Police Officer Job Satisfaction: A Multidimensional Analysis

Richard R. Johnson¹

Abstract
The literature on police officers’ job satisfaction to date has focused primarily on individual officers’ demographic characteristics, while a few recent studies have demonstrated that officers’ job task characteristics are a principal source of job satisfaction. The present study expanded on this prior research by simultaneously analyzing three dimensions of correlates of job satisfaction: officers’ demographic characteristics, officers’ job task characteristics, and officers’ organizational environment characteristics. This was the first such study to include the dimension of organizational characteristics in the study of police officer job satisfaction. The analysis of survey data from a sample of patrol officers from 11 law enforcement agencies in the southwestern United States suggested that the officers’ job task characteristics were a principal source of job satisfaction. Organizational environment characteristics also played an important, but weaker, role in the shaping of officer job satisfaction.

Keywords
police, job satisfaction, supervision, management, leadership

Police work environments tend to be very negative. In handling crime, police officers often see the worst society has to offer in terms of violence, cruelty, and indifference to the welfare of others. Police officers struggle to fulfill conflicting demands from the public, and within their own organizations police officers face bureaucracy, internal politics, and a militarist style of management that can seem unsympathetic to the issues officers face. This negative work environment can breed cynicism, low morale, and low levels of job satisfaction (Blum, 2000; Crank, 1998).

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Officers with extremely low levels of job satisfaction can create difficulties for law enforcement organizations. Meta-analyses and reviews of research across a number of occupations have consistently found a link between low employee job satisfaction and high employee turnover and absenteeism (Gerhart, 1990; Mobley, 1977), low productivity (Podsakoff & Williams, 1986), and low organizational commitment (Jayaratne, 1993). Police officer job satisfaction, therefore, is an important issue for policing management that needs further investigation. Zhao, Thurman, and He (1999) noted that insufficient research existed on determinants of police officer job satisfaction. What little research existed, failed to make multidimensional assessments of the officer's work environment. Surprisingly, more than a decade later, this remains the case as there continues to be a lack of research on police officer job satisfaction beyond the effects of demographic attributes or simple work characteristics, maintaining a significant void in the police administration literature.

The present study took a major step toward filling this breach by simultaneously examining the impact of officer demographic characteristics, job task characteristics, and organizational characteristics on the job satisfaction of a sample of patrol officers. It is necessary to examine the work environment in a structured manner to determine whether these major dimensions are equally important in helping shape officer satisfaction, or whether one or more dimensions are more important. This information is necessary so that policing scholars and police executives can better understand the impact of the total police work environment on officer job satisfaction.

**Job Satisfaction**

Hopkins (1983) defined job satisfaction as "the fulfillment or gratification of certain needs that are associated with one's work" (p. 7). Over time, organizational psychologists have offered differing perspectives on the nature of job satisfaction. Herzberg (1968) theorized that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are separate constructs. He hypothesized that job satisfaction was determined by the employee's ability to attain personal and organizational goals, and dissatisfaction determined by the work environment conditions. Locke (1976) proposed that job satisfaction is a product of the difference between the employee's expectations about his or her job, and the reality of the job. The more the worker's expectations differ from the reality of the job, the lower the employee's job satisfaction. Hackman and Oldham (1976) introduced a complex model for job satisfaction. They argued that there are five principal task elements—variety, identity, significance, autonomy, and feedback—those together influence three psychological states. These three states—experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of the actual results—then, in turn, influence job satisfaction.

More recently, Weiss (2002) defined job satisfaction as an attitude toward one's job resulting from the net sum of the individual's positive and negative emotions experienced at work. If the frequency of negative emotional experiences is greater than the frequency of positive negative experiences, then low job satisfaction results.
Nevertheless, no matter how job satisfaction has been theorized or operationalized, common correlates of job satisfaction have been identified.

