

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND  
CURRENT LEVEL OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG NORTH CAROLINA  
STATE AGENCY REHABILITATION COUNSELORS

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CURRENT LEVEL OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG NORTH CAROLINA  
STATE AGENCY REHABILITATION COUNSELORS

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John Chad Duncan

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## VITA

John Chad Duncan, son of John and Laurie Duncan, and was born February 11, 1972 in Montgomery, Alabama. Chad attended school in Auburn, Alabama graduating from Auburn High School. In 1990, he entered Wofford College. He transferred to Auburn University in 1992 where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Rehabilitation Services in March of 1995. Following graduation he attended Northwestern University in where he received post graduate certification in Prosthetics and Orthotics. Upon completion of his Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling, he will continue graduate study in rehabilitation at the doctoral level.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND  
CURRENT LEVEL OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG NORTH CAROLINA  
STATE AGENCY REHABILITATION COUNSELORS

John Chad Duncan

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(B.S., Auburn University, 1995)

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This study examined factors perceived to contribute to job satisfaction (amount of pay, having good benefits, having job security, autonomy and other various factors that one may perceive as advantageous to go to work) and current level of job satisfaction ( I am satisfied with my job, I am satisfied with the quality of supervision I receive, and my job description accurately describes the work I usually perform) among Rehabilitation Counselors in the State Vocational Rehabilitation System of North Carolina. Data collection was accomplished by using a Job Satisfaction Survey developed by the North Carolina State Office of Personnel and disseminated by a Counselor Advisory Committee (CAC) representative. Data were then sent to Auburn University for analysis. The method used to analyze the data was quantitative in nature and included descriptive statistics.

The sample consisted of 384 North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors from across three regions (East, West, Central) of the State. The survey was conducted in October, 2004. Of the 384 surveys mailed, 278 counselors returned the surveys as instructed, 2 indicated that they would not participate, 4 were returned because of vacant positions, 2 were returned due to medical leave and 8 were returned as extras. The final sample contained 274 usable replies for a 71% response rate. It has been noted in research that even though there is a high response rate that there may exist a positive upward response rate in the data collected (Marlow, 1998).

It was determined that 50% of the males and females had a high level of current job satisfaction resulting from support, appreciation, and treatment at work, approximately 8 out of 10 of all respondents reported dissatisfaction regarding the amount of paperwork and as well as current levels of remuneration.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction has been studied for more than a century by researchers and practitioners. Both public and private, profit and non-profit organizations and companies have spent countless hours and millions of dollars attempting to determine factors that influence job satisfaction. By determining what might influence job satisfaction, it is believed that organizations and companies can recruit, maintain and retain quality employees. This, in turn, may contribute to increased productivity, organizational commitment, lower turnover and absenteeism. The more a person's work environment fulfills his or her needs, values, or characteristics, the greater the degree of job satisfaction (Ellickson & Logsdon, 2001). Dissatisfied workers show an increased propensity for counterproductive behaviors, including withdrawal, burnout, and workplace aggression (Spector, 1997).

The field of rehabilitation counseling is currently experiencing an unprecedented number of employment opportunities for counselors. A study conducted by the Rehabilitation Services Agency (RSA) in 2002 found that there is an exodus of personnel (retirement) that is creating a replacement need of 12.4%. The Vocational Rehabilitation system of North Carolina has been monitoring this trend and is now taking a proactive approach to the retention of State Rehabilitation Counselors.

This study was designed to identify factors that may contribute to retention and the current level of job satisfaction among North Carolina State Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

### Statement of the Problem

The North Carolina State Vocational Rehabilitation agency has been experiencing a steady rate of attrition among its agency rehabilitation counselors over the past five years (R. Parks, personal communication, December 2004). To address the attrition issue, the State Director of North Carolina, through a strategic planning initiative, gave permission to the Counselor Retention and Recruitment Committee (CRRC) to design a survey (see Appendix A) to evaluate job satisfaction levels among the state agency rehabilitation counselors.

### Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to identify factors relating to job satisfaction among North Carolina State Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Once identified, these factors could be used to assist the administration of the State of North Carolina to address areas of concern, specifically retention and recruitment of highly trained rehabilitation counselors.

## Research Objectives

1. What are the demographic characteristics of individuals providing rehabilitation counseling services in the State of North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling?
2. What is the current level of satisfaction among the North Carolina State Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors?
3. Is there is a relationship between rehabilitation counselors' reported satisfaction and selected demographic characteristics (e.g., age, number of years with agency, and caseload)?
4. Are certain factors more likely to contribute to current levels of job satisfaction among North Carolina State Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.?

## Limitations of the Study

The survey examined factors that contribute to job satisfaction and current levels of satisfaction of state vocational rehabilitation counselors of North Carolina. The following limitations may have an impact on the results of this study. First, the results depend on the degree to which the respondents are honest in their responses. Secondly, the study included a convenience sample of state rehabilitation counselors thus potentially limiting the generalizability of the results.

## Definition of Terms

*Rehabilitation Counselor:* "A professional that assists individuals with disabilities with adapting to the environment, assists environments in accommodating the needs of

the individual, and works toward a full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society, especially work” (Syzmanzki, 1985, p. 3).

*CAC (Counselor Advisory Committee) Representative:* A trusted peer elected by coworkers.

*Independent Counselor:* Rehabilitation counselor with a CRC and who passes North Carolina State Vocational Rehabilitation agency requirements.

*Non-Independent Counselor:* Rehabilitation counselor who are required to have their work “signed-off” by independent counselors.

### Summary

It is essential to determine what factors may contribute to job satisfaction among rehabilitation counselors. By identifying the factors and levels of job satisfaction for rehabilitation counselors, state programs can more readily implement policies and procedures to potentially increase and maintain a rehabilitation counselor’s satisfaction. The identification of these factors may help state agencies develop a better employee and environment fit. This identification, in turn, may assist in retention efforts for new rehabilitation counselors and decrease the premature exodus of current rehabilitation counselors.

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the historical, theoretical, and methodological aspects of the concept of job satisfaction. Definitions, theories, and research studies related to job satisfaction are reviewed. In addressing job satisfaction one is presented with the challenge of sifting through and reviewing vast volumes of literature and research on definitions, theories, and determinants of job satisfaction. Such a monumental task can lead to confusion and questions about the differing definitions of job satisfaction. Carroll and Blumen (1973) suggested that there might be a problem with defining job satisfaction and the acceptance of a commonly agreed upon system of definitions. To make their point, these authors presented two definitions of job satisfaction. The first defines job satisfaction from the perspective of the worker (Ivanisevich & Donnelly, 1968, as cited in Carrol & Blumen, 1973) and the second, a somewhat different concept defining job satisfaction from a dualistic nature of job and employer addressing the attainment of the worker's personal objectives. Cranny, Smith, and Stone (1992) have reported that the wide variability in defining job satisfaction does not create confusion, but "appears to be general agreement that job satisfaction is an affective (that is emotional) reaction to a job that results from incumbents comparison of



actual outcomes with those that are desired” (p. 1). This example suggests a lack of agreement over what constitutes a single, unified definition of job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction definitions borrow from constructs ranging from the simple to those more complex in nature. Job satisfaction is defined as “the feelings a worker has about his or her experiences in relation to previous experiences, current expectations, or available alternatives” (Balzer et al., 1977, p. 10). Locke’s (1969) evolving definition of job satisfaction supports two aspects of the construct: cognitive and affective. The cognitive aspect is explained by the “appraisal of one’s job” (p. 317) and the affective element as the “emotional state.” Locke (1976) explains job satisfaction as the emotional state or perception in which individuals perceive their own approval of how well one’s job environment fulfills their values. Locke (1976), as well, modified the definition of job satisfaction in a more direct way by stating that it is “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (p. 1300). Ten years later Locke and Henne (1986) reported job satisfaction to be an emotional state resulting from achievement of the workers’ own job values in their work situation.

