

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG VOCATIONAL  
REHABILITATION COUNSELORS IN A MIDWESTERN STATE

by

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ABSTRACT

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American Psychological Association (APA) Manual used in this study

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This study investigated job satisfaction among vocational rehabilitation counselors in a Midwestern state. One hundred, twenty-two vocational rehabilitation counselors participated in the study. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)-short form was used to measure the level of job satisfaction. The results indicate there was a significant general satisfaction level and Intrinsic and Extrinsic satisfaction scores were similar to other norms gathered by the University of Minnesota, Vocational Psychological Research. The implications of the findings for the future of rehabilitation counselors were discussed.

TITLE PAGE

ABSTRACT

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

This chapter will introduce the topic of job satisfaction and the potential impact it may have on Rehabilitation counselors. The concept of work and the importance of work to persons with disabilities will be introduced along with the statement of the problem to be investigated.

“Work determines a person’s worth and place in society and it influences one’s psychological identity and sense of well-being. Work establishes one in the community of human kind. It links a person to others, advances the goals of culture, and gives purpose to one’s very existence” (Szymanski & Parker, 1996, p.1).

Work is dynamic, complex, and diverse in today’s society. Everyone develops their own meaning for and motivation to work. According to Terkel (1974, p.xi) in Working, a reason for working “is about a search, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash”. Throughout history the motivation to work has been determined by current value systems. In The Future of Work, (1973, p.2), Best explained “Work is a purposeful human activity, directed toward the satisfaction of human needs and desires”. He also states some important objectives work satisfies are “income, a sense of identity, a sense of purpose in life, and a sense of community” (73, p.10).

Work is a driving force which keeps our society surviving. It is a central theme during conversation while away from the job. What an individual does for a living often adds to their self-esteem and helps to explain the activities they complete during the majority of the day. Titles are assigned to different jobs to explain main functions completed. “A

title, like clothes, may not make the man or woman but it helps in the world of peers”  
(Terkel, 1974, p.xvii).

### People with Disabilities

People with disabilities have many obstacles to overcome in their search for work. The Disability and Rehabilitation Handbook defines a person with a disability as “one who is structurally, physiologically, or psychologically different from the normal person because of an accident, disease, or developmental problems” (1978, p.12).

### Fulfillment of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Employment was the main emphasis upon passage of Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It “mandated federal-state rehabilitation programs to serve people with severe disabilities” (Rubin & Roessler, 1995, p.46). “The primary purpose of the state-federal vocational rehabilitation system is to assist individuals with disabilities with obtaining and maintaining meaningful employment” (Kosciulek, Vessell, Rosenthal, Accardo, Merz, 1997, p.7). Two facets of Vocational Rehabilitation system are Vocational Evaluation and Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling.

### Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors Role

The main function of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is to assist people with unique vocational needs to acquire necessary services or employment. They fulfill this purpose by executing multiple tasks. The knowledge domains these professionals utilize range from information about disability; the world of work; basic counseling techniques; case coordination; vocational evaluation; and a broad knowledge of the spectrum of work. Roessler & Rubin (1992, p.9) “help define the vocational counseling part of the rehabilitation counselor’s job include the following:

1. Counsels with clients regarding educational and vocational implications of test and interview information.
2. Suggests to client occupational areas compatible with the vocational, psychological, and social information gathered to improve the appropriateness of his or her rehabilitation choice.
3. Examines with the client the consequence of his or her disability and its vocational significance.
4. Explores with the client his or her vocational assets and liabilities in order to assure a realistic understanding and acceptance of them.
5. Recommends occupational and/or educational materials for clients to explore vocational alternatives.

The Vocational Counselor completes these functions in order to benefit the participant (client), by assisting him/her to fulfill his/her occupational goal. In some cases this may include employment. "Increased employment, in turn, allows individuals with disabilities to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make choices, contribute to society, and pursue meaningful careers." (Kosciulek, Vessell, Rosenthal, Accardo, Merz, 1997, p.5).

### Job Satisfaction

Thomas reports in Women in Business, (Jan/Feb. 99, p.13) "most Americans spend at least a third of their lives at work". Job Satisfaction is an individual's general feeling about the job one has or does. It is a dichotomy arranged on a scale, positive feelings (job satisfaction) are on one end and negative feelings (job dissatisfaction) occupy the opposite end of the scale. Job satisfaction is a complex Construct which can be defined individually.



Job satisfaction “ is often considered in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as proposed by Herzberg (1966). Intrinsic factors (e.g., opportunities for advancement and growth, recognition, responsibility, achievement) promote job satisfaction, whereas extrinsic factors (e.g., supervision, pay, policies, working conditions, interpersonal relations, security) prevent job dissatisfaction” (Szymanski & Parker, 1996, p.24). In order to prevent job dissatisfaction and retain employees in their current jobs, employers need to keep up with changing values related toward work.

#### Statement of Problem

The purpose of the study is to describe current job satisfaction among Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a Midwestern state, as measured by the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire.

#### Research Hypothesis

A review of the literature shows that “higher productivity was found to be related to higher satisfaction” (Wilkinson & Wagner, 1993, p.15). Other studies have also shown “counselors with higher satisfaction also had higher productivity in number of rehabilitation plans developed, number of rehabilitants, and number of severely disabled rehabilitants served” (Wilkinson & Wagner, 1993, p.23). Research implies “job satisfaction is important due to its impact on absenteeism, (1) turnover, (2) and prosocial “citizenship” behaviors such as helping coworkers, helping customers and being more cooperative” (Karl & Sutton, 1998, p.515).

