

Job Satisfaction of People with Disabilities Placed Through a Project with Industry

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Abstract: The level of job satisfaction among disabled persons provided employment through a project of industry is investigated. The study reveals that the overall job satisfaction level for these people is slightly higher than the average for other occupations reported in the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. The amount of pay, the chances of advancement and the implementation of company policies are areas, however, where respondents said they were least satisfied.

Job satisfaction has been related to personnel turnover (Scott & Taylor, 1973), plans to terminate employment (Rosse & Hulin, 1985), and life satisfaction (Iris & Barrett, 1972). Additionally, job satisfaction has been correlated with positive behaviors toward others (Smith, Organ & Near, 1983) and physical health (Burke, 1970; Karasek, Gardell, & Lindell 1987). Job satisfaction has been noted to be important for people with disabilities (Quigley, 1968; Selzer, 1984).

The Hawthorne study (Roethlisberger & Dickenson, 1939) was an early indicator of research on job satisfaction. As a side effect of studying productivity, investigators found that workers influenced the behavior of their coworkers and a sense of belonging to the work group was pursued. Prior to this time there was little expressed interest among employers to understand job satisfaction. In the 1940s as more workers were needed, largely due to World War II, there was an increased interest in job satisfaction of workers and several theories of job satisfaction were developed to understand relevant issues. Theories have been helpful in understanding the nature of job satisfaction and for developing measures to assess job satisfaction.

One theory of job satisfaction is based on a person's evaluation of whether one gets what he/she wants from a job (Vroom, 1964). The amount of job satisfaction is related to the degree the job provides outcomes which are in congruence with what the person desires. In another theory of job satisfaction Herzberg (1966) suggested a two factor theory wherein job satisfaction is composed of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors consist of work dimensions of autonomy and responsibility. Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson, and Capwell (1957) differentiated intrinsic and extrinsic factors of job satisfaction. Intrinsic factors involved characteristics of the job whereas extrinsic satisfaction concerned the work environment. They found that intrinsic factors contributed to job satisfaction and extrinsic factors were related to job dissatisfaction.

A third viewpoint is the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment (MTWA) wherein job satisfaction is defined in terms of the relationship between the reinforcers in the work environment and the person's needs (Dawis, England & Lofquist, 1964). A contingency is that the individual's ability corresponds to requirements of the job. The closer the relationship between the reinforcers and the person's needs the higher the level of job satisfaction. These theories of job satisfaction have

provided the basis for numerous studies about the topic. Additionally, instruments measuring job satisfaction have been developed based upon these theories (Weiss, England, & Lofquist, 1967).

Investigators have studied a range of jobs and issues related to job satisfaction (Tziner & Lotham, 1989; Walsh, 1982). For example, Walsh (1982) focused on job prestige and worker satisfaction, comparing occupations such as garbage men, teachers, bartenders, and professors. Hackman and Lawler (1971) investigated the effects of job characteristics on job satisfaction. Four specific job characteristics were related to job satisfaction: variety, autonomy, task identity and feedback. Individual personality characteristics were related to preference of job tasks and job satisfaction.

