Library workers Job Satisfaction: A Literature Review

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Abstract:-

Purpose – This article aims to explore job satisfaction among library workers. *Design/methodology/approach* – The paper takes the form of a literature review of psychological and sociological studies of job satisfaction in general and specifically for library workers. *Findings* – Library workers are very satisfied in their jobs no matter if it is a current study or one from previous years. *Originality/value* – Job satisfaction should be a key factor in recruitment of the next generation of library workers.

Review of Literature:-

Joyce K. Thornton (2000) said it best when she wrote: "Job satisfaction is critical to the retention and recruitment of librarians." It is hard to pinpoint when the subject of job satisfaction in libraries began to appear in the literature; however after an analysis, it is found that while the literature is considerable in its range and quantity, it is not comprehensive nor of primary concern to library scholars. Job satisfaction itself has been a huge topic attracting over 4,793 articles by 1985 (Thornton 2000, 219). According to Thornton (2000), who has written two articles on job satisfaction and African Americans (2000; 2001), before the 1970s, no studies "specifically" were found about job satisfaction and librarians.   Beverly Lynch and Jo Ann Verdin (1983) identified ten sources between the years 1964 to 1980 on job satisfaction in libraries; they replicated their study in 1987. Lynch and Verdin concluded that "significant variations in job satisfaction occur among functional units in libraries and among occupational groups" (Lynch and Verdin 1983). This sparked an interest in the scholarly community because throughout the 1980s several significant studies on (these "variations") different aspects of job satisfaction in libraries were published (Linsley 1984; Bengston 1985; Nzotta 1985; Shyu 1985; Hobson et al 1987; Jones 1987; Nzotta 1987; Waters 1988; McHenry 1988; Washington 1989; Thapisa 1989; West 1989 Oyler 1989). However, three studies earlier than Lynch and Verdin were located: Chew 1978; Lewis 1980; and Marchant 1982. Regardless of its beginnings, the subject of job satisfaction in libraries has accumulated an internationally substantial body of literature of journal articles, textbooks, and websites. This paper will review the character of this body of literature identifying different classifications, methods of

data collection, theories, and future recommendations. While textbooks (and websites, less so) are acknowledged (and will be explained in the Conclusion) as a valid medium for this subject, journal articles will primarily be discussed in this context.

Methodology

The approach taken to find articles on job satisfaction in libraries is three-fold. It First citation hunting was used: Beginning with one article; look at the reference list; find several more good articles; look at there reference lists; repeat *ad infinitum*. One of two criteria was in place during the searching for articles: (1) The words "job satisfaction" had to appear in the title of the article; and/or (2) The words "job satisfaction" had to appear as keywords for the article. These two criteria posed certain problems because keywords were not always available for many articles; so articles about job satisfaction in libraries may have been missed if these words were not in the title. Four primary sources were used for the search: LibraryLit, Academic Search Premir, Google, and TWU Online Catalog. Because of the method used for the TWU Online Catalog, several other sources were inadvertently used for this project.

First using the TWU Online Catalog a Journal Title search for "library" was conducted with the intention of browsing the available electronic (journals) sources. One-hundred and twelve journals exist in the TWU Online Catalog with the word "library" in their title; out of this number, approximately eighteen journals are available online; from this number six were primarily selected due to feelings of relevance; and this yielded a result of four articles (Sierpe 1999; Niyonsenga and Bizimana 1996; Togia et al 2004; and Montgomery 2002). See the Appendices for a distribution of database, journal title, and relevant article based on each search. Next, a Journal Title Keyword search on the TWU Online Catalog was conducted for "library", and this produced 396 hits. The method conducted of searching for electronic journals was the same, of which approximate seventy-four were located and approximate twenty were browsed; and approximately nineteen articles were during this search (with minimal duplication from the prior search). "CRTL F" was used once in the electronic journal to guide the computer search for the word "satisfaction." If this word was anywhere on the interface then the computer highlighted it for convenience. As mentioned above journals with titles or keywords with "job satisfaction," were desired. In instances some instances titles or keywords for "user satisfaction" or "patron satisfaction" were pointed out by the databases; these cases were ignored. One more set back with this method is that journals that were not

incomplete were too complete. For instance the years 1975 to 2004 of *School Library Journal* are available; in other words 29 volumes; 11 issues each; 5 pages to an issue (do the math)! This was just too much and the search was not complete for this online journal.

