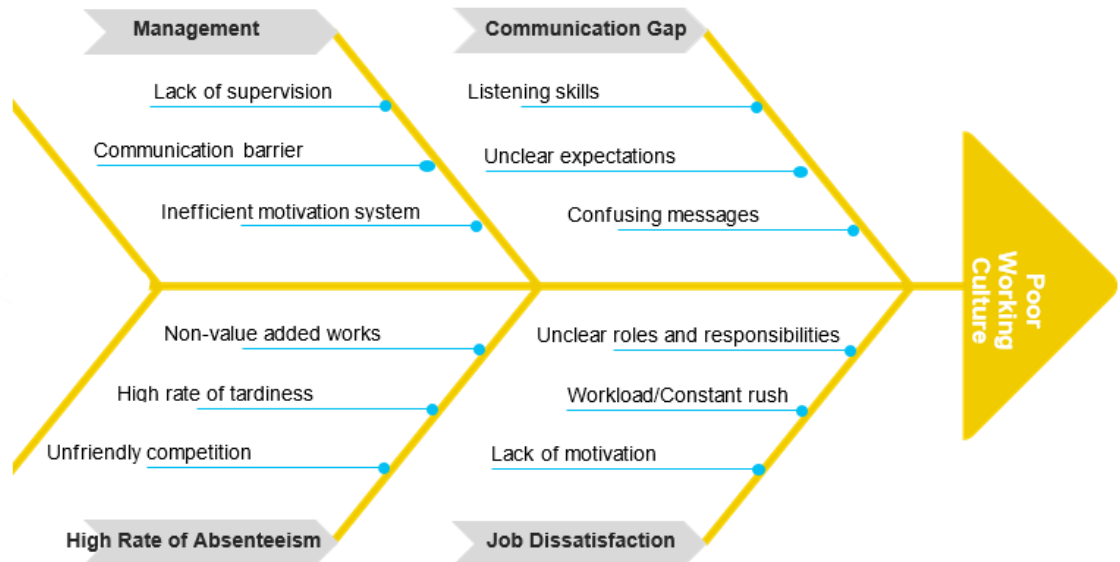


Figure 1.2: Ishikawa Diagram

1.2.1.1 Communication Gap

Civilian employees (non-army) face a significant communication gap with army officers and other ranks in the workplace. Communication gap should be bridged in order to maintain mutual understandings among employees. There are several barriers which affect the communication which includes listening skills, unclear expectations and confusing messages. All these barriers are very common among employees in 91DPOD, they are facing challenges to get their job done as how it should be done because it has been a routine for our organization to have parade every morning in our marching field (*padang kawad*) immediately after the parade, they will be well informed regarding organization's upcoming activities and other updates.

Due to time constraint and tight protocol schedule, army officers who supposed to deliver the messages to the civilian employees failed to do so and passing it through third person verbally, and this where the problem starts. As a result, civilian employees confuse with the messages received and often misinterpret it. In other words, what intended by the sender is not what understood by the receiver.

1.2.1.2 Job Dissatisfaction

The number of employees applying for transfers is an indicator of job satisfaction level among employees in an organization. The higher the rate of employees applying for transfer, the more widespread employees' job dissatisfaction is. The number of non-army civilian employees applying for transfers are increasing year by year as shown in Figure 1.3.

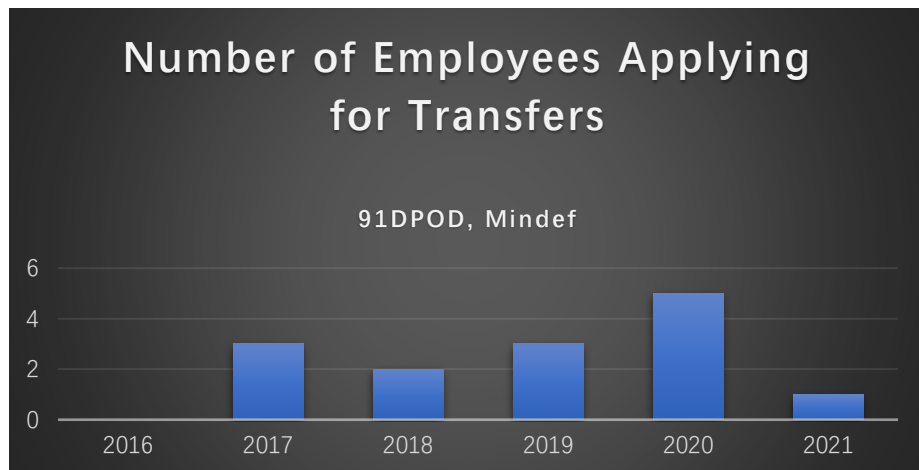


Figure 1.3: Number of Employees Applying for Transfer

It is important to understand that influences on job dissatisfaction include unclear roles and responsibilities, workloads, constant rush to get things done, autonomous and empowerment work of groups and communication styles.

