# THE RANKING OF PRE - EMPLOYMENT JOB FACTORS BY BUSINESS STUDENTS AND EMPLOYED PERSONNEL

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## THE RANKING OF PRE-EMPLOYMENT JOB FACTORS BY BUSINESS STUDENTS AND EMPLOYED PERSONNEL

An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Howard Kenneth Tucker
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#### ABSTRACT

Industrial psychologists have long concerned themselves with investigations of such topics as job satisfaction,
satisfaction of needs on the job, and the relationship
between job satisfaction and job performance. However, the
majority of these investigations have utilized currentlyemployed subjects.

The present study was designed with several purposes in mind. First, the relative importance of selected preemployment job factors was to be investigated through the use of a questionnaire devised for that purpose. A second purpose was to determine the degree of similarity, if any, between the rankings of job factors made by college-student subjects and "full-time" employed subjects. Third, a comparison of the relative importance of job factors between male and female subjects was to be investigated. Finally, to check the reliability of the questionnaire that was developed, a three-week reliability coefficient was determined for the college-student subjects.

The results indicated that the rankings on the various "equivalent" forms of the questionnaire were significantly similar, as were comparisons of the composite forms for the college-student and "full-time" employed subjects.

Furthermore, a significant three-week reliability coefficient was obtained for the college-student subjects. A significant correlation of the male and female composite forms indicated

that sex differences did not influence the perceived importance of the job factors.

In conclusion, the objective of constructing a reasonably reliable job factor questionnaire was achieved. The data from this study indicated that business-major college students view the job factors contained in the questionnaire very much the same way as do persons presently working on a full-time job. Such factors as enjoyment of work and personal growth with the job were consistently seen as being highly important, whereas factors such as location of job and time off were viewed as being relatively unimportant.

## THE RANKING OF PRE-EMPLOYMENT JOB FACTORS BY BUSINESS STUDENTS AND EMPLOYED PERSONNEL

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Master of Arts

p'n

Howard Kenneth Tucker
July 1974

#### To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Howard Kenneth Tucker entitled "The Ranking of Pre-employment Job Factors by Business Students and Employed Personnel." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Psychology.

Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Second Committee Member

Darland & Blain

Third Committee Member

Accepted for the Council:

Dean of the Graduate School

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## Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

From the standpoint of having to select personnel for a business institution, it would seem highly desirable to have adequate information concerning the nature of the person who is applying for a job and whether or not he would be suited for that particular job. Studies that have dealt with job satisfaction and job-factor importance have typically started from the standpoint that the individual was presently working on the job.

Once the individual is actually on the job, the problem of job satisfaction among employees has been of concern to several researchers (e.g., Armstrong, 1971; Hackman & Lawler, 1971). The research reported by Armstrong (1971) investigated the question of whether or not a job-factor dichotomy existed between content factors (responsibility, achievement, and recognition) and context factors (job security, salary, and working conditions). Previous research (Centers & Bugental, 1966; Friedlander, 1965) had indicated that favorable feelings toward content factors contribute primarily to intrinsic job satisfaction, but do not necessarily contribute to extrinsic job satisfaction. For example, one might enjoy the job he is performing (i.e., intrinsic satisfaction), but not be fully

satisfied with the salary he is receiving (i.e., extrinsic satisfaction). Conversely, positive feelings toward context aspects, contribute to neutralizing dissatisfaction per se. Moreover, this relationship was found to hold true regardless of occupational level. By using both engineers and assemblers as subjects, the results of Armstrong's (1971) research gave added support to the generality of this hypothesis. He found that job content factors made a relatively greater contribution to overall job satisfaction than did the job context factors, regardless of the occupational level. Furthermore, Armstrong's (1971) data indicated that for both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction the typical contribution of the content factors was relatively greater than context factors. Again, occupational level had no influence.

Hackman and Lawler (1971) began their research from the standpoint that what was needed were conceptual frame-works which generated testable propositions about how job characteristics affect employees under various circumstances. Once these propositions were formulated, then research could be designed to explicitly test them. More specifically, Hackman and Lawler (1971) predicted that the nature of the relationships between job characteristics and employee reactions to their work (including satisfaction and performance) would depend upon the need states of the employees. These need states consist of two general

catagories, lower and higher order. Lower-order needs include food, shelter, and security; whereas, higher-order needs include self-esteem and self-actualization. particular, it was predicted that, if employees were desirous of higher order need satisfactions, there should be positive relationships between the four core dimensions they studied (variety, autonomy, task identity, and feedback) and motivation, satisfaction, performance, and attendance. Additionally, their results also provided support for the hypothesis that when a job was rated highly on these core dimensions, employees reported having higher intrinsic motivation to perform well. These results also gave support to the hypothesis that employees, who viewed their jobs as being high on the core dimensions, established conditions on the job that made it possible for workers to obtain personally rewarding experiences by performing well on the job.

