

**AN URBAN VS RURAL JOB SATISFACTION COMPARISON:  
STATE-FEDERAL BASED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELORS**

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

According to Hultaker (1977), job satisfaction is a characteristic that has been studied for many years. The relationship between job satisfaction and professional agencies has been determined to be important for many different reasons. According to Gruneberg (1976), job dissatisfaction can lead to many negative results for employers. Some of these results are: costly employee turnover, absenteeism, strikes, ignoring safety standards, and decreased motivation for performing high quality work. As a result of the impact of job satisfaction, a well-defined understanding of the job satisfaction level of employees can be extremely beneficial to any employer.

The purpose of this research was to increase the knowledge base of the job satisfaction levels of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in rural and urban locations in the state-federal based Vocational Rehabilitation system in a Midwestern state. The

subjects of this study included every practicing Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the DVR system of a specific Midwestern state. The specific research objectives are the following: to investigate the current overall levels of job satisfaction of DVR Counselors in a specific state and to investigate if there is a difference in the levels of DVR Counselors in rural vs urban locations.

The data will be collected through the use of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. The surveys collected information of job satisfaction, gender, and identification of urban or rural location of practice. There were 202 qualified participants, of which 105 chose to participate.

The results of this study showed that the overall job satisfaction of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors is at a level of average satisfaction. However, there were some components of job satisfaction that showed trends of being in the level of dissatisfied and some components that consistently showed numbers of being satisfied. Also, there were no significant differences found between the job satisfaction levels of urban and rural Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Work is an activity that people have engaged in all across the world since before recorded history. According to Tilgher (1930), the meaning of work has evolved substantially throughout time. Tilgher states that in early times, the Greeks and the Romans thought of work in a very negative manner. The Greeks believed that work was simply a punishment handed to them from the Gods. Tilgher notes that the Hebrews also gave a negative connotation to work. The Hebrews believed that work was a penalty for sins committed by their ancestors. Tilgher states that by the end of the nineteenth century, the concept of work and its value had drastically changed. At that period in time, work was being held in a much more positive regard. In fact, some of the Christian movements described work as “the foundation of all human progress” (Tilgher 1930, P.45). According to Watson (1987), during the Reformation and the Protestant Christianity movement, the meaning of work was evolving from a negative, punishing view to a much more positive and productive view. This more positive view of work has continued to develop since that time in history.

Applebaum (1992) describes work “as a human activity embedded in the fabric of society” (p. ix). Watson (1987) adds that work is the process by which people complete the required tasks in order to make a living. Moreover, Watson notes that work is the activity that the members of society must engage in to satisfy the constant need to attain sufficient amounts of the necessary resources to maintain survival. This economic survival includes society as a whole, and each of the individuals which are contained within it. However, work doesn’t only provide sustenance for individuals and their society. According to Bruce and Blackburn (1992), “Work is an intrinsic part of most



lives, frequently our reason for being, a place from which we get our identity” (P.4). Grint (1991) states that work provides a person with the opportunity to develop their feelings of personal self-worth. Kahn (1981) further notes that a person gains this sense of self identity and feelings of self-worth by fulfilling a particular role within their occupation. In a study on the relationship between employment and self-esteem, Donovan, Oddy, Pardoe, and Ades (1985) found that the group of subjects that were employed scored significantly higher on the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale than subjects that were not employed. Also, in a study conducted by Arns and Linney (1993), the effects of vocational status on self-esteem, self efficacy and life satisfaction were measured. Each of the subjects in their research were clients of a group of psychosocial rehabilitation programs. Arns and Linney discovered that improvement in employment status led to feelings of higher self efficacy, higher self-esteem and greater overall life satisfaction. These studies and many others that have been completed have shown that work is a very important part of a person’s life. As a result, it is also very important for a person to be happy or at least attain some level of satisfaction with their job.

According to Hultaker (1977), job satisfaction is a concept that has been studied for many years. Bruce and Blackburn (1992) note that “The notion that satisfied employees make a difference was spurred by what has been called the “third industrial revolution”, which began with the Hawthorne studies of the 1930’s calling for a humanization of the workplace” (P.4). At that point in history, it was believed that people who were happy with their work would be more likely to keep a particular job and they would also be more productive workers. According to Bruce and Blackburn, the actual correlation between job satisfaction and job production is unclear. However, they further note that regardless of the relationship between happiness with employment and

higher productivity; job satisfaction is still a very pertinent issue in the constant process of hiring and maintaining effective employees in any organization.

Gruneberg (1976) reports that there are many negative results that may occur from job dissatisfaction. Some of these consist of: employee turnover, absenteeism, strikes, ignoring safety standards, and being oppositional towards co-workers and supervisors. Moreover, Bruce and Blackburn note that satisfied workers tend to have higher levels of motivation to complete work of higher quality. There was a study conducted by Collins, Jones, McDonnell, Read, Jones, and Cameron (2000) on the job satisfaction of nurses and occupational therapists. Collins et. al. found a significant correlation between low job satisfaction and the intention to quit their job.