In the management and organizational psychology empirical literature, three distinct dimensions appear in the discussion of job satisfaction. The first dimension involves the relationship between workers' personal demographic characteristics and their level of job satisfaction (Jayaratne, 1993). The second dimension emphasizes the importance of the employee's work environment characteristics (Herzberg, 1968). The third dimension is the characteristics of the organization that employs the worker (Griffin & McMahan, 1994; Jayaratne, 1993). The majority of the policing research to date has focused primarily on one of these dimensions. Only a few studies of police officer job satisfaction have conducted analyses across more than one of these dimensions at a time (Zhao et al., 1999), and no policing study to date has simultaneously analyzed characteristics from all three dimensions of police officer job satisfaction.

**Officer Demographic Characteristics**

In studies of fields outside of criminal justice, employee demographic characteristics, such as sex, age, race, education, and tenure have all demonstrated inconsistent and weak correlations with employee job satisfaction (Griffin & McMahan, 1994; Jayaratne, 1993). The same has been the case in studies of police officer job satisfaction. Some studies have found that female police officers were less satisfied with their jobs than are male officers (Belknap & Shelley, 1992; Buzawa, Austin, & Bannon, 1994; Love & Singer, 1988), yet these studies found the differences between male and female officers to be small. Other studies, however, reported no statistically significant differences between male and female officer levels of job satisfaction (Dantzker & Kubin, 1998; Hunt & McCadden 1985; Love & Singer, 1988; Zhao et al., 1999).

Research on officer differences by race in levels of job satisfaction have found no statistically significant differences between White officers and those who are members of racial minority groups (Buzawa et al., 1994; Dantzker & Kubin, 1998; Zhao et al., 1999). Empirical evidence has been consistent that an officer's length of service is associated negatively with the officer's satisfaction with the job (Burke 1989; Buzawa et al., 1994; Dantzker 1992; Hunt & McCadden 1985; Sheley & Nock 1979; Zhao et al., 1999). Furthermore, officer tenure has consistently been the strongest correlate of job satisfaction among officer demographic characteristics (Buzawa et al., 1994; Dantzker 1992; Zhao et al., 1999).

The empirical link between officer job satisfaction and the officer's level of education has been equivocal. Dantzker (1992) found officer education level positively correlated with officer job satisfaction, while Lefkowitz (1974) found that officer education level was negatively associated with job satisfaction. In both of these studies, however, the correlation coefficient was small. Furthermore, Buzawa and associates (1994) and Griffin, Dunbar, and McGill (1978) found that officer education level had no significant influence on officer reported satisfaction.
Other officer characteristics have also been studied, such as psychological personality characteristics and family ties. Ortega, Brenner, and Leather (2007), and Miller, Mire, and Kim (2009) found that officer psychological personality characteristics, such as extroversion, was positively correlated with job satisfaction, while officer neuroticism was negatively correlated with job satisfaction. In both studies, however, these psychological characteristics had very little explanatory power. Finally, Howard, Donofrio, and Boles (2004) investigated the influence of having a family on officer job satisfaction, finding that officers who experienced work–family conflict had lower levels of job satisfaction.

Job Task Characteristics

In various occupations, job task characteristics demonstrate a greater impact on job satisfaction than worker demographic characteristics. Job characteristics can include job variety, autonomy, stress, and role strain (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). The work of patrol officers involves tremendous variety in work tasks and situations (Crank, 1998). The empirical research has demonstrated that as the variety of work duties increases for an officer, so does the officer’s job satisfaction (Lawton, Hickman, Piquero, & Greene, 2000; Miller et al., 2009; Zhao et al., 1999).

Job autonomy refers to the freedom to exercise professional discretion and operate independently within the organization (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). It has been suggested that implementation of community and problem-oriented policing strategies have increased officer job autonomy over the last several decades (Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1990; Wycoff & Skogan, 1993). The policing research conducted since the adoption of these new policing strategies has consistently found higher levels of officer job autonomy correlated with higher levels of officer job satisfaction (Lawton et al., 2000; Miller et al., 2009; Skogan & Hartnett, 1997; Wycoff & Skogan, 1993; Zhao et al., 1999).

