

## Job Satisfaction Among National Highway Authority Employees

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*Job satisfaction has not lost its fame as an important measure to help assess employee perception and ownership about the work. Out of the many applaudable reasons for this distinct fame, one may be that job satisfaction is itself made up of a number of constructs like pay, nature of work and supervision, promotions etc and leads to a number of outcomes held in high primacy by the organizations. The current study assesses the employees' impression about the Emolument Packages, Career Advancements, High Salaries, Compensation Policy and Clear Job Descriptions applicable in National Highway Authority and its impact upon Job Satisfaction. The results showed high job-satisfaction levels, insignificant staff turnover rate, and major dissatisfaction regarding emolument and packages (basic salary, health and housing as some of the important components of emoluments). Furthermore, employees felt that instead of performance-based compensations, decisive factors were seniority, relationships and political influence. The respondents feel that Salary increase will enhance transparency, suppress corruption and increase performance of the employees.*

**Key Words:** Salary, Career Advancement, Compensation Management, Job Descriptions, Emolument Packages, Job Satisfaction

### 1. Introduction

Job satisfaction describes how content an individual is with his or her job. It is a relatively recent term since in previous centuries the jobs available to a particular person were often predetermined by the occupation of that person's parent and not much by the interest of that particular person. There are a variety of factors that can influence a person's level of job satisfaction; some of these factors include the level of pay and benefits, the perceived fairness of the promotion system within a company, the quality of the working conditions, leadership and social relationships, and the job itself (the variety of tasks involved, the interest and challenge the job generates, and the clarity of the job description/requirements).

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National Highway Authority (NHA) is a public sector organization in Pakistan; amongst various restructuring strategies, enhancement of the existing emoluments package of all levels of NHA cadres is also pursued. The idea emanates from the understanding that normally lower performance and job satisfaction level of employees are resulting from organizational poor emolument packages, compensation policy, lack of career advancement path, vague job description. In contrast, the organizations offering better emolument packages, good compensation policy, clear job description and proper career advancement path to their employees tend to get high level of their job satisfaction, who in turn enhances the organizational performance. The specific objectives of the study include: (1) To measure the job satisfaction level of NHA employees. (2) To develop better job satisfaction and compensation policy of NHA that could address the organizational needs of attracting best available talent during a medium and long-term planning period and will increase the job satisfaction of employees.

## **2. Literature Review**

Satisfied workers are happy workers and happy workers are productive workers is an old rule of thumb. The underlying theology may be a blend of Human Relation Theory by Elton Mayo and Scientific Management Theory by Adam Smith. To develop, maintain and exploit an environment conducive to learning and achievement is a primary concern to today's organizations. Research has shown employees with higher job satisfaction are more productive, more committed to the organization, have lower turnover rates, care more about the quality of their work, and believe in the long run they will be satisfied with the company.

### **2.1. Job Satisfaction**

Job Satisfaction as defined by Locke (1976) is "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience". Job satisfaction should be viewed as a desirable condition in itself, especially as it is closely related to the overall quality of life in a society (Lawler, 1973; Locke, 1976; Gross & Etzioni, 1985).

### **2.2. Antecedents of Job Satisfaction**

The present study draws upon the most specific and relevant determinants of Job Satisfaction. Be it the economic conditions, high unemployment rate, low opportunities for career advancements and progressions or high levels of political and socioeconomic instability Pakistan is currently passing through.

#### ***High Salary and Job Satisfaction***

Lawler (1971) studied the significance of the role of pay in work organization, examined the satisfaction with pay to exert a positive influence on employee commitment. He also suggested that pay satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a function of the discrepancy

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between what one feels one should receive and how much pay one does receive. Pay dissatisfaction is sufficiently common that a finding of a lower rate of satisfaction with pay than with other job components can be anticipated, and even predicted (Lawler, 1990).

