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An Examination of Work-Related Correlates of Job Satisfaction in Programmer/Analysts*

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ABSTRACT

Even though industrial and organizational psychologists have accumulated a great deal of knowledge about job satisfaction, few MIS researchers have applied this knowledge to the study of the job satisfaction of programmer/analysts. One of the most notable exceptions to this oversight is the study conducted by Cougar and Zawacki (1981). These researchers examined the relationship between programmer/analysts' feelings about their jobs and one set of work-related correlates of job satisfaction - correlates of satisfaction stemming from the work itself. Specifically, they used Hackman and Oldham's (1976, 1980) Job Characteristic Model (JCM) to study the relationship between the tasks carried out by programmer/analysts and the programmer/analysts' feelings about their jobs.

This research examines two sets of variables that can be added to the JCM and can measure some work-related correlates of job satisfaction not considered by Cougar and Zawacki. One set of variables - role perceptions - measures the amount of conflict and ambiguity in a worker's job (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Stroek, and Rosenthal, 1964). Researchers have found high levels of conflict and ambiguity among workers who have a great deal of contact with people in other groups within the organization. Since contact with information systems users is often an important part of programmer/analysts jobs, role perceptions should be significant correlates of job satisfaction in programmer/analysts. The second set of variables measures the quality of leadership provided by the worker's supervisor and peers (Bowers and Seashore, 1966). Leadership characteristics should also be important in the study of programmer/analysts' jobs, because of the amount of team work needed in developing information systems.

The survey described below examines the relative importance of these three sets of independent variables - job characteristics, role perceptions, and leadership characteristics - as correlates of job satisfaction in programmer/analysts. It is hypothesized that each of the in-

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dependent variables will be significant correlated of job satisfaction. Further, it is hypothesized that the addition of role perceptions and leadership characteristics to job characteristics will significantly increase our understanding of work-related correlates of job satisfaction.

To test these hypotheses, a survey of 188 programmer/analysts was carried out. The subjects came from two insurance companies and two industrial companies, each with a staff of over 100 programmer/analysts. The subject completed a questionnaire that contained measures for each of the independent variables and for job satisfaction.

Correlation and regression analyses were performed on the survey data. The correlation analysis indicated that each of the job characteristics, role perceptions, and leadership characteristics correlated significantly with job satisfaction. In general, the role perceptions correlated more highly with the satisfaction variables than either the leadership characteristics or the job characteristics.

Multiple regression analyses were performed to examine the amount of variance in job satisfaction explained by each of the three sets of independent variables. The job characteristics alone explained 39% of the variance in job satisfaction. The role perceptions alone explained 34% of the variance, and the leadership characteristics alone explained 25% of the variance in satisfaction. Further analysis indicated that using job characteristics in a base regression and then adding role perceptions and leadership characteristics, either individually or together, significantly increased the explained variance in job satisfaction. The addition of both sets of variables increased the explained variance in job satisfaction from 39% to 50%.

The main conclusion of this research is that extensions are needed to the JCM to better understand the work-related correlates of job satisfaction in programmer/analysts. This conclusion has important implications for researchers and practitioners interested in redesigning programmer/analysts' jobs. Work redesigners must not focus solely on modifying the tasks performed by programmer/analysts. In addition, they must examine the interactions between information systems users and programmer/analysts that could affect role conflict and role ambiguity. Further, they must consider the quality of leadership provided by information systems managers and the programmer/analysts' co-workers and how improvements in this area can lead to higher job satisfaction.

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