In the past, there have been many other studies conducted on the components of job satisfaction. The relationship between job satisfaction and professional agencies has been determined to be very important in many different ways. Wilkinson and Wagner (1993) reported that job satisfaction is a term that includes many distinct characteristics. In the "Rehabilitation Job Satisfaction Inventory", Wright and Terrian (1987) propose that job satisfaction consists of the following: intrinsic factors, such as the work itself and the role of the employee; co-worker relations; supervision and management; and, lastly, organizational policy and structure. In this inventory, there is a scale which specifically measures one component of job satisfaction; which is burnout. According to Garske (2000), job satisfaction and the emotional state of burnout can be significant to occupations in the Human Services profession.

According to Arnold and Seekins (1997), there are differences in satisfaction and burnout levels in vocational rehabilitation jobs in rural vs. urban locations. Arnold and Seekins noted that these differences are likely resulting from decreased resources

available to serve the needs of the client. According to Arnold and Seekins (1997), many Vocational Rehabilitation professionals believe that the state-federal based rehabilitation programs are tailored for, and based on ideas of urban life; rather than rural realities. For example, rural life usually includes fewer job opportunities, higher incidence of unemployment, decreased educational attainment of clients, and minimal public transportation.

In a study conducted by Stout and Williams (1983), they found a significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and burnout in 78 professionals in the mental health and mental retardation fields. In their investigation, Stout and Williams (1983) utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory, which specifically measures three components of burnout; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment levels in employees. According to Garske (2000), the experience of burnout is a result of people in the human service field being faced with difficult and stressful circumstances. Garske further notes that these stressful working conditions have led to labor turnover rates that have often been quite high in the human services profession. According to Bishop (2001), "Given the current and expected turnover and retirement rate among State-Federal based Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, there is a more pressing need than ever before to understand the motivation to enter this line of work" (p.145). Bishop further reports that the work motivation or reason a person chooses to attain and maintain a particular job is greatly related to the aspects of work satisfaction. Hence, there is a significant need to understand job satisfaction of state-federal based Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in order to continue to improve the likelihood that this profession will be able to attain, maintain, and develop experienced, effective counselors.

## **Purpose of Research**

The job satisfaction of employees is very important to any professional agency. Bruce and Blackburn (1992) reported that job satisfaction is a very complex phenomenon and can be difficult to determine and understand. However, a well-defined idea of all of the distinct characteristics of job satisfaction can be extremely beneficial to any organization.

The purpose of this study was to help determine and describe the current levels of job satisfaction of counselors in rural and urban areas in the state-federal Vocational Rehabilitation system. Data was collected through the use of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, which will include a measure of current job satisfaction levels. These surveys were sent to counselors in the various state-federal based agencies throughout a specific state in the summer of 2003.

## **Research Objectives**

There are two research objectives that this study attempted to complete. They are the following:

1. Investigate the current levels of job satisfaction of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in state-federal based facilities.
2. Investigate if there is a difference in the levels of job satisfaction of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in rural vs. urban areas.

## **Definition of Terms**

There are three terms that need to be defined to help make this research easier to understand. These are:

Job Satisfaction – It consists of the total body of feelings that a person has about their job (Gruneberg, 1976).

Urban – This term will be defined as all counties that are considered to be in a metropolitan location as compiled by the Office of Rural Health in 2002.

Rural – This term will be defined as all counties that are considered to be in a non-metropolitan location as compiled by the Office of Rural Health in 2002.

## **Assumptions and Limitations**

There are a few assumptions in this research that should be noted. First of all, it was expected that all counselors participating in this study would understand all of the questions related to the psychometric measure scale of job satisfaction. Secondly, it was assumed that all participants were open and honest when answering the survey questions.

There were several limitations in this investigative study. First, this study was limited by the type of vocational rehabilitation counselors that were included as subjects. Since this study involves only state-federal based Rehabilitation Counselors, the results can't be generalized to describe all vocational rehabilitation agencies. Also, due to expense of conducting survey research, this study was limited in the number of state-federal based counselors that are to be included. As a result, the findings in this research would not be descriptive of job satisfaction levels in other states. Lastly, this study was limited by the fact that there are more counselors in the urban areas as compared to the number of rural Counselors in the specific state of inclusion in this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will discuss three distinct topics related to the research study. In the first section, there will be an overview of the implications of work. In the second section there will be a discussion of the historical background of Vocational Rehabilitation. This background will include the various reasons why vocational rehabilitation services are being provided to people with disabilities. For example, this section will provide a description of the legislation that has determined the need for a mandate for these services. Also, it will discuss the societal and economic changes that brought about the desire to develop and implement these programs to people with disabilities.

In the final section of the chapter, there will be a discussion of job satisfaction. This section will provide a background on the importance that this characteristic has shown in various professions, including vocational rehabilitation. Also, the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

#### **Importance of Work**

In this section, a description of the importance of work will be provided. First of all, a brief historical background of work will be given. Then, there will be an explanation of the meaning that work and paid employment can bring to an individual's life and to society as a whole.