Job stress, defined as feelings of work-related anxiety related to one’s workload, presumably, is high in policing (Crank, 1998). Job stress leads to a host of health problems such as migraine headaches, hypertension, heart attacks, gastrointestinal issues, and strokes (Blum, 2000; McGrath, 1977). These stress-related illnesses can ultimately affect job satisfaction, as employees who perceive their jobs to be high in stress are generally less satisfied with their occupations (Griffin & McMahan, 1994; Jayaratne, 1993). Research has revealed a negative relationship between job stress and job satisfaction in police officers (Anson & Bloom, 1988; Blum, 2000; Territo & Vetter, 1981; Zhao et al., 1999).

Related to general job stress, yet unique, is job role strain. Role strain refers to the internal tension the employee feels when required to do work tasks the employee dislikes or feels ill equipped to perform (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). Meta-analyses in organizational psychology have documented a consistent negative correlation between employee role strain and employee job satisfaction (Griffin & McMahan, 1994; Jayaratne, 1993), and recent research in policing has found the same regarding police officer role strain (Schaible & Geces, 2010; Violanti & Aron, 1993).
Organizational Characteristics

Several organizational-level characteristics have been investigated for their relationship to job satisfaction in areas outside of police work. These organizational-level characteristics have included organization size, supervisor feedback, perceived organizational support, and employee cohesiveness (Griffin & McMahan, 1994; Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Jayaratne, 1993). Job satisfaction has been hypothesized to have a positive association with organizational size, as larger organizations are believed to provide better pay and benefits, better working conditions, and more chances for specialization or advancement. The empirical evidence to support this hypothesis, however, has been generally weak and inconsistent (Beer, 1964; Cummings & El Salami, 1970; Meltzer & Salter, 1962).

Supervisor feedback may help reduce role and performance ambiguity among employees, assisting them in correcting performance deficiencies to meet the expectations of their supervisors (Komaki, 1986). Evidence of this has been found in the general research on job satisfaction levels, as satisfaction was consistently positively correlated with the degree of supervisor feedback employees receive (Jayaratne, 1993). Providing useful feedback in a law enforcement agency, however, is complicated by three major issues. First, articulating appropriate employee performance is a very subjective endeavor in police work (Brehm & Gates, 1994), making determining the correct way of handling any given incident very situation based. What was the right thing to do in one situation may be a very inappropriate way to have handled another situation.

Second, police work involves a constant interplay between conflicting goals (Lipsky, 1980). The contradictory nature of the goals of police work (protect the property of citizens and seize property as evidence, or maintain peace through the application of force) complicates efforts to provide officers guidance on how to perform their jobs. Third, especially with regard to patrol officers, it is very difficult to supervise officers at work (Brehm & Gates, 1994). Officers are highly mobile across vast areas of the jurisdiction, patrolling independently, severely limiting direct observation of their work product. The influence of supervisor feedback, therefore, may differ in its effects in a police organization and has yet to be investigated.

The perception by employees that management supports them and cares about their personal and professional welfare (known as perceived organizational support) appears to bond employees to their organization and increase their levels of job satisfaction (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). There also may be significant barriers to fostering perceptions of organizational support in law enforcement agencies. Wilson (1968) suggested that differences in role orientations result in conflict between police officers and police managers. Policing scholars have well documented the strained relationships between “street cops” and “management cops” (Crank, 1998; Manning, 1977; Reuss-Ianni, 1983). Police officers tend to have a profound distrust of management, suspecting that supervisors look out for their own best interests at best, or are out to get them at worst (Blum, 2000; Crank & Caldero, 1991; Seltzer, Alone, & Howard, 1996). Fostering feelings of organizational support within law enforcement agencies, therefore, would appear difficult, and its effects on job satisfaction need investigation.
The bonds between coworkers increase employee levels of job satisfaction across occupations (Andrews, Kacmar, Blakely, & Bucklew, 2008; Jayaratne, 1993). The more employees like their coworkers, respect them, and enjoy being around them, the more satisfaction employees report about the work they perform. This peer cohesion does not appear to be a serious problem in the policing field as police officers have a strong and well-documented subculture (Crank, 1998; Skolnick, 1966). Police officers tend to bond together in a solidarity rarely found in other professions, as police officers have to be able to depend on each other at times for their very lives. Nevertheless, the effects of peer cohesion on police officer job satisfaction have yet to be empirically studied.