To date, several need-satisfaction and job-satisfaction questionnaires have been developed. As representative examples of this type of questionnaire, one might single out the Job Description Index constructed by Smith (1961) at Cornell University during the course of studying job satisfaction, and the Porter Need Satisfaction Questionnaire (Porter, 1961). In developing the Need Satisfaction Questionnaire, Porter (1961) has challenged the traditionally-held hypothesis that job satisfaction results in

improved performance. He has proposed, conversely, that a higher degree of performance results in better job satisfaction. According to Porter, satisfaction presumably is derived from the fulfillment of our needs and if our work provides us with this need fulfillment then we can, in effect, administer our own rewards by improving our level of performance. Porter and Lawler (1968) studied 148 managers and found that the high-performing managers did not receive greater extrinsic rewards, such as pay, than did their low-performing counterparts. However, the high-performing managers reported that significantly more rewards were obtained through the satisfaction of intrinsic needs, such as autonomy and self-realization, as compared with low-performing managers. These results provide support for the hypothesis that need fulfillment from a job leads to satisfaction which, in turn, leads to increased performance. Furthermore, numerous other studies have been reported that were related to occupational goals and satisfactions of special professional groups (Kilpatrick & Cantril, 1960; Goodwin, 1969; Dunnette, Campbell, & Hakel, 1967). These studies suggest that for feelings of job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction, job content factors, such as recognition, responsibility, and growth on the job are judged slightly more important at higher occupational levels; whereas, job context factors, such as work group, job security, and working conditions are judged more

important at lower occupational levels.

It would seem to be very beneficial to the employer, as well as to the employee, that the employee, before accepting a job, be cognizant of all the major job factors he actually felt were significant. One of the few studies conducted along these lines was reported by Paine (1969). Paine (1969) studied the relationship between quality of college work and expressed values. His research revealed that the better students tended to emphasize intrinsic factors, such as interesting work, respect, and freedom on the job; whereas, average students tended to emphasize extrinsic factors, such as starting salary, steady employment and security benefits.

A similar study was conducted by Manhardt (1972), who compared the relative importance of job characteristics between currently-employed males and females. He found that men rated characteristics of an advancement-responsibility nature higher than did women. The work environment characteristics were considered more important by the women employees. For characteristics related to job content, only small and mixed sex differences were found. Manhardt (1972) felt that these small differences could possibly be ascribed to a subgroup of women in the study who did not expect to work for more than a few years and therefore found the longrange success aspects of a job irrelevant.

To date, however, no reliable questionnaire investigating the relative importance of pre-employment job factors has been developed. Obviously, such an instrument would be of mutual importance to both the potential employee and employer. Employers could be made aware of those factors or aspects of a job that needed to be particularly stressed and clearly explained. On the other hand, the potential employee could be made aware of those aspects of the potential employment situation that demanded his closest attention and scrutinizing.

The purpose of the present study was to develop a reliable instrument which would: (1) indicate, generally, the relative importance of selected pre-employment job factors; (2) supply the potential employer with additional information relating to the applicant; and (3) aid the potential employee by relaying to him information concerning which factors demand further investigation. The optimum results would be, hopefully, better employer-employee relations, over-all increased productivity, and a lower turn-over rate among employees. The present study was also designed to investigate what differences, if any, exist between the emphasis placed upon various job factors contained in the questionnaire, by full-time college students and persons that are currently working at a full-time job.

Chapter 2
METHOD

#### Subjects

The subjects consisted of 14 female and 28 male upper-division (i.e., junior or senior classification) undergraduate college students majoring in business administration and marketing at Austin Peay State University during spring quarter 1974, and 27 (15 female, 12 male) persons working on a full-time job, either as a department store or bank employee, during the same time period. The department store employees' jobs ranged from department manager to sales clerk, whereas the bank employees' jobs ranged from vice-president to teller.

