

CAREER PROSPECTS AND JOB SATISFACTION OF NSNP FOOD HANDLERS IN GAUTENG

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ABSTRACT

The National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) is of cardinal importance in South Africa. It operates on a large scale nationally and across different sectors of the economy, primarily to serve meals to all public schools in communities with low socio-economic status. In response to this huge demand, parents of learners in the local communities are employed on contract as food handlers to prepare and serve meals to learners at the schools. However, contract periods are fixed-term with no certainty of re-employment. This study investigates the career dynamics and satisfaction levels of NSNP food handlers in Gauteng. A convergent parallel mixed-method research design was adopted for this study. Random sampling was applied in 290 secondary schools to identify participants in all 15 Gauteng Department of Education districts. A structured questionnaire was administered to NSNP food handlers while interviews were conducted with all 15 District Nutrition Co-ordinators (DNCs). Quantitative responses on job satisfaction were rated on a 4-point Likert scale, while career prospects and failure to find employment after the expiry of the NSNP contract were measured on a dichotomous scale. Qualitative data from interviews were analysed in a narrative form. It was concluded that the NSNP food handlers struggle to secure employment after the expiry of their one-year NSNP contracts. Furthermore, the evaluation reveals that food handlers have low job satisfaction. The advanced age of some NSNP food handlers is related to the low job satisfaction experienced. Additional challenges faced by the food handlers were poorly managed working conditions and low remuneration.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore career prospects and job satisfaction of food handlers in the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP). Research on these aspects in the NSNP is rare as most research is focused on the lack of training (Langsford, 2012; Mafugu, 2018; Sibanyoni, Tshabalala & Tabit, 2017), lack of knowledge (Legbara & Selepe, 2017; Qila & Tyilo, 2014;), poor food preparation skills (Qila &

Tyilo, 2014) and the need for nutrition education among food handlers. The well-being, which include career prospects and job satisfaction, of food handlers has not been reported on.

Job satisfaction influences work performance on both the individual level (Goslin, 2005; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985; Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000) and in terms of organisational performance (Jalagat, 2016; Latif *et al.*, 2015; Mafini & Poee, 2013). Being satisfied in a job refers to the positive emotion a person feels when performing a project which is in accordance with their expectations and values (Locke, 1979). The concept of job satisfaction is multidimensional and complex and is linked to the positive opinion and attitudes an employee exhibits in their workplace (Saltztein *et al.*, 2001), to the productivity and to the organisational behavior (Burke, 2000). On the other hand, job dissatisfaction has adverse effects on workers and may hinder productivity (Theodossiou & Zangelidis, 2009). Job satisfaction may be reduced by temporary contracts (Chadi & Hetschko, 2016) while job security or the prospect of full-time employment improves the perception of job satisfaction (Theodossiou & Zangelidis, 2009).

The NSNP is a state funded nutritional intervention in all nine provinces which feeds 8.8 million needy children a meal every school day (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2015). The intervention provides one mid-morning meal consisting of one protein, one starch, and one vegetable, chosen according to a nationally-developed menu with adaptations according to local taste preferences (Graham, Hochfeld, Stuart & Van Gent, 2015). The mandatory obligation of the NSNP in South Africa is to provide nutritious meals to all the targeted learners in public schools across the country (DBE, 2015). School nutrition programmes are globally acknowledged as having a positive impact on children's nutritional status (International Food Policy Research Institute, 2014), well-being, school attendance,

educational outcomes (Briggs, 2008; Iverson, Du Plessis, Marais, Morseth & Høisæther, 2011), psychosocial functioning and cognitive development (Szajewska, Ruszczyński & Chmielewska, 2010). School nutrition programmes reduce short-term hunger (Gelli, Cavallero, Minervini, Mirabile, Molinas & De La Mother, 2011), improve children's food security, improve concentration (World Food Programme (WFP), 2010; World Health Organization (WHO), 2007), increase class participation and help protect children from childhood and adult obesity (Graham, Hochfeld, Stuart & Van Gent, 2015) as well as improve performance on the sports field (Hochfeld, Graham, Peters, Patel, Nyathela & Moodley, 2013; Mawela & Van den Berg, 2018).