### Objectives

This study will focus on the following objectives:

1. To determine the level of job satisfaction reported by Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a Midwestern state, using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire.
2. To identify demographics such as gender, age, years of education, and years of experience.
3. To determine the most important values to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a Midwestern state, such as: job security, pay, recognition, supervision, co-workers, or environment.

### CHAPTER II

### Review of Related Literature

This chapter will explore reasons why people work and the importance work has on society. Historical significance of work will be defined along a timeline. The meaning of work and the changes that occurred throughout time will be addressed. Four specific periods will be portrayed. These include: Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, the Middle Ages, the Industrial Revolution, and the present, as we progress through the Information Age into the future. Next, theories about the individual in relation to work will be discussed. Particularly, theories proposed by Maslow, Super, Holland, and Herzberg are included. Specific explanation included in this chapter are topics such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, career development theories clarified by Super, personality theories furnished by Holland, and the two-factor theory of Herzberg.

Discussion continues with clarification of the unique circumstances facing people with disabilities. Namely how their career development is affected, the Rehabilitation Act, and the Rehabilitation specialists involved in the process of assisting people with disabilities achieve vocational goals.

This chapter also summarizes current literature specific to job satisfaction. First, a definition and the importance of job satisfaction are reviewed. Next, include studies listing characteristics crucial to help ensure job satisfaction among employees.

Employers who are aware of the employee's present level of satisfaction, benefit in two ways. Current employees are retained and productivity is maximized. These benefits are wanted in the competitive society of today.

### Critique of Literature

A surplus of information was discovered on the broad spectrum of the world of work, historical views and attitudes of work, and theories about career development and motivation to work. Details about persons with disabilities in relation to work and his or her lifestyle were also plentiful. Although this researcher located many facts about satisfaction and job satisfaction as it relates to other professionals such as college professors, mental health counselors, managers, and business people, no recent information specific to current job satisfaction among Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in the state of MN, was located.

### Significance of Work in Society

Work is the driving force which society runs on. What individuals do is how they are defined. Work provides structure to daily activities and helps keep the economy stable. Needs are met by working such as, basic food and shelter, economic, and personal. In The Future of Work, (1973, p.10) Best explains some important objectives work satisfies are “income, a purpose in life, and a sense of community”. Without the activity of work, society would be chaotic. Applebaum (1992) states in The Concept of Work, “in part our habits and mind-sets are conditioned by what is created through work and no human society can exist without work”(1992, p.9). Levitan explains in, Second Thoughts on Work, (1970, p. 4), “the definition of work changes as the nature of work changes”. It is defined by the economic, social, and political situation of a particular society.

### Historical Definitions

Social and economic conditions, along with views of work have changed over time.

Conditions within society were drastically different during the early Greek and Roman Eras, the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and the Industrial Revolution as compared with today.

The motivation to work has changed since Ancient Greece and Rome. During this time period work was considered a religious act. This non-market society had a two class system, Nobles and commoners. They worked collaboratively, everyone contributed a portion to a communal Homeric institution. This Homeric society was an aristocratic extended family. The members of this group consisted of the immediate family, slaves, hired workers, and craftsmen . Vocational choice was not an option, individuals were born into the type of work their parents did. Early on in this time period three main reasons to work were necessity, survival, and prestige.

It was expected or necessary for everyone within the Homeric society to use his/her specialized skills for the continuation of the institution. Survival, was the second major motivational force to work or labor during these times. The majority of people raised or gathered there own food for nourishment so they could continue living. Farming was a highly prestigious career. Not only did farming help in sustenance of the population but the social view of farming was that it “was also a means of fostering habits and values of honesty and discipline considered to be important traits for the worthy individual”

(Applebaum, 1992, p.21). Society valued each individual’s contribution. Workers took pride in the work produced.

Advancement in new ideas and concepts brought drastic changes to the Grecian way of life. Two of these advancements were the development of a market economy and currency. The market economy widened the gap between the two class systems. Views about work changed among the aristocrats. Slavery became more prevalent during this time, mainly because of the widely accepted usage of the Hebrew word, Avodah. This word is derived from the same root as eved, meaning slave.

The upper class enjoyed pursuits of higher knowledge within schools of thought. They spent most of their leisure time becoming self-actualized. Early Grecian and Roman wealthy saw “work as something detestable and below them. Working on a voluntary basis was unheard of “ (Levitan,1970, p. 21). This strict social strata divided the world of work through the Middle Ages. Work had the negative connotation of servitude and humbleness until the Renaissance Period.

#### Middle Ages to Industrial Revolution

Communal lifestyle lasted throughout the Middle Ages. A majority of the population lived in small villages, were uneducated and worked the land. Medieval citizens had a close knit social structure. They lived, worked, and played together. Most of the necessary work was done within the community because outside trading was rare.

Changes in society redefined the meaning of work during the Renaissance. Advances in modern science, improvements in technology, a positive economy, and altering views about religion, guided people to view work contrary to the previous negative definition. It now became respectable to work. It was the “rightful duty of all” (Levitan, 1970, pp.21-22). Leisure was viewed as “the worst sin” (Levitan, 1970,pp.22). This belief continued until the Industrial Revolution.

Prior to the Industrial Revolution most people in America lived in an agrarian society. A large majority of the population lived in rural areas. Survival was still a motive to work. The people living in these rural settings farmed, they produced their own food or raised livestock to supply basic needs. Work and leisure were closely related. A barn raising or harvesting event provided a time to come together and celebrate with community, at the same time work was done. Farmers earned an income by selling items they raised. Monetary exchange for goods and services was done in trading for a product the farmer could provide. Education was minimal if at all. Vocational training was unnecessary because of the lack of career options. “A son most likely was trained to take over the occupation of his father” (Kroll, 1970, p.2).