#### Historical Background

According to Tilgher (1930), in early times, work was typically viewed in an extremely negative manner. Tilgher states that the Greeks and Romans believed that

work was simply a punishment sent to them from the Gods and that it was only the unfortunate that had to endure it. In fact, Watson (1987) reports that work was considered an act that was only appropriate for the people that had the lowest social status. Watson further notes that work was viewed as insulting and was meant mostly for the individuals that were kept in slavery at that time in history. According to Tilgher, the Hebrews also had a negative belief regarding work. Tilgher states that the Hebrews thought that work was an activity that people had to engage in to repent for the original sin of man.

According to Watson (1987), in early Christianity, the philosophy of the meaning of work was seen in a slightly more positive manner. Tilgher (1930) states that early Christian views gave work the value of providing a person with a healthy body and mind. Watson (1987) further notes that early Christian thought about work was that it helped to keep people occupied so that they were less likely to engage in actions that were sinful. Watson (1987) reports that work was beginning to be viewed in a more consistently positive manner during the Reformation and the development of the Protestant Christian religion. Watson (1987) further states that work was becoming as important as a religious “calling”. This positive view of work and employment has continued to develop and grow since that period in time. Also, Watson (1987) adds that “with the growth of industrial capitalism we see this spreading further and wider as hard and effective work becomes the essential prerequisite of personal and social advancement, of prestige, of virtue, and of self-fulfillment” (p. 84).

### Effects of Work on the Individual and Society

Watson (1987) states that “work can be defined as the carrying out of tasks which enable people to make a living within the environment in which they find themselves” (P.83). According to Applebaum (1992), work is the process by which people attain the resources that they need in their lives. Applebaum further states that these resources include: food, shelter, clothes and other materials that we need to protect ourselves and maintain life. Watson (1987) adds that work also benefits individuals and society in many other ways as well.

According to Kahn (1981), work is an essential part of an individual’s well-being. Kahn notes that a person’s daily activities and work-related behaviors help to define their self-identity. Applebaum (1992) adds that work is an activity that allows people an opportunity to attain a higher self-esteem. Kahn (1981) notes that many workers claim that their jobs help them to define the type of person that they are. Watson (1987) adds that work gives an individual a chance to develop their personality, attitudes, and beliefs regarding themselves and the world around them. According to Kahn (1981), as people attend to their work activities they fulfill the roles that they are faced with. Kahn further states that as these roles are continually fulfilled, an individual’s self-identity is developed. Applebaum (1992) reports that work provides structure in a person’s life. According to Watson (1987), work-related activities present an individual with a set of challenges and responsibilities that they must try to accomplish. Applebaum (1992) adds that “work is associated with maturity, self discipline, and moral values” (p. xii).

Grint (1991) reports that work is not only necessary for the health and survival of each person but it is also essential for the sustenance of society. Kahn (1981) adds that



the absence of work would be very detrimental to any society. According to Applebaum (1992), society would likely be destroyed without the activity of work. Grint (1991) notes that work is needed to produce the resources that are important to maintain the functioning of a society. Applebaum (1992) reports that each individual that works has contributed either directly or indirectly to the well-being of the community in which they live. According to Watson (1987), each society has a culture within it that has determined the appropriate ways that individuals should proceed with their values and actions towards work-related behavior. Watson further states that work provides a system of meaning and helps guide people in a structured, productive, and healthy manner.

### **Historical Development of Vocational Rehabilitation**

In this section, a historical development of vocational rehabilitation will be provided. Employment is an essential and important part of life for most people. Therefore, those individuals in society that have the ambition and ability to work, should be allowed the opportunity to do so. Even though this viewpoint would be agreed upon and supported by most people in today's society; this opportunity to find and maintain employment has not always been a reality for many members of our society. One group of individuals that has not always had access to employment and other activities in society are people with disabilities.

According to Rubin and Roessler (2001),

“Society's willingness at any given point in time to attend to the needs of persons with disabilities has been greatly determined by the perceived cause of the disability, the perceived threat of the disability group to the

nondisabled community, prevailing economic conditions, the existing medical knowledge, and the prevailing sociocultural philosophy” (p. 1).

Rubin and Roessler note that in early times, such as the Greek and Roman eras; people with disabilities were treated in a very negative and inhumane manner. At that period in history, people with disabilities were often kept detained in asylums and prisons because others in society were under false beliefs that individuals with disabilities were to be feared and that they had no potential to contribute to society. However, even during these tragic early times faced by individuals with disabilities, Rubin and Roessler reported that there were some unusual cases of rehabilitation. For example, it was recorded that a person with a hearing impairment was taught to write in the fifteenth century and in the seventeenth century there was early development of sign language.