In addition to the nutrition and health advantages, the social and community benefits of school nutrition programmes should not be underestimated. In the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP), food handlers are contracted annually from the community and paid a stipend. The community and family benefit when surplus food is given to vulnerable learners to take home (Graham *et al.*, 2015; Hochfeld *et al.*, 2013; Mawela & Van den Berg, 2018; Mkosi, Wenhold & Sibanda, 2014). The programme boosts the local economy as well as generating job opportunities for cooks, caterers and transporters to local communities in the vicinity of the school (Sanousi, 2019; Sumberg & Sabates-Wheeler, 2011). The NSNP has the potential to be a reliable and stable market for smallholder farmers (Zwane, 2014), depending on the contract system used in the procurement process (Kallman, 2005). Food handlers learn skills, such as hygienic food practices and cooking in bulk, which can be used to gain future employment or to run small businesses since they are required for weddings or other catering events. The school feeding programme has the potential to be an important component of an overall strategy to alleviate the effects of poverty and inequality (Mawela & Van den Berg, 2018).

From the discussion above, it is clear that the positive impacts of the NSNP have been documented with studies generally focused on

evaluating the impact of school feeding on nutritional status, school attendance and educational outcomes. Unfortunately, the well-being of the food handlers who play a significant role in the success of the programme has not been studied. After continuous in-depth literature searches, no papers on job satisfaction or the career prospects of food handlers were found. This paper focuses on food handlers in the NSNP with specific reference to career prospects and their levels of job satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Food handlers in the National School Nutrition Programme

The South African government allocates R21.7 billion annually to feed over 9 million learners through the NSNP in all nine provinces. The Conditional Grant Framework (CGF) (South Africa, 2017), reveals that 96% of the grant funding is channelled to the NSNP to feed the huge number of learners from the marginalised communities attending quintile 1 to 3 schools. This massive demand for school nutrition intervention has been necessitated by the prevalence of food access problems in the majority of South African provinces.

Managing the NSNP is a huge operation that requires a capable workforce to prepare and serve nutritious meals to learners. In order for this operation to be a success, employee morale is of crucial importance (Bakotić, 2016). Employee morale is related to job satisfaction which is itself correlated with organisational performance (Latif *et al.*, 2015; Mafini & Pooe, 2013).

In trying to meet this demand, a substantial number of the parents of learners in public schools are recruited to work as food handlers in the NSNP which is mandated to create job opportunities for local people within its function to provide nutritious meals for school children. It is estimated that about 50 000 parents annually work as food handlers in the programme (DBE, 2015; Department of Planning, Monitoring and

Evaluation (DPME), 2016). As a result, the NSNP significantly alleviates unemployment in low socio-economic communities.

Typically, food handlers are unemployed parents of learners within the local community and are recruited on a rotational basis for twelve months (DBE, 2011/12). This arrangement has implications since it has been reported in the wider literature that a lack of job security (Theodossiou & Zangelidis, 2009), or employment on a temporary basis (Aleksynska, 2018), has a significant effect on job satisfaction (Theodossiou & Zangelidis, 2009) and impacts negatively on productivity (Bakotić, 2016). Furthermore, at the beginning of every year, there is a new group of food handlers who are not familiar with the objectives and dynamics of the programme. Towards the end of contracts, a lack of income becomes a reality for NSNP food handlers which, in turn, leads to charged emotions, bitterness and sorrow (Kwatubana & Makhaleni, 2015).

The mandate of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) in South Africa is to provide nutritious meals for all targeted learners in public schools across the country (DBE, 2015). This key output of the programme is dependent on the skills competency levels of food handlers. A lack of training among NSNP food handlers can have a negative effect on the efficacy of the programme, while this shortcoming tends to place at risk the standard of service rendered to customers (Lowry, Simon & Kimberly, 2002). Operational reviews suggest that the training of NSNP employees is not providing the required results (DBE, 2015; DPME, 2016; New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), 2013) because it does not take place on a regular basis (Berejena, 2015). This results in food handlers having very little knowledge of food practices and principles (Sibanyoni, 2017).