### Industrial Revolution

The scene of the work world changed drastically with the transition from a rural to urban society during The Industrial Revolution. Young people were no longer satisfied with following in their parents footsteps in regards to career choice. “An increase of production factories in the cities increased vocational opportunities” (Kroll, 1970, p.2). Individuals began moving into an urban society in search of dreams of adventure and opportunity.

The Industrial Revolution brought increased mobility with this drastic shift of people moving to this urban setting. It also separated the home, leisure and work place (Glyptis, 1989, p.24). It became a necessity to go out of the home for work and leisure activities. The meaning of work became negative again. It was observed as an “obstacle to free time” (Levitan, 1970, p.21). This opinion was conceptualized “with the reduction of the standard work week from 60 hours to 40 hours in the sixties” (Glyptis, 1989, p.24). This

transformation created exactly what most people wanted, more time to spend doing leisure activities. Best reported in The Future of Work (1973, p.3), “leisure is an important part of an American’s life”.

### Present

The work ethic is still strong enough to determine status and influence in society, even though real power is based on wealth and ownership of property” states Applebaum (Concept of Work, 1992, p.573). Our prosperous economy and tremendous advances in the use of computer technology help to explain the meaning of work today.

### Environmental Trends Affecting the Workplace

We are involved in the Information Age. Three circumstances influencing how work is defined today are the economy, shift from goods to services, and advancing technology. Best (1973, p.18) described income to be about “fifty times” that of pre-industrial revolution years. We now are moving toward a world economy.

There are less people producing goods. Some factory jobs now have programmed computers to do the work which was once done by people. “In the United States, service industries, broadly defined, now account for 70% of the GNP and are 75% of all jobs” (Bruce & Blackburn, 1992, p.88).

Our motivation to work is no longer for survival in most cases (Levitan, 1970). Many Americans work for reasons other than food, shelter, and other basic needs. Some work to satisfy ulterior needs. An explanation of these needs will be portrayed along with the career development theories.

With the increased use of computers more vocational opportunities have surfaced than at any time previously. The computer technology of today requires additional specialized



training. There are elevated job requirements across a majority of fields. These strict prerequisites demand additional schooling which an individual needs to complete before entering his/her chosen career.

In the Post-Industrial society of today emphasis has changed. “Interest has shifted from product to profit, from workman to machine, from quality to efficiency, and from beauty to function. The satisfaction of work has been sacrificed to the rationalism of work (Applebaum, 1992, p.573)

### Theories

The theoretical models discussed in this section consist of the self-actualization hierarchy of Maslow, career developmental designs from Super and Holland, and Herzberg’s explanation of motivation and job satisfaction.

As humans, we respond at various need levels. Maslow proposes that we have five such levels. At the first, most basic level are physiological needs—food, sleep, sex, drink, shelter. These needs must be satisfied before an individual can be motivated at a second level—the safety needs. Safety needs such as security, stability, protection, and strength are important motivators when any sort of threat to these needs might be present. The third level consists of the belongingness and love needs, our social motivators... The fourth need level is identified by Maslow as the esteem needs. These needs represent both self-esteem, our desire for achievement and mastery, and esteem of others, our desire for reputation and prestige. These needs spring from our belongingness needs and represent a further stage in accomplishing our goals. Finally, at the fifth level in the hierarchy, Maslow identifies the need for self-actualization, our desire for self-

fulfillment and for realizing our potential. Maslow suggest that we may be striving for this if other needs have been met, but self-actualized person probably does not exist. (Wolvin,1988, p.306).

Career Development Theories are utilized to aid in clarification of an individual's pathway to a suitable career. Career Development Interventions (Burck & Reardon, 1984, p.8) claims theories are "useful to the specialist". They provide (a.) an organizational method for the client; (b.) provide focus for counseling goals and; (c.) help develop a method of working with a client (1984, p.8).

Super's life stages theory is explained according to Theories of Career Development (Osipow, 1968, pp.117-118). Super had two influences. The self-concept theory from Carl Rogers is the first. The second part of his theory came from Charlotte Buehler's developmental stages theory. Super believed one entered the profession where he/she would be able to best express themselves. He proposed everyone has differing abilities, interests, and personalities. These characteristics qualify them for a number of occupations. Qualifying attributes tend to change over one's lifetime due to his/her experiences and stage of career development.

There are five life stages. The first stage is the Growth Stage, during childhood. Children are first introduced to work through either household chores or yard work. Some of these jobs may be taking care of the lawn, helping with meal preparation, or caring for a family pet.

The exploratory stage often takes place during the teenage years. Teenagers usually learn about the world of work by trying out a variety of entry-level jobs. These may include:

working as a cashier at a store, waiting tables at a restaurant, or helping out on a farm or with field work. Presently, the ages which mark separate life stages tend to be elevated due to delayed entry into chosen careers. Some people are acquiring required knowledge to enter a highly specialized career field.

Career goals are generally set during the establishment stage (Pruitt, 1986, p.11). This stage starts with the completion of schooling and the start of the individual's career.

He/she has dreams of what a job is to offer, either monetarily or intrinsically. It is a belief by some, that when a potential career pathway is chosen one must enjoy the activity of the job. Since a third of a working individual's life is spent at work, it is optimal to satisfaction that one enjoys what he/she does.