According to Goldenson (1978), some small medical advances, such as the development of orthopedics, were being made in the eighteenth century. However, these medical improvements needed a lot of time to develop to make a substantial change in the likelihood that individuals with disabilities could be successful in a rehabilitation process. Rubin and Roessler (2001) noted that during the nineteenth century there was a change in the way that much of society viewed people with disabilities. According to Rubin and Roessler (2001), a humanitarian movement was developing in the late nineteenth century. Unfortunately, this movement towards helping others meet their full potential was battling theories of Social Darwinism, which were views of survival of the fittest and didn't support the idea of giving equal opportunity to those that had abilities and ambitions that needed a receptive and informed environment in which to flourish.

Rubin and Roessler (2001) reported that in the early 1900's, the vocational education movement, which promoted the theory that all children had a right to be

educated, helped to pave the way for the development of vocational rehabilitation programs. However, according to Goldenson (1978), the process of developing vocational rehabilitation for person's with disabilities was slow and inconsistent in the early 1900's.

### Legislation in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some significant laws were developed to provide a legal mandate for providing vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities. According to Szymanski and Parker (1998), "the federal rehabilitation legislation had its roots in vocational education" (p.4). In addition, Rubin and Roessler (2001) note that the Progressive era helped to lead political movements towards a government that provided an equal opportunity for all people. This movement was led by Theodore Roosevelt, Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson.

According to Rubin and Roessler (2001), the Soldier's Rehabilitation Act of 1918 was the initial law that called for a mandate of vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities. Szymanski and Parker (1998) state that this Act only provided services to veterans of war that had a disability as a result of their combat. Goldenson (1978) reported that in 1920, the Smith Fess Act was passed to include civilians with disabilities. However, according to Rubin and Roessler (2001), this Act only provided services to those with physical disabilities. According to Goldenson (1978), the greatest development of an inclusive vocational rehabilitation program came during and following WWII. Rubin and Roessler (2001) add that a very important Act was passed as a result of the labor shortage that existed during WWII. This piece of legislation was referred to as the Barden-Lafollet Act. Rubin and Roessler further state that this Act extended services to people with mental illness and mental retardation. Moreover, Rubin and

Roessler (2001) note that during WWII people with disabilities had the opportunity to show that most could contribute in the workplace if they had appropriate employment situations.

Goldenson (1978) reported that in the 1970's, societal principles and legislation were beginning to promote ideas of equal rights for all people with disabilities. Goldenson further reports that the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was developed and passed into law during this period in history. According to Szymanski and Parker (1998), the sections 501 and 503 of this Act offered some protection for people with disabilities in their vocational pursuits. Szymanski and Parker note that section 501 provides law that helps decrease discrimination of federal employees with disability. This section included the development of affirmative action plans. Also, Szymanski and Parker (1998) report that every level of the employment process is included in section 501, which consists of: hiring, maintaining, and promotion of persons with disabilities. According to Goldenson (1978), section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 73 provides legislation which helps to decrease discrimination of people with disabilities by private businesses who benefit from federal funding. Szymanski and Parker (1998) stated that this Act provided some progress in eliminating discrimination of people with disabilities in the domain of employment, however, discrimination was still present in many private arenas and there was limited proper use of the law in federal and federally-funded businesses.

According to Szymanski and Parker (1998), another key piece of legislation that helped to provide equal opportunities for all Americans in their vocational pursuits was passed in 1990. This law was referred to as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Szymanski and Parker report that Title I of this law provided that

“no employer that has 15 or more employees can discriminate against a qualified individual with a disability because of the disability in regard to job application procedures; the hiring, advancement, or discharge of employees; employee compensations; job training; and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment” (P.19).

As a result of the development of anti-discriminatory legislation and the changing social attitudes regarding the employment of people with disabilities, there has been a mandate created for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disability.

With this mandate has come the creation of a need for the profession of Vocational Rehabilitation. These professionals are necessary for the facilitation and coordination of services which are needed for the successful employment of individuals with disabilities. Therefore, it is of great importance that we understand these Vocational Rehabilitation professionals. We must continue to study the components of this profession, which result in a better understanding of the job satisfaction of these individuals. Finally, the greater awareness we have of this phenomenon then the greater chances we will have to continue to attract and keep capable professionals in this field.

### **Background on Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction has been a topic of importance and great interest for many years. There are many reasons for this extensive study and examination of job satisfaction. Fraser (1983) noted that the term job satisfaction is difficult to define, just as the effects of high or low satisfaction are to determine. According to Hultaker (1977) “...studies of job satisfaction are important even though they cannot predict productive behaviour; they can tell about the relative welfare of employees” (p. 5). Gooding (1972) reported many of the probable results of employees that dislike their occupations. Some of these

possible effects of job dissatisfaction consist of: high absenteeism, high labor turnover, less interest and effort given to the tasks of the job, and possibly a breakdown in the personal life of the employee. According to Gooding (1972), some of these effects on employee's personal lives can be very serious. These personal effects could include: family/marital problems, abuse of drugs and alcohol, and various emotional difficulties; such as depression and anger management problems. Gooding further notes that the most definite result of a dissatisfied employee is decreased attendance and, eventually, resignation. As a result, even though job satisfaction may not be correlated with actual job productivity, it is still an extremely important concept to understand for employees and employers.