Fisher (1980) conceptualizes job satisfaction as a general attitude toward one’s job. McCormick and Ilgen (1980) also supported the view of job satisfaction as an attitude. Guion (1992) views job satisfaction as a trait of the individual or worker. Guion further argues that a trait is a characteristic, attribute, or personal peculiarity not to be confused with terms such as permanent, omni functional, and congenital. Guion (1992) stated that “to some degree and by whatever name, the level of satisfaction of a person with a job is a function of the person as well as of the job and job situation” (p. 262). Chichester-Clark examined job satisfaction from the viewpoint of the individual doing a

job. Chichester-Clark (1972) further explain that the traditional use of job satisfaction was the “general way to convey the extent to which people are content with their overall work situation” (p. 26).

Vroom (1964) through his research of work and motivation, concluded that the terms job satisfaction and job attitudes were interchangeable. Vroom further explains that job attitude and job satisfaction both referred to affective orientations of the individual toward presently occupied work roles. Mumford (1972) suggests that job satisfaction to is a nebulous concept. His justification was that individuals talk about job satisfaction often, but when asked what they mean they have trouble providing an acceptable definition. Mumford reported that job satisfaction could be divided into several schools of thought; that is, psychological need, leadership, effort- reward bargain, management ideology and values, and content of work. Mumford and Carroll’s suggestion that job satisfaction is a nebulous concept are substantiated by the variation of understanding of how job satisfaction has been defined. Mumford (1972) best brings together all the definitions of job satisfaction by stating that “job satisfaction is not something that remains constant; it alters during an individual’s lifetime as his needs, expectations and aspirations alter” (p. 215).

## Theories of Job Satisfaction

### *Taylor’s Scientific Management*

The earliest research and study of job satisfaction and motivation dates back to Fredrick Taylor’s, *Principles and Methods of Scientific Management* (1911). Taylor believed that individuals would be motivated to excel at work if rewards were available

in relation to their performance of carefully planned tasks. Taylor (as cited in M. Weir, 1976) stated that

in order to have any hope of obtaining the initiative of his workman the manager must give some special incentive ... for example rapid promotion or advancement; higher wages ... better surroundings and working conditions, ... friendly contact with his workman which comes from genuine and kindly interest in the welfare... (p. 64)

Taylor called this type of management “initiative and incentive” (p. 64). Taylor’s belief that job satisfaction related to extrinsic rewards and the physical needs of the worker meant that meeting these needs, the worker would thus maximize his or hers potential.

#### *Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs*

Abraham Maslow (1954) theorized that humans have five basic needs that fit into two categories. The first category was called “deficiency needs” and included physiological, safety, and affection needs. The second category he called “growth needs” and addressed self-fulfillment. Maslow (1971) modified “growth needs” by adding two more needs called knowing and understanding, and aesthetic appreciation. The “deficiency needs” form the pyramid’s foundation as the lower part and the “growth needs” make up the upper portion. The lower part of the pyramid is considered one’s primary needs and the upper portion makes up one’s motivational needs. Once an individual achieves primary needs, they move on to the “growth needs.”

Maslow (1971) believed that the individual would not be satisfied with their occupation until certain needs were met such as (knowing and understanding and aesthetic appreciation). Maslow’s concept of self-actualization was considered the

optimal human state, resulting in satisfaction. Maslow (1971) believed that few individuals ever achieved a state of self-actualization.

#### *Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory*

John C. Flannagen (1959) wrote in *The Motivation to Work* that “there are few problems of more basic importance to our culture than an understanding of the motivation to work” (p. viii). Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) examined factors that constitute work motivators. They found that work motivators were composed of two factors: motivation and hygiene. Motivational factors were achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and growth. Herzberg et al. (1959, p. 113) wrote that “factors of hygiene included supervision, interpersonal relations, physical working conditions, salary, company policies and administrative practices, benefits, and job security.” Herzberg et al. believed that improvement of hygiene factors would help to remove any impediments to positive job attitudes, but if the hygiene factors fell below what was considered acceptable, then job dissatisfaction occurs. Herzberg et al. suggest that an individual’s motivators were the primary reason for bringing about positive job satisfaction.

#### *Vroom's Expectancy Theory*

Marriner-Tomey (1988) wrote that Vroom’s Expectancy Theory is based on Kurt Lewins’ field theory. Expectancy theory is based on the assumption that motivation is dependent on how much an individual wants something and the assessment of the probability of obtaining it. The preference of an individual is called Valence. The probability of obtaining what an individual wants is Expectancy. Vroom states that the combination of Valence and Expectancy equals the individual’s motivation. If there is

high Valence and high Expectancy then the motivation will be high: *Motivation = Valence × Expectancy* (Marriner-Tomey, 1988).

### *Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment*

In 1957, the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment was developed as a part of a two year grant from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation awarded to Lloyd Lofquist and George England. The purpose of the grant was to evaluate and study the effectiveness of job placement procedures used with assisting person with disabilities. The 1957 Minnesota Studies in Vocational Rehabilitation researched the general problem of adjustment to work. The study had two main objectives: (a) to develop tools for predicting work adjustment, and (b) to explore the process of adjustment to work (Lofquist, Dawis, & Hendel, 1972). The results gave rise the concept of the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment which is based on “person-environment fit” (Lott, 2003). By 1964, the first formulation of *The Theory of Work Adjustment* was published (Dawis, Lofquist, & Weiss, 1968; Lofquist et al. 1972).

The Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment includes four basic concepts: (a) Correspondence, (b) Tenure, (c) Satisfactoriness, and (d) Satisfaction. Correspondence is the “harmonious relationship between the individual and their environment” (Dawis et al., 1968, p. 3). The environment is anywhere the individual relates, e.g. home, school, church, and work. Dawis et al. (1968) suggested that when an individual enters work for the first time they want Correspondence, that is, the individual presents a behavior that fulfills the requirements at work, and in return receives rewards from work. If this does not occur, then a negative correlation will occur in that the individual will stop seeking Correspondence, which may result in leaving the work environment. If the individual

seeks a way to achieve Correspondence “work adjustment” (Lofquist & Dawis, 1972, p. 5) would be achieved.

Work adjustment leads to Tenure. Tenure is when an individual remains on the job. A positive correlation is evident when Correspondence relates to length of Tenure. Tenure may be explained as equilibrium in Correspondence or the positive relationship of the individual and their work environment.

The concepts of Correspondence and Tenure are symbiotic factors that infer that when there is a positive relationship between these two factors, an individual is both satisfactory and satisfied. Satisfactory or Satisfactoriness relates to the factors on the side of work. These factors are extrinsic in nature that work provides to the individual. Satisfaction considers the factors on the side of the individual. These factors are intrinsic factors that the individual perceives internally from their work environment. Syzmanski and Hershenson (1998) have noted that Tenure is a function of Satisfaction and Satisfactoriness.

Dawis et al. (1968) believed that Satisfaction and Satisfactoriness are outcomes and measures of work adjustment. They believed that by using Satisfaction and Satisfactoriness as measures and assessing an individual’s personality in relation to work environment that work adjustment could be predicted. In short, the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment states that when there is a positive relationship between Correspondence, Tenure, Satisfaction, and Satisfactoriness, job satisfaction is present. When there is an imbalance in Correspondence, then the three remaining factors are negatively affected. If there is a decrease in either Satisfaction or Satisfactoriness then Correspondence and Tenure are negatively affected. If the individual’s Tenure increases

while there is an imbalance in the other three factors, then work adjustment is occurring. Tenure can be predicted by an individual's Satisfaction and Satisfactoriness or by "work personality-work environment correspondence" (Dawis et al., 1968, p. 7). If Tenure is affected, one must assume that a problem exists with Correspondence, Satisfaction and/or Satisfactoriness and work adjustment was not a viable option.

The Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment considers the interaction of the individual and their work environment as a dynamic relationship. When the fit of either the individual to work or work to the individual is not optimal, then Tenure is negatively impacted. If the individual is able to make adjustments to their environment, then work adjustment is achieved. If either the individual or work environment is not flexible, then a positive outcome is not achieved and there is no work adjustment.

