

JOB SATISFACTION AMONG RECREATION PRACTITIONERS

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Abstract: Job satisfaction among recreation professionals can be affected by many working conditions. This study has investigated the impact fourteen variables had on the job satisfaction of recreation practitioners. The sample consisted of 106 responses from members of the Resort and Commercial Recreation Association (RCRA). The results of the regression analysis for job satisfaction indicate that for recreation practitioners, five variables (type of work you do, goals of organizations, control in work life, hours per week and current salary) out of fourteen lead to greater job satisfaction; the strongest variable was "type of work you do". This may lead us to believe that the more important and worthwhile the work is for the employee, the more satisfied the employee will be with their job. One variable (current salary) led to both greater overall job and overall career satisfaction. Only one variable (working conditions) led to only overall career satisfaction. This may show support for the job characteristics theory, whereby the more involved the employee is with his/her job the higher the chance of job satisfaction.

Introduction

An understanding of the relationship between perceived job characteristics and job satisfaction would enable public and private leisure service managers to more effectively manage their resources. According to the job characteristics theory, enrichment and the resultant motivating potential of jobs is determined by the core job dimensions. When these core dimensions are highly evident in jobs they trigger three critical psychological states in individuals: experienced meaningfulness, sense of responsibility, and knowledge of actual work results (Nogradi, Yardley, & Kanters, 1993). Nogradi, et al. (1993) noted an employee who experiences these psychological states is more likely to be satisfied, willing to exert effort toward task accomplishment, and thus prosper at work. The primary purpose of this study was to determine what factors determine a recreation professional's job satisfaction.

This study was performed to better understand what characteristics of the recreational profession led to overall job satisfaction in the field. Specifically, this study sought to determine what variables were most highly correlated to job satisfaction and overall career satisfaction. This research asked the following questions:

1. What variables lead to overall job satisfaction?
2. What variables lead to overall career satisfaction?
3. Does overall career satisfaction differ based on current job satisfaction?

Literature Review

The labor force in the leisure services profession is changing, organizational structures are being evaluated and reorganized, social and economic forces are new, diverse, and constantly evolving as are client leisure interests. The future labor force will reflect the values of baby boomers that place importance on jobs with variety, flexibility, choice, emphasis on autonomy, and ownership (Robinson, 1989). In these days of rapid and diverse changes, it is essential for leisure managers to gain new insights into employee motivation. The greater appreciation and understanding of critical work related employee values currently are seen as important links to increasing organizational output and individual productivity. It is important for managers of recreation and leisure service organizations to help employees feel and become empowered within their area of responsibility. Hobbs (1987) noted that employees in parks and recreation "appreciate the opportunity to express their ideas about how their job could be made easier, more productive, or less wasteful. Peters and Waterman (1982) have argued that productivity of an organization should be through people: Creating awareness that their best efforts are essential and that they will share in the rewards of the organizations success.

Research about motivation has been a popular subject written about in organizational literature. Herzberg (1959) developed a model to explain employee motivation known as the two-factor theory. Herzberg argued that two sets of variables were relevant to the question of motivation. One set, the "hygiene factors" related to job dissatisfaction; the other set, "motivators" related to job satisfaction. Herzberg theorized that variables associated with job satisfaction (recognition and opportunities for achievement) would lead to increased productivity and motivated workers. He argued that improvements in hygiene factors such as pay would not increase job satisfaction; instead any improvements would simply reduce dissatisfaction. This theory of motivation indicates that to motivate employees the job must be challenging. Higher level needs can be defined as job growth, achieving work related goals, and have a role in decision making. Lankford (1992) noted that the opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction but rather "no job satisfaction". Consequently, motivators and hygiene factors should not be considered opposite; they should be seen as complimentary. Both must be maintained at the highest level, or the result may be employees who are not operating at full proficiency.

Controversy about the effect of job satisfaction and performance can go back as far as the Hawthorne studies conducted during 1920 and 1930. Some authors have interpreted the findings of these studies as indicators that higher levels of job satisfaction lead to higher levels of worker performance, a conclusion that some argue was never present in the original research reports and is thus a

misinterpretation (Organ, 1986). Whether it is a misinterpretation or not the Hawthorne studies are usually credited for the discovery that a happy worker is a more productive worker.

Job characteristics theory continues to be the most prominent model for assessing and designing jobs. This distinction is due to the evidence that enriched jobs have a positive effect on job effectiveness outcomes. According to job characteristics theory, enrichment and the resultant motivating potential of jobs is determined by the core job dimensions. When these core dimensions are highly evident in jobs, they trigger three critical psychological states in individuals: experienced meaningfulness, a sense of personal responsibility and a knowledge of the actual work results. Employees who experience such psychological states are more likely to be satisfied, willing to exert effort toward task accomplishment, and thus prosper at work (Nogradi et al, 1993).