**Method**

The present study simultaneously examined the impact of these officer demographic characteristics, job task characteristics, and organizational characteristics on the job satisfaction of a sample of patrol officers. The data were gathered by Robin Haarr (2003) as part of a longitudinal analysis of the evolution of police officer attitudes. Haarr surveyed officers in four waves. First, when they began their training at a regional police academy in Arizona, at the end of their academy training, at the end of their field-training period, and after they had successfully completed their probationary year on their respective departments. Only the final wave of data was used as, in this wave, all of the respondents were experienced police officers with at least 1 year of experience on the street. There is a body of literature indicating police officers' work attitudes change during their academy and field training experiences and then remain relatively stable after the 1st year on the job (Foley, Guameri, & Kelly, 2008; Garner, 2005; Van Maanen, 1973, 1974, 1975; White, Cooper, Saunders, & Raganella, 2010). It was for this reason that only data in the final wave was used, after the officers’ work attitudes had begun to solidify.

This wave consisted of 292 respondents employed by 11 different law enforcement agencies around the Phoenix metro area. These data were appropriate for the present study because they contained survey items that specifically measured many of the variables of interest in the study, or survey items that could be fashioned into appropriate proxy measures of the remaining variables of interest. While not recent data, these data were collected long after the most recent changes in policing in America, specifically the unionization of police forces, and the adoption of community and problem-oriented policing strategies (Langworthy & Travis, 2003).

Consistent with national statistics on police officer demographics (Hickman & Reaves, 2006), the sample of officers was overwhelmingly male (90%) and mostly White (81%). Forty-two percent of the officers held a baccalaureate degree and 52% were married. Although all of these officers had only been employed with their current agency for just over 1 year, many came to their present department with previous police experience. The number of years of police experience ranged from 1 to 14, with a mean of 2.87 years.
Dependent Variable

The dependent variable, patrol officer job satisfaction, was created with five survey items similar to those used by Hopkins (1983). The questions used were “I find work stimulating and challenging;” “I find a sense of worthwhile accomplishment in my work;” “I find opportunities for personal growth and development in my job;” “I enjoy nearly all the things I do on my job very much”; and “I like the kind of work I do very much.” The items were answered using a 5-point scale of strongly disagree (coded as 1), disagree (2), uncertain (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). These five items were standardized by converting them to Z-scores, and then summed together to form an additive index, which had a Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient of .74.

Independent Variables

The organizational-level independent variables in this study were supervisor feedback, perceived organizational support, peer cohesion, and agency. Supervisor feedback was based on three survey items (“My supervisors let me know how well I am doing on the job,” “My supervisors often let me know how well I am performing,” and “I always know what my immediate supervisor expects of me in terms of my performance”), which were consistent with feedback measures used by Komaki (1986). The questions were answered using a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (coded as 1) to strongly agree (coded as 5). These three items were standardized by converting them to Z-scores, and then were summed together to form an additive index, which had a Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient of .79.

Perceived organizational support was measured using three items that tapped into typical officer concerns about upper management, such as political favoritism on the part of upper management, and the perception that management is willing to hang officers out to dry just to please disgruntled citizens (Crank & Caldero, 1991; Manning, 1977; Reuss-Ianni, 1983). These survey items were “The average departmental complaint is the result of pressure from top administrators for supervisors to give out complaints (reverse coded)”; “The majority of special assignments on the department depend on who you know, not merit (reverse coded)”; and “When a police officer is the focus on an internal affairs investigation, he will be presumed guilty even when he can prove otherwise (reverse coded).” These three items were standardized and summed together to form an additive index, which had an alpha value of .63.

