

## **Determinants of organizational satisfaction in the Dutch Public Sector**

Prof dr. Bram Steijn  
Department of Public Administration  
Erasmus University  
Room M8-37  
3000 DR Rotterdam  
Steijn@fsw.eur.nl

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## Introduction

HRM-issues are getting increasingly attention within Public Administration. This is not surprising as 'human resources' are of decisive importance for the performance and the quality of services rendered by public organizations. Probably this is even more important compared to private organizations.

Public organizations themselves are devoting a lot of time and effort to the management of their human resources. Like in the private sector, employee surveys are one of the tools used. In this respect the survey held by the Dutch Ministry of Home Affairs must especially be mentioned. Since 1999 each year<sup>1</sup> a large number of public sector employees are interviewed about their job, their perception and evaluation of several aspects of their job and their organization, etcetera. For instance, in 2001 14,212 employees were interviewed, and in 2003 24,414.

This survey is very interesting as it provides a lot of information about the attitudes of Dutch public sector workers. I have earlier published about these data, especially about the 2002 data set. There I focussed on job satisfaction (Steijn, 2003; 2004) and the employees' perception of their management (Steijn, 2003; 2005). I want to continue this attention in this paper by analyzing the 2003 dataset. The survey in that year contains an interesting item that measures the 'organizational satisfaction' of the employees involved. Unlike job satisfaction, organizational satisfaction is a much less researched subject. Organizational satisfaction, however, is an interesting subject in itself as it tells us how employees perceive their organization. It tells us, in other words, something about the organization. When (public) organizations in the near future (again) need to compete for employees and need to become an 'attractive employer', it is important to know how employees perceive their organization and what factors are influencing this perception;

Although the survey deals with the Dutch public sector as a whole, I will only deal in this paper with employees working for the state sector. This is because I have learnt in the other analyses done so far, one gets in this way a better understanding in the mechanism leading to specific answers of the respondents. By analysing only a part of the survey, one gains a better in-depth understanding of the processes lying behind the data. Moreover, the sub-survey of employees working in the state sector is still large: it includes no less than 3751 employees.

Like my earlier publications on job satisfaction I want to focus on the determinants of organizational satisfaction, with special attention devoted to the role of HRM-practices. More specifically, my research question is: "what factors determine the organizational satisfaction of employees in the Dutch state sector, and what is the specific role of HRM-practices in this regard?".

The paper is divided into five parts. In the following section a short review is given of the literature about organizational satisfaction. Based on that discussion we will formulate *several hypotheses*. Next we will discuss the dataset and the measurement of the main variables. The main findings follow in the fourth section. And the fifth part discusses the conclusions and its implications.

## Literature review

Job satisfaction is a well-researched subject (compare Hackman & Oldman, 1975; Harter et al. 2002), although that is less true for the public sector (compare Steijn, 2004). Strangely enough, the concept of organizational satisfaction seems far less explicitly researched: a search in the SSCI generated only 9 hits for the 1988-2005 period (using organizational or organizational satisfaction as search term). A search with scholar.google.com added only a few other sources where the term 'organizational satisfaction' is explicitly used.

This lack of interest is surprising as organizational satisfaction tells us explicitly something about the perception employees have of the organization they work for, which is clearly is different from the perception of one's job: people can be satisfied with their job, but not so satisfied with their organization, and *vice versa*. Shore et al. (1990) have pointed this out in their study. They refer to

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<sup>1</sup> Since 2003 the survey has become bi-annual.

Azjen and Fishbein by stating that an employee can be positive about his job because of the immediate experiences of the job, but negatively about the organization due to policies with respect to for instance pay scales and promotion.

Following Porter et al. (1974) they hypothesized that organizational attitudes may be more important than job attitudes when explaining the intention of an employee to leave the organization. The results of their study supported this assumption in general: e.g. they found that job attitudes are more relevant for job intentions and organizational attitudes are more explanatory with respect to organizational outcomes, like turnover outcomes – however they did not find any explicit effects of organizational satisfaction on these outcomes as such.

This is in contrast with Granrose and Portwood (1987) who did find an effect of organizational satisfaction on ‘the search for external alternatives’: e.g. workers with a lower organizational satisfaction more often look for another job. Further research to find out whether or not such a relationship exist is therefore clearly necessary.

However, in this paper we are not so much interested in the outcomes of organizational satisfaction – though we will say something about it in the results section, but in the explanation in differences in organizational satisfaction.