There are several models that exist for the purpose of better understanding job satisfaction. According to Gruneberg (1976)

“The traditional model of job satisfaction is that it consists of the total body of feelings that an individual has about his job. This total body of feelings involves, in effect, weighing up the sum total of influences on the job; the nature of the job itself, the pay, the promotion prospects, the nature of supervision, and so on.

Where the sum total of influence gives rise to feelings of satisfaction the individual is job satisfied, where in total they give rise to feelings of dissatisfaction the individual is job dissatisfied” (p. X).

One specific model of job satisfaction is referred to as Herzberg's Two-Factor theory. Hultaker (1977) reports that this model is of great importance in the examination of job satisfaction because it is accepted by many professionals in this field. According to Gruneberg (1976), Herzberg's theory states that there is a clear difference between the cause of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. Hultaker (1977) notes that the two parts

of this model are called the motivators and the hygienes. The motivators are thought to be responsible for job satisfaction and the hygienes are responsible for job dissatisfaction. Fraser reports that the motivators are characteristics such as advancement potential, recognition, and the work itself. According to Fraser (1983), Herzberg's hygiene factors consist of: working conditions, administrative policy, job security, and salary. Herzberg did extensive study on the attitudes of employees towards different aspects of their jobs. Fraser (1983) notes that most of Herzberg's work only included employees that were supervisors and those in middle-management positions. Therefore, it is uncertain whether the results from this model should be generalized to the general working public. Also, Gruneberg (1976) states that many professionals in the field dispute Herzberg's Two-Factor theory of job satisfaction. Hultaker (1977) reports that "Herzberg himself has neither formalized his theory nor has he been particularly clear in stating the corollaries that follow from it" (p.15).

Fraser (1983) states that there is no specific and constant level of job satisfaction. He describes that this is a situation that is fluid and, therefore; it may change on a daily basis. Gruneberg (1976) notes that job satisfaction is not only dependent on the job itself but, is also influenced by each individual's ideas of what a job should provide for them. For example, Fraser (1983) states that there are two very basic goals that most people are attempting to receive from work. The first is intrinsic in nature, which can be described as getting satisfaction and enjoyment out of the actual work that someone performs. Fraser further notes that there is a second way to look at the pleasure derived from work, which is referred to as an extrinsic point of view regarding a job. People with an extrinsic view would be more concerned about the effects that the job would have on

their life outside of the workplace. For example, does the job allow them enough vacation or free time to be able to enjoy their hobbies, interests, and family life.

In a study conducted by Collins, McDonnell, Read, Jones, and Cameron (2000), they found that job dissatisfaction is very influential in the field of Nursing and Occupational Therapy. Collins et. al. (2000) found that overall low job satisfaction was an important indicator in the potential for an employee to leave their position. Collins et. al. (2000) discovered in their study that being satisfied with one's profession was significantly associated with a feeling of belonging and integration with a person's co-workers. Also, Collins et. al. (2000) found that high job satisfaction was determined by feeling that their roles at work were clearly defined and that they were sufficiently trained to be able to complete that role.

In a study completed by Wilkinson and Wagner (1993), a relationship was discovered between supervisor style and job satisfaction. Wilkinson and Wagner used a sample of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in the state-federal sector in the state of Missouri. The results of their study showed that the professional relationship and interaction between supervisor and employee was the most important aspect of job satisfaction. Wilkinson and Wagner (1993) found that supervisors that included a great deal of support and direction were related to increased satisfaction of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in the state of Missouri. For the completion of this study, the authors utilized the Rehabilitation Job Satisfaction Inventory (RJSI). The RJSI was created by Wright and Terrian to define satisfaction with the following components: Intrinsic, Burnout, Co-workers, Supervision, Administration, and a total score of all the scales.



In another study of job satisfaction, Arnold and Seekins (1997) examined the differences between urban and rural Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. In this study, rural and urban Counselors reported the same satisfaction level in components such as: training, working conditions, and availability of information. Arnold and Seekins (1997) noted that Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in rural areas were less-satisfied the component of satisfaction that is related to the availability of services for their consumers. This is consistent with research in the past that has found a decreased satisfaction with employment opportunities, public transportation and educational opportunities in rural areas.

There has been a lot of research completed on the job satisfaction of various industries and agencies. This extensive study is the result of the tremendous importance of understanding employees. In order for agencies to continue to attain and develop quality, experienced workers, they must continue to monitor the many aspects of their employee's job satisfaction. This study will add to the body of research that has been completed in the past on job satisfaction of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. In order to conduct this research I will be using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire as my instrument of job satisfaction measurement. According to the Seventh Mental Measurements Yearbook, this questionnaire is a product of the Work Adjustment Project studies at the University of Minnesota's Industrial Relations Center. The MSQ has been developed as a survey of satisfaction that considers the Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and overall work satisfaction levels of employees. According to the website, [www.psych.umn.edu/psylabs/vpr/msqinf](http://www.psych.umn.edu/psylabs/vpr/msqinf), the MSQ can be given to groups of subjects or to an individual. Weiss, England, and Lofquist (1967) report that the reliability coefficients for the use of this form are considered to be high. The coefficients ranged