The implications of skills problems like this are familiar in the general literature. Employee training has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016; Khuong & Tien, 2013; Lee & Bruvold, 2003; Vasudevan, 2014). Moreover, training results in benefits

such as the development of profitable and adaptable, as well as efficient, organisations, and productive, contented employees (Kulkarni, 2013). Many employees show appreciation for the organisation's investment in their development by indicating that they derive value from training and, in turn, become motivated, committed and productive (Jasson & Govender, 2017). Training fosters self-development, self-confidence and problem-solving skills (Ukandu & Ukpere, 2013). On the other hand, a lack of training tends to compromise the service rendered to customers (Lowry *et al.*, 2002), and quality standards in an organisation (Lashley & Best, 2002).

From the literature it is clear that the NSNP is not only advantageous to the school children through the provision of healthy meals but also benefits the community through the provision of employment to parents of learners from these schools. Food handlers experience that limited training impacts negatively on the food practices followed during food preparation. The questions arise "How do the food handlers experience their jobs and do they have any career prospects after their contracts expire?"

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A convergent parallel mixed-method design was used to identify career prospects and job satisfaction of NSNP food handlers. This design is known for complementing distinctively different data in a topic by integrating information for the purpose of analysis and interpretation. A convergent parallel design is the most well-known approach to mixing methods which are intended to bring together the varying strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In this study, a population of 305 secondary schools, offering the NSNP in all 15 educational districts of Gauteng, constituted the target population. Due to a number of unforeseen circumstances, 15 schools did not take part in the study. Probability sampling was used at each school to identify one food handler who became part of a sample of 290 NSNP food

handlers. All 15 District Nutrition Co-ordinators (DNCs) in Gauteng were interviewed.

A structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview schedule were used as instruments to collect data from two different units of assessment. The questionnaires consisted of closed-ended questions, which were formulated in advance, as referred to by Maree (2012), as "a *priori* categories". The closed-ended questions provided information on the age, educational background, and challenges faced by the NSNP food handlers.

The data on job satisfaction among the NSNP food handlers were evaluated on a Likert scale on which 1 is ranked as not satisfied, 2 as partially satisfied, 3 as satisfied and 4 as highly satisfied. A Likert scale was ideal for measuring the job satisfaction levels of NSNP food handlers in this study as it offers respondents a wide range of responses where there are possible variations in opinion or attitude (Lee, 2013). A five-point Likert scale was avoided because the presence of a mid-point scale has a tendency to misrepresent data gathered (Antun, Frash, Costen & Runyan, 2010). Career prospects and failure to find employment after the expiry of the NSNP contract were measured on a dichotomous scale.

Qualitative data for this study were gathered in semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews comprise several major questions that help to identify the areas to be explored, while also allowing the interviewer to deviate from or to pursue responses in more detail (Minhat, 2015). The interview questions were developed from the questionnaire, which was administered at schools. The Gauteng Provincial Department of Education Directorate granted the researcher consent to conduct research in secondary schools within all 15 districts (M2017/409). To commence the data collection exercise, the researcher was provided with an ethical clearance letter from the Tshwane University of Technology (FREC201/FR/06/003-MS).

Statistical data from the questionnaire was captured on an Excel spreadsheet which

TABLE 1: AGE RANGE AND EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF NSNP GAUTENG FOOD HANDLERS (N=290)

The age of food handlers (years)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Below 30	64	22.1
31-40	92	31.7
41-50	117	40.4
51-60	17	5.9
61+	0	0
The educational levels of food handlers (years)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Primary	98	33.8
Secondary	192	66.2
Certificate	0	0
Diploma	0	0
Degree	0	0

reorganised raw data into a workable format. The captured data were analysed using Stata v15 statistical analysis software. To determine and explain the relationships between variables descriptive statistics, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and Pearson's Chi-square were used. The Cronbach Alpha tests performed showed good internal consistency with Cronbach Alpha scores of 0.9721. Descriptive thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. A variable narrative analysis was used to describe and explain themes.