### **Career Advancement and Job Satisfaction**

Another way to improve job satisfaction is by varying tasks assigned to employees. Repetitive tasks make satisfaction difficult. Therefore, employees need independence to be fully satisfied within their jobs (Anderson, 1984). Taveggia & Hedley (1976) assumed that workers in highly specialized jobs experience less autonomy or discretion and, consequently, they are more dissatisfied with work than those in less specialized jobs. The above findings clearly make career advancement an uphill task in an organizational culture that lacks trust and freedom to make choices.

### **Clear Job Description and Job Satisfaction**

An increase in production can be achieved with job redesign. A job can be redesigned in an effective way by increasing the levels of control and support an employee perceives within an organization. It has been shown that some employees enjoy challenges and actually need them to be motivated. High demands are not detrimental as long as the employee has high levels of control (Dollard, Winefield, Winefield, Jonge, 2000).

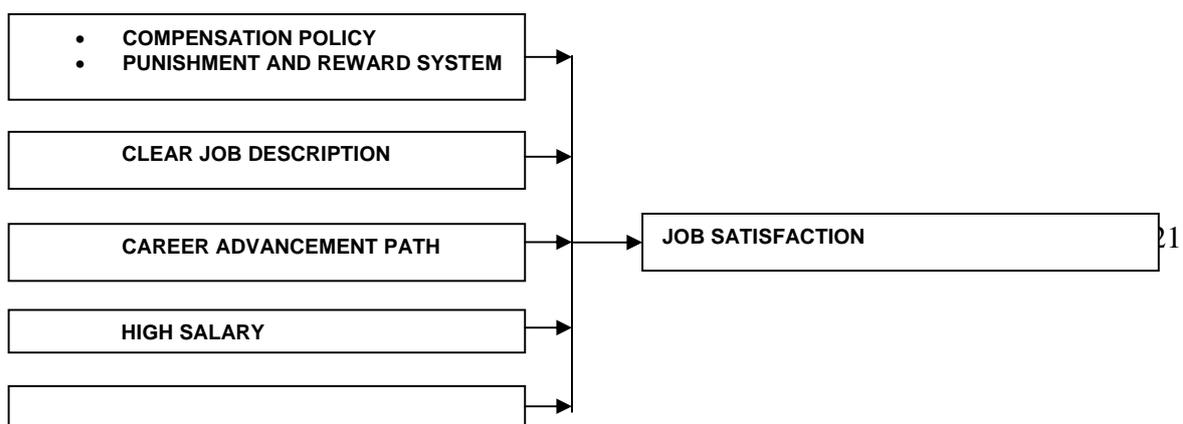
### **Compensation Policy and Job Satisfaction**

Based on an employee survey (Ghiselli, La Lopa, Bai, 2001), salary and benefits were the most often stated reasons to leave a job. A study by Lee and Duxbury (1998) suggests that employees generally perceive employers policies lacking in family support. Companies must be responsive towards these policy changes. If managers are not in support of policies such as extended maternity leave and in-house childcare, it is impossible for the employees to use these resources. Employees do not want their boss to reprimand them in any way for utilizing programs that the boss may not be in agreement with. Therefore, managerial behaviors must be adapted to correlate with the newly formed policies.

### **Emolument Packages and Job Satisfaction**

Satisfaction of employee and employer is a mutually beneficial relationship. Employee satisfaction, in turn reflects upon the customer satisfaction. National High Way Authority being a custodian of highways and roads networks realizes the gravity of the task. The present study assumes that in order to retain employees with a high level of KSA (Knowledge, Skill and Abilities), NHA must have focused on Effective Emolument Packages. The following figure demonstrates the relationship between Job Satisfaction and its Antecedents

**Figure 2.1. Relationship between Job satisfaction and its Antecedents**



### **3. Methodology**

A sample survey of different cadres of NHA employees was conducted for collecting information about their knowledge of HR systems operating in the organization and assesses their job-satisfaction level. The tools for the survey focuses upon some important aspects like: what is the opinion of the employees with regard to their job description; compensation policy; possibilities of career advancement and available career paths; what indicators the employees use to arrive at their job satisfaction level; and how this information impacts in arriving at the current job satisfaction level.

