

Job Satisfaction of Librarians: A Comparison between Men and Women

The significance of studying the job satisfaction of librarians is discussed. The study concentrates on a comparison of the job satisfaction of men and women librarians. Data were collected by means of the well-validated Need Satisfaction Questionnaire (NSQ) which was developed to reflect Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs." The sample included 202 men and women librarians from twenty-three college and university libraries. A t test was used to determine the difference between men and women librarians' job satisfaction. The results show that men and women attached the same importance to security, social, and self-esteem needs. Women regarded autonomy and self-actualization needs as having lower importance than did the men. Women were more dissatisfied than men in all need categories (security, esteem, autonomy, and self-actualization needs) with the exception of social needs, which were similar for both men and women. The results point to the need to alleviate differential treatment in the work environment of men and women librarians.

THE JOB SATISFACTION AND MOTIVATION of many professional and nonprofessional groups (accountants, engineers, middle managers, insurance agents, research scientists, Air Force officers, evening students, telephone operators, assembly workers, and nurses) have been studied by many behavioral scientists in the last two decades.¹ One group of professionals, however, which has been virtually ignored is that of librarians. This is unfortunate because most of the studies of job satisfaction have concluded that job satisfaction differs from occupation to occupation, and that there

is a definite need to study the job satisfaction and motivation of distinct professional groups independently one from another. From the research findings it is apparent that the determinants of job satisfaction are different for different occupational groups.² For example, work itself was found to be a significant determinant of job satisfaction for engineers, but not for accountants, while promotion was found to be more important for accountants than scientists. There are numerous other examples of this difference in factors determining job satisfaction among different occupations.

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In an earlier paper the author has reported on the study of the overall job satisfaction of librarians.³ The purpose

of the present paper is to compare and contrast the sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of men and women librarians. One recent trend in the study of job satisfaction in general has been a comparative analysis of the need satisfaction of men and women. For example, Bengé, Stockford and Kunze, and Chase reported that women are more satisfied with some aspects of their job than men; while Peck, Cole, and Hulin and Smith reported the opposite trend—namely, that women are less satisfied with their jobs than men.⁴⁻⁹ Needless to say, the need to compare the satisfaction of men and women is crucial in librarianship due to the fact that both sexes are heavily represented in the profession.

Previous studies of job satisfaction comparing men and women have attempted to measure job satisfaction with respect to some aspect of the job, for example, working conditions, nature of the work, supervision, pay and promotion, etc., rather than to measure job satisfaction in relation to the individual's need system and degree of need satisfaction received from the job. It was Abraham Maslow who proposed a theory of human needs.¹⁰ Maslow contended that human needs array themselves in hierarchies of prepotency. As one need is satisfactorily fulfilled, it is replaced by another. Man continually seeks to gratify some need. Maslow characterized these needs as:

Self-actualization and autonomy: the opportunity for self-fulfillment and accomplishment through personal growth and development;

Esteem: the prestige received from both within and outside the organization;

Social: the requirement for affectionate relations with others;

Security: the feeling of freedom from anxiety; and

Physiological: the requirement for food, clothes, shelter, sex, etc.

Maslow regards these five sets of

needs as being in a definite hierarchy but not in an all-or-none relationship to one another. He contends that decreasing percentages of satisfaction are encountered as a lower-level need is replaced in predominance by a higher-level need. Specifically, Maslow's theory proposes that there are basic or primary needs, such as food, water, and sleep, which the individual satisfies first (physiological and security needs). After accomplishing this, the individual turns to the so-called higher-order needs, such as need for affiliation (social) and esteem. Finally, if the individual has achieved some degree of satisfaction in both physiological and social needs, he may then spend some effort in trying to satisfy the needs of highest order; that is, autonomy and self-actualization needs.

The approach which considers job satisfaction in relation to the individual's need system may make it possible to reconcile the contradictory findings of the prior results of the men-women differential. Further, the knowledge regarding the differences between the structure of needs of men and women librarians is valuable in other aspects of work behavior and attitude.

The purpose of the present paper is to compare the perceived degree of need fulfillment and need deficiencies of men and women librarians. The study will also contrast the importance of these needs as viewed by men and women.

METHOD

Instrument

The data for this study were obtained by using a slightly modified version of Porter's Need Satisfaction Questionnaire (NSQ).¹¹ The NSQ has been used in almost all of the prior studies dealing with the comparative analysis of various groups with regard to the perceived need satisfaction, need fulfillment, and need importance. The NSQ consists of thirteen items reflecting Mas-

low's need classification scheme. In particular, the NSQ includes the following needs: security, social, esteem, autonomy, and self-actualization. Originally, Porter reported no reliability data about the questionnaire; later, Porter and Lawler validated the NSQ.¹² For each of the items of the NSQ, subjects are asked to give three responses:

1. How much of the characteristic is there now?
2. How much of the characteristic do you think there should be?
3. How important is the characteristic to you?