A Title search and a Keyword search on the database, *LibraryLit,* were also conducted for "job satisfaction" resulting in fifty-seven and seventy-two hits respectively. Because this is an exclusively library related journal, all of the fifty-seven Title hits were relevant to this research; however, while the Keyword search listed relevant articles not found on the Title, it also produced irrelevant articles about patron and user satisfaction. In order to determine the relevance of Keyword search articles, it was necessary to read the abstracts of articles in question. Also complete duplication occurred between the Title and Keyword searches so one has to find the relevant article in the Keyword search that were not listed in the Title search, in order to come to a finite number of relevant articles within this database. Duplication was easily measured because marks were made on the fifty-seven Title hits; and when conducting the Keyword search, each of the fifty-seven marked articles appeared. Between these two searches approximately sixty-nine article were deemed relevant because either their title included the words "job satisfaction" or this phrase was included in a keyword search.

Two other sources were used to find articles about job satisfaction: *Academic Search Premier* and Google. An advanced search on Academic Search Premier for Title "job satisfaction", Subject "library" yielded eight hits, where three were not listed in *LibraryLit* (Marchant 1982; Lewis 1980; and Chwe 1978). One more search on *Academic Search Premier* (Subject Terms "job satisfaction, Subject Terms "library") yielded sixteen results where approximately nine are neither located in *LibraryLit* nor the first *Academic Search Premier* query (Wallace et al 2004; Sullivan 2004; Fox 2003; Crowe 2003; Massey 2001; Pederson 1999; Oyler 1989; McHenry 1988; and Hobson et al 1987). These two searches resulted in approximately twelve newly located articles!

The last searches were conducted was on Google for "librarian job satisfaction" where full-text articles were located (Kaya 1995; Fitch 1998; Murray 1999; Burd 2003; Van Reenen 1998). This of course produced duplication from the database searches; however the benefit of a Google search is locating the full-text documents when they are directly available from the TWU resources. For

example the article by Van Reenen (1998) was listed in *LibraryLit,* but the full-text was only found through the open access liberation of Google. When the full-text was not available trough *LibraryLit* of *Academic Search Premier,* a search for the electronic journals through the TWU Online Catalog was done; when this did not produce positive results, a title search on Google was done. This Google "title search" came full circle back to citation chasing, because the titles being sought for were located in the reference lists of the full-text articles.

As a result of the above searches for literature on job satisfaction in libraries approximately eighty-one articles were located. It is considered that there are probably half as many more that was not located due to the defaults of the searches described. However, it is also considered that is an acceptable find and adequately represents the characteristics of this topic. Three general areas of the literature will be discussed below, followed by a conclusion, a reference list, and appendices. The three areas of the literature that will be discussed are: Trends; General Approaches; and Major Theories.

TRENDS

Within the literature on the subject of job satisfaction in libraries there are several trends. The most common is probably the use of surveys to collect the data. Of the most popular tool used is probably that of Paul E. Spector who published his first article using it in 1985. It "measures satisfaction across nine dimensions: *pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, coworkers, nature of work,* and *communication*" (Burd 2003). According to the Spector's "Bibliography of Studies Using the Job Satisfaction Survey" (2004) approximately thirty-one surveys have used this technique, four of which (Murray 1999; Parmer and East 1993; Sierpe 1993; and Voelck 1995) were library studies – Burd (2003) also used a "modified" Spector Survey for his article. Generally, scholars design there own surveys to collect information about job satisfaction in libraries because they find that standard instruments don't meet there initial needs. For example, Thornton (2000) developed a "three-part survey instrument" because no others "addressed several factors of concern to librarians of African descent, such as diversity, isolation, or hostility issues" (p. 221).

Another trend in the literature is to study what affects job satisfaction in librarians, not only if librarians are satisfied in their job or not; however there is some interplay of course between these

two measurements. For the latter approach, Goetting (2004) conducted a state-wide survey to determine if Louisiana librarians are satisfied in their work places. While this study presented some structural flaws the author found that in general librarians (or non-MLS staff) are generally satisfied in the state. Studies on motivation (Gouws 1996; Pascoe 1996; Thapisa 1991; Baker 1991; Gower 1987) and the effect of management (Pascoe 1996; West 1989) look at specific approaches to what effects job satisfaction in libraries.