For interviewing the senior management, it was considered that all key personnel up to the level of general managers, who could become available for the interviews, were be contacted except the Chairman NHA. For survey of the remaining cadres of employees a sample of around 10% was agreed with the study coordinator. For covering heterogeneity in the staff, a purposive random sampling method was employed. Accordingly staff was classified into various grades and 10% of the employees were selected from each grade for asking the interview questions. In order to give coverage to the opinion of the regional and field staff, some employees who had the experience of working in the regional offices and fields were purposively selected for the interviews. The investigation of the collected data generated Situation Analysis to depict the impact of antecedents on job satisfaction.

### **4. Results / Discussion**

#### **4.1. Findings Of Senior Management's Survey**

##### ***Respondents profile***

A total of sixteen senior management personnel (including members, director generals and zonal managers) were interviewed during this survey. All the respondents were male and married. Most of them (88%) are in the age range of 50 years plus. Senior management was well qualified and possesses sufficient experience to hold their posts. Around 67% of all respondents were holding specialized post-graduate degrees i.e. masters in engineering and other specialized subjects, whereas 29% carried qualification of specialized field at bachelor's level. In overall job-related experience, around 36% had more than 30 years experience, whereas 64% were in the experience range of 15-25 years.

##### ***Clarity of job descriptions***

Most of the respondents (71%) said that their job descriptions are clear and provide guidance in performing their jobs. One of the respondents abstained from answering the question while those who said that job descriptions are not clear (21%) thought that these do not provide enough guidance for performance of assigned tasks while one of them is of the opinion that work on job descriptions development has not yet accomplished.

***Career advancement path and opportunity for career development***

Most (75%) of the respondents agreed that a clear career advancement path exists in NHA but another 25% did not agree with this opinion. The quota system by which 75% of the newly created positions are required to be filled by promotion was also criticized. It is interesting to note that those who joined NHA during last 4 years are carrying the same positions, while those who joined earlier than 4 years got promotions or elevated to higher ranks through open competition.

***Punishment and reward system***

Most of the respondents (57%) said that a proper punishment and reward system is not operating in NHA. Many of them opined that a judicious punishment and reward system couldn't operate in a public sector organization bounded by government rules and regulations. They were of the opinion that culprits find some loopholes in the government regulations and implementations system and escape punishment. Those who wanted punishment and reward system in NHA referred to 'Eid Bonus' to lower grade employees and honoraria to those performing meritorious services.

***Desired increase in the current emoluments package and expected outcome***

Only 25% of the respondents felt that their current emoluments package was reasonable and did not ask for an increase. Most of the respondents who desire revision of their emolument package wanted to index the increase with the rate of inflation (36%). The other responses were for three fold increase in emoluments (21%), and 100 to 125 percent increase (21%).

Around 70% of the respondents from senior management said that increase in emolument packages will reduce corruption and increase efficiency. Many indicated that corruption is rampant in the organization and procedure development efforts will have to focus on increasing transparency and introducing systems that effectively check corruption. Other responses included increase in the level of job satisfaction and committed staff etc.