### Research Studies

Boothby and Clements (2002) found that there were lower levels of job satisfaction among those working in large and over-crowded prisons. Limited opportunities for advancement also contributed to dissatisfaction. This study demonstrated that when individuals have to focus more energy on extraneous tasks and have no clear career advancement path, these two factors are more likely to lead to dissatisfaction rather than satisfaction at work. Boothby and Clements (2002) suggest that research has related because of overcrowding, correctional psychologists are focusing more on intervention instead of assessment and treatment.

Judge, Bono and Locke (2000) reported on the relationship among core self-evaluation, intrinsic job characteristics, and job satisfaction. The study analyzed measures

of self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, neuroticism, perceived job characteristics, job complexity, and job satisfaction. A confirmatory factor analysis showed self-esteem and self-efficacy had a high correlation with core self-evaluations. Judge et al. (2000) found that core self-evaluations correlated with job satisfaction over time. Other findings were that individuals who reported higher levels of job satisfaction also had positive core self-evaluations and perceived their job to be challenging. The present study linked attributes such as goal setting, coping with negative events, goal commitment, effort and tenacity in setbacks to the correlation of core self-evaluations and job complexity. Judge, et al. (2002) did report that a limitation to the study was a 22% return rate. It was also suggested that further extension of the study is needed, given that this model of measurement of job complexity was inexact.

In another study, Judge and Ilies (2004) researched affect and job satisfaction by e-mailing 74 randomly sampled university employees from the southeast. The study had 68% participation from the sampled university employees. In this study Judge and Ilies (2004) measured mood, job satisfaction, trait positive affect and negative affect. Mood was determined by using the survey of Positive and Negative Affect Schedule. It was reported to have internal consistency off-work scores of .97 for positive mood and .95 for negative mood. A five-item scale was used to determine job satisfaction with a reported internal consistency of .95.

Judge and Ilies (2004) hypotheses regarding affect and job satisfaction with accompanying research results follow.



Hypothesis 1 : Across individuals, positive and negative mood at work will mediate the effect of trait positive-affectivity (PA) and trait negative-affectivity (NA) on job satisfaction.

Result: Both positive and negative state of affect significantly predicted job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Within individuals, momentary mood will predict concurrent job satisfaction. That is (a) positive mood will have a positive effect on job satisfaction and (b) negative mood will have a negative effect on job satisfaction.

Result: This hypothesis was supported by both positive and negative mood being strong predictors of concurrent job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: The within-individual effect of mood at work on job satisfaction will grow weaker as time interval increases.

Results: This hypothesis was supported. Mood at work on job satisfaction would weaken over time as mood and job satisfaction increased.

Hypothesis 4: Within individuals, job satisfaction at work will have (a) a positive mood after work and (b) a negative effect on negative mood after work.

Result: Analysis indicated that “job satisfaction at work significantly predicted positive mood after work” (p. 67).

Hypothesis 5: The within-individuals effect of job satisfaction on positive mood after work will be moderated by trait PA (Hypothesis 5a) and the effect of job satisfaction on negative mood will be moderated by trait NA (Hypothesis 5b) such that the relationships are stronger for those with high trait PA and high trait NA, respectively.

Result: Found not to represent a reliable measure.

Hypothesis 6: Within individuals, positive mood at work will have a positive effect on positive mood at home (Hypothesis 6a) and negative mood at work will have a negative effect on negative mood at home (Hypothesis 6b).

Result: Considered the content of spillover effect and concluded that previous day's mood at home did influence next day's morning mood at work.

Future research should be conducted to expand the scope of affectivity events theory by examining spill over effect from work to home, and the relationship of affective reactions to work affect and job attitudes (Judge & Ilies, 2004).

Another recent research endeavor examined Locke's (1976) model of facet satisfaction and its utility for predicting organizationally important global measures of job satisfaction. Jackson and Corr (2002) identified two groups of individuals from a military organization. They operationalized Locke's facet description as a "single variable representing a (have-want) discrepancy or as the difference between the two variables" (p.3). The preferred choice in the study further operationalized facet description as a direct question "How possible is it for you to achieve..." This question was preceded by twenty-six different facets to follow the question; for example: (a) Be promoted on the basis of ability; (b) Spend a lot of time with your family; (c) Variety in job activities; (d) Develop further skills, etc..." (p. 3). These facets were rated in terms of a five point Likert scale. The anchors were: 1= not important at all; 2 = somewhat below average importance; 3 = of average importance; 4 = somewhat above average importance; and 5 = extremely important. To determine global satisfaction Locke et al. (2002) asked three questions:

- (1) “How much are you enjoying your present job?”
- (2) “How much are you enjoying your off-duty?”, and
- (3) “To date, how much have you enjoyed your life in the (name of organization)?” (p. 4).

Jackson and Corr (2002) reported that the “closer the criteria related to immediate enjoyment of work, the better the utility of the facet description model” (p. 7). They reported the spillover effect between job satisfaction and life satisfaction was consistent with their findings; that is, satisfaction at work relates to satisfaction outside of work. However, the authors noted that further studies on new samples would increase the robustness and findings reported. Additionally, they stated a need to perform further research on new dependent variables such as turn-over and absenteeism.

Van Eerde and Thierry (1996) in a meta-analysis of Vroom’s Expectancy Model and Work-Related Criteria examined 180 articles but used only 77 studies and correlated predictions of the expectancy model with single components. The predictions with the model were valence, instrumentality, and expectations. The single components consisted of five variables: performance, effort, intention, preference, and choice. Van Eerde and Thierry sought to determine if 30 years of research supported the main tenets of expectancy theory; that is, “Is the theory still promising?” and “Is it useful to combine expectancy theory with other approaches...” (p. 575). Van Eerde and Thierry concluded that many of the studies were performed incorrectly in terms of the data analysis and theoretical point of view. Further results determined that the variables of valence, instrumentality, and expectancy are related to the five work-related criterion variables but did not show an increase in relationship. The authors suggest that future researchers in

the area of expectancy theory should be aware of the different interpretations that have been made.

Current research by Randolph, Doisy, and Doisy (2005) attempted to establish extrinsic and intrinsic job satisfaction factors that were most predictive of retention, recruitment, and career satisfaction among rehabilitation professionals. Rehabilitation professionals were defined as Occupational Therapist (OT), Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), and Physical Therapist (PT). Of the 1500 surveys sent out, 30% were returned and 70% of those returned were suitable for analysis (N = 315).

The theoretical framework of the study was based on Herzberg's two-factor theory and Bandura's self efficacy theory. The extrinsic factors were considered to be those that are provided by the employer and include: "Family leave, Flexible schedule, Cafeteria-type benefit, Employer-provided child care, Competitive Pay," (p.53). Intrinsic factors were divided into content and context categories. Intrinsic-context factors were defined as those factors that are less tangible and controlled by outside forces such as: "Adequate staffing, Support by physicians, Feeling valued as an employee, Quality supervision, Stable environment, and Balance between work and home, etc...." (p. 54). Intrinsic-content was defined as factors that are controlled by the individual (OT, PT, and SLP) and affect efficacy. These factors were: "Fair policies, Direct patient care, Feeling competency, Meaningful work, Providing quality care, Feeling close to coworkers, Helping people overcome disabilities, and Interdisciplinary team approach, etc...." (p. 54).

Randolph et al. (2005) suggest that professional growth and being in an environment with professional values were useful predictors of retention for OTs and

PTs. Other factors that were predictive of retention for rehabilitation professionals were (a) having a flexible schedule, (b) having a realistic work load, (c) proper training, and (d) an adequate work staff. Boothby and Clements (2002) found a similar correlation between a realistic work load and an individual's job satisfaction. Research by Avery, Bouchard, Segal, and Abraham (1989) represents a different view of job satisfaction. These researchers studied genetic components and job satisfaction. Avery et al. (1989) had thirty-four monozygotic twin pairs who were reared apart to complete the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire. The variables were to reflect intrinsic, extrinsic, and general satisfaction with the current job. Avery et al. hypothesized that extrinsic work factors are less likely to demonstrate genetic components than intrinsic aspects of job satisfaction. In this study Avery et al., (1989) noted that Locke's view of job satisfaction as multidimensional, thus "raising the possibility that particular elements of job satisfaction vary with respect to the degree of influence of genetic factors" (p. 188). Avery reported that Staw and Ross (1985) argued that dispositional influences have influence on job attitudes and perhaps other researchers focused too much attention to the environmental aspects that contribute to job attitude.