RESULTS

Age and educational level of food handlers (N=290)

Age range and educational levels are known factors that tend to influence future career prospects of an individual. The majority of food handlers (54.0% n=156), indicated that they were younger than 41 years. (Table 1).

The highest frequency (40.4%, n=117) was between 41 - 50 years while the lowest frequency (5.9%, n=17) was between the ages 51 - 60 years and no participants were over 60 years. The study established that 72.1% of NSNP food handlers in Gauteng were between 31 and 50 years, whereas few were 30 years or younger (22.1%) and even fewer over 51 years (5.9%).

When considering educational levels, more than half (66.2%, n=192) of food handlers had formal education up to secondary level, while 33.8% (n=98) had formal primary education only. In the sample population, no NSNP food handlers had tertiary qualifications such as national certificates, diplomas or degrees.

Career prospects

Referring to career prospects, the majority (83%, n=241) of the NSNP food handlers doubted that they would secure employment after the expiration of NSNP contracts, with only a few (17%, n=49) being certain. This illustrates that, after the expiry of a one-year contract with the NSNP, food handlers thought they would find themselves back in the vicious circle of poverty as they fail to secure employment.

During the interviews conducted with 15 DNCs, they also indicated that the food handlers have limited career prospects when their contracts expire. The DNCs were in a good position to comment on the functioning and perceptions of the food handlers as they have experience from seeing food handlers come and go over the years as well as the challenges that the food handlers face. The interview results further indicated that the poor career prospects could be attributed to low literacy levels of the food handlers (See Table 2)

TABLE 2: INTERVIEW COMMENTS OF DNCS

Question	Comments	Interviewee codes
"Comment on the career prospects for the food handlers after the expiry of their NSNP contracts?"	"The food handlers have limited career prospects after leaving the NSNP because someone of their age are no longer marketable on the job market."	NC1, NC2, NC5, NC6, NC7, NC8, NC12, NC13, NC15
	"They have limited career prospects because they lack formal qualifications."	NC4, NC14
	"They have got a challenge due to the low literacy rate and securing employment at the end of the contract is very limited."	NC3, NC9, NC10, NC14
"What solutions would you suggest to improve the career prospects for the NSNP food handlers?"	"They should be considered and recruited as part of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)."	C4, NC9 p
	"A strategic meeting should be held to recruit the NSNP food handlers for more than a year."	NC2
	"They should be considered for Further Education and Training (FET) in aspects like entrepreneurship, food preparation and literacy skills."	NC1, NC5, NC7, NC8, NC10, NC11, NC14
	"They should be awarded some certificates after training in the NSNP"	NC3, NC6, NC12 NC13, NC15

Challenges faced by food handlers

Besides this reported uncertainty about career prospects, NSNP food handlers face other challenges that compromise their level of job satisfaction. The many challenges impacting job satisfaction of food handlers are presented in Figure 1 below.

The results show that only one challenge out of five did not affect the NSNP food handlers: the majority (63.5%, n=184) did not face challenges relating to poor relationships with fellow workers.

Of the 290 respondents, 73.4% (n=213) agreed that extreme fatigue after work was a recurring challenge they grappled with. Other challenges that impacted job satisfaction among NSNP food handlers included frequent accidents in the kitchen (61.6%, n=179) and difficulties in using kitchen equipment (55.1%, n=160).

Furthermore, the majority (70.7%, n=205) of NSNP food handlers always worked under extreme pressure during food preparation and service time. This challenge was ongoing because each food handler was expected to

prepare and serve meals to 200 learners per day.

When job satisfaction levels of food handlers were measured, the majority had low scores. The levels of job satisfaction for the food handlers are presented in Figure 2 below.

