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HOSPITAL PRESTIGE AND JOB SATISFACTION  
AMONG NURSES, MEDIATED BY SELF-ESTEEM

by

Paul Donovan

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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1981

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## VITA

The author, Paul Joseph Donovan, is the son of John Patrick Donovan and Helen (McCarthy) Donovan. He was born February 24, 1956, in Evergreen Park, Illinois.

His secondary education was obtained at Mendel Catholic High School, Chicago, Illinois, where he graduated in 1974.

In 1974, he entered the College of Arts and Sciences at Loyola University of Chicago, and in June, 1977, received the degree of Bachelor of Science with majors in Psychology and Sociology.

In August, 1980, he completed an internship in Clinical Psychology at the Loyola Guidance Center and Day School.

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of job satisfaction has led to the identification of self-esteem as an important variable in moderating the relationship between job satisfaction and other key variables, such as work performance and need fulfillment on the job. Korman (1970) has proposed that, due to the individual's need for consistent evaluations of himself and his work, self-esteem influences the extent to which an individual will be satisfied with a given occupation. Also, an individual will tend to perform in a job in a manner which is consistent with his self-evaluations. A third critical prediction based on Korman's theory is that individuals will tend to seek out and be most satisfied with work situations which are consistent with their evaluations of themselves. Korman cites his own work (1966, 1967a, 1967b) as support for the influence of self-esteem on the relationship between job performance and overall job satisfaction. He emphasizes that further research is needed to deal with the issue of self-esteem as a determinant of choice of work situation and subsequent satisfaction with such situation.

The present study is an attempt to demonstrate the influence of self-esteem on the relationship between the individual's subjective assessment of the prestige of the institution for which he works and his satisfaction with his

job. Based on Korman's model of cognitive consistency, it is hypothesized that individuals of high self-esteem will tend to show greater satisfaction with a job that they see as being carried out in a prestigious institution, as the high esteem in which they see the institution as being held is consistent with the high esteem they have for themselves. For individuals of low self-esteem this positive relationship between institutional prestige and job satisfaction would not be expected to be found, as it would be inconsistent with the self-evaluations of these individuals.

The present study looks at these relationships as they pertain to nurses in hospital settings. This particular work situation was chosen for two reasons. First, hospitals are publicly visible institutions, about which assessments of relative levels of prestige can fairly readily be made. Second, the present job market is such that nurses have a great deal of freedom in choosing the institution for which they will work. For this reason, the issue of the consistency of the prestige of the workplace with the self-evaluations of the worker is especially applicable in this situation.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In an early article on the subject, Super (1953) states that the ideas of self-concept and of vocational development are inseparable. According to Super, the process of vocational choice essentially amounts to development and implementation of a self-concept in a compromising process in which the self-concept is a product of the interaction of inherited aptitudes, neural and endocrine make-up, opportunities to play various roles, and evaluation of the extent to which the results of role-playing meet with the approval of superiors and peers. One of the implications of this is that job-satisfaction is positively related to self-concept.

This implication of Super's hypothesis is supported in the more recent literature. One study (Schwyhart and Smith, 1972) considers job involvement as related to job satisfaction. Job involvement is defined as "the degree to which a person is identified with his work, or the importance of his work to his total self-image". Subjects in this study were 149 salaried, white-collar males under age 40. Subjects were assessed both in terms of job involvement and in terms of job satisfaction by means of Likert-type scales. The results of this study indicate that job involvement and job satisfaction were positively related,



to a significant degree ( $\underline{r}=.44$ ,  $\underline{p}<.05$ ). By studying a factor which the author states is largely ignored in the vocational and psychological literature, this study lends support to the general relationship between self-concept and vocational development.

Similarly, Snyder and Ferguson (1976) emphasize that, out of the many factors that have been studied in relation to work motivation and job satisfaction, self-concept has been largely ignored as an independent variable. In consideration of this variable, 600 non-academic employees of Ohio University were given measures of self-concept and of job satisfaction. No significant relationship was found between self-concept and overall job satisfaction. However, a significant positive relationship was found between self-concept and satisfaction with work associates. The authors explain this result in terms of the tendency for workers to compare themselves with one another and for those with a positive self-concept to like those who are similar to themselves. Since workers tend to be similar to one another in many ways, the individual who has a favorable self-concept is also likely to have a favorable impression of his work associates. Thus, the importance of self-concept is emphasized in relation to the social component of job satisfaction.