Avery et al. failed to confirm that the prediction of intrinsic satisfaction would have a stronger heritability than extrinsic satisfaction. It was determined by reviewing the data on an item-by-item basis that there is a genetic component to intrinsic job satisfaction and general job satisfaction. Avery et al. determined that organizations have less control over intrinsic satisfaction and that individual predispositions may be more difficult to modify than previously acknowledged. Another implication reported by these

researchers was “that prediction of future job satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a different job may be possible from knowledge of current satisfaction” (p. 191).

Roessler, Rumrill, and Fitzgerald (2004) researched factors that effected job satisfaction of employed adults with multiple sclerosis. Several variables that could affect job satisfaction of an individual with a disability were (a) health related factors, (b) extrinsic factors, (c) disability factors, (d) subjective factors, and (e) person and job match (Roessler et al., 2004).

Roessler et al. developed a three level model of job satisfaction that starts with more objective variables, then proceeds to the more subjective. The first level looks at monetary stability (income adequacy, and annual income), the second level was disease characteristics, and the third level was job tenure and job match. A hierarchical logistic regression analysis was used to analyze data. Analysis revealed that income and perceived job/person match added to the explanatory power of the model (Roessler et al., 2004). These findings are supported by the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment in that the person must match the environment/job and that if the job does not meet the individual’s financial needs, then the job is an inadequate reinforcer which will cause poor correspondence.

Wilkinson and Wagner (1993) researched the relationships between supervisory leadership styles and job satisfaction among state vocational rehabilitation counselors in Missouri. They used the Rehabilitation Job Satisfaction Inventory (RJSI) to help operationalize the rehabilitation counselor’s satisfaction and the Situational Leadership II (SLII) to define style of leadership. The RJSI presented five subscales of satisfaction and one global satisfaction score that combined all subscale scores together. The SLII divided

leadership into four styles: Directing, Coaching, Delegating, and Supporting. Stepwise regression analyses demonstrated a significant correlation between the RJSI global satisfaction and SLII Supporting and Coaching leadership styles. Wilkinson and Wagner also reported that these data suggested an increased satisfaction with RJSI's Supervision, and Administration when there was greater use of Supporting and Coaching leader styles. Wilkinson and Wagner suggest that the study's results are supported by previous research which has noted that interpersonal behavior between supervisor and counselor is a key aspect of employment satisfaction.

An exploratory study by Syzmanski and Parker (1995) examined work motivation of state rehabilitation counselors, and the association between motivational factors to work performance. They sampled 189 individuals employed within the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) with a 159 (84%) usable response rate. Of the 159 usable responses, 129 (81%) had been with the agency at least one year. The mean length of experience of the 129 counselors examined was 13.5 years.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section contained open ended questions that addressed job motivation, and the second section looked at job satisfaction by employing closed ended questions. Job motivation responses were separated according to Herzberg's Two-Trait Theory factors of hygiene and motivators. Syzmanski and Parker reported that the most frequent response to what the participants liked most about their job was "working with people." Reasons for individuals staying on the job were due to job security and "nature of job duties."

When evaluating work motivation responses through Herzberg's motivation and hygiene factors using cross-tabulations, it was reported that 49 (44.1%) of the counselors

reported the reason for joining the agency was related to one of Herzberg's identified factors (e.g., supervision, salary, and interpersonal relations...). Each factor was reported by 54 (45.5%) respondents as the reason for staying on the job. Syzmanski and Parker found that counselors with the lowest probability of leaving their job were those who reported motivator factors such as: autonomy, challenge, and nature of the agency. Their study demonstrated that Herzberg's motivator factors were more likely to promote job satisfaction than were hygiene factors.

### Summary

Since the publication of Taylor's (1911) *Principles and Methods of Scientific Management* professional organizations, researchers and individuals have sought to determine what job satisfaction is and how it can be measured. There are multiple views and theories regarding job satisfaction and varying in perspective and details. Mumford best defined job satisfaction as "... not something that remains constant ... but alters during an individual's lifetime as his needs, expectations and aspirations alter" (p. 215). This is the factor that makes the determination of job satisfaction difficult and challenging.

While no universal definition of job satisfaction exists, research efforts have led to a general concept of job satisfaction. Related to this concept are various theories of job satisfaction and adjustment; that is, Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment, Vroom's Expectancy Theory, and Herzberg's Two-Trait Theory.

The research studies related to rehabilitation counseling such as Randolph et al. was very insightful regarding factors related to Occupational Therapists, Physical



Therapists, and Speech Language Professionals career satisfaction that have some relevance to rehabilitation counselors. Avery et al. looked at a very small minority sample and did not address genetic determinants pertaining to rehabilitation counselors. Judge and Ilies's study was of significance to the study of job satisfaction but examined only university employees. All these studies helped to identify determinants of job satisfaction in their particular field though not specific to the field of vocational rehabilitation counseling. Judge et al. (2000) found that high core self-evaluations e.g. (high measures of self-esteem and generalized self-efficacy) correlated with job satisfaction over time. However, this study only included people in the Midwestern part of the U.S. and did not look at one specific job such as rehabilitation counselors.

Nevertheless, researchers have discussed several factors thought to be significant regarding job satisfaction and rehabilitation counseling. The multidimensional nature of job satisfaction is apparent in the studies by Wilkinson and Wagner and Syzmanski and Parker. Wilkinson and Wagner were interested in supervisor and counselor relationship to job satisfaction, while Syzmanski and Parker were researching Herzberg's Two-Trait Theory factors of hygiene and motivator pertaining to the rehabilitation counselor. Both studies were analyzing factors that may constitute job satisfaction among rehabilitation counselors but with two differing theories of what influenced job satisfaction.

### III. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND CURRENT LEVEL OF JOB SATISFACATION AMONG NORTH CAROLINA STATE AGENCY REHABILITATION COUNSELORS

#### Introduction

Throughout history professional organizations, researchers, and individuals have sought to determine what job satisfaction is and how it can be measured. While no universal definition of job satisfaction exists, research efforts have led to a general concept. The more a person's work environment fulfills his or her needs, values, or characteristics, the greater the degree of job satisfaction (Ellickson & Logsdon, 2001). Dissatisfied workers show an increased propensity for counterproductive behaviors including withdrawal, burnout, and workplace aggression (Spector, 1997). Researchers have studied job satisfaction through the utilization of the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment. The Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment notes two aspects of work adjustment: job satisfaction and job satisfactoriness. Job satisfaction can be described as the extent to which employees like their work (Agho, Mueller, & Price, 1993). Satisfactoriness relates to the factors on the "work side" (Dawis, 1976). Job satisfaction among rehabilitation counselors has been related to the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Szymanski & Parker, 1995; Wright & Terrian, 1987). Intrinsic

(dependent) factors can be described as recognition, the work itself, and achievement while extrinsic factors are described as the working environment, money, and co-workers

Rehabilitation Counseling is currently experiencing an unprecedented number of employment opportunities within the state-federal program of vocational rehabilitation. A study conducted by the Rehabilitation Services Agency (RSA) in 2002 revealed an exodus of personnel due principally to retirement that is creating a need to replace 12.4% of rehabilitation counselors nationwide. The Vocational Rehabilitation agency of North Carolina has been monitoring this trend and is now taking a proactive approach to the retention and replacement of state rehabilitation counselors (see Appendix B).

