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ABSTRACT

The sources of faculty work dissatisfaction in U.S. colleges and universities were studied in 1978-1979. A sample of 1972 faculty teaching in 24 institutions were mailed questionnaires, and 1,096 usable responses were received. The sample included faculty from eight universities, eight liberal arts colleges, and eight community colleges. Five personal factors emerged: self-interest and institutional interest, discipline concerns, a pessimistic viewpoint of higher education, and perceived power of faculty. Three environmental factors also were found: facilities, quality, and financial support. Multiple regression analysis revealed two major factors: quality and pessimism. A strong faculty concern for quality in their students, colleagues, and work environment was found. In evaluating the pessimism factor, a predictor indicating career/role dissatisfaction, concerns for quality again emerged. In short, faculty concerns for a perceived diminution of quality were a principal predictor of dissatisfaction with their place of work and career. The results held irrespective of age, sex, rank, security (tenure), and type of institution. More dissatisfaction was expressed with place of employment than with the career. A questionnaire is appended. (SW)

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FACULTY WORK DISSATISFACTIONS AND THEIR CONCERN FOR QUALITY

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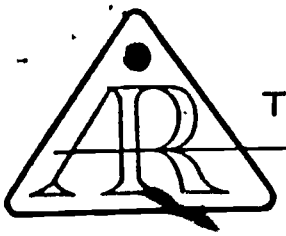

THE ASSOCIATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

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D. R. Coleman, Chairman
Forum Publication
Advisory Committee

FACULTY WORK DISSATISFACTIONS AND THEIR CONCERN FOR QUALITY

ABSTRACT

This study examines the sources of faculty work dissatisfaction in United States colleges and universities. Five personal and three environmental factors emerged from 1096 faculty questionnaire responses. Two accounted for most of the variance when regressional analyses were run. These were "Quality" (student competency, peer performance, administrative capability) and "Pessimism" (external respect for the profession). The results held irrespective of age, sex, rank, security (tenure), and type of institution. (Some exceptions obtained.) More dissatisfaction was expressed with place of employment than with the career. Implications are discussed.

FACULTY WORK DISSATISFACTIONS AND THEIR CONCERN FOR QUALITY

INTRODUCTION

Until the recent Willie and Stecklein (1982) study, the literature on faculty job satisfaction had been uniformly positive (e.g., Eckert, Stecklein, & Sagen (1959) through Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, & Pinneau (1975) and Ladd & Lipset (1976)). Overwhelmingly, faculty were happy. However, the Minnesota survey showed an appreciable increase in the percentage of indifferent and dissatisfied faculty. Others have suggested that there has been a real change in work satisfaction since the mid '70's (e.g., Sarason, 1977) — and indeed the day-to-day faculty chit-chat would confirm the rise — but the Minnesota data were the first to corroborate such suspicions.

From both a practical as well as a theoretical perspective, the problem is one of determining the sources of dissatisfaction. Are they due to environmental factors? Or are there personal ones that contribute to strains? What factors moderate the sources of dissatisfaction? What is the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic determiners of decreased satisfaction? Is dissatisfaction principally with the career or is it more closely associated with the place of work? Can conditions be altered to increase satisfaction?

These are the questions this study addresses.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

No single conceptual framework adequately encompasses the issues being dealt with here. In the first place, faculty expressions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction do not seem to be on a single continuum. That is, the absence of a satisfier does not automatically produce dissatisfaction nor does the removal of a dissatisfier guarantee satisfaction. For example, increasing a low salary (a cause of dissatisfaction)

will not necessarily lead to a satisfied professor. Herzberg's dual theory seems appropriate but closer analysis finds it wanting.

Second, it appears that the shortcomings of others who have studied faculty satisfaction results from their failure to differentiate between job and role satisfaction. Faculty, for example, can be quite dissatisfied with their particular college or university (job dissatisfaction) but simultaneously be happy with the career they have chosen (role satisfaction). The analyses presented here have taken this important distinction into account.

Third, our data collection and analyses have separated environmental from personal factors related to job and role sat/dissatisfactions. The division was made for both theoretical and practical reasons. Extrinsic/intrinsic motivational theory (see Atkinson, 1977) is helpful for it guides the inquiry toward meaningful constructs. For example, the intrinsic (personal) factors can be expected to be attitudes and motivations. From a practical perspective, if a goal is to improve faculty satisfaction (and hence productivity, an as yet not well established relationship in higher education), it is important to recognize that changes in the external environment are much easier to accomplish than are the basic behavior patterns of adults.