The importance of psycho-social aspects of the job in determining job satisfaction is also emphasized by Hayes

(1973). He hypothesized that the kinds of job-relevant information that are held important by young people in school are different from the aspects of the actual working situation that are held as important by those working in a given job. That is, once a person is involved in an actual work situation, psycho-social aspects of the job become more important. As a test of this hypothesis, Hayes conducted two interviews with each of 62 electricians. The first interview was conducted in the early stage of the individual's apprenticeship; the second interview was conducted after the individual had been working as an electrician. The responses given during the interviews were content-analyzed, showing considerable changes over time in the kinds of job-relevant information that the individual held as important. The experienced electricians showed themselves to be more concerned with psycho-social aspects of their jobs than they had been as apprentices. Thus, further support is gained for the importance of social factors in job satisfaction, which is related to the importance of self-concept in job-satisfaction.

In addition to being related to job satisfaction, self-concept has also been shown to be related to occupational choice. Greenhaus and Simon (1976) hypothesize persons of high self-esteem would tend to resist social and financial pressures and settle for occupations that they assessed as less than ideal for themselves. This hypothesis

was tested by means of examining the intended and ideal occupations, as well as the level of self-esteem, of 139 students at an eastern community college. Similarity of intended and ideal occupations was assessed by means of the Self-Description Inventory. For individuals with high self-esteem, a significant positive correlation was found between career salience and the tendency to choose an ideal occupation. For individuals of low self-esteem, this correlation was positive but not significant. The difference between these two correlations was found to be significant. Self-esteem is, therefore, shown to be an important determinant of occupational choice.

Similarly, Greenhaus (1971) suggests that individual differences in level of self-esteem moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and the extent to which the individual views himself as similar to members of his occupational group. Subjects for this study were 228 undergraduate students at an eastern state college, of whom 83% were female. Self-esteem was assessed by means of the Self-Assessment Scale of the Self-Description Index. To assess the individual's perception of the extent of his similarity to other members of his occupational group, subjects were asked to rate themselves and to rate a typical member of their occupational group on 25 traits. The similarity of these two sets of ratings was assessed in terms of Cronbach and Gleser's (1953) generalized index of profile similarity.

The results of this study indicate that congruence between ratings of self and ratings of members of one's intended occupational group was significantly and positively related to job satisfaction for individuals of high self-esteem ( $p < .05$ ). For individuals of low self-esteem, this correlation was not significant.

In a similar study, Healy (1973) examines the relationship of self-esteem and social class to congruence between one's evaluation of self and of members of one's chosen occupational group. Subjects for this study were 54 accounting majors and 58 non-accounting business majors at California State College. Subjects rated themselves and accountants on each of 20 traits adapted from the Guilford (1968) scale. Congruence between rating of self and of accountants was measured in terms of absolute differences between ratings of themselves and of accountants than did non-accounting majors. Accounting majors of high self-esteem had the highest level of congruence ( $p < .05$ ). Self-esteem, then, can be seen as an important determinant of the extent to which an individual will see himself as being similar to members of his intended occupational group.

Lee and Doran (1973) emphasize the importance of self-concept in predicting the likelihood that an individual will remain in a given job situation. They hypothesized that the tendency to remain in an occupation is dependent on the ability of the individual to maintain a tolerable

level of dissonance regarding his actual work functions and his occupational self-concept. Given this, individuals who have remained in a job situation for a long time would be expected to display less job-related cognitive dissonance than those who have remained in the situation for a shorter time. This hypothesis was tested using 134 male Catholic seminary students who volunteered to participate in the study. Each subject was asked to give his real and ideal rating of himself on a number of instruments: An Inventory of Religious Activities and Interests; Self-concept Adjective Checklist; Religious Orientation Inventory; and College or University Environmental Scales. Dissonance was assessed in terms of the discrepancy between real and ideal ratings of self. Each subject was also asked to indicate whether he was planning to leave the seminary, to stay in the seminary, or whether he was undecided. Results show that those who intended to leave the seminary displayed consistently higher levels of dissonance than those who intended to stay or those who were undecided ( $p < .01$ ). The dissonance scores of those who intended to stay in the seminary did not differ significantly from those of the seminarians who were undecided. Further support for the hypothesis is gotten from the fact that the number of individuals who intend to leave the seminary progressively decreases from the freshman year onward. This study demonstrates the usefulness of dissonance theory in explaining the tendency to

continue or discontinue in a given field and indicates the importance of self-concept in this process.