Job satisfaction was evaluated by using a job satisfaction survey developed by the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NCDVR). The survey (see Appendix C) was distributed by the Counselor Advisory Committee (CAC) which represents all rehabilitation counselors currently working for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency of North Carolina. This study was designed to identify factors that could increase retention and the current level of job satisfaction among North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

## Method

### *Participants*

Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) data from 2003 reported that the State of North Carolina has 5,460 people employed in the field of counseling. Of this group, 384 were employed by the North Carolina as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors. The survey was restricted to rehabilitation counselors who were currently employed by

the Vocational Rehabilitation Agency of North Carolina. Each VR counselor was asked to participate by completing a survey identifying factors that contribute to job satisfaction. The survey was distributed by the Counselor Advisory Committee (CAC) to all 384 VR counselors. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. A total of 278 (72.4%) of the counselors chose to participate. The counselors are classified as Independent and Non-Independent counselors. Independent counselors are those counselors who do not need to have their paperwork approved after seeing a consumer. The Non-Independent counselors must have an Independent counselor review and approve their agency paperwork. Demographic information gathered included age, gender, county type, caseload type, level of education obtained, and counselor status.

#### *Instrumentation*

A modified Delphi Study was performed to develop the current Job Satisfaction Survey for Rehabilitation Counselors and included the following: review of other satisfaction surveys (e.g., Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire-Short Form), a focus group to discuss the survey and related issues, and two pilot questionnaires distributed three weeks apart to randomly selected counselors across the state for review and possible modification. Changes in items resulted from these pilot surveys. The subjects who participated in the pilot studies were then asked to participate in a focus group to clarify questions and to rate each question individually. The focus group used a dichotomous scale (yes/no) to rate the relevance of each item to job satisfaction and to establish content validity. These ratings were then compiled into a subsequent draft that the focus group again rated. A preliminary reliability score was calculated by dropping items receiving less than a 75% “yes” rating.

The final instrument contained 44 items that were sub-divided into three sections. Section one contained demographic information about participants, including length of service, county type, counselor status, level of education obtained, region, gender, caseload, and age. The second section, “Factors That Contribute To Your Job Satisfaction,” consisted of ten items regarding importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic. Environmental job satisfaction items were rated using a four point Likert scale (Dillman, 2000) with 1 = Not important, 2 = Important, 3 = Very Important, 4 = Extremely Important. The third section consisted of 27 items relative to the counselor’s current level of satisfaction. Respondents rated current level of satisfaction items using a five point Likert scale (Dillman, 2000) with 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Neither Disagree or Agree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. In order to track responses by region, a number was assigned to each survey. The purpose was to determine if there were any trends in a particular region as well as the response rate for each region surveyed.

#### *Data Analysis Procedure*

Data were analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Cross Tabulations were performed to determine if there were any relationships among the demographic categories and job satisfaction. Participants provided seven demographic characteristics: age, gender, caseload type, region, level of education obtained, county, and counselor status. Within Table 1, the demographic characteristics as those surveyed are presented. The sample included 192 females (69.1%) and 80 males (28.8%), ranging in age from 24–63 ( $M = 43.92$ ). Approximately 80% of counselors surveyed had obtained an advanced degree, while 19.4% had earned a bachelor’s degree.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of North Carolina Rehabilitation Counselors*

| Age             |           |            |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Range           | 24–63 yrs |            |
| Mean            | 43.92 yrs |            |
|                 | n         | Percentage |
| Gender          |           |            |
| Female          | 192       | 69.1       |
| Male            | 80        | 28.8       |
| Education Level |           |            |
| Bachelors       | 54        | 19.4       |
| Advanced        | 221       | 79.5       |
| Total           | 275       | 98.9       |

Table 2 identifies the various types of caseloads served by the counselors: General, Mental Health, School and Other. Other included drug abuse, multiple case load, etc.

Table 2

*Types of Caseloads Served by Counselors*

| Caseload Type | n   | Percentage |
|---------------|-----|------------|
| General       | 87  | 31.3       |
| Mental Health | 51  | 18.3       |
| School        | 69  | 24.8       |
| Other         | 68  | 24.5       |
| Total         | 275 | 98.9       |

Table 3 reports the region and county type where counselors are located; fifty eight (20.9%) counselors worked in the Eastern region, 118 (42.4%) in the Central, and 96 (34.5%) worked in the Western region. County types were defined as rural, city or both areas of service. The majority of counselors (54.7%) worked in rural counties. Thirty nine percent of counselors were in an urban environment, while approximately 5% work in both city and rural county.

Table 3

*Region and County Type Where Counselors Are Located*

|                | n   | Percentage |
|----------------|-----|------------|
| Region         |     |            |
| Eastern        | 58  | 20.9       |
| Central        | 118 | 42.4       |
| Western        | 96  | 34.5       |
| Total          | 272 | 97.8       |
| County Type    |     |            |
| Rural          | 152 | 54.7       |
| City           | 108 | 38.8       |
| Rural and City | 13  | 4.7        |
| Total          | 273 | 98.2       |

In Table 4, counselor status and service years are reported. Counselor status is differentiated by independent or non-independent.\* Approximately 62% of North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors have the status of independent, while 36% have non-independent status. Years of service ranged from less than one year to thirty-six years, with the majority (32.2%) of counselors with more than 10 years of service. While 15.6% of counselors had less than or equal to 1 service years, 27.3% with greater than 1 less than or equal to 5 service years, and 22% with greater than 5 less than or equal to 10 service years.



Table 4

*Counselor Status and Service Years*

|                         | n   | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----|------------|
| <b>Counselor Status</b> |     |            |
| Independent             | 172 | 61.9       |
| Non-Independent         | 101 | 36.3       |
| Total                   | 273 | 98.2       |
| <b>Service Years</b>    |     |            |
| ≤ 1 year                | 43  | 15.6       |
| > 1 year ≤ 5 years      | 75  | 27.3       |
| > 5 years ≤ 10 years    | 61  | 22         |
| > 10 years              | 91  | 32.2       |
| Total                   | 270 | 97.1       |

Note: \*To differentiate, non-independent counselors are required to have their work “signed-off” by independent counselors.

Within section “Factors That Contribute To Your Job Satisfaction” of the survey, participants rated each of the ten items and was considered to contribute to job satisfaction. All ten items were considered by the majority of counselors as either extremely important or very important. Table 5 contains counselor’s responses to “Factors That Contribute To Your Job Satisfaction” and were rank ordered to determine importance. Responses “Extremely Important” and “Somewhat Important” were

combined prior to rank ordering the items. The top three contributing factors for rehabilitation counselors had an agreement of greater than 90%. The most important item contributing to job satisfaction when ranked ordered was “Doing Meaningful Work” (95.4 %). The second most important contributing factor was “Having Good Benefits” (93.9%). The third factor was “Having Job Security” (93.5%). The following seven items were then rank ordered: “Opportunities to use Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities” (89.5%), “Fair Treatment” (87.8%), “Autonomy” (86.3%), “On-Going Training” (79.2%), “Amount of Pay” (78.4%), “Being Rewarded for Good Performance” (78.1%), and the least important factor was “Flexible Work Schedule” (64.4%).