In spite of the popularity of job characteristics theory, research efforts have been burdened with problems. Job characteristics theory posits that core job dimensions interact with certain individual difference variables in determining job effectiveness outcomes. Enriched jobs merely hold the potential for motivating individuals. Transformation of this potential into reality is contingent on the attributes of the person involved. Much of job characteristics research has either ignored person-work environment relationship or has almost exclusively focused on variables that have been explicitly included in the original theory.

Methods

This study was conducted in the summer of 2000. Data was collected from members of the Resort and Commercial Recreation Association (RCRA). A total of 444 members were sent a mail survey and 160 individuals responded, resulting in a 36% response rate. Job satisfaction variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 was "very satisfied" and 5 was "very unsatisfied". Overall job satisfaction and overall career satisfaction was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 was "very satisfied" and 5 was "very unsatisfied".

All data were analyzed using SPSS 10.0 for Windows. A stepwise regression analysis was performed to test which variable contributed to overall job satisfaction and overall career satisfaction.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

The results of the descriptive analyses are shown in Table 1. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents were female while 33% were male. Thirty percent were between the ages of 26 and 30. Twenty-one percent were between the

ages 31 and 35. Of the respondents, nearly 70% possessed a bachelors degree and 15% held a masters degree. Eighty seven percent of the respondents were directors of recreation or activities and 25% were department/program managers. Twenty five percent earn between 30,000 and 35,999 dollars. The largest group of respondents (26.8%) had been in the field 6-10 years.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

| <u>Gender</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
|------------------------|----------|----------|
| Male | 106 | 66.9% |
| Female | 54 | 33.1% |
| <u>Age</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| <21 | 2 | 1.3% |
| 22-25 | 22 | 13.8% |
| 26-30 | 48 | 30.2% |
| 31-35 | 33 | 20.8% |
| 36-40 | 16 | 10.0% |
| 41-45 | 14 | 8.8% |
| 46-50 | 13 | 8.2% |
| 51+ | 11 | 6.7% |
| <u>Education</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| Associates Degree | 10 | 6.0% |
| Bachelors Degree | 111 | 69.0% |
| Masters Degree | 24 | 15.0% |
| Doctorate | 1 | .6% |
| <u>Responsibility</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| Administrator | 118 | 73.8% |
| Supervisor | 30 | 18.8% |
| Line staff | 3 | 1.9% |
| Other | 9 | 5.6% |
| <u>Compensation</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| under 24,000 | 29 | 18.1% |
| 24,000 - 29,999 | 30 | 18.8% |
| 30,000 - 35,999 | 41 | 25.6% |
| 36,000 - 41,999 | 24 | 15.0% |
| 42,000 - 47,999 | 9 | 5.6% |
| 48,000 - 53,999 | 11 | 6.9% |
| 54,000 - 59,999 | 4 | 12.7% |
| 60,000 - 65,999 | 2 | 12.1% |
| 66,000 - 71,999 | 2 | 19.7% |
| 72,000 - 77,999 | 1 | 26.8% |
| 78,000 - 83,999 | 1 | 9.6% |
| 84,000 - + | 6 | 19.1% |
| <u>Years in Career</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>%</u> |
| 0-1 | 20 | 12.7% |
| 2-3 | 19 | 12.1% |
| 4-5 | 31 | 19.7% |
| 6-10 | 42 | 26.8% |
| 11-15 | 15 | 9.6% |
| 16-55 | 30 | 19.1% |

Job/Career Satisfaction Scores

As seen in Table 2, respondents seemed to be most satisfied with the type of work they do (1.54), the community they live in (1.74) and their housing situation (1.84). They were least satisfied with their Current salary (2.85), Free time (2.82) and the hours per week that they worked (2.50).

Table 2. Job/Career Satisfaction Scores

| Item | Mean | sd |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| Type of work you do | 1.54 | 0.65 |
| Community you live in | 1.74 | 0.78 |
| Housing situation | 1.84 | 0.93 |
| Your co-workers | 1.85 | 0.71 |
| Working conditions | 1.88 | 0.82 |
| Satisfied with this job | 1.98 | 0.84 |
| Benefits package | 2.14 | 0.90 |
| Control in personal life | 2.15 | 0.96 |
| Goals of organization | 2.17 | 0.89 |
| Control in work life | 2.24 | 0.98 |
| Management of organization | 2.25 | 1.03 |
| Professional respect | 2.30 | 1.08 |
| Hours per week | 2.50 | 1.03 |
| Free time | 2.82 | 1.22 |
| Current salary | 2.85 | 1.01 |

Note: Items were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale with 1 = high satisfaction and 5 = low satisfaction

Inferential and Multivariate Analysis

The results of the regression analysis for job satisfaction (Figure 1) revealed that five variables contributed to job satisfaction. These were “control in work life”, “type of work you do”, “current salary”, “goals of the organization” and “free time”. The most important variable impacting job satisfaction was the “type of work you do”. This may lead us to believe that the more important and worthwhile the work is for the employee, the more satisfied the employee will be with their job.