There has been some research about job satisfaction and rehabilitation focused on rehabilitation professionals (Wright and Tenian, 1987; Jenkins and Kelz, 1973; Miller & Muthard, 1965). However, there has been relatively few studies about the issue among participants going through the rehabilitation process (Lam, Chan, & Thorpe, 1988; Reiter, Friedman & Mokho, 1985). Much of the research conducted among people with disabilities has been focused on those with mental retardation. Reiter, Friedman, and Mokho (1985) for example, surveyed 83 individuals exploring both intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. The investigators found that extrinsic factors influenced motivation among the participants. Intrinsic job satisfaction in this study was related to issues such as working conditions, supervision, policy, and salary. The importance of being sensitive to job assignments for those with mental retardation in an effort to facilitate the adjustment and the effectiveness of such workers was noted. Seltzer (1984) also studied patterns of job satisfaction among four groups of mentally retarded adults: individuals with mental retardation who were unemployed at the time of the study, but had competitive jobs prior to the study; those who attended sheltered workshops, but had competitive jobs previously; those who attended sheltered workshops and previously did not have competitive jobs; and those who had competitive jobs. This investigator found that positive job satisfaction was related to upward employment mobility (those attending a sheltered workshop to those who had competitive jobs). Personality characteristics such as self-confidence were also found to be positively associated with job satisfaction. There have been a few studies on job satisfaction with populations other than those with mental retardation. Quigley (1968) studied job satisfaction of those with hearing impairments wherein he found that 60% of people with hearing impairments were satisfied with their jobs. Scott, Williams, Stout, and Gucher (1980) investigated job satisfaction of those with learning disabilities and they found that approximately 40% were satisfied with their job. Lam et al. (1988) noted that rehabilitation counselors are less concerned about job satisfaction of people with disabilities than they are with successfully placing these clients in jobs. Successful placement of people with disabilities is an important goal for rehabilitation counselors because of the high unemployment of disabled and the complex process of rehabilitations. However, if the issue of job satisfaction among people with disabilities is ignored, a basic component of matching people to jobs is undermined.

More research is needed about job satisfaction among people with various types of disabilities if rehabilitation professionals are to better understand relevant issues in the placement process, and if rehabilitation professionals are to develop strategies to assist people with disabilities in their tenure on the job. The purpose of this investigation was to identify the level of job satisfaction among people with various disabilities who were placed through a Project with Industry service.

Methods

Participants

Participants consisted of 27 people with disabilities (18 males and nine females) who were placed into competitive jobs through the Massachusetts Project with Industry (MPWI) from 1988 through 1990. The ages of the respondents ranged from 24 to 59 years and their average educational level was two years of college or trade school. The average time on the job was approximately two years and examples of positions held were employment recruiter, administrator, secretary, etc.

Procedures

Graduate assistants reviewed placements through the Massachusetts Project with Industry, MPWI, over a three-year period (1988-1990). The names of 300 individuals who had been placed through MPWI over the past three years were identified. Letters were sent to all 300 people with disabilities explaining the purpose of the study, e.g. identifying job satisfaction of those placed through the MPWI and they were requested to indicate their interest in participating in the study on a post card provided with the letter. Approximately 10% of the letters were returned as undeliverable due to change of addresses. Forty-three returned the post card indicating an interest in participating in the study. All 43 were sent the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) and a stamped envelope to return the survey. Twenty-seven of those forty-three returned the completed survey instrument.

Instruments

Weiss, Dawis, England and Lofquist (1967) developed the 20 item MSQ to measure job satisfaction by requiring respondents to rate degree of job satisfaction with various components of their job based on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very dissatisfied to 5 being very satisfied. The scale has been designed to measure intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction based upon Herzberg's two factor theory (Weiss et al., 1967). The intrinsic scale is composed of 12 items and is characterized by abilities related to on the job achievement opportunities, and opportunities to do things for others. The extrinsic subscale is composed of six items and is designed to measure how many company policies are administered and the quality of working conditions. A general satisfaction is composed of 20 items, two of the general satisfaction items are unrelated to intrinsic or extrinsic satisfaction.

Reliability for the intrinsic scale was reported to be .86; .80 for the extrinsic subscale; .90 for the overall general scale. Means for the subscales; intrinsic, extrinsic, and general satisfaction were 47.14, 19.98, and 74.85, respectively for various occupations with standard deviations of 7.42, 4.78, and 11.92 respectively.

Results

The means and standard deviations derived from the 20 items of the MSQ for the sample are reported in table 1. Item means ranged from 2.96 to 4.46. Participants indicated that they were most satisfied with keeping busy, a chance to work alone, a chance to do different things, a chance to do things for others, and a chance to make use of abilities. Respondents indicated that lowest job

satisfaction occurred with pay and amount of work they do, chances for advancement, the way company policies are put into practice, and the chance to tell other people what to do. Three of these categories of lower satisfaction related to advancement opportunities. Intrinsic satisfaction for this sample was found to have a mean of 48.88, whereas the MSQ manual reports for the standardized group intrinsic satisfaction was 47.14. The extrinsic satisfaction of participants was found to have a mean of 20.17; 19.98 for the standardized group of the MSQ. Overall general satisfaction was found to be 77.03 compared to 74.85 in the standardized group reported in the MSQ manual.