Table 5

*Factors That Contribute To Your Job Satisfaction (rank ordered)*

| Questions                | n   | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----|------------|
| 1. Doing Meaningful Work |     |            |
| Extremely Important      | 197 | 70.9       |
| Very Important           | 68  | 24.5       |
| Important                | 9   | 3.2        |
| Not Important            |     |            |
| Total                    | 274 | 98.6       |

(table continues)

Table 5 (continued)

| Questions  | n   | Percentage |
|--|-----|------------|
| 2. Having Good Benefits                              |     |            |
| Extremely Important                                  | 191 | 68.7       |
| Very Important                                       | 70  | 25.2       |
| Important  | 12  | 4.3        |
| Not Important  | 1   | .4         |
| Total  | 274 | 98.6       |
| 3. Having Job Security                               |     |            |
| Extremely Important                                  | 184 | 66.2       |
| Very Important                                       | 76  | 27.3       |
| Important  | 13  | 4.7        |
| Not Important  | 1   | .4         |
| Total  | 274 | 98.6       |
| 4. Opportunity to use knowledge, skills, & abilities |     |            |
| Extremely Important                                  | 141 | 50.7       |
| Very Important                                       | 108 | 38.8       |
| Important  | 24  | 8.6        |
| Not Important  |     |            |

(table continues)

Table 5 (continued)

|                     | n   | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----|------------|
| Total               | 273 | 98.2       |
| 5. Fair Treatment   |     |            |
| Extremely Important | 170 | 61.2       |
| Very Important      | 74  | 26.6       |
| Important           | 30  | 10.8       |
| Not Important       |     |            |
| Total               | 274 | 98.6       |
| 6. Autonomy         |     |            |
| Extremely Important | 124 | 44.6       |
| Very Important      | 116 | 41.7       |
| Important           | 32  | 11.5       |
| Not Important       |     |            |
| Total               | 272 | 97.8       |
| 7. Ongoing Training |     |            |
| Extremely Important | 110 | 39.6       |
| Very Important      | 110 | 39.6       |

(table continues)

Table 5 (continued)

|  | n   | Percentage |
|--|-----|------------|
| Important                              | 43  | 15.5       |
| Not Important                          | 11  | 4          |
| Total                                  | 274 | 98.6       |
| 8. Amount of Pay                       |     |            |
| Extremely Important                    | 107 | 38.5       |
| Very Important                         | 111 | 39.9       |
| Important                              | 54  | 19.4       |
| Not Important                          | 2   | .7         |
| Total                                  | 274 | 98.6       |
| 9. Being rewarded for good performance |     |            |
| Extremely Important                    | 105 | 37.8       |
| Very Important                         | 112 | 40.3       |
| Important                              | 56  | 20.1       |
| Not Important                          | 1   | .4         |
| Total                                  | 274 | 98.6       |

(table continues)

Table 5 (continued)

|                              | n   | Percentage |
|------------------------------|-----|------------|
| 10. A flexible work schedule |     |            |
| Extremely Important          | 86  | 30.9       |
| Very Important               | 93  | 33.5       |
| Important                    | 76  | 27.3       |
| Not Important                | 18  | 6.5        |
| Total                        | 273 | 98.2       |

Current level of job satisfaction among counselors was 81.6% as noted in Table 6.

Table 6

*Current Level of Satisfaction Among State of North Carolina VR Counselors*

| Question  | n   | Percentage |
|---|-----|------------|
| 11. Generally speaking, I am satisfied with my job: |     |            |
| Strongly Agree                                      | 86  | 30.9       |
| Somewhat Agree                                      | 141 | 50.7       |
| Neither Agree or Disagree                           | 16  | 5.8        |
| Somewhat Disagree                                   | 24  | 8.6        |
| Strongly Disagree                                   | 5   | 1.8        |
| Total   | 272 | 97.8       |

Another focus of the survey was to determine relationships among selected demographic factors (Age, Gender, Caseload, and Years of Service) and reported satisfaction (see Tables 7–10). As displayed in Table 7, age was sorted into 10 year age groups: 24–33, 34–43, 44–53, and 54–63. Ninety percent of respondents in the 54–63 age group reported they were most satisfied, followed by 24–33 age group (87.5%), 34–43 age group (82.9%), and those counselors in the 44–53 age group (72.6%).

Table 7

*Reported Satisfaction Among Counselors by Age*

| Age         | Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 24–33 years |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n           | 18             | 24             | 4                         | 2                 |                   |
| Percentage  | 37.5           | 50.0           | 8.3                       | 4.2               |                   |
| 34–43 years |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n           | 21             | 37             | 4                         | 6                 | 2                 |
| Percentage  | 30.0           | 52.9           | 5.7                       | 8.6               | 2.9               |
| 44–53 years |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n           | 21             | 52             | 7                         | 12                | 2                 |
| Percentage  | 22.3           | 55.3           | 7.4                       | 12.8              | 2.1               |
| 54–63 years |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n           | 25             | 23             | 1                         | 4                 |                   |
| Percentage  | 47.2           | 43.4           | 1.9                       | 7.5               |                   |
| Total       |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n           | 85             | 136            | 16                        | 24                | 4                 |
| Percentage  | 32.1           | 51.3           | 6                         | 9.1               | 1.5               |



When examining gender to determine whether male or female counselors were more generally satisfied with their job, approximately ninety percent of males responded that they were generally satisfied, while just over eighty one percent of females were generally satisfied with their job (see Table 8).

Table 8

*Reported Satisfaction Among Counselors by Gender*

| Gender     | Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Female     |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n          | 57             | 98             | 11                        | 21                | 4                 |
| Percentage | 29.8           | 51.3           | 5.8                       | 11.0              | 2.1               |
| Male       |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n          | 29             | 41             | 5                         | 2                 | 1                 |
| Percentage | 37.2           | 52.6           | 6.4                       | 2.6               | 1.3               |

Relationship between counselors' caseload type and general satisfaction with the job revealed all counselors were generally satisfied. No particular counselors grouped by caseload type were significantly more satisfied than the others: Other 85.3%, School 83.8%, Mental Health 82.4%, and General 82.3% (see Table 9).

Table 9

*Reported Satisfaction among Counselors by Caseload Type*

| Caseload      | Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| General       |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n             | 29             | 41             | 7                         | 6                 | 2                 |
| Percentage    | 34.1           | 48.2           | 8.2                       | 7.1               | 2.4               |
| Mental Health |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n             | 18             | 24             | 2                         | 7                 |                   |
| Percentage    | 35.3           | 47.1           | 3.9                       | 13.7              |                   |
| School        |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n             | 16             | 41             | 6                         | 4                 | 1                 |
| Percentage    | 23.5           | 60.3           | 8.8                       | 5.9               | 1.5               |
| Other         |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n             | 23             | 35             | 1                         | 7                 | 2                 |
| Percentage    | 33.8           | 51.5           | 1.5                       | 10.3              | 2.9               |
| Total         |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n             | 86             | 141            | 16                        | 24                | 5                 |
| Percentage    | 31.6           | 51.8           | 5.9                       | 8.8               | 1.8               |

Relationships between years of service and reported counselor satisfaction, it was noted that counselors with less than one year of service were significantly more satisfied with their job than any other service year. More than 92% of counselors with less than one year of service reported being satisfied with their job. While 82% of those with greater than 5 but less than or equal to 10 years of service were satisfied, 81.3% of those with greater than 1 but less than or equal to 5 years, 81.2% of those with greater than 10 years experience (see Table 10).

Table 10

*Reported Counselor Satisfaction By Years of Service*

| Years of Service   | Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 year or less     |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n                  | 19             | 20             | 2                         | 1                 |                   |
| Percentage         | 45.2           | 47.6           | 4.8                       | 2.4               |                   |
| > 1 year ≤ 5 years |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n                  | 18             | 43             | 4                         | 8                 | 2                 |
| Percentage         | 24.0           | 57.3           | 5.3                       | 10.7              | 2.7               |

(table continues)

Table 10 (continued)

| Years of Service   | Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree or Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <hr/>              |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| >5 years ≤10 years |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n                  | 22             | 28             | 2                         | 8                 | 1                 |
| Percentage         | 36.1           | 45.9           | 3.3                       | 13.1              | 1.6               |
| >10 years          |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n                  | 23             | 50             | 8                         | 7                 | 2                 |
| Percentage         | 25.6           | 55.6           | 8.9                       | 7.8               | 2.2               |
| Total              |                |                |                           |                   |                   |
| n                  | 82             | 141            | 16                        | 24                | 5                 |
| Percentage         | 30.6           | 52.6           | 6.0                       | 9.0               | 1.9               |

### Discussion

The following questions were perceived as pertinent issues to be addressed by the survey for the state agency. Following each question is a narrative of cumulative counselor responses.