As mentioned above, Shore et al. (1990) suggested that especially organizational variables will be needed to explain these differences. And indeed, there are several studies that have included these type of variables in their analysis.

Granrose and Portwood (1987), for instance, looked at an HRM-related variable by studying the match between individual and organizational career plans. Indeed, they found two relevant (strong) results in this regard: : a strong effect of this match on organizational satisfaction (the better this match, the higher the satisfaction), an effect of perceived prospects of career success (better perception leads to better satisfaction). They didn’t find effects of other individual (age, gender) and organizational (like information on career prospects) variables.

Other studies also point towards the role of organizational variables. Kazmar et al. (1999) showed that organizational satisfaction is negatively associated with the perception of organizational politics. Sims (2000) investigated the relationship between organizational satisfaction and conflicting expectation (between the formal code of ethics and supervisors enforcement of this) for lying behaviour. Trembley and Roussel (2001), finally, looked at the effect of organizational justice on pay, job and organizational satisfaction.

Neither of these studies – with the exception of the Granrose and Portwood study – have included a battery of variables to explain differences in organizational satisfaction (such as normally done in job satisfaction research). This, therefore, will be the main goal in this paper. As elaborate models are lacking, it seems logical to borrow a model from another research field. A logical step in this respect is to use models, which are used in research towards job satisfaction. I will therefore use an adapted version of the model used before by Steijn (2004; compare also Ting, 1997) to explain differences in job satisfaction.

In Steijn (2004) three ‘blocks’ of antecedent variables with respect to job satisfaction were used: individual characteristics, job and organizational characteristics and hrm-practices. Here similar variables to explain differences in organizational satisfaction will be used, though – given the suggestion of Short et al. (1990) – organizational variables will be given a more prominent role.

In the analyses, the following variables will be included:

Individual characteristics. In earlier research mentioned above, age, gender and educational level were used as antecedent variables for differences in job satisfaction (though in Steijn (2004) only gender proved to have a significant effect). Although it seems appropriate to use the same variables for organizational satisfaction, Küsdü (2001) suggests that work experience is a better choice compared to age, as discontent workers will leave the organization. Hence we can expect a *positive association between work experience and organizational satisfaction*.

Gender and educational level will be used as control variables, though we have no strong feelings about possible relationships. Given the earlier findings with respect to job satisfaction, it seems logical to assume that *women will have a higher organizational satisfaction compared to men.*

Job and organizational context. It appears logical to assume that the context one works in, will influence the satisfaction with the organization. Given the above discussion (e.g. Shore et al., 1990), job characteristics as such will probably not be that important as such, we will therefore especially look at variables, which specify the organizational context of the job. With this in mind we have selected three variables: Organizational size is a logical choice. Although an effect of size is not found by Granrose and Portwood, a potential danger of larger organizations is that they can become more anonymous and less ‘friendly’, our hypothesis is therefore that *organizational size will be negatively associated with organizational satisfaction.*

The organizational context is also shaped the primary process done within it. To take this into account we looked at two different variables. In the first place we included organizational type in the analysis. In the state sector, there are two important main types of organization: ‘kernel’ organization (the departments) who are mainly dealing with policy planning and formulation, and ‘executive’ organizations who are mainly dealing with the executing of chosen policies. Workers in the second type of organizations will have less room for manoeuvre compared to workers in the first type (as policy executing by definition means you are supposed to do something which is formulated by someone else), we therefore expect that *organizational satisfaction will be higher in public organizations dealing with policy planning and formulation.*

The above distinction is of course very crude: a civil servant at an department can still have a job that involves policy executing. It is therefore also necessary to look more in detail at the job a person is doing. In this respect we have a similar hypothesis: *the more a job is involved in policy planning and formulation, the higher the organizational satisfaction will be.*

Soft organizational characteristics.

We do not believe ‘hard’ organizational characteristics will be very important with respect to organizational satisfaction. In the end this satisfaction will mainly be influenced by the actual policies and organizational practices within the organization. The scarce research mentioned above supports this assumption. Career policies (Granrose and Portwood, 1987); organizational justice (Trembley and Roussel, 2001); practices with respect to lying (Sims, 2000) and organizational politics (Kazmar et al., 1999) are all illustrations of this. In the analysis we will look at the effect of three such organizational practices.