#### Apparatus

Two pilot studies were conducted prior to the initiation of the main investigation. Sixty-two undergraduate college students enrolled in business courses at Austin Peay State University served as subjects in the pilot studies. The subjects were administered the original, expanded version of the questionnaire. The original form of the questionnaire is presented in Table 1. The subjects were requested to rank the job factors from most desirable to least desirable, in terms of desiring additional information relating to the particular job factor. The most desirable factor was to receive a

numerical value of 1, the second most desirable factor a value of 2, and so on, until each factor had been rank ordered. After completion of the questionnaire, pilotstudy subjects were asked to suggest any additional, important job factors which were not contained on the questionnaire. Additionally, a discussion period followed each pilot study. During these periods such topics as the clarity and thoroughness of the questionnaire were discussed. These discussions resulted in the elimination of redundant items from the original questionnaire, as well as modification of the instructions for the purpose of minimizing ambiguity.

The questionnaire used during the primary investigation consisted of the 20 most desirable items, as determined by the pilot investigations and subsequent redundancy eliminations. To investigate the possibility of "position bias" (i.e., the possibility that an item might be ranked highly important simply because it appeared at the beginning of the list), four separate forms of this questionnaire were devised by randomly determining the order of appearance of the job factors on each form. These four forms are presented in Tables 2-5.

#### Procedure

The questionnaire was administered to the collegestudent subjects in a classroom setting on the Austin Peay State University campus. The entire questionnaire was completed by all subjects before initiation of class lectures. In an attempt to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was administered a second time to the college-student subjects. The second administration took place three weeks after the initial administration, and was conducted in the same classroom setting.

The questionnaires completed by the "full-time employed" subjects were distributed by officials of the department store and bank, respectively. Upon completion the questionnaires were retained by those officials, and later retrieved by the investigator.

## Chapter 3 RESULTS

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation technique was employed to ascertain to what degree, if any, relationship existed between the rankings of the job factors for: (1) the equivalent forms of the questionnaire, (2) the first and second administration of the questionnaire to the college-student subjects, (3) the college-student subjects as compared with the full-time employees, and (4) the male verus female subjects. The same procedure for assigning numerical values to the factors that was employed in the pilot studies was again employed in these analyses. For the purpose of brevity and clarity specific correlational values have been omitted from the body of the text. For more detailed information the reader may wish to consult Table 6 which presents the specific correlational values that were obtained.

Several significant correlations resulted from comparisons of the rankings from the first administration of the four equivalent forms to the college-student subjects. These are as follows: Form H and Form K (P<.05), Form K and Form T (P<.05), Form K and Form D (P<.01), and Form T and Form D (P<.01). Correlations of the four forms for the second administration of the questionnaire to the college-student subjects yielded the following significant correlations: Form H and Form T (P<.01), Form H and

Form D (P<.05). It is worthy of note that Form K is conspiciously absent from these significant correlations. Correlations of the equivalent forms administered to the full-time employees were significant at the following levels of confidence: Form H and Form K (P<.01), Form H and Form T (P<.01), Form H and Form D (P<.01), Form T and For K (P<.01), Form K and Form D (P<.01), and Form T and Form D (P<.01). These results would indicate that the four forms are relatively comparable in measuring the relative importance of selected pre-employment job factors. This matter will be discussed in greater length subsequently.

In view of the apparent comparability of the equivalent forms, a composite of these forms was prepared for: first administration to the college-student subjects, second administration to the college-student subjects and the full-time employees. These composite forms were then correlated. Correlation of the first and second administration to college-student subjects resulted in a significant (P<.01) three-week reliability coefficient. Also, a comparison of the composite form of the first administration of the college-student subjects with that of the full-time employed subjects resulted in a significant (P<.01) Similarly, a comparison of the composite correlation. form from the second administration to the college-student subjects with the full-time employed subjects' composite form resulted in a significant (P<.01) correlation.

Additionally, the composite rankings of the male subjects were significantly correlated with those of the female subjects. This finding was found for the first (P<.01) and second (P<.01) administrations of the questionnaire to the college-student subjects, as well as the full-time employees (P<.05).

## Chapter 4 DISCUSSION

It is evident from Table 6, that a rather wide range of correlations was obtained. The highest correlation, .867, resulted from the correlation of Form K and Form T for the "full-time" employed subjects whereas, the smallest correlation, .042, resulted from the correlation of Form H and Form K on the second administration of the questionnaire to the college-student subjects. However, it would appear that the higher correlation is the more representative since twenty of the twenty-five correlations were found to be significant.