People who have become well established in their career are considered in the maintenance phase. During this phase, the typical person may have children almost or already raised. At this time they may have more time to develop a hobby. Most often these activities occur during middle-age. The decline stage is generally the last stage of one's life. It may include retirement activities. "Career development is a life long process" (Brown & Brooks, 1990, p.3). Individuals are either "getting ready to choose, choosing, or continuing to choose" (Brown & Brooks, 1990, p.3) a career.

Super believed these stages could be further "subdivided into: fantasy, tentative, and realistic phases of the exploratory stage" (Osipow, 1968, p.120). The establishment stage could be divided into the trial and stable phases. A few factors were thought to determine a potential career path. Their parent's socioeconomic level, mental ability, personality, and personal life experiences were among the responsible characteristics.

A traumatic event is a personal life experience which upsets the traditional order individuals progress through these steps. One may find themselves back at the growth stage and have to work through the vocational developmental process again, after a serious injury. When assisting individuals with disabilities, it is important to consider a person's vocational maturity.

Frustration, a sense of being overwhelmed, confusion, and despair are among some of the feelings people facing obstacles to work may experience. Frustration can occur while an individual is dealing with an altered environment, social contact, and change in abilities. A person may feel overwhelmed by all of the changes in his/her life that need adjustment. It takes energy to make these life adjustments. Confusion develops when he/she is unsure of current abilities and where these abilities will take him/her. Despair may develop when faced by repeated failure or the belief "things" will never get better. Despair is a general feeling of hopelessness.

As rehabilitation specialists, it is important to always consider people don't all develop at the same rate. Some may even return to earlier stages because of life experiences. It is necessary to be empathetic to their situation in order to adequately assist them with their career development.

Holland's theory emphasized personality. He first divided people into six categories or personality types. Interest Inventories were facilitated to determine the kind of personality category people fit in. These types include: "realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional" (Holland, 1973, p.2). The category people fall into has a lot to do with the environment they live in he proclaimed. His theory explained how personality and the environment interact to arrive at a vocational outcome. This was

done by pairing personality to the best matches for environment. Factors considered in this match include: “Vocational choice, vocational stability and achievement, educational choice and achievement, personal competence, and social behavior” (Holland, 1973, p.2).

Herzberg had a theory about the components of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. Those items contributing to job satisfaction were labeled as “motivators” (Gruneberg, 1976, p. 89). A few of these motivators were: achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, and the work itself. Items causing job dissatisfaction were named “hygiene factors”(Gruneberg, 1976, p.90). Hygiene factors concern conditions about a job like pay and supervision. Company policy, type of administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions are certain hygiene factors which cause job dissatisfaction.

Jones (1959) proposed a theory of motivation he named “expectancy theory” (Gruneberg., 1976, p.90). The theory of motivation is “how behavior gets started, is energized, is sustained, is directed, is stopped and what kind of subjective reaction is present in the organism” (1976, p.90). This theory is made up of two separate parts. (1.) The effort put out depends on what an individual receives in return (1976, p.90). (2.) The reward value or valence equals the individual perception of the value of the reward or outcome that might be obtained by performing effectively (1976, p.91). This theory listed extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Extrinsic rewards come from an outside source and relate to the job situation. Intrinsic rewards could be verbal self-praise on a job well done. Intrinsic rewards come from performance. A change in job design will increase performance. Thus, expanding the job’s intrinsic value (Gruneberg, 1976, p.93).

### People with disabilities

Individuals with disabilities have special considerations because of the unique vocational barriers they encounter. Rehabilitation professionals should be concerned with the development of the self-concept. One should look at “the discrepancy between the ideal and actual self” (Disability & Rehabilitation Handbook, 1978, p.17). A few factors to consider are stage of vocational maturity of an individual and his or her unique vocational obstacles. It is important, as advocates for people who are disabled, to first understand the difference between disability and handicap. A definition of disability and the unique situations facing people with disabilities will be included in the following paragraphs.

#### Barriers for people with disabilities

“The disabled person is one who is structurally, physiologically, or psychologically different from the normal person because of an accident, disease, or developmental problems” (Disability and Rehabilitation Handbook, 1978, p.12). “Someone who is handicapped feels less adequate than others” (78, p.12).

People with disabilities have many obstacles to overcome. Main impediments which this population face are discrimination due to the prejudice and lack of education within the public. “Research reveals an uneasiness in the presence of a disabled person due to a lack of social contact” (Disability and Rehabilitation Handbook, 1978, p.72). Recent literature (Donnell, Alston, Hampton, & Bell, 1999, p.31) stated, “Researchers examining the attitudes of able-bodied individuals toward persons with disabilities have found that negative labels are routinely attributed to persons with disabilities.” Findings from the previous authors on the topic of social acceptance, report “It is possible that there is a feeling of communality among able-bodied persons that permeates race and result in

negative attitudes toward persons with disabilities by both African Americans and Whites” (Donnell, Alston, Hampton, & Bell, 1999, p.33).

Another very important obstacle to master, is employer prejudices. The employer is always thinking cost and benefits. The employer needs to be educated so common myths can be disproved. They often think hiring someone who is disabled will cost them more money. Often beliefs of increased insurance rates and training costs of these workers are unfounded. Another myth is production rates will decrease. There are accommodations which can actually increase productivity. A handicapping obstacle would be that of physical barriers. These prevent people from entering or accessing buildings. The last and hardest challenge for some to overcome is self-fulfilling prophecies. Simply stated; If one is seen as a failure they will fail. If someone succeeds, they are “seen as an exception to the rule” (Disability and Rehabilitation Handbook, 1978, p.73) and given little reward.