Other research, however, supports the notion that actual work activity has little to do with an individual's occupational self-concept. Steer (1973) assessed the correlation of present indicators of self-concept with the individual's perception of how these indicators had applied to himself in the past, among a group who had experienced a significant intervening occupational change. The study asked 118 recently retired male educators to rate themselves presently, as they see themselves as having been just prior to retirement, and as they see themselves as having been during middle age, in terms of an adjective checklist. Correlations among these three sets of ratings were significantly positive ( $p < .001$ ), leading the authors to conclude that the individual's self-concept is stable and independent of the actual work the individual is performing. It should be kept in mind, however, that this conclusion is based entirely on retrospective data. Also, retirement from the educational profession was presumably related more to age than to dissonance regarding job functions and a possible change in the individual's occupational self-concept. For these reasons, this study does not seem to represent a serious challenge to the notion of self-concept influencing and being influenced by the type of work activity in which an individual engages.

This concern with the relationship of self-esteem to various factors in one's occupation centers around factors that are expected to affect the levels of job satisfaction experienced by individuals with differing levels of self-esteem. This concern with job satisfaction, in turn, is based on the notion that greater job satisfaction will lead to greater productivity and longevity on a given job. This notion is challenged by Wernimont, et al (1970), who state that a distinction must be made between "need satisfaction" and "work motivation" and that these terms have been erroneously used interchangeably in recent research into job satisfaction. In a study involving 994 technical employees of a large midwestern corporation, the authors administered a questionnaire to each subject, asking him to rate those factors that were important sources of personal satisfaction and those factors that were important sources of motivation to work. As important sources of personal satisfaction, subjects cited personal accomplishment, praise for good work, getting along with co-workers, company location, and receiving credit for ideas. As important sources of motivation to work, subjects cited knowing what is expected, having a capable supervisor, having challenging work responsibility, being kept informed of changes, and participating in decision-making. The authors cite this difference in factors mentioned by employees as support for their assertion that personal satisfaction with a job does not necessarily in-

crease work motivation, and the two concepts are influenced by different factors.

Other authors (Shapiro and Wahba, 1974) have argued that personal satisfaction with a job is not an important determinant of work motivation. This study involved 75 blue-collar workers with an average tenure of 30 years. Subjects were asked to complete the Job Satisfaction Index. Results showed that the subjects were highly dissatisfied with all aspects of their jobs. The fact that workers had remained for so long in a work situation with which they were highly dissatisfied led the authors to conclude that job satisfaction is not an important determinant of motivation to remain in a job.

Despite these instances of lack of support for the importance of job satisfaction, however, interest in its relationship to self-concept has continued. Schneider, et al (1971) examine the relationship among self-image, perceived job characteristics and organizational identification. "Organizational identification" is defined as "the extent to which the individual accepts the values and goals of the organization as his own and, therefore, becomes emotionally committed to the organization". Subjects were 200 professional employees of the United States Forest Service of the eastern region of the United States. Self-concept was assessed by means of a semantic differential; job attitudes and organizational identification were assessed by



means of a Likert-type scale. Results indicate that organizational identification was significantly positively related to tenure. There is a positive and increasing relationship between organizational identification and self-esteem.

Similar findings are reported by Altimus and Tersine (1973), who studied blue-collar workers in terms of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction among employees in a glass-blowing factory was assessed by means of the Porter Need-Satisfaction Questionnaire and the Job Description Index. Subjects were divided into the following age groups: 18-25 years old; 26-38 years old; and 39-65 years old. A significant difference in job satisfaction was found between the 13-25 year old group and the other two age groups, with the older workers reporting greater satisfaction with their jobs. The authors explain this in terms of rewards which are associated with greater tenure causing increased satisfaction with the job. This, of course, ignores the alternative explanation that the group of workers with greater tenure includes only those workers who were satisfied enough in the first place to remain with the job for that long a period of time.

In a related study, Gibson and Klein (1970) examined 2067 blue collar workers in two different factories in terms of age, tenure, and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was assessed by means of a Likert-type scale consisting of 100 items. Results indicate a significant positive relationship ( $p < .05$ ) between age and overall job satisfaction, which was

maintained when the tenure variable was controlled. Interestingly, a significant negative relationship ( $p < .05$ ) was found between tenure and overall satisfaction, satisfaction with supervisors, and perceptions of favoritism. This study, then, supports age, rather than tenure, as an important determinant of job satisfaction.