1. *What are the demographic characteristics of individuals providing rehabilitation counseling services in the State of North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling?*

Participants provided seven demographic characteristics: age, gender, caseload type, region, degree, county, and counselor status (see Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4). Respondent ages ranged from 24 to 63 years with a mean of 43. One third of all State of North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors were over the age of 50. Of those participating 192 (69.1%) were female and 80 (28.8 %) were male. Years of service ranged from less than one year to thirty-six years. Of those responding 58 (20.9%) worked in the Eastern region, 118 (42.4%) in the Central, and 96 (34.5%) worked in the Western region. The Caseload Type included General, Mental Health, School, and Other. Of those responding 87 (31.3%) had General caseloads, 51 (18.3%) had Mental Health Caseloads, 69 (24.8%) had School Caseloads, and 68 (24.5%) defined their Caseload as Other. When addressing level of education obtained it was reported 221(79.5%) of State of North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors had an Advanced degree (received Masters, received Doctorate, and received Professional Degree, i.e. Law) and that 54 (19.4%) had a Bachelors degree. North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors were asked what type of county they served: Rural or City. Of those responding 152 (54.7%) reported they worked in rural counties and that 108 (38.8%) served primarily city. Counselor status was divided into Independent and Non-Independent categories. It was reported that 172 (61.9%) were Independent and 101 (36.3%) were Non-Independent.

2. *What is the current level of satisfaction among the North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors?*

In determining the current level of job satisfaction among the North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Question 11 asked, “Generally speaking, I am

satisfied with my job.” Of those responding most counselors (81.6%) considered themselves satisfied with their job.

3. *Is there a relationship between rehabilitation counselors' reported satisfaction and selected demographic characteristics (age, number of years with agency, and caseload)?*

No demographic characteristic were more significant than the other when compared with counselors reported satisfaction

4. *Are certain factors more likely to contribute to current levels of job satisfaction among Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors?*

Items 1–10 asked counselors to rate statements identifying what contributes to job satisfaction. Respondents consistently rated all items as “Important”, “Very Important”, and “Extremely Important”. Fifty percent or more of the respondents rated questions 2,3,4,6, and 8 as “Extremely Important” (see Table 5). Performing meaningful work, being treated fairly, having good benefits, job security and having the opportunity to use their knowledge, skills, and abilities on the job will more likely contribute to the counselor’s job satisfaction.

#### IV. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

Job satisfaction was evaluated by using a job satisfaction survey developed by the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NCDVR). This study was designed to identify factors that contribute to retention and current level of job satisfaction among Rehabilitation Counselors. This study examined factors perceived to contribute to job satisfaction (e.g., amount of pay, having good benefits, having job security, autonomy and other various factors that one may perceive as advantageous in a work situation) and the relationships between demographic characteristics and current level of job satisfaction (e.g., satisfied with job, satisfied with the quality of supervision received, and congruency of job description with the work performed) among Rehabilitation Counselors in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency of North Carolina. Data collection was coordinated by the Counselor Advisory Committee (CAC) representative. Data were then sent to Auburn University for analysis. The method used to analyze the data was quantitative in nature and included descriptive statistics.

The sample consisted of 384 North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors from across three regions (East, West, Central) of the state. The survey was conducted during the month of October, 2004. Of the 384 surveys mailed, 278 counselors returned the surveys as instructed, 2 indicated that they would not participate, 4 were returned because of vacant positions, 2 were returned due to medical

leave and 8 were returned as extras. The final sample contained 274 usable replies for a 71% response rate.

## Conclusions

The results of this study justify the following conclusions:

1. North Carolina Rehabilitation Counselors ranked ordered the following factors that contribute to job satisfaction: (1) Doing Meaningful Work, (2) Having Good Benefits, (3) Having Job Security, (4) Opportunities to use my knowledge, skills, and abilities, (5) Fair Treatment, (6) Autonomy, (7) Ongoing Training, (8) Amount of Pay, (9) Being rewarded for good performance, (10) A flexible work schedule.

2. In determining the current level of job satisfaction among the State of North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Question 11 asked, "Generally speaking, I am satisfied with my job." Of those responding, more than 8 of every 10 counselors ranked were satisfied with their job.

3. Fifty percent or more of those responding "Strongly Agree" with three items: "I receive fair and equitable treatment by my manager", "I have adequate support from my office assistant to do my job", and "I am appreciated and valued as an employee by my manager". These items suggest that there is a high level of current job satisfaction in the areas of support, appreciation, and treatment at work.

4. Half or more of the respondents either "Somewhat Disagreed" or "Strongly Disagreed" with the items "I am satisfied with the balance between counseling and clerical duties", "I am adequately paid for the work that I do", and "My salary is comparable to the salary of professionals in like fields". The State agency may well



consider strategies to address these areas which are contributing to dissatisfaction among a majority of counselors.

5. North Carolina Rehabilitation Counselor's Motivation factors are being sufficiently met but Hygiene factors are not. This imbalance may indicate job dissatisfaction is or will occur. This is a contradiction in relation to how the counselors answered the question "Generally speaking, I am satisfied with my job".

6. Seventy three percent of the responding counselors agreed with the question "My job description accurately describes the work I usually perform," while 86.6% agreed with the statement "Generally speaking, I am satisfied with my job". Fifty three percent disagreed with the statement "I am satisfied with the balance I have between counseling and clerical duties". There appears to be incongruency regarding job expectations or an imbalance within hygiene factors which can ultimately lead to dissatisfaction.

7. When integrating responses by North Carolina Rehabilitation Counselors utilizing the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment one can speculate that there is not "Correspondence" among counselors. Correspondence results when internal and external factors that contribute to job satisfaction coexist. Responses indicate that the Counselor's internal factors are being met from high positive responses to items related to fair and equitable treatment, adequate support, and perceived appreciation and value from their manager. The external factors of Satisfaction are currently not being met, such as comparable salary to other professionals, being adequately paid and their balance between counseling and clerical duties. There was a lack of congruence between internal

factors and current attrition rate among Rehabilitation Counselors in the State of North Carolina Rehabilitation System.

8. One of every three counselors are above 50 + years of age. Fifteen percent of the counselors responding reported service of one year or less. The bulk of counselors have between 1 to 19 years of service. Twenty three percent of the counselors have 15 or more years of service and may well include many of those over the age of 50 whom maybe exiting within the next 5 to 10 years. This has implications for retention and recruitment efforts.

9. Counselors (192 or 69.1%) reported there was no incentive or reward for receiving a Very Good or Outstanding rating on annual reviews and more than 8 of every 10 counselors believed the state needed to focus on counselor retention. From this, one may speculate that there are currently few if any motivation factors in place to encourage counselors to remain in their current job. Herzberg's Theory would suggest due to the low amount of motivation factors, there would be a decrease in job satisfaction. The counselor's high response to the belief that the state needs to focus on counselor retention, may suggest that counselors have strong interest in the retention of current counselors.

#### Recommendations

1. Future researchers should consider conducting a more detailed survey with specific considerations given to job satisfaction. The survey did not allow for much variability between the response categories Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree. These response categories did clearly define accurately the scope of the Rehabilitation

Counselors satisfaction or dissatisfaction within their current job situation. Conducting a more detailed survey by addressing intrinsic and extrinsic factors may help North Carolina Rehabilitation managers and directors identify specific areas of concern that contribute to attrition of dissatisfied counselors by improving extrinsic factors that may improve job satisfaction.

2. Response categories “Factors That Contribute To Your Job Satisfaction” had limited response range and were not defined. This could be remedied by providing a wider range of choices instead of having three positive choices and one negative choice. Dillman (2000) suggests that when rating scaler questions to use equal numbers of positive and negative responses/categories; that is Essential, Important, Less Important, and Not Important. Another technique would use a scale from 1-7, where 1 means not important and 7 means extremely important. In addressing the response categories to “Current Level of Job Satisfaction” more information may have been extrapolated if the neutral response would have been put at the end of the categories (Dillman, 2000).

3. When researching job satisfaction within an organization it is imperative that the researcher be involved with the construction of the instrument. This would allow for the inclusion of items related to career choice theory such as the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment. By using one specific theory, a survey may be designed with greater applicability, giving further consideration to intrinsic and extrinsic satisfiers.