Job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are subjective concepts related to work. In this organization, employees are unclear and dissatisfied with their job because army and civilian employees' way of performing job is totally different. Army officers' working style wholly based on Armed Forces Act, civilian employees' job characteristics are based on Public Service Departments Circulars. Employees find various ways to postpone their jobs and never staying in one long enough to contribute anything of value to the organization. When employees are unsatisfied with their jobs, it impacts the organization and it hits the organization's bottom line. Some discontented employees decided to apply for transfers to other government organizations while others stay and just be unhappy.

High rate of employees applying for transfers in an organization results in loss of employees' morale. Jose, Mercedes, Virtudes, Susana (2012)'s cross sectional study with 764 patients and 327 physicians has shown that communication barrier are one of the factors that influences towards physicians job satisfaction, patients considers the information they are giving is sufficient but it does not improve the clinical safety and decreases the level of job satisfaction among physicians.

1.2.1.3 Poor Working Culture

High rate of absenteeism is the indicator of employees' satisfaction towards their job. Previous study by Luthans (1995) has been generally revealed a consistent inverse relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism, when satisfaction is high among employees, absenteeism rate tends to be low and when satisfaction is low, absenteeism tends to be high in an organization. It has been conclusively proved that less satisfied employees are more likely to be absent from work due to unavoidable reasons.

Hence, the workplace culture becomes obligation instead of fulfillment and employees (army and non-army) stops loving what they do. Poor working culture in the organization due to poor leadership and disengaged employees. Senior army officers unclear with their roles and responsibilities, and they are not adapting organization's core values instead of being vigilant to create positive workplace culture. It is noticeable that employees are having unfriendly competition, excessive tardiness and high rate of absenteeism.

1.3 Research Question and Objective

1.3.1 Research Question

- What are problematic situation and factors that influence the job satisfaction with regard to workplace culture and communication barrier among employees?
- What is the intervention proposed in order to improve workplace culture?
- What is the impact of intervention proposed in order to improve workplace culture?

1.3.2 Research Objective

- To investigate factors that influence the job satisfaction with regard to workplace culture and communication barrier among employees in 91 DPOD.
- To propose training and development as an intervention in order to improve workplace culture in 91 DPOD.
- To evaluate the outcome of training and development as intervention proposed in order to improve workplace culture in 91 DPOD.

1.4 Researcher Role

The researcher role in mixed method research is complex because researcher has to gather data and implements analysis (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, researcher's role in this study is as an 'observer as participant' in which the researcher will participate in the organization activities and gather information and data as participant (internal researcher) while the organization is well informed about the observation activities. To be clearer, the researcher will be in the studying group to understand factors which influence problematic situation in an organization and gather related information from the organization. Being an internal researcher, one must be very careful not to overlook the basic information about the organization.

Researcher should not manipulate the problematic situations which occurred in the organization, but rather observe it as how it occurs naturally without any restrictions from researcher. Researchers' past experiences and assumptions about the organization can be used as a base for the research to better understand the organizational culture as a whole. Besides observing other participants, researcher should act with integrity when collaborating and communicating within the organization.

It can be said that in qualitative research, researcher will make an attempt to approach the feelings and thoughts of study participants. While, for quantitative research, researcher measures invisible occurrence within organizational study using numeric data. To be concluded, researcher roles are includes aligning the methodologies using appropriate instruments to acquire and interpret data, implement intervention, evaluate the results and present the findings. These roles and responsibilities should be carried out by monitoring potential participants without biasing.

1.5 Research Ethics

Researchers generally face an array of ethical requirements in order to conduct researches or studies. There are several ethical principles should be applied in performing research which includes obtaining informed consent from the group of people that going to be studied in the research. This is to make sure organization is aware that they are under researcher's observation. Researcher's way of conducting the research should not put participants and the organization at risk, in this context, respecting and protecting their confidentiality should be taken into account. Researcher has to take huge responsibility to protect the confidentiality which includes military secrets, confidential communication either verbally or non-verbally, and employees' personal records.

Researcher must be very careful and honest when handling data gathered from the participants or the organization by critically examining it before interpreting to avoid negligence. Researcher should be criticism tolerant and open to new ideas from participants. Researcher must be ensuring that research practices are beneficence and non-maleficence to human subjects and the organization.