It is interesting to note that all comparisons involving Form K during the second administration to the college-student subjects, resulted in low non-significant correlations. On the other hand, Form K was significantly correlated with the other forms on the first administration to the college-student subjects, as well as, the "full-time" employed subjects. The explanation for these discrepant results might lie in the arrangement of the job factors on Form K. As can be seen from Table 3, this randomized arrangement placed such job factors as "mental work", "fits your capacities", and "routine work" near the top of the list. Most of the subjects' rankings placed these factors among the least desirable. Possibly,

presenting these factors early in the list accentuated 14 their relative desirability. It is extremely difficult to explain how the bias, if this is the correct explanation, was apparent only during the second administration to the college-student subjects and not apparent during the first administration to the college-student subjects or the "full-time" employed subjects. However, it should be noted that some degree of variation relating to Form K also existed during the first administration of the questionnaire to the college-student subjects. Two of the three comparisons which involved Form K on the first administration to the college-student subjects were significant at the .05 level, while the third was significant at the .Ol level. Eventhough all three results are "significant", in the strict sense of the term, it would seem that some degree of variability did exist during the first administration to the college-student subjects. This range of variability was not found for the "full-time" employed subjects, as all correlations were found to be significant at the .01 level.

Table 6 also indicates that a significant (P<.01) correlation existed between the composite forms of the first and second administrations to the college-student subjects as well as that of the "full-time" employed subjects. It can be concluded that the subjects of the present investigation view such factors as: (1) enjoyment

of work, (2) financial reward, and (3) personal growth 15 with the job as highly important; whereas, factors such as: (1) location of job, (2) fits your capacities, and (3) time off are viewed as relatively unimportant. It is interesting to note that all the correlations between the various equivalent forms of the questionnaire for the "full-time" employed subjects were significant at the .01 level. However, there was some variability, especially in the second administration, and to some extent in the first, in the rankings produced by the college-student subjects. This consistent ranking of the pre-employment job factors could be due to the fact that these subjects, as "fulltime" employees, have crystalized their opinions about the relative importance of job factors. This may well be a function of having actually worked on a more-or-less permanent basis.

The significant male-female correlations indicate that men and women are quite similar in how they view the relative importance of the factors presented on the questionnaire. Eventhough the male-female correlations were "significant" for both the college-student and "fulltime" employed subjects it is of interest that a probability level of P<.01 was achieved by the college-student subjects correlation, whereas a probability level of P2.05 was achieved by the "full-time" employed subjects. difference, eventhough it is minimal, could possibly be

attributed to the greater educational homogeneity between the male and female college-student subjects, whereas one would expect greater educational heterogeneity for the "full-time" employed subjects. On the other hand, sampling variability may also have produced these differences. Further research is indicated to delineate this more adequately.

Concerning the practical applications of this research, it appears that this information could be utilized by any management team that hires college students who have majored in business. These results could be used to better construct job designs that would emphasize factors that are considered most important by the college-student subjects, and minimize those factors that are viewed as relatively unimportant. Thus, with increased understanding of the employees attitudes and desires, better employeremployee relations and over-all increased productivity would hopefully result.

Also, this questionnaire could be used by management to determine to what degree, if any, differences exist in the ranking of the factors between their high-productive and low-productive personnel. Furthermore, once high and low productive composite forms have been determined, a comparison of these forms with those of a potential employee could be made. Results of such comparisons could be highly

beneficial to management in giving them an indication about the potential productivity of a job applicant.

On the other hand, if a business was just beginning operations, persons initially hired could complete the questionnaire and after they had been on the job long enough to determine productivity, a comparison could then be made between the forms of high- and low-productive personnel. This additional insight could well result in job redesign, as well as helping to evaluate other potential employees to ascertain if their ranking of the preemployment job factors was similar to those of highly productive personnel.

Management would not seem to be the only ones to potentially benefit from this research. Through administration of this questionnaire, union officials could gain insight into what job factors are deemed most important as well as least important by their rank and file. In addition to a savings in time, paper work, and conferences this increased understanding could be put to valuable use when bargaining for contract renewals and changed working conditions with management. This would possibly result in a redirection of emphasis from context factors such as salary increases and security benefits, to content factors such as freedom on the job and self-development.

Eventhough it is not of major substance and it certainly was not the purpose of the study, it is

interesting to note that one "full-time" employed subject took the additional time to express how her perception of job factors had shifted as her life situation changed:

When younger it was most important to me that I had a job which met my need for money as we were buying our first home and my husband did not have his degree yet so there was some insecurity at this point in our life. . . . Now I work because we need the money, but not to the degree we did years ago. I enjoy the public, therefore it's most important to me that I like what I do, the convenience of being near my job, being able to be off when I need to be with the children, and coming home for lunch with my husband.