from .84 to .91 for intrinsic factors related to job satisfaction and .77 to .82 for the extrinsic satisfaction scale. The validity for the short form can be inferred from the validity from the MSQ long form as the short form is a subset of the long form questionnaire. The survey is appropriate for any subjects that can read at a fifth grade level or higher. There is a long form and a short form of the MSQ. For the purposes of this study, the length of time that it takes to complete the MSQ has been determined to be extremely important factor in the likelihood of timely return of surveys. Hence, the short form of the MSQ will be used as the measurement of job satisfaction. The short form contains 20 items taken from the long form which most accurately represent that entire scale.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will consist of information regarding how the sample was selected, a description of the sample, and the instrument that was utilized. Also, data collection and data analysis procedures will be included. A description of the methodological limitations will conclude this chapter.

#### **Subject Selection and Description**

The subjects of this study were selected by an inclusion of all of the current practicing Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in a specific state. The agencies that were included as subjects were contacted and approval was gained prior to completion of this research. There are currently 202 State-Federal based Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors employed in the specific state that was utilized for this research. All Counselors were sent a survey and were asked to voluntarily participate. Counselors were asked to participate regardless of age, gender, length of employment, or level of education. Also, all subjects were assured that their completed surveys would remain confidential.

#### **Instrumentation**

The data collected in this study was completed through the use of the short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. This questionnaire was sent by letter mail to each qualified subject.

#### **Data Collection**

Permission to conduct this study was gained from the administrator of the state-federal based Vocational Rehabilitation system in a specific state. This permission was

completed by e-mail and was finished prior to any survey data collection. Also, approval for this study was gained from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Wisconsin - Stout. After approval for this study was attained; letters of intent, surveys, and consent for participation forms were sent to all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors that are employed in a specific mid-western state. A copy of the informed consent form that was sent to each subject can be found in Appendix A. The surveys were sent to each Counselor by letter mail. Each Counselor was asked to voluntarily participate by completing their survey and returning it to the researcher.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected was analyzed by using a computerized statistics program, SPSS. The data that was collected is ordinal as it was collected using a likert scale. For example, subjects answered each of the twenty questions with one of the following: very dissatisfied = 1, dissatisfied = 2, not sure = 3, satisfied = 4, and very satisfied = 5. All of the appropriate descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Cross-tabulations were conducted to determine if gender, location of provision of services had any affect on the levels of job satisfaction.

### **Limitations**

There were a few limitations in this study. First of all, this study was limited by the type of counselors that were included as subjects. Since this study consisted of only state-federal based Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, the results can't be generalized to describe the conditions in other Vocational Rehabilitation agencies. Also, this study was limited to state-federal based programs in a specific state, as a result, the findings can't be generalized to counselors in state-federal based programs in other states. Lastly,

due to the voluntary nature of this type of survey research, the study was limited by the number of counselors that decided to participate and return their survey.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Introduction**

There were two objectives of this research. First, the research was to determine the overall level of job satisfaction on Rehabilitation Counselors in a specific State Agency. Second, the research was to determine whether there were differences in job satisfaction between counselors who provide services in an urban area versus those who provide services in a rural area. This chapter will describe these two objectives by providing a data analysis of counselor responses to the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire results. This chapter will provide two sections in order to accomplish the presentation of the results of this study. The first section will include the gender and location description of the subjects that responded to the survey. The second section will provide a description of the statistical analysis that was performed on the data that was attained in this study.

#### **Demographics**

In conducting this research, it was determined that two hundred and two State-Federal based Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in the specific state were qualified to be subjects for this study. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire was mailed to all the qualified subjects and one hundred and five of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors chose to participate in the study by completing and returning their surveys. This return rate was determined to be 52% of the total possible participants for this study. Of the one hundred and five Counselors that chose to participate, there were thirty nine males and fifty nine females. Also, there were seven subjects that did not indicate their gender. Of the one hundred and five subjects, there were fifty nine Counselors that

provide services in urban areas. Of the one hundred and five subjects, there were thirty two Counselors that indicated that they provide services in rural locations. Of the one hundred and five subjects, there were six Counselors that indicated that they provide services in rural and urban locations. Lastly, there were eight subjects that did not respond to the location question and therefore, their results could not be used in the analysis of data which was used to describe job satisfaction based on the characteristic of location.

## **Results**

The raw data that was received from the survey was converted into total scores by the following scoring procedure: for each of the twenty questions subjects were given an answer selection of: very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, not sure, satisfied, and very satisfied. This likert scale was then scored according to the MSQ manual by the following conversion process. Items that were marked very dissatisfied were given a score of 1, questions that were marked dissatisfied were given a score of 2, questions that were answered with not sure were given a score of 3, questions that were answered satisfied were given a score of 4, and questions that were answered very satisfied were given a score of 5. Then, these scores were analyzed with the SPSS statistics program in order to attain the appropriate descriptive statistics for this study.