Following ethical guidelines will ensure the researcher not fabricate or falsify data obtained from the organization where the study has been carried out. In order to that, researcher should avoid using deceptive practices in conducting a research because different type of research develops different level of risks and inconveniences. It is very important for a researcher to adhere to ethical norms and values in conducting a research because ethical behavior is relatively related to the ethical principles of social responsibility.

It can be concluded that ethical principles are playing vital role in conducting research because the set of ethical principles govern how research should be performed. Following ethical norms and principles while conducting a research which is beneficial for both researcher and participants.

1.6 Importance of Proposed Research

1.6.1 Theoretical

During the past decades, job satisfaction has been one of the most important topics which is strongly concentrated by organizational researchers (Gruneberg, 1979). Job satisfaction, frequently linked with job attitudes and morale which has been characterized in varying ways and it is considered as an individual's perceptual reaction to significant facets of work (Vroom, 1967). Locke (1976) has outlined the meaning of job satisfaction as a pleasure-able or positive emotional state by examining one's job or encounters have been observationally connected to job satisfaction, hence there is no predictable connection between communication and job satisfaction. According to a research conducted by Yammarino and Naughton (1988), improving work culture can enhance communication skills among workers and overcome the barriers for effective communication.

Theoretically, this study stressing the main theories to support job satisfaction, communication barriers and workplace culture in the organization. Based on findings from previous studies, Herzberg's Motivation Theory is the most appropriate theory to identify various factors in the organization which causes job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. This theory is adopting two stages of process to motivate people which includes increasing satisfaction and eliminating dissatisfaction experienced by employees.

There are many studies which concentrating on communication barriers in organization and quite number of scholars attracted to the factors that factors which influences job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. In the near future, identification of topic related to job satisfaction and workplace culture will provide crystal clear understanding for researchers on the exact factors for job satisfaction among employees in natural situation.

This research is mainly to extend the literature on management practices, job satisfaction and communication barriers in which improving workplace culture is expected to increase the level of job satisfaction among employees in an organization through information obtained by conducting interviews, focus group discussions and observations. And by implementing the proposed intervention of training and development program in order to improve the workplace culture. This research can be a reference research in related topic for future researchers.

1.6.2 Practical

Factors which influences communication barriers and decreases the level of job satisfaction among employees can be overcome by improving the workplace culture. Breaking communication barriers in an organization can increase the level of job satisfaction among employees. Therefore, it is important to investigate the factors that causes the communication barriers by observing and discovering the natural situation of 91DPOD to identify the challenges and problems facing by the employees.

Despite that, the initial stage of the study is to identify the challenges and problems faced by the organization. The information will be obtained by conducting interviews, focus group discussions, secondary data and observation to identify barriers of effective communication in the organization and how the improvisation of the workplace culture will break the barriers. From the findings, an appropriate intervention will be implemented to mitigate the issues.

The aim of the study is to help the organization to recognize on how the improvisation of the workplace culture can break the barrier for effective communication and increase the level of job satisfaction among employees in the organization. The frameworks from previous studies is used to help in problem diagnosing and to support the implementation of proposed intervention.

The proposed intervention in this research is expected to a reference for management and practitioner in other organization in order to solve similar problems and challenges faced by their organizations. This research believes to help them to initiate more training and development programs in order to improve workplace culture and increase the level of job satisfaction among employees.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Job Satisfaction

Author (s)	Definition
Locke (1997)	A positive emotional state which comes from appreciation for the work done. Personality traits which includes conscientiousness and extra version influence job satisfaction.

Table 1.2: Definition of Job Satisfaction

1.7.2 Communication Barriers

Author (s)	Definition
Brun & Summers (2010)	Anything that makes it harder for us to receive and comprehend the messages that others employ to communicate their information, ideas, and thoughts.

Table 1.3: Definition of Communication Barrier

1.7.3 Workplace Culture

Author (s)	Definition
Gruneberg (1976)	Workplace culture is the mix of organization's belief, interactions, behaviors, attitudes, values and leadership which contribute to relational and emotional of workplace environment.

Table 1.4: Definition of Workplace Culture

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND ACTION RESEARCH PLANNING

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Relevant Theory/Model/Framework

2.1.1 Herzberg's Motivation Theory

Herzberg's Motivation Theory model argues that motivator factors (job satisfiers) and hygiene factors (job dissatisfiers) are two main principles in which organization can act accordingly to influence job satisfaction at workplace. Job satisfaction is influenced by motivator factors which encourage employees to work harder while job dissatisfaction influenced by hygiene factors, factors that do not encourage employees to work harder and employees become unmotivated.



Figure 2.1: Herzberg Theory of Motivation

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