Each response is made on a seven-point scale with high value representing maximum points.

As constructed, the NSQ provides three types of scores:

1. The need fulfillment score, consisting of the response to part one of each item, dealing with what is now. The higher the value of the need fulfillment score, the higher the perceived satisfaction and vice versa.
2. The need deficiency score, consisting of the difference between part two and one of each item, that is, the difference between what should be and what is now. The higher the need deficiency score, the higher the deficiency or the dissatisfaction of the need and vice versa.
3. The perceived need importance score, consisting of the response to part three of each item. The higher the need importance score, the higher the importance of the need and vice versa. Recently, several authors have shown that efforts to improve the measure of satisfaction by accounting for the importance usually fails.¹³ Consequently, many writers including Porter and Lawler have ignored this part of the NSQ.¹⁴ However, the score for the importance scale will be used in this study, not to measure need fulfillment or deficiency but rather

to explore sex difference in the judged importance of various needs.

Sample and Procedure

The sample included 202 librarians from twenty-three academic libraries. To ensure the feasibility of the study, the sample included only libraries from the greater New York Metropolitan Area whose directors had initially agreed to participate in the study. It was determined that a similar number of responses should be obtained from each library to avoid biases in the sample due to size. This procedure seems to be standard for carefully designed studies of this nature. It should be noted, however, that most studies on this subject have utilized a smaller sample and a fewer number of organizations. It was determined that the inclusion of a large number of libraries would provide a stronger basis for generalization of the findings. Demographic data for the sample (e.g., age, experience, etc.) showed relatively wide variance.

The questionnaires were distributed individually to all the department heads in each library. Accompanying the questionnaire was a letter of introduction from the library's director explaining that the library had been asked to participate in an academic research project and that the library had agreed to cooperate. The letter emphasized that participation was voluntary, but each librarian was strongly urged to cooperate, especially since individual responses would not be available to the library administration. Participants were not asked to sign their names to the questionnaires. A stamped, self-addressed envelope was included for respondents to mail the questionnaires directly to the researcher.

Results

Table 1 presents the mean and the standard deviation for the need fulfillment for each need category for men and women and the *t* value for signifi-

TABLE 1
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION FOR NEED FULFILLMENT FOR EACH NEED CATEGORY
FOR MEN AND WOMEN

Group	Security		Social		Need Esteem		Autonomy		Self-Actualization	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Men	5.45	1.54	5.33	1.23	5.16	1.081	5.04	1.49	5.23	1.33
Women	5.57	1.55	5.14	1.28	4.65	1.26	4.38	1.44	4.88	1.43
<i>t</i> value	.48		-.948		-2.86*		-2.79*		-1.596	

* $p < .01$

cance of difference between means. As pointed out earlier, the higher the need fulfillment score, the higher the need satisfaction since it represents the response to what is now. The statistical significance of the differences between the means of men and women was determined using a *t* test. The results in Table 1 show that women express lower need fulfillment than men statistically significant at $p < .01$ in two need categories: esteem and autonomy. Men and women showed a similar level of fulfillment in security and social needs. Also, women expressed lower fulfillment in self-actualization needs, but the mean difference was not significant. The range of need fulfillment for women (4.38–5.57) is larger than that of men (5.04–5.45), indicating that women experience comparatively uneven levels of satisfaction in various needs. From Table 1, it is also evident that men and women experience decreasing levels of need fulfillment as we move on Maslow's need hierarchy from lower to higher needs (e.g., security, social, esteem, self-actualization, and autonomy). It should be noted that autonomy, rather than the self-actualization need, is the least fulfilled need for both men and women. The security need is the highest fulfilled need for both men and women librarians.

Table 2 presents the means and the standard deviations of need deficiencies for each need category for men and women and the results of a *t* test for significance of difference between means.