With regard to self-esteem and its relationship to job satisfaction, Korman (1968) sought to explain this as a more complex relationship. Korman cites research (Dunnette, et al, 1967) that indicates that task liking is vital for job satisfaction. Others (Locke, 1965), however, have suggested that this relationship is influenced to a great degree by how hard the individual is trying to succeed. Korman asserts that self-esteem should, therefore, be seen as a moderator of the relationship between task liking (need-satisfaction) and job satisfaction. Based on a self-consistency hypothesis of job satisfaction proposed by Lecky (1945) and Vroom (1964), Korman proposes that individuals will tend to find most satisfying those job situations which are consistent with their self-image. Thus, if an individual sees himself as a competent, need-satisfying individual, he will find most satisfying those situations in which he is able to actualize these self-perceptions. In this study involving undergraduate Psychology students, Korman found a significant positive relationship between task liking and success on a task for individuals displaying higher levels of self-

esteem, while this relationship was not found among students with lower self-esteem. These results support Korman's hypothesis that self-esteem moderates the relationship between need-satisfaction and liking for a task.

In a further elaboration of this position, Korman (1970) states that "all other things being equal, individuals will engage in and find most satisfying those behavioral roles which will maximize their sense of balance or consistency". This leads to the following derivations, as stated by Korman:

- 1) Individuals will be motivated to perform on a task or job in a manner which is consistent with the self-image with which they approach the task or job. That is, to the extent that this self-concept concerning the job or task situation requires effective performance in order to result in a consistent cognition, then, to that extent, they will be motivated to engage in effective performance.
- 2) Individuals will tend to choose and find most satisfying those job or task roles which are consistent with their self-cognitions. Thus, to the extent that an individual has a self-cognition of himself as a competent, need-satisfying individual, then, to that extent, he will choose and find most satisfying those situations which are in balance with these self-perceptions.

Korman states the first derivation of this hypothesis (i.e., self-esteem as an important determinant of job performance and job satisfaction and the relationship between the two) has been well supported in his own previous work. He states, however, research relevant to the second derivation of the hypothesis (self-esteem as an important determinant of choice of job situation) has been lacking. In sup-

port of this second derivation, Korman cites his own work (1966, 1967a, 1967b). Korman states these studies found support for the prediction that chronic and experimentally manipulated self-esteem is positively related to seeking out and choosing occupations which are seen as satisfying one's self-perceived needs, and that self-esteem is also related to the positive relationship between liking for a task and success on the task. Korman emphasizes that, in all of these studies, the liking of subjects of low self-esteem for a task could not be predicted on the basis of either self-perceived needs or experimentally manipulated success on the task, while these variables did predict liking for the task among subjects high in self-esteem. While these studies provide some measure of support for Korman's hypothesis, he reiterates the need for more research into the area of self-esteem as a determinant of choice of job situation.

Expanding on Korman's hypothesis, London and Klimoski (1975) examine the role of job complexity in moderating the relationship between job performance and job satisfaction. This is based on Korman's (1970) finding that self-perceived competence for a task, based on the individual's overall self-evaluation, seems to facilitate performance and that persons of high self-esteem perform better on more difficult tasks than do individuals of low self-esteem (while the two types show no difference on less difficult tasks). Subjects for this study were 202 female registered

nurses on the day shift at four Columbus, Ohio hospitals. Self-assessment was measured by means of Ghiselli's (1971) Self Description Inventory. Job satisfaction was assessed by means of the Job Description Index. Job complexity was assessed by means of a straightforward questionnaire, and job performance was assessed by means of a questionnaire of self-, supervisor- and peer-ratings of performance. Results showed no direct relationship between self-esteem and either job-satisfaction or performance. Some support was shown, however, for self-esteem as a moderator of the relationship between job satisfaction and performance, in that the relationship between satisfaction and performance at optimal complexity was significantly negative ( $r = -.31$ ,  $p < .05$ ) for nurses with low self-esteem, but not for nurses of high self-esteem. Similarly, the relationship between job-satisfaction and performance was significantly negative ( $r = -.52$ ,  $p < .01$ ) for nurses of high self-esteem on jobs of low complexity. These data, then, support the idea that nurses are likely to be dissatisfied, even though performing well, if the complexity of the task is not consonant with the nurse's level of self-esteem. Therefore, this would seem to imply that congruity of self-esteem and task complexity is a moderator of the relationship between job performance and job satisfaction.