This section listed examples of the variety of barriers placed before individuals with disabilities. These obstacles often affect the quality of life and or pursuit of employment for these stereotyped human beings. The next section will address this specific issue.

### Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Serving people with severe disabilities was stressed with the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This responsibility to serve people with more severe disabilities was passed to rehabilitation professionals. Rehabilitation counselors became the professional involved when this Act listed gainful employment as one of its requirements. So “with gainful occupation as the goal, states were required to provide services to persons with

more severe disabilities before serving those with less severe disabilities” (Rubin & Roessler, 1995, p.46).

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 has had many amendments and additions. Amendments were passed in 1978, 1984, 1986, 1992, and 1998 are among the more recent legislation that has addressed a continued commitment to providing services to individuals with disabilities.

Another important piece of legislation, “the Americans with Disabilities Act is a wide-ranging legislation intended to make American Society more accessible to people with disabilities” (Kinder, 1996). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) covers five separate topics called titles. Title I addresses reasonable accommodations during employment. Public Services, Title II is concerned with access to state and local government services for people with disabilities. Title III relates to new construction and modifications pertaining to accessibility of public facilities. Telecommunications (Title IV) applies to access to alternate communication devices for persons with disabilities. Miscellaneous (Title V) further protects the safety of people with disabilities and the individuals advocating for them. The ADA insures people with disabilities a greater likelihood for gainful employment. As previously stated Rehabilitation counselors advocate for people with disabilities in search of employment. Since a third of an individual's life is spent at work it is important to understand how satisfied counselors are while at his or her job. Job satisfaction will be discussed in the following paragraphs.



### Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a complex affective reaction to the job performed. There are many factors to consider when determining the level of satisfaction one has. This is a defining feature that can differ from individual to individual.

Researchers have searched for some basic similarities among workers around the world. Such a similarity was found by Yankelovich Partners. The study was conducted in “Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas” (Yankelovich Partners, 1998 p.39) and reported in the Houston Business Journal. There were

“10,339 workers surveyed across 10 European countries, Russia, the United States and Japan. They consistently identified the same top five key attributes in a job: ability to balance work and personal life, work that is truly enjoyable, security for the future, good pay or salary and enjoyable co-workers. Across the four major geographic regions studied, workers specifically emphasized the importance of potential for advancement and the opportunity to build skills as a way to maintain employability and job security.”(Yankelovich Partners, 1998 p.42).

“Work influences one’s psychological identity and sense of well-being. Work establishes one in the community of human kind “(Szymanski & Parker, 1996, p.1). Patrick Lennahan of Roger Williams University stated in a Kansas City Star article “Your self-concept depends on what you do and what you’re called. Even if you simply change the title, it affects your ego” (Office Pro, 1999).

Many studies have sought to learn about specific workers personality traits and job satisfaction levels. The following paragraphs will briefly discuss findings from recent literature. A salary survey of network professionals found the average worker to be a male, “satisfied with his work, enjoying the challenge. The vast majority of computer network and Information Specialist (IS) professionals like their jobs: 27 percent reported being very satisfied and 58 percent reported being moderately satisfied” (Schnaidt, 1996, p.35).

In a second survey, Information Technology (IT) professionals “listed salary as an important element of compensation, along with educational assistance, training, and up-to-date equipment” (Steen, 1997, p.115) as items that would be part of the dream job. When investment management professionals in the United States were asked about their jobs, they were “largely happy with their jobs, but money is not their main motivator” (Cardona, 1996, p.9). A survey, polled members of the Association for Investment Management and Research; found “81% of managers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their job.” (Cardona, 1996, p.9). They were then “asked to identify the factors that create positive feelings about their job, most managers named professional achievement, personal or professional growth, the work itself and their degree of responsibility as more important than compensation. The chief factors creating negative feelings were company policies and administration, relationships with supervisors, compensation and the negative impact of work on their personal life” (Cardona, 1996, p.9).

Job satisfaction changes when characteristics of the job are altered. An article in the National Underwriter (1998) included an action to increase productivity is to “reduce the

number of work days employees miss by increasing job satisfaction, redesigning disability plans and involving supervisors in disability management” (Maurice, 1998, p.13).

The world of work is highly competitive in today’s society. Employers are interested in remaining stable in this world economy. In order to be profitable and prolong the company’s existence, it becomes necessary to retain current employees. Previously stated studies have suggested lower productivity results because employees are dissatisfied with his or her current position.

So how do companies retain satisfied employees? One article suggested “rewarding employees for work well done” (Walker, 1998, p.18) this “increases their satisfaction and productivity” (Walker, 1998, p. 18). Another statement written in Internetweek (1998) inferred “recognition and rewards mean something outside the paycheck. It can be as simple as recognizing key employees by name” (Metzler, 1998, p.37-42).

Other research indicates “Customer satisfaction and loyalty are excellent predictors of profitability....the strongest predictors of customer satisfaction: employees’ general satisfaction with their jobs and employees’ satisfaction with their work/life balance” (McDonald & Hutcheson, 1999, p.18).

The level of job satisfaction may change from job to job or over the duration of a career. “Results of studies comparing differences between age groups and level of job satisfaction report an increase in job satisfaction with age”(Saleh & Otis, 1973, p.169). It has been “hypothesized that the level of stated job satisfaction will increase with age to the pre-retirement period and within that period will show decline” (1973, p.169).

“From an employee’s standpoint, job satisfaction is a desirable outcome in itself. From a managerial or organizational effectiveness standpoint, job satisfaction is important due to its impact on absenteeism (1) turnover, (2) and prosocial “citizenship” behaviors such as helping coworkers, helping customers, and being more cooperative. (3) Thus, to redesign jobs, reward systems, and human resource management policies that will result in optimum job satisfaction and productivity, managers need to know what employees value” (Karl & Sutton, 1998, p.515).