Last, it is recognized that a number of factors can moderate one's satisfaction/dissatisfaction. By way of illustration, rank and tenure status have been shown to have a relationship to the outcome measures used here. A number of these are introduced as controls in the analyses.

In summary, rather than employ a single conceptual framework, four principal kinds of distinctions have been introduced — satisfaction/dissatisfaction; job (place)/career; intrinsic (personal)/extrinsic (environmental); and a set of moderating variables.

RELATED LITERATURE

The foundational (Russell, 1962) and theoretical (Leon, 1973) studies of faculty satisfaction indicate that the construct is multidimensional and that dissatisfaction

is not simply the absence of satisfiers. As noted above, most of satisfaction/dissatisfaction research fails to make the distinctions a complex conception requires. Consequently, it is impossible to construct a comprehensive set of generalizations from the many investigations. Still, some systematic display of the experimental literature is presented. In a broad stroke, the findings show that faculty derive satisfactions within their role activities (teaching, research, etc.) and attribute their dissatisfactions to conditions of the place of work (unsatisfactory rewards, inadequate salaries, poor relations with administrators, etc.). The Eckert and Williams (1972) study captures the principal empirical findings before and since their report.

As for performance on the job, several studies have examined the relationship between satisfaction and performance. The outcomes are not conclusive and vary from positive to negative relationships. It appears that a number of factors moderate the relationship. (See Ferguson, 1961; Thorp, 1970; Clark and Blackburn, 1973; Coltrin and Glueck, 1977.) With respect to the generally very high overall satisfaction with the academic role (career) reported in surveys, early studies found little or no relationships with such attributes as age, rank, and time on the job. These studies, however, failed to take into account career stage. More recent inquiries find that satisfaction with the academic profession is related to career stage and is not constant over the career span. (See, e.g., Baldwin and Blackburn, 1981).

The largest proportion of the studies involving satisfaction/dissatisfaction can be catalogued under the general category of intrinsic/extrinsic (personal versus environmental) factors — even though this was not necessarily the conceptual framework that directed much of the research. McKeachie (1979), for example, argues for the dominance of intrinsic factors from Atkinson's (1977) motivation. The pleasures of teaching, observing students learn and grown, the freedom afforded the professor, autonomy, and other intrinsic satisfiers appear throughout the literature (Cohen, 1974; Nicholson & Miljus, 1972; Leon, 1973; Eckert and Stecklein, 1961; Eckert and

Williams, 1972; Witlock, 1965; Swierenga, 1970; Avakian, 1971).

Also, control of the work environment has been shown to be related to satisfactions (Cares and Blackburn, 1978; Levine, 1978). Unsatisfactory environmental conditions appear frequently in reports of faculty dissatisfaction. Smart (1975) has dealt with the phenomena conceptually while Javier (1971) and Wallin (1966), among others, have supplied empirical evidence.

Closely related organizational dissatisfiers are found in a number of studies — facility deficiencies (e.g., Clark, 1973), inadequate rewards (e.g., Wallin, 1966), perceived failures of administrative leadership (Wieland and Bachman, 1966; McCord, 1970; Cope, 1972; Bachman, 1968; Coltrin and Glueck, 1977; Eckert and Williams, 1972; Barrett, 1969; Nicholson & Miljus, 1972; Place & Sorenson, 1974), and a lack of quality (e.g., qualified students) (Huber, 1970; Kelley & Wilbur, 1970; Sarason & Johnson, 1979).

Another extensive collection of studies deals with extrinsic variables that produce stress and cause dissatisfaction. These studies have been carried out in a variety of settings — liberal arts colleges, universities, and organizations changing from one mission to another (e.g., teaching to research). The studies by Rice (1980), Fahrer (1978), Klapper (1967), Barnard and Blackburn (1972), DeVries (1970), Kratcoski (1969), Buerer (1967), Boyenga (1978), and Baldwin and Blackburn (1981) are examples. At the same time, Pelz (1967) has shown that creative tension, i.e., an atmosphere which has stress mixed with freedom, is more productive than one which has no stress at all. In addition, Clark and Blackburn (1973) have shown that stress is modified by personal attributes, a category turned to next.