In the first place satisfaction with HRM–practices will be a vital variable. Granrose and Portwood (1987) already showed the relevance of one such practice (with respect to career). Research into job satisfaction (compare Steijn, 2004) already showed that HRM-practices are important for satisfaction. It seems logical assume that these practices will be even more relevant for organizational satisfaction, as it are these organizations that are practicing these HRM-practices; in other words: HRM-practices tell people something about the organization they work in. According to Guest (2000, 12) the fact is that ‘the greater the number of practices, the greater the impact on workers’. Following the results of Steijn (2004) with respect to HRM-practices and job satisfaction, and Gould-Williams (2004) about the relation between HRM-practices and organizational commitment, the following hypothesis seems relevant: *the more HRM-practices are used within the organization, the higher the organizational satisfaction will be.*

However, other research suggests that not so much the number of HRM-practices are relevant, but only the evaluation by workers of these practices matter. Meyer and Smith (2000) studied the potential impact of HRM practices on organizational commitment. Their argument, that the nature and strength of the influence of HRM practices might be determined by how employees perceive these practices, is corroborated empirically in their analysis. Following this, our main hypothesis is that *the higher the satisfaction with HRM-practices, the higher the organizational satisfaction.*

In other words: if workers are discontented with the HRM-practices used by their organization, this will add to their organizational dissatisfaction. An interesting assumption – which

we can't study here – is that it is better to have no HRM-practices at all than to have HRM-practices which generate dissatisfaction.

The next variable we will include concerns the role of the supervisor. In the HRM-literature, the supervisor plays a vital role in communicating and executing the HRM-policies of the organization. In the HRM-literature, HRM is not so much something for a special department, but mainly something the supervisor/manager himself should do. One can also look at the role of the supervisor with respect to organizational satisfaction. From the perspective of the employee, the supervisor is the face of the organization. Hence, the following hypothesis: *the more positive the role of the supervisor is evaluated by the employee, the higher the organizational satisfaction.*

However, the organization itself or the supervisor are not the only relevant actors. At least as important are the colleagues. It makes a lot of difference if one works with colleagues one likes or dislikes. Therefore our hypothesis is: *the more positive an employee is about his colleagues, the higher the organizational satisfaction will be.*

Going back to the first sentence of this section, it must be rehearsed that we believe these type of soft organizational characteristics will be more important with respect to organizational satisfaction than individual or hard organizational perspectives.

### **Measurement**

As said above our analysis is based on a survey held by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior, which in 2003 contained 3751 employees employed in this sector. The Ministry has tried to make the survey as representative as possible for the public sector as a whole as well as the various sub-sectors (like the state sector). This has been a success with the exception of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, respondents of both ministries are absent in the survey.

We now turn to the measurement of the main concepts used in this paper.

*Organizational satisfaction* is the main concept in this paper. Organizational satisfaction is the extent to which respondents are satisfied with their current organization ( It is measured by a single five-point Likert item 'Overall, how satisfied are you with the organization you are working for?'. The results show a reasonable distributed variable with 5% very dissatisfied workers (category 1), 19,5% dissatisfied, 23,6% neutral, 42,2% satisfied and 9,5 very satisfied (category 5).

In the next section we will not only look at the determinants of organizational satisfaction, but also at the relation with several other outcome variables, e.g. a) *job satisfaction*, which is also measured by a single item 'Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?'. The results suggest (2,7% very dissatisfied, 10,7% dissatisfied, 12,3% neutral, 54,3% satisfied, 19,6% very satisfied) employees in the Dutch state sector are more dissatisfied with their organization than their job; b) *intention to leave*, this is measured as the proportion of employees indicating they have looked for another job in another organization in either the previous year or at the moment of the survey. The results show 17,9% of the respondents is doing so; c) *absence due to sickness*, this is measured as the number of days respondents have been absent due to sickness in the preceding year – according to their own account. It ranges from 0 to 260 days, with a mean of 25, and a standard deviation of 126,901.

### *Job and Organizational context*

To try to make sense of differences in organizational satisfaction, we will first look at some 'hard' job and organizational characteristics. More specifically, we will look at three of these:

*Organizational size* will be the first we will look at. This variable was measured by a single item 'how many employees are employed in the organization you work for?'. Respondents could answer by ticking one of eight categories, ranging from 1 (0-10) to 8 (more than 5,000). As could be expected, the resulting variable is skewed: only 0.5% of the respondents scored category 1, whereas 36.8% scored category 8. The mean score was 6.5 or an organizational size between 500 and 5000.