The results of the regression analysis for overall career satisfaction yielded four significant variables: “the type of you do”, “current salary”, “working conditions” and “free time”. The variable “type of work you do” was the strongest correlation with career satisfaction but “current salary” also had a strong correlation. The revealed that the current salary of an employee has a strong effect on their overall career satisfaction. The variables “type of work you do”, “current salary” and “free time” were shared by both job satisfaction and career satisfaction. “Control in work life” and “goals of the organization” affected job satisfaction, but not career satisfaction. This may show support for the job characteristics theory, whereby the more involved the employee is with his/her job the higher the chance of job satisfaction.

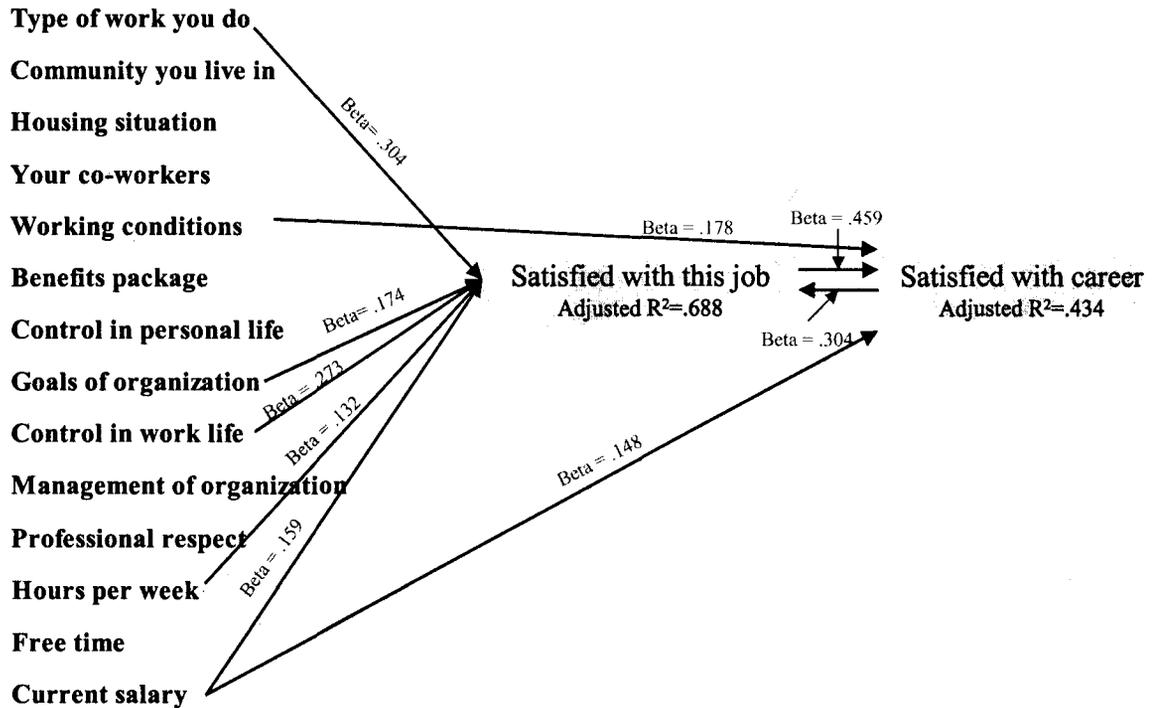


Figure 1. Regression Model

Discussion and Conclusions

The results of this study indicated that a recreation professional's job satisfaction and career satisfaction is impacted mostly by the satisfaction in the type of work he or she performs and his/her current salary. An important finding is that employers might be more successful in their business if they ensure their employees are content with the type of work they do and that their salary level is adequate. Thus an employee is more likely to be satisfied, more willing to put forth extra effort and overall be more satisfied with work if these two criteria are met.

Attracting and retaining qualified staff is a major challenge for recreation managers in all sectors particularly in times of low unemployment. This issue is particularly important in the hospitality industry where annual turnover is reported as high as 90% - 130% (Angelo & Vladimir, 1999). The tourism industry is characterized as offering low salaries, long hours, and little career satisfaction. This study found the respondents were less than happy with their compensation and working hours, respondents to this survey were fairly satisfied with their jobs and careers. A better understanding of the factors other than wages and hours that affect job and career satisfaction for this group could assist in attracting and retaining employees in other areas of the recreation and hospitality industries.

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