The lowest frequency indicates that only 11% (n=32) of food handlers were highly satisfied, while 13.8% (n=41) were satisfied. Some 21.7% (n=64) indicated that they were not satisfied, while more than half (53.5%, n=154) were partially satisfied. These results showed that only a quarter (25%, n=73) enjoyed job satisfaction while three-quarters of food handlers (75%, n=217) did not have job satisfaction in the NSNP.

Considering that food handlers were of different age groups, a test for independence was performed to establish the relationship between the age of food handlers in the NSNP and their level of job satisfaction. The results are tabulated below (Table 3).

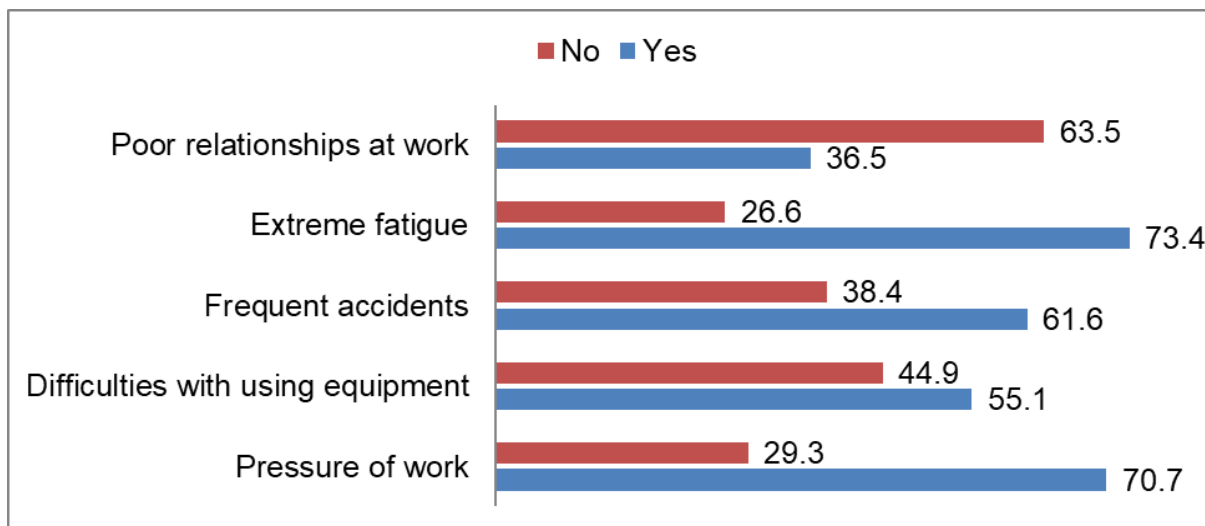


FIGURE 1: CHALLENGES FACED BY FOOD HANDLERS IN THE NSNP

These results show a significant statistical relationship between the age of the food handlers and the level of job satisfaction. A Chi-square p-value of 0.003 was measured, therefore (p-value < 0.005), there was a significant difference between the level of job satisfaction among the youngest food handlers and the oldest. It was evident that 68.1% of food handlers who were below 30 years were either not satisfied or partially satisfied compared to 89.5% of those between 51 and 60 years. More young food handlers (31.9%) who were below 30 years were either satisfied or highly satisfied compared to 10.5% of those between the ages of 51 and 60. Therefore, the older the food handler, the lower the job satisfaction level.

Furthermore, a test for independence was

performed to establish the relationship between the age of food handlers and the challenges they experienced in executing their NSNP duties. The results are tabulated below (Table 4).