Peer cohesion was constructed with two survey items (i.e., “I like the employees I work with a great deal” and “The example my fellow employees set encourages me to work hard”). These two items were standardized and summed together to form an index, which had an alpha value of .72. Finally, the validity of these three organizational-level variables was checked through a factor analysis. The Varimax rotation factor loadings revealed that for each variable, the survey items selected for that variable loaded very high (> .7), and the other items loaded very low (< .2). This analysis
confirmed that the measures used to create them had validity, and the three separate variables created measured three unique concepts.

The final organizational-level variables controlled for agency-wide differences. The officers in the sample represented 11 law enforcement agencies ranging in size from 49 officers to 2,600 officers. Each agency was assumed to have its own unique culture, management issues, and policing environment. To control for these agency differences, therefore, dichotomous dummy variables were created for each agency, using the largest agency (Phoenix) as the reference category.

Five job characteristic measures were also employed. Job variety, the degree of variation in one’s work (Price & Mueller, 1986), was measured with two survey items. These survey questions were “My job is arranged so that I do not have the chance to do an entire piece of work from beginning to end” and “My job assignment requires me to use a number of complex and high-level skills,” similar to those used by Price and Mueller (1986). These two items were standardized and summed together to form an additive index, which had an alpha value of .72.

Job autonomy, the freedom to exercise professional discretion and operate independently within the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), was measured with four survey items similar to those used by Ford, Weissbein, and Plamondon (2003). These survey questions were “My job assignment permits me to decide on my own how to do the job,” “My job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my work,” “I feel I have enough authority in my job,” and “I have enough discretion in my job to make effective decisions.” These four items were standardized and summed together to form an additive index, which had an alpha value of .79.

Job stress was measured with three items (i.e., “I am dissatisfied with the amount of work I am expected to do”; “The amount of work I am expected to do makes it difficult for me to do my job well”; and “My workload is seldom too heavy” [reverse coded]). These were standardized and summed together to form an additive index, which had a Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient of .72. Out of concern that the dependent variable and job stress measures may be tapping the same attitudinal construct, a factor analysis was conducted on all eight survey items to investigate the reliability of one or two clusters. This analysis confirmed the appropriateness of the variables as constructed. On Factor 1 of the rotated factor matrix, the five variables used to create the dependent variable all loaded higher than .5, while the three remaining variables used to create the organizational support independent variable all loaded at less than .5. On Factor 2 of the matrix, this pattern was reversed. This test confirmed the validity of the separate measures used.

A measure of employee role conflict was included. Employee role conflict can be described as the feeling of psychological discomfort when the behaviors required for a given job are inconsistent with the employee’s beliefs or attitudes (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). Constrained by the data, only a proxy measure of role conflict was available to measure the degree to which the officer embraced a legalistic enforcement philosophy. Persons who lack authoritarian personality traits tend to find it more difficult to impose rules on others (Frankel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Adorno, 1993).
Officers who are uncomfortable with strictly and aggressively enforcing the law may experience more role conflict in their jobs. This measure was created using two survey items (i.e., “All laws should be enforced at all times, otherwise citizens lose respect for the law [reverse coded]” and “Police officers should remember that enforcing the law is their most important responsibility [reverse coded]”), which were standardized and summed together in an additive index that had a modest alpha coefficient of .55.

Finally, a proxy measure of officer cynicism was created, expecting that cynicism also influenced job satisfaction (Hickman, Piquero, & Piquero, 2004). Niederhohher (1967) argued that among police officers the conflicting norms and values they experienced at work gave rise to cynical attitudes. Regoli (1976) further developed Niederhoffer’s hypothesis and measurement scales, identifying five distinct dimensions of cynicism. Survey questions were available in the existing data that approximated one of these five dimensions; cynicism toward relations with the public. This proxy measure of cynicism consisted of five items (i.e., “Most people do not respect the police”; “The relationship between the police and the public is very good [reverse coded]”; “Citizens will never trust police enough to work together effectively”; “The public shows a lot of respect for law enforcement officers [reverse coded]”; and “The public is more apt to obstruct law enforcement than to cooperate”). These items were standardized and summed together in an additive index, which had an alpha coefficient of .79.