It should be recalled that need deficiency is the score difference between what is now and what should be. Consequently, the results for need deficiency are not completely independent from the results for need fulfillment as shown in Table 1. Nevertheless, need deficiency scores are rather important because they are considered by many authors as more likely to determine the behavior of the individual.¹⁵ Table 2 reveals some interesting aspects of the difference between the need deficiency of men and women librarians by considering the means of each need category. Women have significantly higher deficiencies than men in four areas: security, autonomy, esteem, and self-actualization needs (*t* test $p < .01$). It is interesting to note that both men and women showed a similar level in the fulfillment of social needs as shown in Table 2. The difference between the degree of the fulfillment of the security need and the deficiency in it, for women, can possibly be explained by the stronger desire or expectation (the should-be scale) for a higher degree of security for women than for men. Both men and women report the same level of deficiency as far as social needs are concerned. For men, security is the least deficient need, while self-actualization is the most deficient need. For women, the least deficient need is the social need, while the most deficient need is self-actualization (like men). Another interesting aspect in Table 2 can be inferred from the variability in need deficiency. The standard de-

TABLE 2
NEED DEFICIENCIES FOR EACH NEED CATEGORY FOR MEN AND WOMEN

Group	Security		Social		Need Esteem		Autonomy		Self-Actualization	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Men	.30	3.06	.65	1.060	.79	1.85	.93	1.76	1.06	2.03
Women	1.06	2.46	.61	1.35	1.060	1.41	1.41	1.51	1.54	1.47
<i>t</i> value	3.61*		-1.13		3.61*		6.65*		5.47*	

* $p < .001$

viations are relatively high in all need categories for both men and women, indicating strong individual difference effects in the responses to need deficiency. This is particularly true in the case of the security need of both men and women.

Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations of the perceived importance of needs for men and women, and the results of a *t* test for the significance of difference between means. The results in Table 3 indicate that men perceive the importance of autonomy and self-actualization needs significantly differently (more important) than the women. The judged importance of need of both men and women is similar in other categories, namely security, social, and esteem needs. Men and women seem to judge self-actualization need as the need of highest importance. Also, both men and women view the esteem need as the least important of all needs.

DISCUSSION

The results show that there are some differences between men and women librarians with regard to need fulfill-

ment, need deficiency, and the perceived importance of needs. As far as need fulfillment is concerned, women express significantly lower levels of fulfillment than men in the esteem and autonomy needs. Men and women showed similar levels of fulfillment in lower-order needs, that is, social and security needs. As far as need deficiency is concerned, women indicated larger deficiency needs in all categories except for the social need, which was similar for both men and women. As far as the judged importance of needs, both men and women ranked autonomy and self-actualization needs as having the highest importance of all need categories. The results also show that the judged importance of security, social, and esteem needs are similar for men and women librarians. However, women regarded autonomy and self-actualization as having lower importance in contrast to the men.

A possible explanation of these findings may arise out of considering what each of the three scores reflects in the work situation. The need fulfillment score can be viewed, generally, as a

TABLE 3
PERCEIVED NEED IMPORTANCE FOR EACH NEED CATEGORY FOR MEN AND WOMEN

Group	Security		Social		Need Esteem		Autonomy		Self-Actualization	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Men	5.71	1.28	5.54	1.25	5.34	1.23	5.94	.86	6.24	1.33
Women	5.66	1.64	5.32	1.30	5.08	1.186	5.35	1.80	6.12	1.07
<i>t</i> value	-.959		-1.08		-1.33		-2.86*		-3.02*	

* $p < .01$

function of the satisfaction derived from the work situation, while the need deficiency score can be viewed as a function of *both* the personal expectations of need fulfillment and the actual fulfillment from the job. Judged need importance for the most part reflects the value judgment of the individual or group involved.

The need fulfillment scores indicate an actual or imaginary differential treatment in the work situations between men and women. The deficiency score may reflect the differences between the need expectation (should-be) of men relative to women. For example, assume that men and women have the same need fulfillment, and that women have higher need deficiency than men. This situation is demonstrated by the fulfillment and deficiency scores for the security needs of women in this study, where both men and women showed the same level of fulfillment but women showed a higher degree of deficiency (higher insecurity) than men. The need expectancy degree (should-be) concept may provide the key to reconcile the contradictory findings of prior studies on the subject. None of the prior studies attempted to measure the need expectation of women and men and compare them to their level of fulfillment.

Finally, it is evident from the results

of the judged need importance that men and women librarians reflect similar value systems in all categories of need except autonomy and self-actualization. The fact that women and men perceived the importance of the other three needs similarly indicated that the value system of men and women in librarianship may not be different with regard to these needs. The reason that women view autonomy and self-actualization lower in importance in contrast to men may be due to the prevailing social roles in which men are expected to be the dominant sex. Clearly, women's perceived need for autonomy is not as high as men under the current social norm. It is likely that such traditional sex roles may not continue in light of the current women's social movement.

The results of this study cannot be generalized to all professionals due to the fact that the study included only librarians. There is a need to further test and replicate the results in a variety of samples before a definite conclusion can be drawn about the comparative differences between the need satisfaction of men and women in general. It should be pointed out, however, that the results of this study are in agreement with prior results showing women as more dissatisfied than men.

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