As indicated in Table 4, there was a significant relationship between the age of food handlers and the challenges they experienced in executing their NSNP duties. All the challenges in Table 4 scored individual Chi-square p-values between 0.099 and 0.000, therefore p-values < 0.05. There is thus sufficient statistical evidence to suggest that a significant relationship exists between challenges experienced and the age of food handlers. In particular, 72.5% of the age group below 30 years experienced more

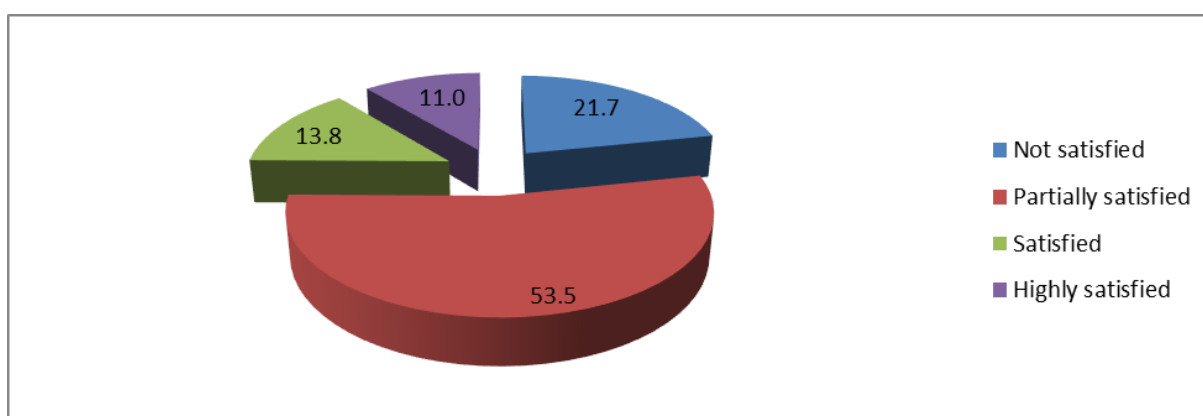


FIGURE 2: JOB SATISFACTION OF FOOD HANDLERS

TABLE 3: RELATIONSHIP ANALYSIS BETWEEN AGE AND THE LEVEL OF JOB SATISFACTION

	Cross tabulation				Chi-square		
	Not satisfied	Partially satisfied	Satisfied	Highly satisfied	Df	Value	P-value
< 30	23.2	44.9	13.0	18.8	9	24.5730	0.003
31-40	22.4	43.9	18.7	15.0			
41-50	17.9	69.5	9.5	3.3			
51-60	26.3	63.2	10.5	0.0			

TABLE 4: RELATIONSHIP ANALYSIS BETWEEN AGE AND CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY FOOD HANDLERS

Consideration		Cross tabulation				Chi-square		
		Below 30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Df	Value	P- Value
Pressure of work during food preparation	Yes	72.5	71.0	54.7	42.1	3	11.9482	0.008
	No	27.5	29.0	45.3	57.9			
Difficulties in using kitchen equipment	Yes	75.4	46.7	35.8	47.4	3	25.9379	0.000
	No	24.6	53.3	64.2	52.6			
Frequent injuries and accidents in the kitchen	Yes	65.2	60.8	43.2	57.9	3	9.7355	0.021
	No	34.8	39.3	56.8	42.1			
Extreme tiredness after work	Yes	87.0	63.6	60.0	42.1	3	20.2712	0.000
	No	13.0	36.5	40.0	57.9			
Failure to secure employment after NSNP contract	Yes	65.2	74.8	81.1	84.2	3	6.2649	0.099
	No	34.8	25.2	19.0	15.8			
Poor relationships among food handlers	Yes	44.9	33.6	25.3	26.3	3	7.4027	0.060
	No	55.1	66.4	74.7	73.7			

TABLE 5: RELATIONSHIP ANALYSIS BETWEEN WORK EXPERIENCE AND CHALLENGES

Challenges		Cross tabulation		Chi-square		
		Less than a year	1-3 Years	Df	Value	Pr- Value
Pressure of work during food preparation	Yes	65.8	57.6	1	1.3651	0.243
	No	34.2	42.4			
Difficulties in using kitchen equipment	Yes	51.5	44.1	1	1.0426	0.307
	No	48.5	55.9			
Frequent injuries and accidents	Yes	58.0	47.5	1	2.1219	0.145
	No	42.0	52.5			
Extreme fatigue after work	Yes	68.4	59.3	1	1.7392	0.187
	No	31.6	40.7			
Failure to get employment after expiring of the NSNP contract	Yes	72.3	86.4	1	5.0392	0.025
	No	27.7	13.6			
Poor relationships among the NSNP food handlers	Yes	33.3	32.2	1	0.0271	0.869
	No	66.7	67.8			

pressure at work when compared to 42.1% of those between 51 and 60 years.