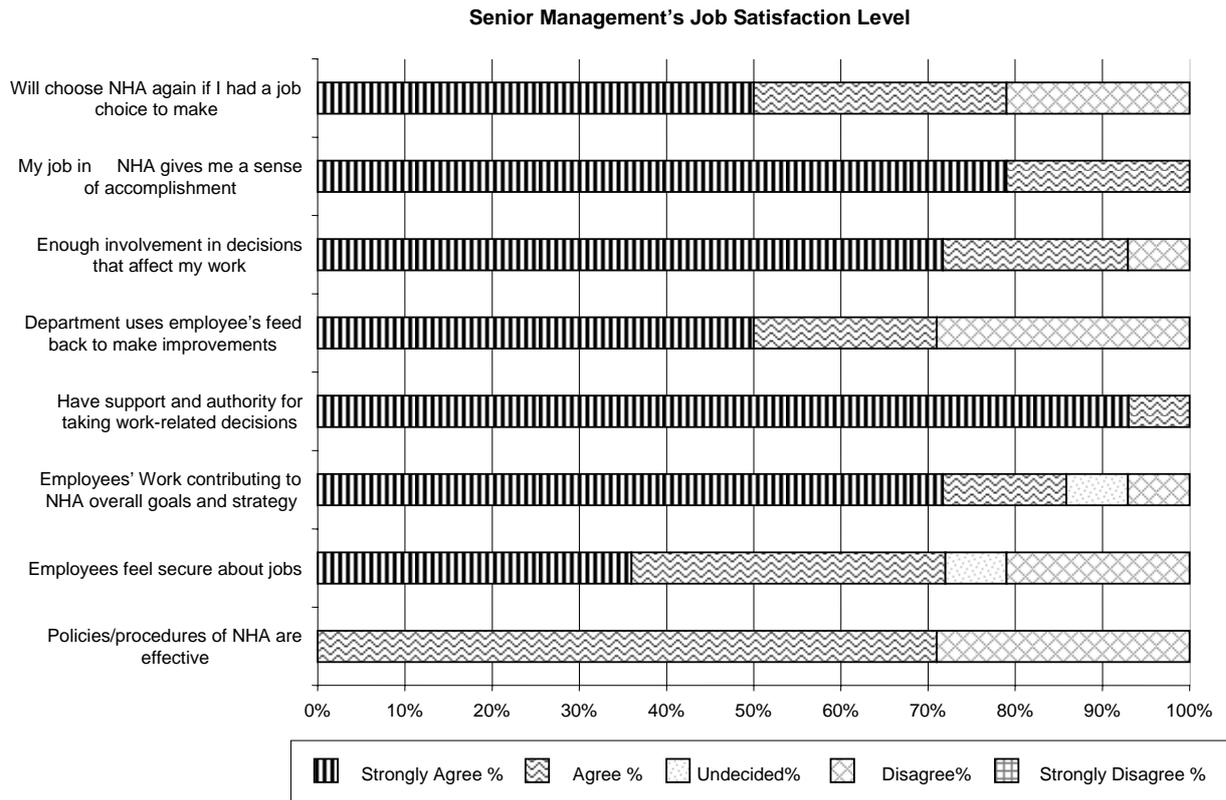
***Job Satisfaction of Senior Employees***

The percentage of the respondents who strongly agree with various statements used for measuring job satisfaction level was high at 57%. Another category of respondents who agree with the statements (though not strongly) stood at 27%. Lumped together; these opinions reached the mark of 84%. Against the high percentage of agreeing respondents, disagreements stood at 14% and those undecided were only 2%.

To assess the job satisfaction level, gradual scale was used to measure respondents' opinion about various segments of the work environment in NHA. Smallest number was allotted to show highest level of importance while bigger numbers portrayed lower levels. An analysis of the responses showed that the respondents placed highest priority on the component of 'ability to make decision'. Next in importance was 'comfortable work environment' while 'employees training program' achieved third place in the order of priority. 'Career development plan' and 'recreational activities' found forth and fifth positions in the order of preference.

About the query, *what they* (respondent) *liked best about working for NHA*, around 94% of the respondents said that the sense of accomplishment and work environment was liked best by them, about working for NHA.

**Figure 4.1: Job Satisfaction level of Senior Management**



## 4.2. Findings From All Cadre Survey

### **Respondents profile**

A total number of one hundred and twenty-two (122) staff members were interviewed during this survey. The interviewed members are divided into three categories for the purpose of analysis, which are staff grades 19, 18 and 17 categorized as Junior Management (JM), grades 11 to 16 Supervisory Group (SG) and others as Supporting Staff (SS). The respondents included junior management personnel (26), supervisory group (34) and supporting staff (62). Most of the respondents were male (91%). The proportion of married was 87%. Most of them (75%) were in the age group of 31-50 years.