The descriptive statistics included in these results include total mean values for overall job satisfaction levels which indicated that the total job satisfaction of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in this specific state was 73.99%. This percentile score was determined by converting the overall total scores into a percentage of satisfaction level. This percentage level is interpreted by the MSQ normative data to be in the job

satisfaction level which is considered to be average satisfaction. There is a standard error of measurement of 3.05 for this overall total of job satisfaction.

The next descriptive statistic that was determined in this analysis was the mean values for each particular question of the survey as completed by the subjects of urban service area, rural service area, and urban/rural service areas (these subjects answered both to the provision of services location question attained in the survey). This data is provided in Table 1 (Page 27), Table 2 (Page 28), and Table 3 (Page 29). Included in the each table are mean values for each question, standard deviation scores for each question, and the total mean values for each service location (urban, rural, and both).

It was noted by this researcher that there may be some significance in the differences between the mean scores on question 16. This question was in regards to the satisfaction level with a Counselor's independence in using their own methods to complete their job. An Analysis of Variance was performed on this question to determine if there was statistical significance between the mean values for urban, rural, and both. The ANOVA used to analyze this difference found that there was a statistically significant difference in these mean values at the 0.031 level. However, it should be noted that this difference is likely due to the proportional differences in the number of subjects that were included in each group (urban – 59, rural – 32, both – 6).

The following is a list of the twenty general topic areas that were addressed by each question (an exact replica of the survey is not available due to respect of the copyright of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire that was utilized for this research).

**Question 1:** Workload.

**Question 2:** Independence.

**Question 3:** Issues of variety.



- Question 4:** Respect in the community.
- Question 5:** Supervisory issues.
- Question 6:** Supervisory issues.
- Question 7:** Being able to perform in honest manner.
- Question 8:** Job security issues.
- Question 9:** Chance to help people.
- Question 10:** Authority on the job.
- Question 11:** Feeling good about competence.
- Question 12:** Agency policy and procedures.
- Question 13:** Salary.
- Question 14:** Career upward mobility.
- Question 15:** Independence.
- Question 16:** Independence in procedure.
- Question 17:** Job environment.
- Question 18:** Interpersonal relation issues.
- Question 19:** Supervisory management/Public respect.
- Question 20:** Internal feelings of reward.

Table 1

## Job Satisfaction of Counselors in an Urban Service Area

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	59	4.29	.83
Q2	59	4.36	.61
Q3	59	4.41	.53
Q4	59	3.51	.94
Q5	59	3.44	1.41
Q6	59	3.58	1.32
Q7	59	3.93	1.00
Q8	59	4.42	.67
Q9	59	4.37	.61
Q10	59	3.32	.75
Q11	59	4.05	.97
Q12	59	2.10	.90
Q13	59	2.66	1.18
Q14	59	2.42	1.05
Q15	59	3.85	1.13
Q16	59	3.56	1.10
Q17	59	3.61	1.11
Q18	59	4.27	.87
Q19	59	3.15	1.16
Q20	59	3.73	1.05
Valid N (listwise)	59		
Urban Service Area Total Score			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	59	73.03	8.97

Table 2

## Job Satisfaction of Counselors in a Rural Service Area

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	32	4.31	.54
Q2	32	4.38	.61
Q3	32	4.28	.92
Q4	32	3.59	.87
Q5	32	3.41	1.13
Q6	32	3.75	1.02
Q7	32	3.97	.82
Q8	32	4.44	.67
Q9	32	4.38	.75
Q10	32	3.25	.72
Q11	32	4.06	.98
Q12	32	2.38	1.01
Q13	32	2.81	1.28
Q14	32	2.78	1.01
Q15	32	4.19	.90
Q16	32	4.13	.87
Q17	32	3.69	1.00
Q18	32	4.28	.77
Q19	32	3.12	1.04
Q20	32	3.88	.87
Valid N (listwise)	32		
<b>Rural Services Area Total Score</b>			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	32	75.06	9.94

Table 3

## Job Satisfaction of Counselors Serving Both Urban and Rural Areas

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	6	3.67	1.37
Q2	6	4.17	.41
Q3	6	4.50	.55
Q4	6	3.17	.75
Q5	6	3.83	1.17
Q6	6	3.83	.75
Q7	6	3.50	1.22
Q8	6	4.50	.55
Q9	6	4.50	.55
Q10	6	3.00	.63
Q11	6	3.83	1.47
Q12	6	2.00	1.10
Q13	6	3.17	1.33
Q14	6	2.83	1.33
Q15	6	3.50	1.22
Q16	6	3.33	1.03
Q17	6	2.50	.84
Q18	6	4.00	1.55
Q19	6	2.83	.98
Q20	6	3.17	1.33
Valid N (listwise)	6		
<b>Both Service Area Total Score</b>			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	6	69.83	12.38

## **Summary**

The results of the research demonstrates that counselors in the state were generally satisfied with their job. There were differences between groups of counselors based on the location where services were provided however the differences were small and not at a level of significance. There does however tend to be a trend among all the three groups where questions 12, 13 and 14 tended to be responded to with less satisfaction than the other items on the survey.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of the research was to describe the current condition of job satisfaction for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in the State-Federal based agency in a specific state. Also, this study examined if there were any differences between urban Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor job satisfaction and rural Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor job satisfaction. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire was utilized to survey Counselors on their current levels of job satisfaction. This chapter will provide a discussion of the results of the data and will provide recommendations for future research on this topic.