As was done with the organizational-level, composite measure variables, factor analyses were also conducted with these five job task-level variables. The loadings in the Varimax rotation component matrix revealed that the survey items associated with each independent variable with a loading coefficient of greater than .7, while the survey items not assigned to that variable had loading coefficients below .3. This factor analysis confirmed that each of the job-task composite variables was independent.

Measures of officer demographic characteristics were also employed. Measures of gender (1 = male, 0 = female), years of police experience, education (1 = baccalaureate degree, 0 = no degree), and marital status (1 = married, 0 = not married) were included in the analyses. Race was measured multicategorically as three dichotomous, dummy variables were constructed for African American officers, Hispanic officers, and other non-White officers. White officers were the reference category. The descriptive statistics for the dependent variable, and all of these independent variables, are reported in Table 1.

**Results**

As Table 1 demonstrates, there was considerable variation in both the dependent and independent variables, and the variables appeared to be normally distributed. Bivariate Pearson’s $r$ correlation coefficients were calculated between the independent variables and the dependent variables. These bivariate correlations and their significance levels are displayed in Table 2. In examining the bivariate correlations, it was revealed that organizational characteristics, job task characteristics, and officer demographic
Table I. Variable Descriptive Statistics (N = 292)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent variable</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction, $\alpha = .75$</td>
<td>-16.98</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employee characteristic variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-White</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job characteristic variables</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job variety, $\alpha = .72$</td>
<td>-6.27</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.46</td>
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<td>Job autonomy, $\alpha = .79$</td>
<td>-14.64</td>
<td>6.25</td>
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<td>3.09</td>
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<td>5.58</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role conflict, $\alpha = .55$</td>
<td>-4.09</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynicism toward the public, $\alpha = .79$</td>
<td>-16.95</td>
<td>7.56</td>
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<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational characteristic variables</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor feedback, $\alpha = .79$</td>
<td>-10.62</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived organizational support, $\alpha = .63$</td>
<td>-7.55</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer cohesion, $\alpha = .72$</td>
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<td>2.87</td>
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<td>0.20</td>
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<td>Colorado River Tribal PD</td>
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<td>0.02</td>
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<td>Gilbert PD</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glendale PD</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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<td>Maricopa County SD</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0.07</td>
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<td>Peoria PD</td>
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<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottsdale PD</td>
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<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tempe PD</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuma PD</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Characteristics had significant correlations with job satisfaction. Specifically, the organizational characteristics of supervisor feedback, perceived organizational support, and peer cohesion all were correlated with job satisfaction at the $p < .05$ level of statistical significance. All three of these variables were positively correlated with job satisfaction at the bivariate level. Only one of the agency dummy variables, Gilbert PD, displayed a statistically significant correlation with job satisfaction.

Among the five job characteristic-level variables, all of them were correlated with job satisfaction at the $p < .05$ level of statistical significance. Job variety and job autonomy had positive correlations with job satisfaction. Job stress, role conflict, and cynicism toward the public had negative correlations. Only two of the five
demographic characteristic variables, African American officer and years of police experience, were correlated with job satisfaction at a statistically significant level, with African American officers having higher job satisfaction than White officers, and more experience resulting in less satisfaction. Other officer races, sex, college education, and marital status had no statistically significant influence on job satisfaction.

The full bivariate correlation matrix (not displayed in tabular form) suggested that there was no issue with colinearity as none of the independent variables was correlated with each other with a coefficient greater than .50. This was confirmed by the variance inflation factors (VIF), later calculated in the multivariate analyses. The VIF values of the independent variables all ranged from 1.22 to 1.93, all well below the conservative conventional threshold of 5.0. These two test methods both confirmed the lack of colinearity among the independent variables.