### **Clarity of job descriptions**

Most of the respondents (94%) said that their job descriptions were clear and provide guidance in performing their jobs. Those who said that job descriptions are not clear

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(6%) thought that these do not provide enough guidance for performance of assigned tasks. Most of those who said that job descriptions were not clear were from Junior Management Group (12%), the remaining two categories were mostly answered positively: (91%) Supervisory Group and (97%) Support Staff.

### ***Career advancement path and opportunity for career development***

Junior management (50%) was of the view that the process was very slow and promotions were seniority based. Most (71%) of the supervisory group was of the same view. Those who did not agree think that promotion to a senior position was mainly linked with the seniority in service while little credit was given to efficiency and fitness. About career path for advancement, out of those (84%) who responded the question were of the view that there are fixed positions and NHA has no career path. Remaining (34%) of them was of the view that there are chances to grow.

### ***Punishment and reward system***

Most of the respondents (84%) who were even affirmative about the availability of a punishment and reward system in NHA and those who were not (16%) said that a proper punishment and reward system is not operating in NHA. Those who were affirmative (84%) about the availability of a punishment and reward system in NHA referred to Eid Bonus to lower grade employees and honoraria to those performing meritorious services. A reference of NHA "Employees Efficiency and Discipline Rules" of 1995 is given in the area of punishment to the various disciplinary actions.

### ***Desired increase in the current emoluments package and expected outcome***

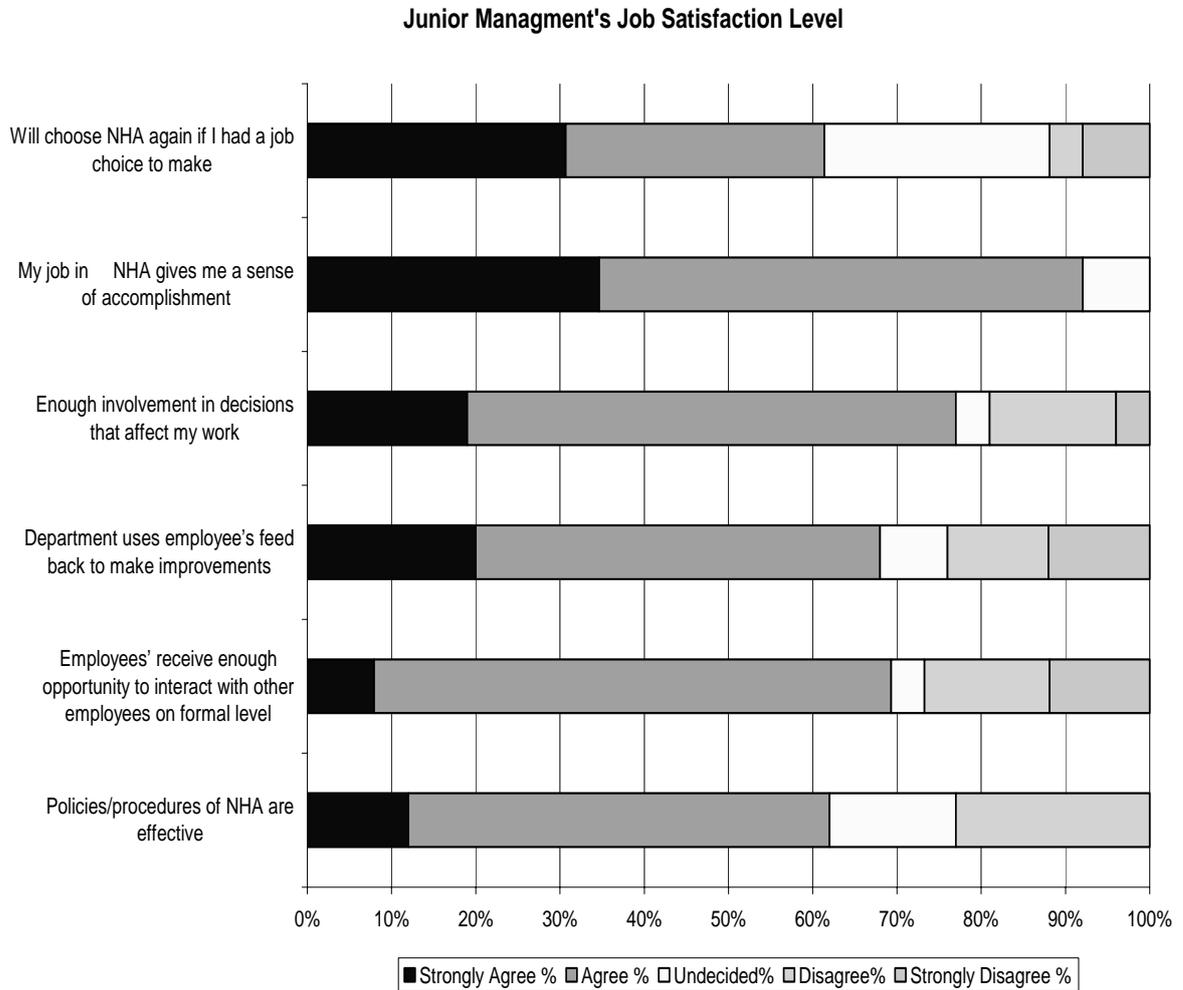
Only 16% of the respondents felt that their current emoluments package was reasonable but they still ask for increase from 25 to 100 percent. Other 83% termed the current emoluments package much lower than what is available to similar positions in the corporate sector's job market. On the record there were very few of the respondents who desire revision of their emolument package wanted to index the increase with the rate of inflation (2-3%). The other responses were for two fold increases in emoluments (21%), among unsatisfied respondents a reasonable number (45%) consider 25 to 100 percent as a desired increase.