In order to prevent job dissatisfaction and retain employees, employers need to keep up with changing values related toward work. It is important to stay in tune with current employee values. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to describe the current job satisfaction level among Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as measured by the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)-short form was the instrument used to attain descriptive data for this study. This tool was designed to measure three types of satisfaction. These three scales include: Intrinsic Satisfaction; Extrinsic Satisfaction; and General Satisfaction. The questionnaire was purchased to meet this study's objectives and attain descriptive data. It takes roughly five minutes to complete. This tool will be used to address the following research objectives:

1. To determine the level of job satisfaction reported by Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a Midwestern state, using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire.
2. To identify demographics such as gender, age, years of education, and years of experience.
3. To determine the most important values to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a Midwestern state, such as: job security, pay, recognition, supervision, co-workers, or environment.

### Specific Procedures

There were a number of procedures which needed completion in order for this to be a successful study. First, special permission to contact rehabilitation counselors was granted by the Department of Rehabilitation Services for a Midwestern state. With reply came authorization and a current staff directory with names and addresses, to contact the rehabilitation counselors. Next, a letter of request was sent to the University of MN-

Vocational Psychology Research Department to purchase and use the MSQ. Two-hundred and five questionnaires were ordered.

Then twenty area managers were sent a packet consisting of a letter asking for his or her participation in current job satisfaction research among rehabilitation counselors in the state of MN. The letter also explained the purpose of the study, right to anonymity as a volunteer, directions for participants, a brief description of each respondent's role in the ongoing research, and a statement of appreciation. Two-hundred and two questionnaires for the counselors were included within the area manager's envelopes. Self-addressed envelopes were also included among the initial mailing.

#### Population and subjects

The selected participants were two hundred and two (202) state rehabilitation counselors taken from a population in a Midwestern state. Subjects were obtained from the Rehabilitation Counselor Directory.

#### Methods for gathering data/instrumentation

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire-short form is copyrighted, so was purchased from the Vocational Psychology Research department at the University of Minnesota. Copies can be purchased by contacting the following address: Vocational Psychology Research, N620 Elliott Hall University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455-0344. The instrument measures general job satisfaction levels. This form was used because of the simplicity for the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who would be completing it. The MSQ-short form only takes about five minutes to finish. The twenty questions are ranked on a five point scale (Very Dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neither, Satisfied, and Very Satisfied). The manual for the MSQ (1967) reported reliability coefficients for the

Intrinsic Satisfaction scale ranged from .84 (for the two assembler groups) to .91 for engineers.

“For the Extrinsic Satisfaction scale, the coefficients varied from .77 (for electronics assemblers) to .82 (for engineers and machinists). On the General Satisfaction scale, the coefficients varied from .87 (for assemblers) to .92 (for engineers). Median reliability coefficients were .86 for Intrinsic Satisfaction, .80 for Extrinsic Satisfaction and .90 for General Satisfaction” (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967, p.23).

Validity can be implied from validity for the long-form. “Other evidence for the validity of the short-form MSQ is available from two sources: (1) studies of occupational group differences and (2) studies of the relationship between satisfaction and satisfactoriness, as specified by the *Theory of Work Adjustment*” (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967, p.24).

#### Data collection

The surveys were then sent out to the area managers with a letter asking for participation in this study. There were a number of procedures which needed completion in order for this to be a successful study. First, special permission to contact rehabilitation counselors was granted by the Department of Rehabilitation Services for a Midwestern state. With reply came authorization and a current staff directory with names and addresses, to contact the rehabilitation counselors. Next, a letter of request was sent to the University of MN-Vocational Psychology Research Department to purchase and use the MSQ. Two-hundred and five questionnaires were ordered.

Then twenty area managers were sent a packet consisting of a letter asking for his or her participation in current job satisfaction research among rehabilitation counselors. The letter also explained the purpose of the study, right to anonymity as a volunteer, directions for participants, a brief description of each respondent's role in the ongoing research, and a statement of appreciation. Two-hundred and two questionnaires for the counselors within each area, were included within the area manager's envelopes. Self-addressed envelopes were also included among the initial mailing. Data collection was completed when the respondents returned the completed surveys.

#### Analysis of Data

The data collected from responses on the MSQ-short form was submitted to the Stout Academic Computing Center for statistical analysis. The following manipulations were carried out on the data: mean, median, standard error of measurement, and frequency of data were compiled.

#### Accuracy precautions/strengths and weaknesses of methodology

A strength of this study was the high internal consistency that the MSQ-short form provides. The short form contains twenty questions and takes about five minutes to complete.

This study had a couple of weaknesses in the methodology. First of all, the sample was a small disclosure of current satisfaction levels of those vocational rehabilitation counselors from a state agency, who volunteered their responses. The other drawback was the generic nature of the MSQ-short form. This instrument is made to measure a number of separate occupations like: Assemblers, Clerks, Engineers, Janitors, Machinists, and Salesmen. Therefore, the form does not address issues specific to the job of



Rehabilitation Counselor. However, the data supplies a comparison of satisfactoriness from Rehabilitation counselors to other occupations.