GENERAL APPROACHES

About ten different approaches to the literature have been identified. Basically, they are separated by different characteristics of libraries or librarians. The ten characteristics are: Motivation; Academic Libraries/Faculty Status; Women; Public Libraries; Automation; International Libraries/Librarians; Life Satisfaction; Minorities; Management/Supervisors/Administration; Library Staff/Support (non-MLS); and Salary/Other.

Job satisfaction articles dealing with primarily motivation generally overlap with the issues of concern by administrators and other areas, providing some overlap within the characteristics mentioned above. There is however one article (McHenry 1988) discussing the motivation of volunteers. She writes that "[m]otivated volunteers have a vested interest in their workplace and a sense of pride in their accomplishments. Moreover, they will feel a sense of…job satisfaction." (p. 47). Another approach to motivation is through the topic of salary, as seen in one article by LaRue (2000), which describes his colleague's search for a new administration position.

The topic of job satisfaction in academic libraries is prevalent as well. There is some overlap because international librarians are discussed in this setting as seen in Togia (2004), Leckie (1997), Edem (1999), and Alao (1997) who describe Greek, Canadian, and Nigerian academic librarians respectively. Other topics within the academic sector are reference (Crowe 2003), African Americans/minorities (Thornton 2000; Thornton 2001), support staff (Geeson et. al 1999; Voelck 1995; Parmer et al 1993; Fitch 1990; Fitch 1998; Thapisa 1989), faculty status (Koening 1996; Horenstein 1993), unionization (Hovekamp 1995), and others (Burd 2003; Lanier et. al 1997; Mirfakhrai 1991; Washington 1989; Bengston et. al 1985; Linsley 1984; Marchant 1982) including, but not limited to, continuing education (Washington 1989). Under the topic of unionization Hovekamp (1995) writes: "Several attempts to estimate the degree of job satisfaction among union worker have shown that this type of employee may report lower levels of satisfaction compared

with nonunion workers." It would valuable to locate these other studies and see how much research has actually been done on the matter.

Two studies were located focusing primarily on women librarians: Dyer (2002); and Thornton (2001). The latter focuses on "African American female librarians"; the former discusses women's choices for promotion and career change. While not directly mentioning women as its target audience, this article appeared in an advanced search on *LibraryLit* for Keyword "job satisfaction", Keyword "women." Dyer (2002) writes: "Americans are now asking two very important questions [due to new job demographics] when they consider a new job or career change: Is this a job I love? And will I be able to have a life outside of work – do I have time to coach my daughter's soccer team, learn how to hang glide or take a cooking class at 6:30 in the evening?" In Thornton's (2001) article he found that the job satisfaction of minority librarians has not been studied very much; "most address recruitment and retention. Very little was found in the literature addressing job satisfaction and African American librarians." In his conclusion, Thornton (2001) writes: "This study indicated that the determinants of job satisfaction for African American female librarians were similar to those that affected their white counterparts, but included other determinants based on skin tones. The combination of gender and race made African American women the least satisfied librarians."

There are several studies of job satisfaction pertaining to public libraries. The most prevalent can be viewed be simple criteria: The phrase "public library" appears in the title. Others that fall generally in this topic were identified through a keyword search for "job satisfaction"; "public library". In this arena of research four characteristics can be identified: public services/reference/stress (Lister 2003; Schneider 1991); administration/supervisory (Bartlett 2000; West 1989); support staff (Goulding 1995; Goulding 1991); and goal setting (Lee 1993).