4. Findings from this survey indicate that there is an inconsistency between responses to “satisfied with their job description” and dissatisfied with “balance between counseling and clerical work.” It is recommended the agency “revisit” the counselor job description to insure that it accurately identifies the amount of “clerical work” required.

By being proactive the agency may clarify misunderstandings counselors have towards their job duties.

Future research should focus on factors in addition to those that are present at work; that is, motivation, home life, self determination, and self perception. By expanding the scope of job satisfaction and learning more about the individual may better explain the complex subject/concept of job satisfaction. From this study it can be considered that job satisfaction is not linear, but multidimensional in nature.

5. Another significant issue is that the agency needs to address is the possible exodus of one third of their counselors within the next 5 to 10 years due to potential retirement. The anticipated exodus would create a loss of experience within the agency and resulting in a decrease in quality of service from the vocational rehabilitation consumer. The Agency should be proactive in developing a plan to address staffing shortages sure to occur within next 5 to 10 years.

The North Carolina Rehabilitation Agency is to be commended for their willingness to identify inadequacies within the system which may be affecting counselor retention. The first step could lead to the identification of strategies which could be implemented to retain their counselors.

#### Limitations

The current study presented two limitations. First, only those rehabilitation counselors who were employed by the State Vocational Rehabilitation System of North Carolina were included in the sample population. This limits the generalizability of the results. The second limitation was the failure to define job satisfaction in the instrument,

thus possibly decreasing the understanding and clarity regarding the topic being researched.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

**Letter of Endorsement from State Director**

**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

Michael F. Easley  
Governor

George McCoy  
Director

Carmen Hooker Odom  
Secretary

Voice (336) 570-6855  
FAX (336) 570-6906

September 28 2004

Dear Rehabilitation Counselor:

The Counselors Advisory Committee (CAC) was formed to recognize the significant contribution that individual counselors make to the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and our clientele. Two major objectives of the Committee are 1) to provide an avenue for direct communication between the State Office and field counseling staff on all issues 2) to encourage personal and professional growth by counselors of the agency. In an effort to accomplish these objectives, the CAC has recently formed an Ad-hoc Committee to explore issues relating to counselor retention and recruitment.

The Ad-hoc Committee, in conjunction with State Office Staff, has developed a survey for counselors to share their opinions about job satisfaction. Completed surveys will be collected by your CAC representative and sent to Auburn University. The surveys will then be tabulated by graduate student Chad Duncan and his professor. A copy of the tabulated results will be forwarded to each counselor within the agency.

I encourage each of you to take advantage of the opportunity to complete the survey. Results from this survey will be used to identify opportunities to improve the job experience of Vocational Rehabilitation employees. Your opinions are vital to the success of this project.

Sincerely,

George McCoy

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF PERMISSION FOR STUDY



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services  
805 Ruggles Drive • Raleigh, NC 27603

Michael F. Easley  
Governor

Carmen Hooker Odom  
Secretary

George McCoy  
Director

Mailing Address:  
2801 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-2801

December 16, 2004

J. Chad Duncan  
Department of Rehabilitation and Special Education  
College of Education 1228 Haley Center  
Auburn University, Alabama 36849

Dear Mr. Duncan,

As Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services of North Carolina, I am glad to give you permission to analyze our satisfaction surveys and to use the information for completion of your Thesis. The State of North Carolina has had a great relationship with Auburn University in carrying out the CSPD mandates and I am fully confident of the quality of research that will be done with our data. Auburn University is the ideal place to carry out such research, and I am confident your discoveries will in the long run make an impact on North Carolina's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. We are excited about the outcome of the survey.

Please keep me posted as to the survey progress and let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

George McCoy  
Director



Voice (919) 855-3500 TDD (919) 855-3579 Fax (919) 731-7968  
An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer



APPENDIX C  
COUNSELOR SATISFACTION SURVEY



## COUNSELOR SATISFACTION SURVEY

**The purpose of this confidential survey is to ask for feedback on your satisfaction with your job in order to identify improvement opportunities for our agency and its staff. Anonymity is assured since your responses will be received by your CAC representative and tabulated and summarized by Chad Duncan at Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama. A copy of the final results will be forwarded to you.**

Please indicate your gender:

- Male    Female

What is your current age?: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate the number of years of service you have with DVRS: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the county you serve primarily?

- rural    city

Please select your current counselor status:

- Independent Counselor    Non-Independent Counselor

What is the highest level of formal education obtained?

- Received Bachelors Degree  
 Attended Graduate School  
 Received Master's Degree  
 Received Doctoral Degree (PhD, EdD)  
 Received Professional Degree (Law etc..)

What is the current caseload you serve?

- General  
 Mental Health  
 School  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

## **Part I: FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR JOB SATISFACTION**

**In questions 1-10, you are being asked to indicate how important each of the following job factors is to your sense of job satisfaction. Please select the one choice that best matches your opinion for each job factor listed.**

1. Amount of pay

- Extremely Important
- Very Important
- Important
- Not Important

2. Doing meaningful work

- Extremely Important
- Very Important
- Important
- Not Important

3. Fair treatment (manager does not show favoritism)

- Extremely Important
- Very Important
- Important
- Not Important

4. Having good benefits (medical insurance, dental insurance, etc..)

- Extremely Important
- Very Important
- Important
- Not Important

5. Being rewarded for good performance

- Extremely Important
- Very Important
- Important
- Not Important

6. Having job security

- Extremely Important
- Very Important
- Important
- Not Important

7. A flexible work schedule (coming in early/late, leaving early/late, etc...)

- Extremely Important
- Very Important
- Important
- Not Important

8. Opportunity to use knowledge, skills, and abilities

- Extremely Important
- Very Important
- Important
- Not Important

9. Autonomy

- Extremely Important
- Very Important
- Important
- Not Important

10. Ongoing Training

- Extremely Important
- Very Important
- Important
- Not Important

## Part II: CURRENT LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

Please select the one response that best matches your opinion for each of the following questions. **If you would like to make additional comments, please do so in the Comments section at the end of each item. We encourage you to make comments!**

11. Generally speaking, I am satisfied with my job.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

12. Morale in my work unit is usually high.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

13. I receive fair and equitable treatment by my manager.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

14. I am satisfied with the quality of supervision I receive.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

15. I am encouraged to participate in the resolution of work related problems in my office.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

16. The agency provides me with the training I need to do my job.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

17. I have opportunities for promotion within the agency.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

18. I am free to make appropriate decisions and judgments without being micro-managed.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

19. My supervisor takes prompt action to correct poor performance.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

20. My job description accurately describes the work I usually perform.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

21. I have adequate support from my office assistant to do my job.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

22. I am appreciated and valued as an employee by my manager.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

23. I am satisfied with the performance rating system used by the agency.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

24. The amount of work assigned to me is reasonable.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

25. My supervisor gives me helpful feedback on how well I do my job.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

26. My performance rating accurately reflects my job performance.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

27. I am satisfied with the balance I have between counseling and clerical duties.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

28. I am adequately paid for the work that I do.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

29. My salary is comparable to the salary of professionals in related fields.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

30. I am satisfied with the degree of autonomy that I am given to do my job.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**



31. I have adequate opportunity to use my knowledge, skills and abilities in doing the job that I was trained to do.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

32. My unit manager actively responds to the concerns of counselors.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

33. I am satisfied with the amount of resources I have to do my job (e.g. equipment, computer hardware and computer software).

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Comments:**

34. On the average, what percentage of your time, in a typical workday, would you estimate that you spend doing clerical/processing activities (filing, data entry, scheduling appointments, paying bills etc.)?

- 0-20%
- 21-40%
- 41-60%
- 61-80%
- > 80%

35. Are there any incentives for receiving a Very Good or Outstanding on your PMP?

- Yes
- No
- No Opinion

If yes, please indicate what they are:

36. Do you feel the agency supports counselors in maintaining their CRC credentials?  
 Yes    No    No Opinion

If yes, please indicate how:

37. To what extent do you think the agency needs to focus on counselor retention?  
 Large Extent    To Some Extent    A Small Extent    Not at All

**Comments:**