The same trend was manifest in reported difficulties of using kitchen equipment, experiencing more accidents in the kitchen and

poor relationships among food handlers, of which all scored p-values of < 0.005. The reason for young food handlers experiencing more challenges than the older ones may be due to the lack of life skills when they join the NSNP. Nevertheless, 84.2% of food handlers above the

age of 51 experienced the challenge of securing employment after the expiry of the NSNP contract as compared to those below the age of 30. This variable scored a Chi-square p-value of 0.099 (p -value < 0.005) which implies sufficient statistically significant evidence to suggest that the challenge of securing employment after the expiration of the NSNP contract is related to age. It could be that younger food handlers perceive their ability to find employment more positively compared to older food handlers. The older food handlers could have been looking for jobs without success which influenced them to perceive it as a challenge.

Relationship analysis between work experience and challenges

A Chi-square test was conducted to examine whether there was a relationship between work experience and the other six challenges experienced. The respondents' work experience include previous employment and was not restricted to NSNP employment. The results are illustrated in Table 5 below. Based on the results in Table 5, there is no positive relationship between the challenges experienced by food handlers and their work experience.

Of the six challenges in Table 5, five individually scored Chi-square p-values between 0.145 and 0.869, therefore p -values > 0.05 . There is no significant statistical evidence to validate that challenges experienced by NSNP food handlers are related to their work experience. The same insignificant difference was observed in aspects such as pressure of work, difficulties in using kitchen equipment, frequent injuries and accidents, extreme fatigue after work and poor relationships among food handlers.

In particular, 33.3% of food handlers with less than 1 year of work experience established poor relationships at work as compared to 32.2% of those with 1 to 3 years of experience. These results were expected, as new relationships have to be formed consistently due to new employment contracts.

Table 5 shows that only one aspect scored a Chi-square p-value 0.025 (p -value < 0.05). This result shows a significant statistical difference between the food handlers who thought that they would experience challenges to get employment after the expiration of the NSNP contract and those who thought that they would not experience it as a problem.

As shown in Table 5, no statistical relationship exists between five of the six challenges experienced by food handlers and their work experience. There is no significant statistical evidence to prove that challenges experienced by NSNP food handlers are related to their work experience. There is not much difference between the challenges experienced by those with less than 1 year of work experience and those with work experience between 1 and 3 years. The same non-significant difference was observed in challenges such as pressure of work, difficulties in using kitchen equipment and extreme fatigue after work.

DISCUSSION

The benefits of the NSNP are short-lived for the local parents who work in the programme as food handlers in Gauteng. The problem arises from short contracts which cause anxiety due to uncertainty of securing future employment after the expiry of the NSNP contracts. However, the contract period has now been extended to two years after the study was conducted. Longer contracts will reduce administration and recruitment and will also provide better skilled food handlers as they would gain more experience which could then improve the opportunity to find employment after their contracts expire. It is not clear how the parents who were waiting for possible employment felt about the extended contracts. The DNC recognized that the food handlers had limited career prospects after leaving the NSNP.