Another aspect of this relationship is studied by Jacobs and Solomon (1977) who investigated the influence of

self-esteem and performance-to-reward contingency on the relationship between job performance and job-satisfaction. Subjects for this study were 251 employees, occupying three different levels of organization, of a nationwide corporation. Self-report measures were used to assess job satisfaction (Job Description Index), self-esteem (Texas Social Behavior Inventory), and the subject's rating of response-to-reward contingency. Task performance was measured by means of supervisor's ratings of subjects. Evidence was found for the influence of both self-esteem and perceived response-to-reward contingency as moderators of the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. The authors emphasize, however, that, "although the results document a substantial increase in predictive efficiency, it should be pointed out that much criterion variation is still left unexplained", and further research is needed to discover other personal and situational variables that would permit a better understanding of the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance.

In another attempt at finding support for Korman's hypothesis, Lopez and Greenhaus (1978) examined the relationship of self-esteem, need satisfaction and job satisfaction among groups of black and white employees. Subjects were 523 employees in 15 schools in a large, racially integrated eastern U.S. public school system. Perceived need satisfaction on the job was assessed by means of the Warner

and Lawler scale; job satisfaction was assessed by means of the Brayfield and Rothe Job Satisfaction Index; and self-esteem was assessed by means of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Results show a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction for both racial groups. Support was also found for Korman's (1970) hypothesis that self-esteem is a moderator of the relationship between job performance and job satisfaction. The authors caution, however, that the data in this study are based entirely on self-report measures and that causal inferences cannot be made. Further research into these relationships is suggested.

In a related study based on Korman's consistency hypothesis, Inkson (1978) tested the prediction that job performance and intrinsic job satisfaction would be significantly positively correlated for individuals of high self-esteem but not for individuals of low self-esteem. Inkson states that, due to the high self-esteem individual's need to maintain consistency between his relatively favorable impression of himself and his actual work performance, it should be expected that he would show a higher level of performance than the individual of low self-esteem. That is, the person of high self-esteem will be satisfied to the extent that this consistency is maintained. The person with low self-esteem, according to Inkson, would not have this incentive to perform well. Subjects for this study were 93

male manual workers employed in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in a New Zealand meat packing plant. Job satisfaction was assessed by means of the Job Description Index. Self-esteem was assessed by means of interviewer ratings and responses on a depression inventory. Job performance was assessed by means of supervisor ratings. As predicted, the results of this study show a high correlation between job performance and intrinsic job satisfaction only for individuals of high self-esteem. It should be noted that, in this study, the author explains the correlational relationship between job performance and job satisfaction in a manner that attributes causality to job performance: Due to the need for consistency between self-evaluation and actual performance, performing well on a task causes the individual to be satisfied with the task. It could be argued, conversely, that an individual of high self-esteem may perceive himself to have the right to reserve good performance for only those job situations with which he is satisfied. Inkson assumes that performance causes satisfaction, without providing empirical support for this assumption.

This issue is addressed more directly in another study by Siegal and Bowen (1974). The authors address the issue of whether job satisfaction causes good performance, as suggested by Broom (1964) and Likert (1967); whether good performance causes job satisfaction, as suggested by Porter and Lawler (1968); or whether performance and job satisfac-



tion covary in a manner determined by other variables, such as self-esteem, as suggested by Cummings and Schwab (1970) and Korman (1970). Subjects for this study were 86 graduate students in Business Administration at the University of Pittsburgh. Subjects were assigned randomly to 20 four-man teams and two three-man teams and asked to complete the task of writing a seven-page literature review. Performance on the task was assessed by means of instructors' ratings. Satisfaction with the task was assessed by means of a group-administered questionnaire. Self-esteem was assessed by means of the Ghiselli Self-Description Index. Results show a very low, insignificant positive correlation between prior satisfaction with the task and subsequent performance. However, a significant positive correlation ( $p < .01$ ) was found between prior performance on the task and subsequent satisfaction with it. From this, the authors conclude that there is considerable support for the notion that performance causes satisfaction, rather than satisfaction causing performance. While this is the case, the question is still left open as to whether there may be a third variable which mediates the relationship between the two. Also, the implication of the apparent direction of the relationship for practical applications can be misleading. If it is shown here that satisfaction does not cause performance per se, one might be tempted to conclude that an employer need not concern himself with providing conditions that would foster

employee satisfaction. One needs to keep in mind, however, the positive relationship between job satisfaction and the tendency to remain in a job situation (Lee and Doran, 1973). If increased tenure results in better performance, one could argue for the indirect causation of performance by satisfaction.