Further research projects into job-factor importance may well wish to investigate concommitant changes in job factor importance and changing life situations.

TABLES

of importance to you. For example, if you were interviewing for a job which of the following information factors would you want related information. Rank the most able factor as 2 and so on until each factor has received

enjoyment of work
chance of being moved
financial reward
location of job
manual work
financial history of the company
job security
when an opening is available
fits your capacabilities
freedom on the job
fringe benefits
prestige of job
self-determination of work
opportunity for feedback on performance
opportunity to complete work
mental work
opportunity for promotion
usefulness of work
personal growth with the job
workload

 responsibility
working environment
 technical supervison
routine work
management policies
time off
 recognition
 relationship with supervisor
 challenging assignments
feeling of achievement
relationship with co-workers
opportunity to talk to a person that is currently employed in a position similar to the one for which you are applying

Age:
Se <b>x:</b>
Marital Status:
Presently Permanently Employed: ( ) Yes ( ) No
Have you ever held a job for 12 months or longer?  If yes, briefly describe:  ( ) Yes ( ) No
Please read all items first, then rank them in order of importance to you. Rank the most desirable information factor as 1, the second most desirable factor as 2 and so on until each factor has received a number value.
personal growth with the job self-determination of work location of job prestige of job relationship with co-workers freedom on the job responsibility relationship with supervisor management policies enjoyment of work fringe benefits opportunity for promotion mental work routine work financial reward challenging assignments fits your capacities working environment
feeling of achievement time off

Age:	
Sex:	
Marital Status:	
presently Permanently Employed: ( ) Ye	s ( ) No
Have you ever held a job for 12 months If yes, briefly describe:	
Please read all items first, then of importance to you. Rank the most defactor as 1, the second most desirable on until each factor has received a num	sirable information
mental work  working environment  relationship with supervisor  feeling of achievement  financial reward  routine work  relationship with co-workers  fits your capacities  freedom on the job  management policies  opportunity for promotion  enjoyment of work  time off  self-determination of work  fringe benefits  responsibility  personal growth with the job	
location of job challenging assignments prestige of job	

\_\_\_ fringe benefits

Age:
Sex:
Marital Status:
Presently Permanently Employed: ( ) Yes ( ) No
Have you ever held a job for 12 months or longer?  If yes, briefly describe:  ( ) Yes ( ) No
Please read all items first, then rank them in order of importance to you. Rank the most desirable information factor as 1, the second most desirable factor as 2 and so on until each factor has received a number value.
fits your capacities enjoyment of work relationship with co-workers self-determination of work personal growth with the job financial reward freedom on the job routine work challenging assignments opportunity for promotion management policies location of job feeling of achievement responsibility prestige of job time off working environment
relationship with supervisor mental work

Age:
Sex:
Marital Status:
Presently Permanently Employed: ( ) Yes ( ) No
Have you ever held a job for 12 months or longer?  If yes, briefly describe:  ( ) Yes ( ) No
Please read <u>all</u> items <u>first</u> , then rank them in order of importance to you. Rank the most desirable information factor as 1, the second most desirable factor as 2 and so on until each factor has received a number value.
relationship with supervisor prestige of job opportunity for promotion enjoyment of work location of job relationship with co-workers mental work management policies responsibility fits your capacities freedom on the job challenging assignments financial reward feeling of achievement routine work personal growth with the job fringe benefits working environment
working environment self-determination of work

First administration to college-student subjects:

Form H and K .499 P<.05 Form K and T Form H and T • 398 n.s.\* Form K and D .578 Form H and D P<.05 . 384 n.s. .587 Form T and D P<.01 .607 P<.01

Second administration to college-student subjects:

Form H and K .042 n.s. Form K and T Form H and T .639 .140 P<.01 Form K and D n.s. Form H and D P<.01 .187 .702 n.s. Form T and D •551 P<.05

Results from employed subjects:

Form H and K .751 P<.01 Form K and T .867 P<.01 Form H and D .767 P<.01 Form T and D .672 P<.01

Three-week reliability correlation between first and second administration to college-student subjects:

Composite forms .587 P<.01

Comparison of composite forms between student and "full-time" employed subjects:

First administration and employed .675 P<.01 Second administration and employed .733 P<.01

Male and female comparisons:

First administration .747 P<.01 Second administration .698 P<.01 Employed subjects .478 P<.05

\*non-significant

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