*Organizational type* is the second variable we will look at. This is a simple dichotomous variable discerning organizations whose main task is policy planning (the kernel task of the departments) from organizations who are mainly occupied with policy executing. We scored all departments as 'policy

planning' (35.7% of the respondents in the survey), but organizations like the Tax agency, 'Rijkswaterstaat', and agencies dealing with the prisons (DJI), immigration (INS) or forests (SBB) as 'policy executing' (64.3% of the respondents in the survey).

*Job type.* The above variable of course gives a crude approximation of the work someone is doing, for instance: a civil servant at an department can still have a job that involves policy executing. We therefore also made a variable distinguishing between several job categories (based on answers given by the respondents themselves). We will discern between: managerial jobs (11.9%), supportive jobs (secretaries, but also specialists on financial, hr or ict aspects; 28.9%), inspection (10.4%), policy planning (12.9%), policy executing (13.7%) and 'something else' (22.3%). In our analysis this variable will be split up in several dummy-variables, where the category 'something else' will be the reference category.

#### *Soft organizational characteristics*

The above variables are 'hard' indicators of the job and organization people work for. However, we are also interest in more 'soft' characteristics, i.e. variables that in principle are more 'man made' and are more prone to change. In fact, one of these (HRM-practices) is the main subject of our research question. Again, we will look at three of these type of variables.

*Number of HRM-practices.* In the survey the respondents were given a list with 10 different HRM-practices: use of job performance interviews, use of job appraisal interviews, personal development plans, career plans, functional flexibility, task rotation, individual coaching, competence management, age-conscious personnel management policies and mobility policies. With respect to each of these findings it was asked whether these were used in the organization, whether the employee had been subjected to one of these practices, and whether or not he was satisfied with this use. To measure this variable, we counted the number of HRM-practices used within the organization. On average, the employees reported that their organizations used 5.39 (out of the 10 given) HRM-practices, although this usage differed widely (SD= 2.74; ranging from 0 according to 2% of the employees to 10 for 11% of the employees).

*Satisfaction with HRM-practices.* Next, we counted for the same number of practices whether the employee indicated he was satisfied (or neutral) with, and calculated the proportion of HRM-practices the employee was satisfied/neutral with. This score is 1 for employees according to whom their organization has 1 HRM practice, which is positively evaluated by them as well as for organizations with 10 HRM practices that are all evaluated positively. On average, the employees score 0.48 on this variable (which indicate that they are satisfied with slightly less than half the HRM-practices used in their organization. Again, scores differ widely (SD=0.32; ranging from 0 to 1 for both 16% of the employees). Correlation between the number of and the satisfaction with HRM-practices is -0.30, indicating that a higher number of HRM-practices goes hand in hand with a lower score on satisfaction. This is less strange as it appears, as the change that one or more practices are evaluated less positively increases when more practices are used.

*Evaluation of direct supervisor.* As said above the supervisor plays a decisive role in the translation of HRM-practices towards the work-floor. We measured employees' perception of their direct supervisor by a scale consisting of nine Likert-type items<sup>2</sup>. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale consisting of these nine items is 0.95. We added the scores on each item up, and divided the resulting scale by nine. A high score on this scale indicated a more positive evaluation of the direct supervisor. The mean score on the scale is 3.28, suggesting a slight positive evaluation. The standard deviation (0.96) and the fact that 2% of the employees scored a '1' (the lowest score) and a '5' (the highest score), point to the fact that employees are widely divided in the evaluation of their direct supervisor.

*Organizational climate.* Not only HRM-practices or supervisors are important for one's perception of the organization one works for. Of course, colleagues are also important. We therefore constructed a scale measuring the perception of the respondents of his colleagues and the way he is supported by them. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale consisting of these five items is 0.78. We added the scores on each item up, and divided the resulting scale by five. A high score on this scale indicated a more positive evaluation of the organizational climate. The mean score on the scale is 3.83, suggesting a

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<sup>2</sup> Examples of these items are 'my supervisor is interested in the well-being of his subordinates' and 'my supervisor distribute the tasks evenly over the employees'.

positive evaluation of this climate. This is also illustrated by the fact that only 12.5% of the respondents score below '3'.