### Summary

This chapter explained the steps taken to gain descriptive data on job satisfaction from a sample of state agency vocational rehabilitation counselors in a Midwestern state. The data was collected by sending out the MSQ-short form survey. A 60% response rate was reached by the time data was ready to be analyzed. The mean, median, standard error of measurement, and frequency were the measurements performed on the useable data.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

The MSQ-short form was composed of twenty questions pertaining to aspects of the work environment. Weighted scores were statistically calculated on the basis of a Likert Scale, 1 being Very Dissatisfied, to 5 being Very Satisfied. Items on the MSQ calculated general satisfaction (questions 1-20), Intrinsic factors (questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, & 20), and extrinsic factors (questions 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, & 19). Data was also collected according to education level, age, gender, number of years each was currently employed on present job, and number of years in vocational rehabilitation.

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaires (MSQ) were sent to the district managers asking for them to assist with current job satisfaction research. There were one hundred and twenty-two (122) respondents out of 202. This was a 60% return rate. There were approximately fifty-seven (57) males and fifty-seven (57) females in the responding population. There were eight (8) returned surveys with this space left blank.

The purpose of this study was to describe current job satisfaction among Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a Midwestern state. The study focused on the following specific objectives:

1. To determine the level of job satisfaction reported by Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a Midwestern state, using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire.
2. To identify demographics such as gender, age, years of education, and years of experience.

3. To determine the most important values to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a Midwestern state, such as: job security, pay, recognition, supervision, co-workers, or environment.

Data was analyzed in terms of frequency of responses, median, mean, and standard deviation.

### Descriptive Data

Two hundred and two subjects (202) of a possible two hundred and seven (207) for this study were selected from a Midwestern state Rehabilitation Services Staff Directory. The subjects were both male and female rehabilitation counselors in the public sector, and from different age groups. One hundred and twenty-two (122) of 202 rehabilitation counselors responded (57 male, 57 female, 60% response rate). The responding population ranged from twenty-four (24) to sixty-three (63) years old. The following table demonstrates age ranges, frequencies and percentages of the sample population:

**Table 1--Age of Counselors in sample population**

<b>Age in years</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
24-28	9	7%
29-35	6	5%
35.1-40	4	3%
40.1-45	10	8%
46-50	20	17%
52-55	37	30%
55.1-60	14	12%
+60	1	1%

No response	21	17%
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Replies reported the years of school each counselor had accomplished. The table below describes the education levels of the respondents:

**Table 2—Education levels**

<b>Years of Education</b>	<b>Percentage of total responses</b>
Bachelor's Degree or 17 years	24%
Masters Degree or 19 years	69%
20 years or more	3%
No response	4%

The instrument also inquired about the years of experience each counselor had at their present job and the total years in the Rehabilitation field. Counselors stated they had been at this present job from under one (1) year to thirty-three (33) years and in the field from two (2) months to thirty-four (34) years.

Years of experience are presented in the tables below.

**Table 3---Years of experience at present job**

<b>Years at present Job</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
0-5	32	26%
5.01-10	16	13%
10.01-15	16	13%
15.01-20	20	16%
20.01-25	9	7%
25.01-30	17	13%
+30	12	9%
No response	8	3%

**Table 4---Total years of experience**

<b>Total years in Rehabilitation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
0-5	21	17%
5-10	11	9%
10-15	9	7%
15-20	21	17%
20-25	22	17%
25-30	24	19%
+30	14	11%
No response	8	3%

The MSQ-short form also consisted of twenty (20) questions. The respondents were asked to answer according to a Likert Scale, 1 being Very Dissatisfied and 5 for Very Satisfied. Each question had the phrase “On my present job, this is how I feel about....” These will be reviewed question by question in the following tables. The response options were Very Dissatisfied (VD), Dissatisfied (D), Neutral (N), Satisfied (S), and Very Satisfied (VS).

**Table 5---MSQ-short form responses**

<b><u>Question #</u></b>	<b><u>VD</u></b>	<b><u>D</u></b>	<b><u>N</u></b>	<b><u>S</u></b>	<b><u>VS</u></b>	<b><u>NR</u></b>
1. Being able to keep busy all the time...	1%	4%	5%	54%	36%	
2. The chance to work alone on the job...	*	2%	3%	52%	43%	
3. The chance to do different things from from time to time...	1%	2%	2%	40%	55%	
4. The chance to be “somebody” in the community...	*	7%	40%	42%	11%	
5. The way my boss handles his/her workers...	3%	15%	11%	38%	33%	
6. The competence of my supervisor in making decisions...	4%	9%	11%	39%	37%	
7. Being able to do things that don’t go against my conscience...	1%	3%	8%	56%	32%	
<b><u>Question #</u></b>	<b><u>VD</u></b>	<b><u>D</u></b>	<b><u>N</u></b>	<b><u>S</u></b>	<b><u>VS</u></b>	<b><u>NR</u></b>

8. The way my job provides for steady employment...	*	1%	5%	57%	37%	
9. The chance to do things for other people...	2%	*	2%	46%	50%	
10. The chance to tell people what to do...	*	5%	61%	29%	5%	
11. The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities...	1%	3%	4%	58%	34%	
12. The way company policies are put into practice...	9%	37%	25%	27%	2%	
13. My pay and the amount of work I do...	9%	46%	14%	25%	5%	1
14. The chances for advancement on this job...	14%	28%	20%	33%	5%	
15. The freedom to use my own judgment...	1%	2%	3%	45%	49%	
16. The chance to try my own methods of doing the job...	2%	3%	7%	52%	36%	
17. The working conditions...	2%	7%	15%	50%	26%	
18. The way my co-workers get along with each other...	1%	9%	12%	53%	25%	
19. The praise I get for doing a good job...	5%	16%	26%	39%	14%	
20. The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job...	2%	2%	12%	59%	25%	

### Summary of Findings

Two-hundred and two (202) MSQ-short form surveys were sent to district managers to disburse among the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in their areas. One-hundred and twenty-four surveys were returned for a response rate of 60%. Most respondents explained in action verbs their job functions, when asked, what they did at their present job. One survey was returned with a comment added. It stated, "I hate this job!". This researcher asked for honest responses. It was appreciated that this individual was willing to respond even though he/she had negative feelings.



## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of the study is to describe current job satisfaction among Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a Midwestern state, as measured by the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire-short form (MSQ-short form). Once the data analysis was complete and the results were reported, interesting findings emerged. These fascinating points are discussed below. Results of general satisfaction, as a whole were above average.

Descriptive data examined gender, age, education level, number of years currently employed on present job, and number of years in vocational rehabilitation. The following paragraphs will discuss the study results and the conclusions this author can determine from these results.

The number of respondents was one hundred and twenty-two (122). Gender was evenly distributed among the responding population. The number of males and females were 57. Ten respondents left this item blank.

An interesting reality that surfaced when age percentages were figured for the respondents was thirty percent (30%) of responding Rehabilitation Counselors were between 52-55 years old. The next age group with the second highest percentage of seventeen percent (17%), was for ages 46-50 years old. So roughly half of the rehabilitation counselors who responded fall between the ages of 46-55. This point is inconclusive because 17% of respondents left this answer blank.

The MSQ-short form also allowed this author to investigate education level by asking about the years of education acquired. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of respondents had

attained a Masters Degree or 19 years of education. This level of education is in response to the requirements stated in the Rehabilitation Act.

Rehabilitation Counselors in this study reported years at their present job. The highest frequency, 26%, was for 0-5 years at the same job. This may mean there are new Rehabilitation Counselors practicing in the field. The next highest percentage 16%, was for 15-20 years of experience.

Another fascinating detail appeared when participants were questioned about the total years of experience individuals had in Rehabilitation. The highest percentage was 19% with 25-30 years in the Rehabilitation field. Eleven percent (11%) of responses reported 30 plus years of experience in the Rehabilitation field. This length of employment implies rehabilitation counselors are generally satisfied with their career. These figures coupled with the reported age range for responding counselors to be between 50-60 plus, suggest that 43% of Rehabilitation Counselors may be nearing retirement age within the next 5-10 years?

#### Past Satisfaction Research

Job satisfaction is a complex affective reaction to the job performed. There are many factors to consider when determining the level of satisfaction one has. Research implies “job satisfaction is important due to its impact on absenteeism, (1) turnover, (2) and prosocial “citizenship” behaviors such as helping coworkers, helping customers and being more cooperative” (Karl & Sutton, 1998, p.515).

The individual questions of the MSQ-short form also had some interesting responses. A few factors which this author researched were General, Intrinsic, and Extrinsic Satisfaction levels.

General Satisfaction is an individual's general feeling about one's own job. To determine general satisfaction, one considers responses to questions one through twenty. After examination of these questions on the survey, it was found, the respondents were generally satisfied with their job. The average general satisfaction score on a one hundred (100) point scale was 77.04. Upon reviewing norms reported in the MSQ manual, engineers had a similar score of 77.88, for general satisfaction. The results from this study were also consistent with past satisfaction research with network professionals and investment managers Chapter 2 reported that a salary survey asked network professionals about their jobs and found workers to be basically satisfied.

Intrinsic satisfaction describes how positive an individual feels about his or her job performance. Intrinsic satisfaction relates to Intrinsic factors, like opportunities for advancement, recognition, and achievement. The questions that addressed the Intrinsic satisfaction level were questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, and 20. The Intrinsic satisfaction score was 49.63. This mean score is similar to normative data for engineers and salesmen. Their mean scores were 48.53 and 50.25 respectively.

Ninety-five percent (95%) of the responding population for this study, felt Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the chance to do work alone (question #2). Ninety-five percent (95%)

stated they were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the chance to do different things from time to time (question #3). Ninety-six percent (96%) said they had a chance to do things for other people (question #9).

Extrinsic satisfaction relates to extrinsic factors such as supervision, pay, policies, working conditions, interpersonal relations, and security. Extrinsic satisfaction pertains to outside factors and if these factors are perceived positively or negatively. Questions on the MSQ-short form which correlate with extrinsic satisfaction level are 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, and 19. The extrinsic satisfaction score was 19.43 this score is similar to normative scores in previous research for office clerks and machinists. These scores were 19.37 and 19.70 respectively. These findings are similar to past satisfaction research which reported extrinsic factors were not a leading consideration when determining overall satisfaction. When investment management professionals in the United States were asked about their jobs, they were “largely happy with their jobs, but money is not their main motivator” (Cardona, 1996, p.9).

This previous statement also coincides with the research done during this study.

Although Forty-six percent (46%) were Very Dissatisfied or Dissatisfied with the way company policies are put into practice and 55% of respondents were Dissatisfied with the pay they received, 57% of the responding population reported being at the same job from 15 years to more than 30 years (refer to Table 3). Forty-two percent were Very Dissatisfied or Dissatisfied with the job advancement. These three items could be a significant determinate to general job satisfaction. General satisfaction is high despite

these low ratings. Furthermore, there are many long term counselors in this sample and they remain at the agency because of the satisfaction with other factors.

### Recommendations

The results of the current study appeared to support the following recommendations:

- 1) The instrumentation be updated before replication in the future.
- 2) The study to be replicated in the future to determine current satisfaction levels of vocational rehabilitation counselors among both public and private sectors in rehabilitation.

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