The responses received from junior management, are quite interesting; around 74% of the respondents said that it would increase performance of the employees. Other responses included increase in the level of job satisfaction and committed staff etc.

### ***Job Satisfaction of Junior Employees***

The overall job satisfaction level of the junior management group in NHA is positive. The percentage of the respondents who strongly agree with various statements used for measuring job satisfaction level is 21%. Respondents who do not strongly agree with the statements stand at 51%. Lumped together; these opinions reach the high mark of 72%. Against the high percentage of agreeing respondents, disagreements stand at 18% and those undecided are 11%. The position of each statement used for measuring job satisfaction level is reflected in the Figure below:

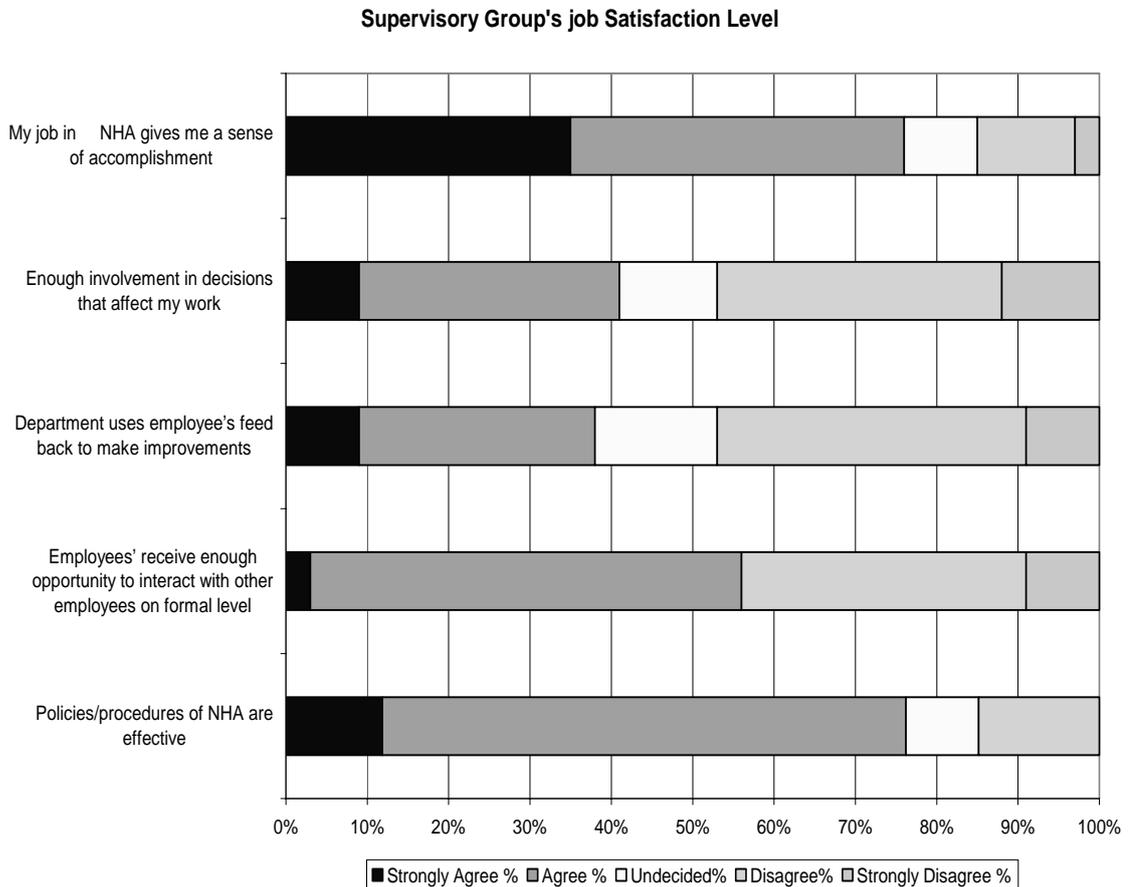
Figure 4.2.1: Job satisfaction Level of Junior Management



**Job Satisfaction of Supervisory Group**

The overall job satisfaction level of the Supervisory Group in NHA is also positive. The percentage of the respondents who strongly agree with various statements used for measuring job satisfaction level is 16%. Respondents who do not strongly agree with the statement stands at 48%. Lumped together; these opinions reach the high mark of 64%. Against the high percentage of agreeing respondents, disagreements stand at 29% and those undecided are 7%. The position of each statement used for measuring job satisfaction level is reflected in the Figure below:

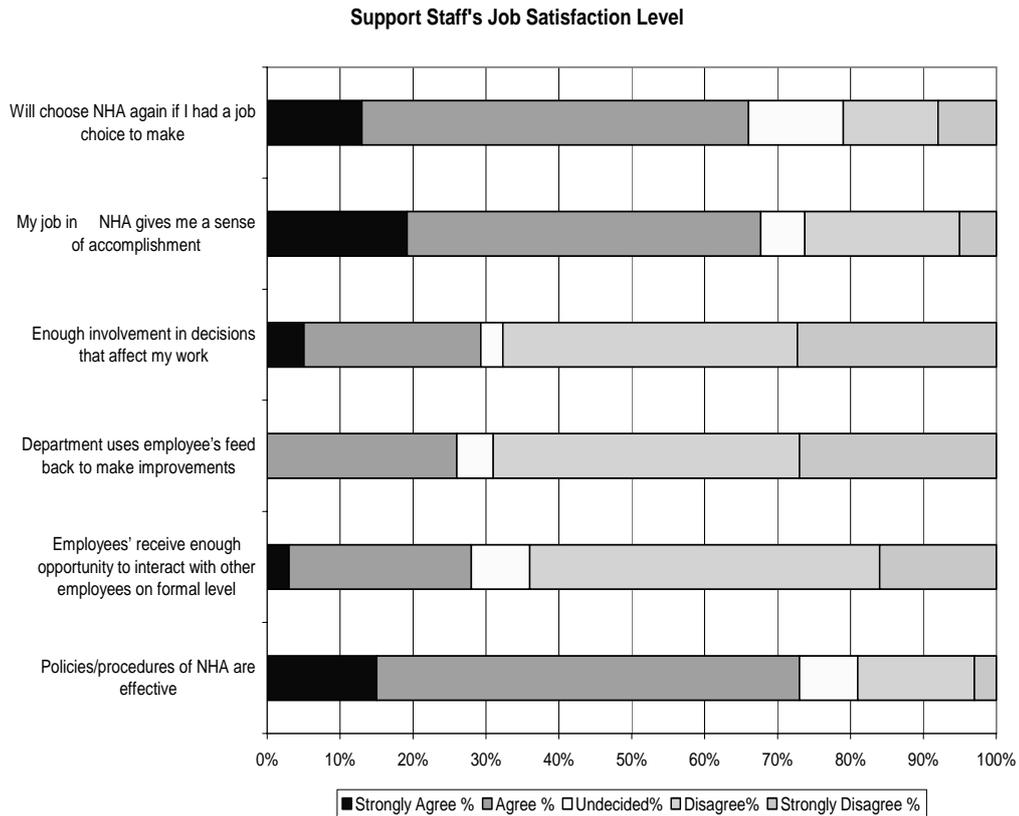
Figure 4.2.2: Job satisfaction Level of Supervisory Group