## Results

### *Organizational satisfaction and other outcome variables*

The first point we will turn to, is whether the variable 'organizational satisfaction' makes any sense at all. In an ideal world, we would like to investigate the relation between organizational satisfaction and performance: do employees with a higher organizational satisfaction perform better than employees with a lower organizational satisfaction? Unfortunately, a measurement of performance is not the survey, so we have to work with proxies instead. We will look at the relation between organizational satisfaction and three other variables: job satisfaction, intention to leave and absence due to sickness.

**Table 1: The correlation of organizational satisfaction with three other variables.**

job satisfaction	0.58**
Intention to leave	-0.21**
Absence due to sickness	-0.01 (ns)

\*\* p < 0.01

The results show that job and organizational satisfaction are closely related, but not the same. This also follows from section 2: the employees are more satisfied with their job than with their organization, which can also be illustrated by the means of these two variables (3.78 for job satisfaction and 3.32 for organizational satisfaction). There is also a clear relation between organizational satisfaction and intention to leave: employees who are more dissatisfied with the organization are more often actively searching a job outside the organization (this confirms the earlier findings of Granrose and Portwood from 1987). However, there is no relationship whatsoever between organizational satisfaction and absence due to sickness.

To dwell more into this, an analysis with the intention to leave as dependent variable, and job satisfaction and organizational satisfaction was performed. Work experience, gender and educational level were used as control variables. Table 2 presents the results of this analysis.

**Table 2: Results of regression analysis (N=3160) with 'intention to leave' as dependent variable .**

	Model 1
	$\beta$
Constant	0.51
Work experience	-.16
Gender	<i>ns</i>
Educational level	.14
Job satisfaction	-.21
Organisational satisfaction	-.10
Explained variance	0.13

\*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05

Clearly, both job and organisational satisfaction are – independently – relevant for the turnover intentions. Employees who are more dissatisfied on one of these variables are more inclined to look for another job. The same hold for higher educated workers and workers with less work experience within the organisation. At the same time, it must also be noted that job satisfaction is relatively most relevant for the turnover intentions, it is in fact almost twice as important as the organizational satisfaction.

### *Determinants of organizational satisfaction*

We now turn to our main analysis, the relationship between the main independent variables and organizational satisfaction. Table 2 contains the results of a stepwise ordinary least squares regression analysis performed to test the hypotheses. In the first step, individual characteristics were regressed on organizational satisfaction, followed by the hard organizational characteristics in the second step and soft organizational characteristics in the third step. In this way we can see how much variance is explained by each ‘cluster’ of variables.

**Table 2: Results of regression analysis (N=3160) of Organisational Satisfaction employees in Dutch state sector.**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
Constant	3.03	3.54	0.66
<u>Individual Characteristics</u>			
Work experience within organization (yrs)	-0.05*	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Gender (1=female)	0.08**	0.07**	0.05**
Educational Level	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
<u>Job and Organizational Context</u>			
Type of Organization (1=executing)		-0.06**	-0.03*
Size		<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Managerial Job		0.06**	<i>ns</i>
Staff		<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Inspection		-0.06**	-0.04*
Policy planning		0.05*	<i>ns</i>
Policy executing		<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
<u>Soft organizational characteristics</u>			
Number of HRM-practices			0.09**
Satisfaction with HRM-practices			0.08**
Evaluation of supervisor			0.29**
Supportive organizational climate			0.20**
Explained variance	0.01	0.03	0.24

\*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05

The main result that follows from table 2, is that individual and organizational characteristics do not matter much with respect to the explanation of organizational satisfaction of our respondents. The explained variance (1% in step 1 and 3% in step 2) is very meagre indeed. Nevertheless, the data suggest that women are slightly more satisfied with their organization compared to men. Work experience and educational level appear not to matter. The effect of the job and the organizational context is weak, although our hypothesis with respect to organizational type is confirmed: organizational satisfaction within executive organizations is slightly lower compared to policy planning/formulating organizations.

In the same way the second step of the analysis shows that organizational satisfaction of employees with a managerial and policy-planning job is higher compared to other employees, whereas it is lowest for workers with an inspection job (which could well be the most executive job of all jobs within the public sector!). In the third step of the analysis the effect of managerial and policy-planning jobs disappears, but organizational satisfaction of employees with an inspection job remains (significantly) the lowest.