Thus far, a considerable amount of support has been cited for Korman's (1970) hypothesis that self-esteem moderates the relationships between need satisfaction and job satisfaction. There are, however, some studies that would indicate otherwise. Orpen (1974) tested the hypothesis that self-esteem moderates the relationship between need satisfaction and overall job satisfaction. Subjects for the study were 120 South African factory workers. Need satisfaction was assessed by means of a questionnaire. Job satisfaction was assessed by means of the Brayfield and Rothe Job Satisfaction Index and a seven-point Likert-type scale. Self-esteem was assessed by means of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Coopersmith's Self-Esteem Inventory, and Zitler's Self-Social Assessment. No significant differences were found in the correlations between need satisfaction and job satisfaction for the low self-esteem and the high self-esteem groups, thus failing to support Korman's hypothesis.

A similar negative finding is reported by Dipboye, et al (1978). They hypothesized that self-esteem would be shown to be a moderator of the relationship between job

interest and job satisfaction. The specific prediction was that, for individuals of high self-esteem, situations that are seen as fulfilling personal interests are seen as satisfying, while those situations that do not fulfill personal interests are seen as unsatisfying. For the individual of low self-esteem, on the other hand, the diminished valuation of the person himself leads him to de-value satisfaction of his personal interests. For this reason, the authors predicted no significant relationship between job interest and job satisfaction for subjects of low self-esteem. This hypothesis was tested on physicists and engineers involved in basic and developmental research. Self-esteem was assessed by means of the Adjective Checklist. Job satisfaction was assessed by means of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. Job interest was assessed by means of the Strong Vocational Interest Blank. Contrary to expectations, the results showed no significant differences in the correlations of job interest and job satisfaction for subjects of low self-esteem versus subjects of high self-esteem. For engineers, self-esteem did seem to moderate somewhat the relationship between job interest and job satisfaction, but in a direction opposite to that predicted. The authors suggest that the degree of autonomy in choosing the task, the nature of the task itself, and the possibilities for promotion may represent such variables. The authors emphasize that the issue requires further study.

A similar finding is represented by Orpen and Lisus (1974), who tested Korman's balance-theory hypothesis that individuals of high self-esteem would show a more positive relationship between overall job satisfaction and need fulfillment on the job than would subjects of low self-esteem. Subjects for this study were 70 white, English-speaking South African professional workers. Self-esteem was assessed by means of the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and Ziller's Self-Social Inventory. Job satisfaction was assessed by means of the Brayfield and Rothe Job Satisfaction Index and a seven-point graphic rating scale. Need fulfillment was assessed by means of the Porter Need Fulfillment Questionnaire. Results indicate a nonsignificant positive relationship between job satisfaction and need satisfaction in the high self-esteem group ( $p > .05$ ), but, contrary to expectations, a significant positive relationship was found between need satisfaction and job satisfaction among the low self-esteem group ( $p < .001$ ). The authors conclude that the data do not support the moderation by self-esteem of the relationship between need satisfaction and job satisfaction, in the manner predicted by Korman.

In summary, there is not complete agreement among all the research cited. Self-esteem has, however, been shown to be an important variable influencing the satisfaction of workers in various settings. The need for further research into the area is emphasized by most writers, es-

pecially with regard to the issue of self-esteem as an influence on the individual's choice of work situation.

## METHOD

Subjects. Subjects were 42 female, full-time registered nurses working the day shift on general medical-surgical units at three Chicago-area hospitals. Subjects ranged in age from 20 to 59 years, with 50% between the ages of 20 and 29 years. The three hospitals ranged in size from a small community-based hospital to a large university-affiliated medical center. Participation was solicited from a total of 88 nurses, of whom 46 declined to participate.

Materials. Each potential subject was given an unsealed envelope containing four items: 1) a cover letter; 2) the Tennessee Self-concept Scale; 3) the Job Satisfaction Index; and 4) a scale for the rating of hospital prestige.

The Tennessee Self-concept Scale (Fitts, 1965) is a 100-item questionnaire, in which the subject indicates, on a five-point scale, the extent to which she feels each statement describes herself. While the instrument can yield a highly specified personality profile, the present study utilized only the Total Positive score, which is used as a general measure of overall self-esteem. The scale was standardized on a sample of 626 people, ranging in age from 12 to 68 years, and test-retest reliability for the Total Positive score is given as .92.

The Job Satisfaction Index (Brayfield and Rothe,

1951) is an 18-item questionnaire, in which the subject indicates, on a five-point scale, her agreement or disagreement with a series of job-descriptive statements. The Job Satisfaction Index is reported to have split-half reliability of .87, based on a sample of 231 female clerical employees.

The scale for rating hospital prestige presented the nurse with 11 points, ranging from zero (very low level) to ten (very high level). The nurse was asked to assess at which point on the scale her institution would fall, based on her perception of how the overall quality of the hospital is regarded by the general public.