#### **Conclusions**

This research study intended to describe the current overall job satisfaction level for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and to determine if there were any differences between the job satisfaction survey results of Counselors providing services in urban areas vs rural areas. Gruneberg (1976) reports that the negative results of job dissatisfaction make it essential for employers to continue to gain a better understanding of their employees job satisfaction levels. Also, Bruce & Blackburn (1992) note that a well-defined understanding of the components of job satisfaction can be very beneficial to any agency. This study has attempted to provide a better understanding of the current job satisfaction levels of Counselors that practice in the State-Federal based agencies. The results of the findings indicated that the overall job satisfaction levels of the Counselors in this study was found to be at the level of about 74% satisfied, which

indicates that the Counselors are at a level of job satisfaction that is just below the high level range of satisfaction. Also, the results of this research showed that there was very little difference between the job satisfaction levels of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors that work in urban vs those that work in rural locations. In fact, both of these groups were shown to be in the average to high level of job satisfaction range in this study. This level is determined by comparing the results of the study to the closest normative group which was included in the development of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. This normative group was referred to as the Employed Non-Disabled group. This group was used because there was no normative group that related to the field of Counseling.

The results of this study contrast with a study that was conducted by Arnold and Seekins in 1997. In that study, Arnold and Seekins reported that there were some differences in the levels of job satisfaction for urban and rural counselors. Arnold and Seekins (1997) reported that the State Rehabilitation system is in some ways tailored for the urban lifestyle and the urban Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Arnold and Seekins reported in their study that the rural Counselor was less satisfied with components of their jobs such as: training, working conditions, and availability of services for consumers. These services for consumers would include employment opportunities, transportation, and educational opportunities. Unfortunately, my study was limited in the type of questions that were included due to the survey that was selected by this researcher. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire that was utilized in this study did not have many questions that would help to bring out some of these type of differences. The survey that was used for this study did contain a general question regarding working conditions. The results of the data in this study indicated that there

were no significant differences between urban and rural Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors on this question about satisfaction with working conditions. In fact, there was only one question that showed a small significant difference between urban and rural Counselors. That question was in regards to the opportunity to use a subjects own methods to do their job. Counselors working in the urban areas were more satisfied than Counselors that were providing services in rural areas. However, it should be note that this result could have been due to the proportional disparity in the numbers of subjects in the different subject groups. Also, this researcher was unable to find any other past studies that indicated these same results regarding Counselors having a chance to utilize their own methods to complete the tasks of their job.

### **Recommendations**

This researcher has the following recommendations for future research on the job satisfaction differences between urban and rural Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

1. Future studies should attempt to find or develop a survey instrument that contains questions that are more specific to some possible differences regarding the job satisfaction of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in urban and rural locations. For example, Arnold and Seekins (1997) conducted a study which indicated that they found differences in levels of satisfaction that related to issues such as: availability of services to consumers and training opportunities. Hence, an instrument that asked questions specific to these issues should be used to gain a better understanding of the job satisfaction differences related to location.
2. Future studies should consider that job satisfaction has been determined to be a fluid situation and that a research study that was structured with a longitudinal



design may be more accurate in defining the job satisfaction of individuals in any occupation.

3. Future studies should consider using a survey instrument that has based its development on a norm group that includes Vocational Rehabilitation or a similar field.
4. Future research should attempt to choose a population subject group that has a more balanced number of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in urban and rural locations.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**INFORMED CONSENT**

I understand that by returning this survey, I am giving my informed consent as a volunteer that is participating in this study. I understand and agree that any potential risk for this survey is small. I am aware that the information being collected will be kept confidential and that this survey contains no identifying information. You have the right to refuse to participate, and the right to withdraw from participating at anytime during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

Questions or concerns about this study should be addressed by contacting the researcher, Gary Emmerich at (715) 233-1386 or the research advisor, Dr. Robert Peters at (715) 232- 1983. Questions about the rights of research subjects can be addressed to Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the protection of Human subjects Research, 11 Harvey Hall, Menomonie, WI (715) 232-1126.

The following survey will describe current job satisfaction levels for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the state-federal agency. Also, it will show a comparison between job satisfaction levels of Counselors in urban (metropolitan areas) vs rural (non-metropolitan areas).

**Please complete the following survey (Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire) and then complete the page that follows which asks for the location of your office and the location of service provision. Please simply enter urban or rural in the blank to preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of your responses. Include the completed survey and the urban/rural location question page with your return mailing.**

**All answers will remain confidential.**

**This survey will take about 10 minutes to complete.**