The results of this third step are the most interesting. Total variance explained rises from 3% to 24%, which clearly confirms our assumption that the soft organizational characteristics are most important with respect to organizational satisfaction. The results also show that all four variables included under this heading are relevant. However, the effect of ‘the evaluation of the supervisor, is – with a beta of .30 – clearly the most important. This confirms our hypothesis, and underlines the role



of the supervisor as the face of the organization for the employee: if (s)he don't like the face, chances are high (s)he will not like the organization. Also the relationship with colleagues matters: if this relationship is evaluated positively (i.e. when the organizational climate is perceived as supportive), the satisfaction with the organisation increases relatively strongly.

Finally, both the number as well as the satisfaction with HRM-practices matters. Both hypothesis are confirmed: a higher number of HRM-practices leads to an higher organizational satisfaction – independent of the evaluation of these practices. An explanation of this finding can be that when employees see that their organization employs a lot of HRM-practices, this signals to them that they are important for their organisation. However – independent of the number of practices – a greater satisfaction with these HRM-practices leads also to a higher organisational satisfaction.

*Soft practices in different organizational contexts.*

Although the relationship between hard organisational characteristics and organisational satisfaction is weak. The results in table 2 suggest that at least at part of the initial differences in organizational satisfaction between the two organizational types and six job types can be attributed to differences in soft organisational characteristics. Tables 3 and 4 give more information about this.

**Table 3: Soft Organizational characteristics by Type of Organization**

	Number of HRM-practices	Satisfaction with HRM	Evaluation of Supervisor	Supportive organizational climate
Policy planning	5.44	0.48	3.37	3.98
Executive agency	5.40	0.47	3.22	3.82
eta	0.01 (ns) N= 3623	0.02 (ns) N=3548	0.08 (p < 0.01) N= 3396	0.04 (p < 0.05) N= 3483

As can be seen employees in both organisational types do not differ in their perception of the number of HRM-practices within their organisation and their satisfaction with them. They do differ, however, with respect to their evaluation of their supervisor and the organizational climate they are working in: employees in organisations dealing with policy planning are more positive about their supervisors and perceive their colleagues as more supportive. Possibly these (small) differences can explain a part of the (admittedly small) differences in organizational satisfaction between the two types.

**Table 4: Soft Organizational characteristics by Type of Job**

	Number of HRM practices	Satisfaction with HRM	Evaluation of Supervisor	Supportive organizational climate
management	6.00	.51	3.38	3.92
staf	5.65	.47	3.24	3.83
inspection	5.11	.45	3.20	3.76
Policy planning	5.54	.47	3.40	3.80
Policy executing	5.50	.47	3.23	3.81
other	4.69	.50	3.28	3.91
eta	0.16 (p < 0.01) N=3706	0.06 (p < 0.05) N=3629	0.07 (p < 0.01) N= 3476	0.08 (p < 0.01) N= 3570

Differences in this regard are more pronounced compared to the two organisational types. They are largest with respect to the number of HRM-practices perceived by the employees (workers with a managerial position perceive on average 1 HRM practice more than workers in an 'other' job type). The results can partly explain why organisational satisfaction of workers with a managerial position is slightly higher compared to other workers, and the satisfaction of workers with an inspection job is relatively low: workers with a managerial job perceive the highest number of HRM-practices, are

relatively more satisfied with its application, perceive their supervising manager relatively high, and are positive about the organizational climate. Workers with an inspection job, on the other hand, perceive substantially less HRM-practices, are less satisfied with them, are less positive about their supervisor, and are also less positive about the organizational climate.

### **Conclusion**

Although it is not a well-researched subject, the study of organisational satisfaction seems a promising road of research. In this paper we have made a first step by analysing the organisational satisfaction of employees in the Dutch state sector.

A first relevant finding concerns the fact the organisational satisfaction of these employees seems to be lower compared to their job satisfaction. In other words: they are more satisfied with their job than with the organisation they work for. This is especially relevant as organizational satisfaction is clearly related with turnover intentions – although it must be stressed the association between these intentions and job satisfaction is higher.

Most our hypotheses with respect to the explanation of differences with respect to organizational satisfaction are confirmed. Although there are slight differences in satisfaction according to job or organizational type, the so-called soft organisational characteristics are by far most important in explaining these differences. This holds true for all variables we included into the analyses: the number of HRM-practices, the satisfaction with these, the evaluation of the supervisor and the perception of the organizational climate. Of these, the evaluation of the supervisor (as ‘the face’ of the organisation) proved to be most important.

These four variables are also explain away part of the small differences that exist between organisational types and jobs within the Dutch state sector. Influencing and manipulating them is therefore a major objective if organisations want to influence the organisational satisfaction of their employees.

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