Perhaps an interesting relationship with library job satisfaction is that with technology or automation. At least five articles were found dealing with this issue: (Bii 2001; Pascoe 1996; Whitlatch 1991; Estabrook et. al 1990; and Waters 1988). Whitlatch sums up this phenomenon by writing:

No Automation Influence At the present time, automation doesn't appear to influence reference employee satisfaction. This observation is based on studies by two groups. Lynch and Verdin (1983) performed an excellent study of three large academic libraries in 1971-72 and replicated it in 1986. Little automation existed at the time of their first study, while by 1986, the libraries were largely automated. In both studies, Lynch and Verdin found that reference personnel

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reported significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than people working in other areas. (Whitlatch 1991)

International librarians have not been excluded form the literature on job satisfaction in libraries. One study (Togia 2004) recently studied "Job Satisfaction among Greek Librarians" in Greece. The instrument used was the "Employee Satisfaction Inventory" which "assessed six dimensions of job satisfaction: 'working conditions,' 'pay,' 'promotion,' 'job itself,' 'supervision,' and 'organization as a whole'" (Togia 2004). During the review at least three articles dealing with librarians in Nigeria were located (Alao 1997; Oladokun 1993; Nzotta 1985). Other countries in the literature included Canada (Leckie et. at 1997), Britain (Thapisa 1991), China (Shyu 1985), and India (Chopra 1984).

The issue of life satisfaction as related to job satisfaction can be seen as an inherent topic in almost every study on job satisfaction; however Landry (2000) address it fully in with her article, "The Effects of Life Satisfaction and Job Satisfaction on Reference Librarians and Their Work." Similarly, Dickinson (2002) writes about "A New Look at Job Satisfaction." These two articles will be discussed further in the section the Theory.

The studies on minorities were briefly discussed above; and it is as Thronton (2001) wrote, that they are few and far between. Citation analysis of Thornoton's reference lists will lead the research to more sources on this topic. For the other characteristics mentioned above, Management/Supervisors/Administration, and Library Staff/Support (non-MLS), these have already discussed briefly in the above statements. For the topic salary, different approaches have been taken. One direct survey correlating salary and job satisfaction was conducted in Florida by Cnudde et. al (1996). Another source associating these two factors is the MLA Salary Survey which is conducted triennially (Wallace et. al 2004). Most, if not all of the literature on job satisfaction deals with salary; but it is like most authors agree that higher salary does not always equate to better job satisfaction. This is one theory that will be discussed in the nest section.

Conclusions

In a sense, the definitions of job satisfaction can be viewed as theories. Thronton (2000) identified a few when he wrote:

Many definitions of job satisfaction exist, including:

1. Job satisfaction is a dynamic changing idea that reflects an individual's attitudes and expectations toward his work and goals in life (Sherrer 1985).

2. Job satisfaction is the feeling an employee has about his pay, work, promotion opportunities, coworkers, and supervisor (Vaughn and Dunn 1974).

3. Job satisfaction refers to the feelings and emotional aspects of individual's experiences toward their jobs, as different from intellectual or rational aspects (Nandy 1985).

However, throughout the literature countless other (more concrete) theories have been stated. For example in here article "Library Volunteers: Recruiting, Motivating, Keeping Them," McHenry (1988) describes a theory on the "hierarchy of human needs" by Abraham H. Maslow. In fact this theory is widely cited by other scholars in the literature including Dickinson (2002) and Landry (2000). Dickinson (2002) writes that "[m]ost library managers are familiar with the job satisfaction theories of Maslow and Hertzberg." In this article she presents the theories of another non-LIS component, Alderfer's ERG (Existence, Relatedness and Growth). Dickinson's paper is an acceptable source for identifying theories used in the literature because she cites several including the "need-satisfaction, or whether of not elements of the job meet the needs of the workers" (Dinckinson 2002). She writes however that "[n]ot all researchers agree with need-satisfaction theory or with the entire concept or [even] job satisfaction as a field of study" (Dickinson 2002). Perhaps this explains the lack of concentration on this topic in the literature. Consider the small average of articles per electronic source through the TWU Online Catalog (a miniscule of approximately 12 out of, perhaps, 40 online journals) found during the initial search for this paper. However, many scholars obviously find a need for this research as the ultimate results of the review are uncovering.

One of the earliest theories in the literature of job satisfaction in libraries was proposed by a librarian was Maurice P. Marchant's "Participative Management, Job Satisfaction and Service" (1982). In this study Marchant proposed that "People prefer to be trusted and allowed to contribute [in the library]. They like their jobs better under those conditions, particularly if they choose the nature and magnitude of involvement" (Marchant 1982). In 1985, Bengston and Shields followed up on Marchant's study of predictive formulates

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