After the bivariate correlations were analyzed, three multivariable ordinary least squares (OLS) regression equations were computed with the job satisfaction indices as
Table 3. Ordinary Least Squares Regression on Officer Job Satisfaction (N = 292)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coefficient (SE)</td>
<td>Coefficient (SE)</td>
<td>Coefficient (SE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β Sig.</td>
<td>β Sig.</td>
<td>β Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>-.48 (.72)</td>
<td>-.02 (.67)</td>
<td>.01 (.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>.92 (.69)</td>
<td>.35 (.65)</td>
<td>.24 (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>2.78 (.14)</td>
<td>2.16 (1.05)</td>
<td>2.14 (1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>.73 (.68)</td>
<td>.07 (.64)</td>
<td>.09 (.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-White</td>
<td>-.46 (.99)</td>
<td>-.49 (.93)</td>
<td>-.85 (.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>-.19 (.10)</td>
<td>-.19 (.09)</td>
<td>-.21 (.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>.13 (.42)</td>
<td>.03 (.39)</td>
<td>-.23 (.45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-.34 (.42)</td>
<td>.02 (.40)</td>
<td>-.06 (.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job variety</td>
<td>.28 (.14)</td>
<td>.13 (.00)</td>
<td>.22 (.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job autonomy</td>
<td>.35 (.07)</td>
<td>.31 (.00)</td>
<td>.28 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job stress</td>
<td>-.18 (.10)</td>
<td>-.07 (.00)</td>
<td>-.19 (.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role conflict</td>
<td>-.24 (.12)</td>
<td>-.11 (.08)</td>
<td>-.26 (.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynicism toward public</td>
<td>-.01 (.06)</td>
<td>-.01 (.00)</td>
<td>-.01 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor feedback</td>
<td>.09 (.09)</td>
<td>.00 (.00)</td>
<td>.07 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived organizational support</td>
<td>.17 (.10)</td>
<td>.11 (.00)</td>
<td>.11 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer cohesion</td>
<td>.27 (.13)</td>
<td>.14 (.00)</td>
<td>.03 (.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avondale PD</td>
<td>.43 (.68)</td>
<td>.04 (.00)</td>
<td>.52 (.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandler PD</td>
<td>1.59 (.00)</td>
<td>.09 (.00)</td>
<td>.11 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado River Tribal PD</td>
<td>1.14 (.41)</td>
<td>.05 (.00)</td>
<td>.42 (.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert PD</td>
<td>1.86 (.30)</td>
<td>.02 (.00)</td>
<td>.15 (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glendale PD</td>
<td>.38 (.11)</td>
<td>.02 (.00)</td>
<td>.74 (.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maricopa County SD</td>
<td>-.56 (.81)</td>
<td>-.04 (.00)</td>
<td>.48 (.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peoria PD</td>
<td>.50 (.13)</td>
<td>.02 (.00)</td>
<td>.70 (.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottsdale PD</td>
<td>.81 (.91)</td>
<td>.06 (.00)</td>
<td>.37 (.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempe PD</td>
<td>.44 (.10)</td>
<td>.03 (.00)</td>
<td>.67 (.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuma PD</td>
<td>-.48 (2.34)</td>
<td>-.04 (.00)</td>
<td>.52 (.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F test</td>
<td>1.762</td>
<td>6.007</td>
<td>3.437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>.245</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The dependent variable. The first model included only the officer demographic characteristics as independent variables, while the second model added the job characteristics and the third added the organizational characteristics in a step-wise fashion. The results of the OLS regression analyses are reported in Table 3.

The officer demographic characteristics in the first model only accounted for approximately 4% of the observed variance in job satisfaction. Only one of the individual officers' demographic characteristic was statistically significant at the p < .05 level. The African American officers in the sample generally had higher levels of job satisfaction than did White officers. Officer experience was statistically significant at the relaxed p < .10 significance level. The remaining demographic characteristics were not statistically significant.
The second multivariate model included the officer demographic characteristics and the job task characteristics. The addition of the job task models dramatically increased the strength of the model as it accounted for approximately 21% of the observed variance in job satisfaction. Among the job task characteristics, three of the five measures had statistically significant effects at the $p < .05$ level, and one more was significant at the relaxed $p < .10$ level.