A number of studies have shown that satisfactions and dissatisfactions are moderated by a wide assortment of variables. Among these are sex (Koester and Clark, 1980), psychological characteristics (Barnes, 1976; Clark and Blackburn, 1973), place of work, i.e., type of college or university, especially its reputation vis a vis

some quality measure (Bess, 1973), age (Cares and Blackburn, 1978; Boberg, 1982), rank and tenure status (Bess, 1973), values held (Harshberger, 1975; Kalleberg, 1975), intellectual and emotional factors (Hoh, 1976), and career stage (Blackburn and Havighurst, 1979; Baldwin and Blackburn, 1981).

While not all of these moderators are variables in this study, the design acquired information on those most easily attainable by the survey method. Similarly, not all of the factors found in the literature are predictor variables in this inquiry. As noted above, the literature is difficult to synthesize because of the absence of theory based studies and the differences in their design. Studies can not be as directly compared as one would desire.

SAMPLE AND METHOD

The data were gathered in 1978-79. A four page questionnaire was mailed to a sample of 1972 faculty teaching in 24 American institutions of higher education. The sample included faculties from 8 universities, 8 liberal arts colleges, and 8 community colleges. The sample was further divided into research oriented (U-I) and comprehensive (U-II) universities, and liberal arts colleges that are selective (LAC-I) and less selective (LAC-II) in their student admissions. A total of 1096 useable questionnaires were returned with an overall response rate of 55.6%. A representativeness of the sample was checked by comparing demographic characteristics of sex, age, and tenure status with national studies (e.g., NCES statistics). Since the frequencies were comparable, the respondents were deemed to be representative of the faculty population. (See [author identifiable reference] for a detailed description of the sampling procedures and the data.)

The dependent variables consisted of two psychological measures of strain — job (workplace) dissatisfaction and workload (role/career) dissatisfaction. Job dissatisfaction is a global item: "In general how do you feel about your institution?"

Responses were from very good = 1, fairly good = 2, and not the place for me = 3. It is a single item, however, and therefore of unknown reliability. (In reviewing studies of single item measures of job dissatifaction, Quinne, Staines, and McCullough (1974) found that while single measures may provide dubious estimates of absolute levels of dissatisfaction, they are useful for comparing the satisfaction of individuals in different demographic groups. Since demographic differences were a focus of the study, the measure was deemed adequate for analysis.)

Workload dissatisfaction, a person's feeling that demands of her/his job are greater than he/she can handle, given the available time, resources, and abilities, is the evaluative response to the quantititate demands of the job. Being overloaded with work can threaten not only job security but feelings of self esteem and competency as well (Clark, 1973; French, Tupper, & Mueller, 1965). Two items were identified as measures of workload strain: (1) "I hardly even get time to give my academic work the attention it deserves." and (2) "My commitments to different aspects of my job are a source of considerable strain." (Scale was from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 4.)

The independent variables were based on questions concerning potential environmental (organizational) and personal (career goals) sources of stress. An attempt was made to reduce the number of person and environment dimensions to a smaller set of more reliable second-order indices. The convergent validity of these indices was first investigated by examining the intercorrelations among all dimensions for the total sample using Pearson product-moment correlations. Correlations of $r \geq .20$ that were significant at the $p < .01$ level were accepted. Then a principal components factor analysis was applied to the intercorrelation matrix. The emergent factors were subsequently rotated to simpler structures by a varimax rotation. The factor loading matrices for each of the major categories can be found in Tables 1 and 2.

[Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here.]

The internal consistency of the items composing each factor was then subjected to analysis by the Index Reliability Program which computes various statistics based on a variance-covariance matrix for a set of items composing an index. The factor reliability coefficients are in the Tables.

Characteristics of the Person

Five factors of personal characteristics emerged with eigenvalues greater than 1.00; they accounted for 60.4% of the total variance and were labelled accordingly. (See Table 1.) The scale score for the factor, and all subsequent factors, was computed by summing each faculty member's response to the questions forming the factor.

The first two factors are measures of self interest and institutional interest. The first could be considered a measure of local orientation (cf. Gouldner, 1957; 1958) especially since the third is clearly a measure of cosmopolitan orientation (discipline concerns). Consequently, these labels were used. A pessimistic viewpoint of higher education is the focus of the fourth factor which is labelled accordingly. The fifth and weakest factor, accounting for only 4.7% of the total variance, is a measure of the perceived power that faculty have over people's lives in the control of allocating funding and institutional opportunities.