**Job Satisfaction of Support Staff**

The percentage of the respondents who strongly agree with various statements used for measuring job satisfaction level is only 9%. Another category of respondents who agree with the statements stands at 39%. Against the percentage of agreeing respondents, disagreements stand at 45% and those undecided are 7%. The position of each statement used for measuring job satisfaction level is reflected in the figure below:

Figure 4.2.3: Job satisfaction Level of Support Staff



To assess the job satisfaction level, a gradual scale was used to measure the respondents' opinion about various segments of the work environment in NHA. Smallest number was allotted to show highest level of importance while bigger numbers portrayed lower levels. Responses showed that the respondents in junior management group placed same highest priority to these two components 'comfortable work environment' and 'career development plan'. Next in importance was 'ability to make decision' and 'employees training program' while 'recreational activities' achieved third place in the order of priority. An analysis of the responses showed that the respondents in supervisory group placed highest priority on the component of 'comfortable work environment'. Next in importance was 'career development plans' while 'employees training program' achieved third place in the order of priority, 'ability to make decision' and 'recreational activities' found forth and fifth positions in the order of preference respectively.

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The respondents in Support Staff placed highest priority on the component of 'comfortable work environment'. Next in importance was 'career development plan' while 'employees training program' achieved third place in the order of priority. 'Ability to make decision' and 'recreational activities' found forth and fifth positions in the order of preference.

### **5. Conclusion**

Although the job satisfaction level of NHA employees was at a high mark and staff turnover rate was insignificant, major dissatisfaction was regarding their emolument packages. All cadres of employees were not happy with the reward and punishment system in NHA. General opinion is that efficiency and competence does not play a dominant role for promotions or incentives but seniority, relationships and political influence become the deciding factors. Employees of all level consider that their job descriptions are clear and provide guidance in their work. However when compared with the performance evaluation system and award of increments and rewards etc., situation does not seem to be satisfactory. Regarding return on investments for pay revision, the employees from the senior as well as junior management cadres opinioned that this will result in improving the staff efficiency, that will enhance transparency, which will translate into huge monetary gains for NHA.

### **6. Recommendations**

Following are the recommendations based upon the above results and discussions:

1. All indicators point towards a need for employees pay revision.
2. The pay revision is recommended in the range of 100 percent to 118 percent for various pay groups, in order to increase the job satisfaction of the employees.
3. A bonus system may be introduced to reward efficient and hard working employees after establishing an effective performance evaluation system.
4. Fair punishment and reward system to keep the employees satisfied with their job.
5. A job analysis of various positions and posts to be carried out to undertake equitable and appropriate distribution of work load. This will also identify indicators for performance evaluation and job level evaluation.

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