Procedure. All available nurses on the day shift on the medical surgical units at the participating hospitals were given a set of instructions and questionnaires. This was accomplished by either a member of the in-service education department or the head nurse on the unit. The nurses were asked to examine the questionnaires and decide whether or not they wished to complete them. They were asked to then place the materials, whether completed or not, into the envelope, to seal it, and to place the sealed envelope into a collection box provided for this purpose. One week was allowed for this process, after which the materials were picked up by the experimenter. All materials were then hand-scored by the experimenter.

## RESULTS

All questionnaires were completely filled out by 42 nurses. On the basis of a median split of their scores on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (median=351), these subjects were divided into a high self-esteem group ( $N=21$ ,  $\bar{X}=379.95$ ,  $s=23.66$ ) and a low self-esteem group ( $N=21$ ,  $\bar{X}=325.86$ ,  $s=17.46$ ). These two self-esteem groups are significantly different ( $t=8.42$ ,  $df=20$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Pearson product-moment correlations were computed for scores on the Job Satisfaction Index and ratings of hospital prestige, for the low and high self-esteem groups. Contrary to expectations, a significant positive correlation was found between job satisfaction and hospital prestige, among the low self-esteem nurses ( $r=.90$ ,  $df=19$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Also contrary to expectations, the correlation between job satisfaction and hospital prestige among the high self-esteem group was not significant ( $r=.24$ ,  $df=19$ ,  $p>.10$ ).

By means of Fisher's  $r$ -to- $z$  conversion (Downie and Heath, 1959), the difference between the correlation of job satisfaction with hospital prestige is shown to be significantly different for the low and high self-esteem groups ( $z=3.68$ ,  $p<.001$ ). This significant difference in correlations is in a direction opposite to that predicted: Job satisfaction and hospital prestige show a significantly



higher positive correlation among subjects of low self-esteem than among subjects of high self-esteem.

## DISCUSSION

The results fail to provide support for the hypothesized role of self-esteem as a moderator of the relationship between job satisfaction and institutional prestige. They also provide evidence to indicate that self-esteem moderates this relationship in a manner opposite to that predicted.

The present results would seem to contradict Korman's (1970) hypothesis that self-esteem is a determinant of choice of work situation and of subsequent satisfaction with that choice. Korman's model, it is recalled, proposes that an individual's satisfaction with his job is dictated by the degree of consistency between his evaluation of the work situation and his evaluation of himself. Were this the case, one would expect the nurses of high self-esteem in the present study to show greater satisfaction in hospitals that they regarded as more prestigious, while it would be expected that nurses of low self-esteem would show greater satisfaction in hospitals that they regarded as less prestigious. In fact, almost the opposite was observed: Nurses of low self-esteem showed greater satisfaction in hospitals they regarded as more highly prestigious, while nurses of high self-esteem did not display a significant relationship between job satisfaction and hospital prestige.

There seem to be two basic alternative explanations

of these results. The first is that Korman's self-consistency hypothesis is inadequate to predict or explain reality. The second is that the present study unsuccessfully attempted to isolate the variables involved and that the complexity of the relevant issues led to the observed results as experimental artifacts.

With regard to the first possible explanation, it is noted that the results do not contradict Korman's assertion that self-esteem influences the relationships among job satisfaction and other job-relevant variables. They do, however, contradict Korman's explanation of the manner in which this influence is carried out and the reasons for it. The present results contradict Korman's notion of the need for consistency of evaluations as a determinant of work satisfaction. The low self-esteem group in this study, in fact, seems to be more satisfied when working in an environment that is evaluated as inconsistent with their evaluation of themselves. If these results are taken as valid, then an alternative to consistency as a determinant of job satisfaction would have to be raised. One such alternative explanation might involve the difference in need for external recognition and support among subjects of high self-esteem versus those of low self-esteem. It could be argued that nurses of high self-esteem have sufficient internal sources of reward and self-recognition, so that the prestige of the hospitals for which they are working is irrelevant to their

job satisfaction. Nurses of low self-esteem, on the other hand, may lack such internal sources of reward and self-recognition and depend to a greater extent on the prestige of the hospital to shore up their shaky sense of satisfaction with themselves. For these nurses of low self-esteem, then, one would expect to see a greater relationship between hospital prestige and job satisfaction. Thus, if the present results are taken as valid, Korman's model of self-consistency as a determinant of job satisfaction is contradicted and support is given for alternative explanations of the influence of self-esteem on the relationship between job satisfaction and the individual's perception of the prestige of the institution for which he works.