The uncertainty of future employment is attributed to the profile of food handlers. None of the NSNP food handlers in Gauteng possess a

post-secondary qualification, which makes it difficult for them to be marketable in the job sector. The DNC perceived the poor career prospects of the food handlers to the low literacy rates. It is important to note that although the DNCs reported on the food handlers' low literacy rates a substantial number (66.2%) of food handlers had completed secondary school which should be adequate for the type of work they had to do as well as for future employment. They also attributed the lack of employment opportunities to the lack of formal qualifications. Food handlers in the NSNP have low levels of education as the majority have only secondary education. In a study conducted in KwaZulu Natal, some food handlers (37%) had not gone beyond primary school, thereby compromising their literacy standard (Legbara & Selepe, 2017). As illiteracy among members of the immediate community is one of the reasons for a school to benefit from the NSNP (Gresse, Nomvete & Walter, 2017), high levels of illiteracy among food handlers in these communities is not only to be expected but also weakens their career prospects. In contrast to the relatively low literacy rates documented in this study, most food handlers in Mpumalanga had a high school education (Sibanyoni, Tshabalala & Tabit, 2017) which could improve their ability to be trained as well as their career prospects.

The career prospects of NSNP food handlers are further impacted by the advanced age of some of them. As indicated above, the perception of DNCs was that "food handlers have limited career prospects because of their age and are no longer marketable on the job market". With only 5.9% of the food handlers being older than 50, this is a concerning perception, meaning that the food handlers in the age group of 41-50 are also perceived as too old for new careers after their NSNP contracts expired. DNCs felt that food handlers' career prospects would be improved if they are considered and recruited as part of the EPW programme. The low level of job satisfaction among NSNP food handlers in Gauteng is of major concern. Extreme fatigue and pressure of work have been identified as worrisome factors that contribute to low levels of job satisfaction.

The ratio of learners per food handler is 1:200 (DBE, 2015), which causes food handlers to experience a lot of pressure (Sibanyoni, 2017). As extreme pressure of work is a threat to health which could lead to illnesses among NSNP food handlers in future, the workload of NSNP food handlers needs to be addressed to ensure optimal work practices (Machado, Monego & Campos, 2014; Samapundu, Climat, Xhafeni & Devlieghere, 2015).

A lack of education and training is known to impact job satisfaction levels. DNCs felt that the food handlers should be considered for Further Education and Training (FET) in entrepreneurship, food preparation and literacy skills, for example, to improve their career prospects and job satisfaction. Employee training has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016; Khuong & Tien, 2013; Lee & Bruvold, 2003; Vasudevan, 2014). A study in the KwaZulu Natal province by Legbara and Selepe (2017) had shown that the majority of the NSNP food handlers in the province never underwent nutrition training. Training tends to increase job satisfaction levels, motivation and commitment to work (Jasson & Govender, 2017). Employees with a formal qualification are motivated by meaningful and stimulating job content which, in turn, encourages increased productivity. Evidence shows that a lack of training impacts job satisfaction of employees and quality standards in an organisation (Lashley & Best, 2002). The DNCs felt that food handlers should receive a certificate after training and working in the NSNP to improve their career prospects.

One of the limitations of this study is that only current food handlers were part of the study. The perceptions of previous food handlers regarding career prospects could have improved the understanding of the problem.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The major reasons perceived for the limited future employment of NSNP food handlers were a lack of formal qualifications and the advanced age of some of the food handlers, consequently

NSNP food handlers are destined to become unemployed at the end of their contracts. Evidence gathered in this study suggests that NSNP food handlers in this Gauteng sample do not have high levels of job satisfaction.

The extended contract period of food handlers will reduce stress among the NSNP food handlers. Creating a range of positions for NSNP food handlers could mean retaining some food handlers for longer periods. It could also be advantageous if the NSNP target community members with at least formal secondary school education for employment as food handlers. Formal certification after training is recommended to help ensure better career prospects. Continuous training of food handlers cannot be underestimated as it impacts job satisfaction significantly. Induction training programmes for first time food handlers could help them cope better with the many challenges that they experience, as it was clear that the food handlers with less than a year of work experience, experienced more challenges compared to the ones with more than 1 year of work experience. Job satisfaction will lead to the empowerment of community members and boost self-confidence. Empowerment might also mean that food handlers could start entrepreneurial activities leading to job opportunities that did not previously exist in their communities. Improved job satisfaction through targeted training programmes for food handlers will ensure that these employees will achieve their full potential, with increased empowerment levels.

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