The reliabilities for the factors range from .49 to .68. Reliabilities of .50 to .60 have been suggested as adequte in the early stages of research. Only one fell below that criterion, faculty power. It was maintained for analysis, however, since the alpha coefficient was .49.

Characteristics of the Environment

The environmental factors emerged from a list of resources that were rated according to their availability in achieving their teaching and scholarship activities.

The questionnaire scale ranged from inadequate = 1 to 5 = outstanding. Three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 accounted for 57.2% of the total variance. (See Table 2.) Two items were eliminated — computers and student assistants — due to a low output communality (.18) and a low factor loading. The names of the factors are self explanatory.

FINDINGS

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple regression analyses for job and career dissatisfaction controlling for age, sex, rank, place of employment, and tenure status. Table 3 shows that quality is negatively associated with job dissatisfaction (i.e., lack of quality predicts to job dissatisfaction) for all but two of the categories. It accounts for 11 to 45% of the variance with the greatest amount contributed by the younger and older age categories.

[Insert Table 3 about here.]

Two of the age categories account for the differences previously mentioned in predictors of job dissatisfaction with pessimism and faculty power predicting to job dissatisfaction for both groups 55 and older. For faculty 60 and older an additional factor, cosmopolitan orientation, is negatively related to job dissatisfaction. In other words, as faculty approach the retirement years, the less they are oriented towards their discipline the more likely they are to be disappointed with their workplace. (Cosmopolitanness is not to be confused with local orientation, also a possible predictor. However, localism appears as a significant determiner in the analysis.) Workload dissatisfaction is not as highly predicted by the variables in this study. The significant variables account for only 10 to 16% of the variance with pessimism accounting for the significant results in four of the eight cases — women, faculty in comprehensive universities, and three of the age categories. Lack of quality was significant for

only instructors (r = -.38) and facilities were significant for assistant professors only (r = -.31).

DISCUSSION

As with all cross-sectional studies—and nearly all on faculty are—there is the need to keep in mind that the portrait of faculty satisfaction is a snap-shot at one moment in time and suffers this limitation. Nonetheless, it can be argued that this was an opportune moment (1979-80) to take the professor's pulse for a change was picked up, one that likely reflects a trend still present in the profession. No one is suggesting that faculty happiness is on the rise. With this reservation, the predicting variables (the "causes") can be examined.

The strong faculty concern for quality — in their students, in their colleagues, in their work environment — is the pervasive finding of the study. It is the intrinsic desires for self-fulfillment that pervade the data.

Also, when one examines the components of the pessimism factor — the predictor that predominates in the multiple regression with respect to career/role dissatisfaction — one again finds what are essentially concerns about quality, now from a personal perspective. "Lower standards" is like lowered "student quality" and "excess administrators" can be linked with "administrator quality." "Declining respect" does not have an immediate parallel among the items composing the Quality factor but certainly it is of a similar nature.

In short, faculty concerns for a perceived diminution of quality are a principal predictor of dissatisfaction with their place of work and their career.

The observations on the negative relationships between quality and job dissatisfaction assume greater importance when the results are contrasted with much of the research on job satisfaction in which quality is a control variable rather than a predictor variable. The lack of quality predicting to job dissatisfaction for all

faculty except faculty in liberal arts colleges where high quality is maintained (and the 55-59 age category) is rather surprising in light of previous research. That faculty decry the demise of quality is understandable, but the fact that it includes research universities as well as community colleges is new. What can account for the pervasiveness throughout academia?

The rebellion against poor students could account for the pessimism associated with workload dissatisfaction for poor students take more time away from other faculty pursuits, especially at comprehensive universities where faculty are under greater pressure to publish more and still have to deal with less qualified students.

There is no definitive answer as to why the lack of facilities is associated with workload dissatisfaction for assistant professors. One explanation is that many of the new faculty members are coming from large research universities and they find their new environments inadequate. Another explanation is that the assistant professors are protecting themselves against possible career failure (not getting promoted and not receiving tenure) by making excuses in advance, a strategy employed by many in all walks of life. When times are tough, blame someone/something else.

From a practical perspective, what can administrators do? Some conditions are outside their control (for example, age of faculty), whereas some others are amenable to treatment. Still others call for more creative solutions. For example, from a strictly realistic perspective, an institution will not raise its entrance standards when enrollments are falling. In fact, it will do just the opposite. Improving student quality through selection is not an option open to large numbers of colleges and universities today.