Alternatively, it could be argued that the present results do not provide conclusive evidence to contradict Korman's hypothesis, due to the complexity of the variables involved or to factors relating to the sample studied.

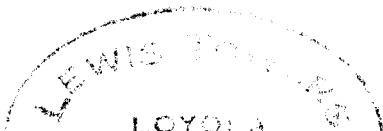
The present study involves a general measure of overall job satisfaction, thus not taking into account any possible differential effects of various aspects of the job in causing satisfaction among different nurses. For example, one nurse's satisfaction may be more influenced by her relationship with her supervisor, while another's may be more influenced by the hours she works, while another nurse's satisfaction may be more related to the consistency of her evaluation of the prestige of the hospital with her evalua-

tion of herself. While the present study was concerned only with the effects of hospital prestige, it should be remembered that this variable is only one of many which are involved in job satisfaction. It is possible that these numerous factors are influential to a different degree, depending on the self-esteem of the individual. It is possible that the apparent contradiction by the present study of Korman's assertion is, to some extent, a result of the failure to identify and isolate those subjects in whom hospital prestige is a central factor in job satisfaction. A similar study among only these subjects might yield results which are more consistent with Korman's model.

Another methodological issue which may have some bearing on the results is the small number of nurses who were available for participation in the study. With only 42 nurses participating, the range of scores on the measuring instruments seems somewhat constricted. Of a possible range of scores of 90-450 on the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, the range of scores obtained in this study is 279-420. Of a possible range of scores of 18-90 on the Job Satisfaction Index, the range of scores obtained here is 47-85. The relatively small size of the sample and the apparent constriction in the range of scores obtained on the measures of self-esteem and job satisfaction indicates that the present results may be, to some extent, influenced by these characteristics of the sample.

A final methodological point that should be kept in mind is that the sample involved is highly select. Out of 88 nurses solicited for participation, only 42 filled out and returned the questionnaires. How these participants may differ from the non-participants is not known. Even the larger group of potential participants was selected by the factor of availability to the researcher. Any differences that are attributable to their hospital's willingness to participate in the research is not known. One apparently influential factor related to the hospitals themselves is known, however. Hospitals were selected on the basis of the rating of their prestige, as given by a professional in nursing education. Of those hospitals solicited, three hospitals at the bottom of the rating scale refused participation. Thus, the nurses that are represented tend to come disproportionately from hospitals that are generally regarded as more prestigious. This would presumably explain the fact that the nurses' subjective ratings of the prestige levels of their hospitals tend to be high ( $\bar{X}=6.95$ ,  $s=2.53$ ). This absence of participation by nurses who would presumably rate their hospitals as lower in prestige may have a significant effect on the direction of the relationship observed.

With regard to Korman's assertion of the primacy of the need for self-consistency as a determinant of job satisfaction, then, the results of the present study are equivocal. While, at face value, the results would seem to



contradict Korman's model, there are significant methodological problems involved in studying these relationships, and these would greatly qualify any conclusions based on these data as to the adequacy of Korman's model.

The need for further research in this area is clear. In order to more directly evaluate the relevance of Korman's model to job satisfaction among nurses, one would need to have access to a greater number of nurses that would more adequately reflect the range of prestige among hospitals. It would also be important to isolate for study those nurses who regard hospital prestige as a central factor in job satisfaction. Finally, further research should focus on the relative prestige of different work units within a given hospital and how they may interact with the overall prestige of the hospital to influence job satisfaction.

## CONCLUSION

As noted previously, the present study does not provide unequivocal support for either the acceptance or the rejection of the notion that self-consistency is a primary determinant of job satisfaction. However, with regard to the broader question of whether self-esteem is an important variable to consider in studying job satisfaction, the results of the present study can be taken as affirmative. The present study points up the methodological problems involved in evaluating the issue, and underlines the need for further research into this area.



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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Paul J. Donovan has been read and approved by the following committee:

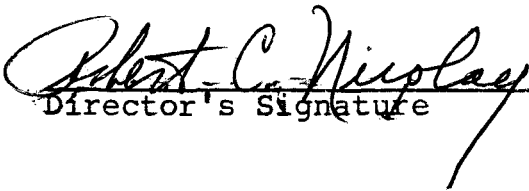
Dr. Robert Nicolay, Director  
Professor, Psychology, Loyola

Dr. Leroy Wauck  
Professor, Psychology, Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

7/15/81  
Date

  
Director's Signature