Discussion

Intrinsic and overall general satisfaction were found to be slightly higher than the mean of other occupations reported in the MSQ manual. Extrinsic satisfaction for the sample was found to be comparable to MSQ norm group scores. In terms of specific items, people with disabilities expressed less satisfaction with opportunities for higher level jobs which were generally unavailable to them.

Researchers in the few studies that have been conducted about job satisfaction of people with disabilities have generally found high levels of job satisfaction (McAfee, 1986). Brolin, Durand, Kromer, and Miller (1975) found that 70% of workers with mental retardation to be satisfied with their work. Quigley (1968) determined that approximately 60% of people with hearing impairments were satisfied with their jobs. Scott, Williams, Stout, and Gucher (1980) obtained results indicating that 40% of those with learning disabilities were satisfied with their jobs. Whereas, Hardy (1968) found that over 60% of persons with learning disabilities reported satisfaction with their jobs. Results found in the present study support these previous studies indicating people with various disabilities were satisfied with their jobs.

There may be several explanations for the results obtained in this study. The Project With Industry staff systematically work with each person who goes through the program. The MPWI staff work systematically with both people with disabilities and potential employers. Upon intake into the MPWI program participants are carefully interviewed to determine the directions for their job searches. Additionally, the referral sources provide information about the participants background including any vocational and career testing results.

Based upon the information that is collected the MPWI staff work with the person with disability and various employers to find a successful match. MPWI staff also, provide employers with information about people with disabilities to dispel any concerns and myths of hiring people with disabilities. Consequently, when a person with a disability is placed into a job, considerable time and effort has been devoted to matching the person and the job. Another explanation is that persons with disabilities may feel fortunate to have a job and they overrate their satisfaction. Another explanation may be that only those individuals satisfied with their jobs responded to the survey, there was only a 9% return rate of those who had been placed into jobs over the identified three year period.

It was interesting to note that the respondents felt that the amount of pay, chances for advancement, and the way company policies were put into practice were areas in which they were least satisfied. There may be several implications for those working with people with disabilities based upon these

results. Professionals providing career counseling to people with disabilities may want to keep in mind potential for pay increases and the amount of money that can be earned in particular professions. People with disabilities should be clearly informed of the pay for a particular profession. Additionally, those working with people with disabilities can provide information and training during the placement training process about how to obtain raises. Chances for advancement on the job for persons with disabilities may be improved with recent changes in federal legislation, the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Informing people with disabilities of their rights and providing information about how to obtain promotions should be provided to people with disabilities on an ongoing basis even after they have been placed upon a job. Typically, cases are closed three months or six months after people with disabilities have been placed into a job. However, it may be helpful to provide periodic contact once or twice a year to discuss and provide training on relevant issues such as how to get a raise or a promotion.

There are several important areas for research which potentially can contribute to the quality of life among people with disabilities and their success in the world of work. One important research area is to focus on job satisfaction of people with various disabilities who have been placed through different types of rehabilitation agencies and systems. For example, what is the job satisfaction of those placed through the state/federal system, the private rehabilitation system, or other rehabilitation placement organizations. Such information will be helpful in determining the effectiveness of placement practices and to develop improved methods of placement. Gathering information about job satisfaction among people with disabilities placed through a placement program may provide program evaluation information which can be used in making program decisions and improvements.

A second research focus might be the development of strategies and programs to continue provision of limited services to persons with disabilities on an intermittent schedule, and which are designed to systematically improve adaptation to the world of work. Adaptation to the work world for people with disabilities placed into jobs through the rehabilitation process should be seen as a developmental process rather than a one time event. Research needs to be focused on methods and training which facilitates the acquisition of raises and job promotions for persons with disabilities. Developing strategies and training for long term on the job success such as raises and promotions may be timely given the new opportunities for equality for persons with disabilities as a result of ADA.

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