At the same time, the work climate can be improved without an infusion of non-existing funds. Climate sometimes can be improved by increasing participation of those whose lives are affected by decisions that are made. Assignments can be altered so that, say, working with a remedial group can be balanced with an advanced

seminar or with released blocks of time needed for creative work. Sponsoring (and publicizing) faculty colloquia can increase the respect faculty have for their colleagues. It is not that there are quick fixes for serious problems; rather, there can be improvements that mitigate stresses.

What was learned in this inquiry was that faculty liked their career choice. They want to be professors. What they are unhappy about is the condition of work. Tending to these is one way to improve the quality of life for an institution's most vital personnel.

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TABLE 1

MATRIX OF FACTOR LOADINGS FOR ROTATED (VARIMAX) PERSONAL FACTORS (N = 992)*

Dimension	Factor I Local	II Economic Status	III Cosmo-politan	IV Pessi-mism	V Faculty Power
Personal status	-.017	-.481	-.413	.052	.088
Continued employment	-.014	-.679	-.032	.033	-.027
Financial security	-.060	-.737	-.071	.032	.012
Development of students	-.750	-.046	.063	-.061	.003
Institutional reputation	-.449	-.276	-.250	-.080	-.114
Improve education	-.745	-.026	.000	.006	.051
Lower standards	.033	-.055	-.064	.422	.113
Excess administrators	.075	.004	.005	.475	.139
Declining respect	-.003	-.004	-.029	.612	.050
Discipline concerns	.088	-.015	-.562	.085	.070
Contribute to field	-.196	-.138	-.720	.020	-.045
Peer review	-.043	.032	-.016	.234	.542
Senior power	.018	.006	-.044	.093	.537
% Total Variance	10.79	10.17	7.50	6.19	4.65
% Common Variance	27.45	25.88	19.08	15.76	11.82
Cronbach Alphas	.66	.68	.55	.50	.49

*The factors had eigenvalues greater than 1.00 and accounted for 60.4% of the variance.

TABLE 2

MATRIX OF FACTOR LOADINGS FOR ROTATED (VARIMAX)
ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS (N = 841)*

Dimension	Factor I Facilities	Factor II Quality	Factor III Financial Support
Research support (financial)	-.025	-.226	-.728
Teaching support (financial)	-.227	-.015	-.761
Student quality	-.270	.543	-.187
Faculty quality	-.138	-.727	-.053
Administrator quality	-.191	-.625	-.210
Specialists (expert assistants)	-.306	-.401	-.182
Library	-.497	-.259	-.100
Laboratories	-.682	-.175	-.162
Classroom space	-.559	-.141	-.206
Clerical help	-.396	-.173	-.209
% Total Variance	15.1	14.9	13.3
% Common Variance	34.82	34.34	30.85
Reliability	.65	.72	.79

*Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 and accounting for 57.2% of the cumulative variance.

TABLE 3

MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF FACTORS ON JOB AND WORKLOAD DISSATISFACTION BY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Demographic	N ≥	Job Dissatisfaction (Place)	Partial r	Workload Dissatisfaction (Career/role)	Partial r
Age					
< 30	(19)	quality	-.67**		
30-34	(59)	quality	-.61**		
35-39	(97)	quality	-.33**	pessimism	.31**
40-44	(101)	quality	-.42**		
45-49	(79)	quality	-.51**		
50-54	(79)	quality	-.52**	pessimism	.38**
55-59	(44)	faculty power	.41**	faculty power	.41**
		pessimism	.44*	local	.34*
				pessimism	.36*
60 >	(20)	quality	-.64**		
		pessimism	.52*		
		cosmopolitan	-.57*		
		faculty power	.50*		
Rank					
Instructor	(60)	quality	-.36**	quality	-.38**
Assistant	(124)	quality	-.52**	facilities	-.31**
Associate	(161)	quality	-.51**		
Full	(151)	quality	-.47**		

continued . . .

Sex					
Female	(131)	quality	-.58*	pessimism	.32**
Male	(393)	quality	-.44*		
Institutional Type					
CC*	(137)	quality	-.44*		
LAC-I***	(102)	facilities	-.35*		
LAC-II	(50)	quality	-.36*		
U-I	(99)	quality	-.43*		
U-II	(139)	quality	-.56*	pessimism	.40**
Tenure					
Yes	(366)	quality	-.50*		
No	(133)	quality	-.45*		

*p < .05

**p < .01

***Carnegie Classification