Job autonomy was positively correlated with job satisfaction, with higher levels of individual officer discretion associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. Job variety was another statistically significant predictor of job satisfaction, as higher levels of job variety were associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. The measure of role conflict over enforcing the law was statistically significant. As the officer's discomfort with legalistic enforcement increased, job satisfaction decreased. Finally, higher levels of officer job stress were associated with lower levels of job satisfaction. Cynicism toward the public was the only job characteristic variable not statistically significant in this multivariate model.

After the inclusion of the job task characteristics in Model 2, the same two officers' demographic characteristics remained significant. African American officers were associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, and the longer the respondent had been a police officer, the lower the respondent's job satisfaction. The remaining demographic characteristics were not statistically significant after controlling for the combined effects of all of the other variables in the model.

The third OLS regression model accounted simultaneously measured the influence of officer demographic characteristics, job task characteristics, and organizational characteristics. The inclusion of the organizational characteristics in Model 3 increased the model strength further, as approximately 25% of the observed variance in job satisfaction was explained by the variables in Model 3. Only one of the organizational characteristic indices (peer cohesion) had a statistically significant impact on officer job satisfaction at the $p < .05$ level, and another (perceived organizational support) was statistically significant at the relaxed significance level of $p < .10$. Neither supervisor feedback, nor any of the police agency dichotomous variables, approached statistical significance.

Among the job task characteristics in Model 3, three of the five measures had statistically significant effects. Job autonomy was positively correlated with job satisfaction, with higher levels of individual officer discretion associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. In fact, the standardized coefficient ($\beta$) indicated that this variable was the strongest predictor in the model. Role conflict influenced job satisfaction, as the officer's discomfort with legalistic enforcement increased, job satisfaction decreased. The last statistically significant job characteristic was the measure of job stress. Higher levels of job stress were associated with lower levels of job satisfaction. Job variety and cynicism toward the public had no statistically significant influence on officer job satisfaction after controlling for the net effects of the other variables in this last model.

As for the individual officers' demographic characteristic, the same variables that were statistically significant in the first two models (African American and experience) remained statistically significant in the final multivariate analyses. The remaining
demographic characteristics were not statistically significant after controlling for the combined effects of all of the other variables in the model.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings reported above have important practical and research implications. First, they indicated that police officer job satisfaction is multidimensional. The analyses from the regression models showed that job task characteristics and organizational attributes both explain between-officer variation in job satisfaction. Furthermore, as the total multivariate model only explained approximately 25% of the variation between officers (a value similar to previous studies of police job satisfaction), clearly there are other correlates of police officer job satisfaction that are yet undiscovered.

Second, as the findings suggested that job satisfaction was intrinsic to a police officer’s job task and organizational environments, and not so much the ascribed characteristics of the officer, actions can be taken to improve officer satisfaction. These results highlight the importance of autonomy as a source of job satisfaction. This finding suggested that police officers like to work in an environment where they enjoy considerable discretion to decide how best to handle situations. This finding was also consistent with previous studies of officer satisfaction (Wang, 2006; Zhao et al., 1999). While the traditional model of policing emphasizes a top-down management style and limited discretion among the lowest ranks, one tenant of problem-oriented policing is that officers need more autonomy to develop unique, tailor-made solutions to repeat problems of crime and disorder (Goldstein, 1990). The consistent finding about the influence of officer autonomy suggests that the adoption of problem-oriented policing strategies by a law enforcement agency can measurably improve the job satisfaction among the agency’s officers.

Sources of officer stress and role conflict were also significant contributors to low job satisfaction. This underscores the importance of easily accessible counseling services for police officers and training in stress management techniques. It is impractical to seek ways to eliminate stressful circumstances in policing, as stress is an inherent part of the job. More effort could be made, however, to train officers how to deal with their work stress and feelings of emotional discomfort from performing their job (Blum, 2000; Violanti & Aron, 1993). Perhaps mandatory counseling, officer support groups, and routine stress management seminars could both improve officer personal mental health and raise officer job satisfaction. Role conflict may be addressed through preemployment screening, ensuring that police recruits have enough authoritarian personality traits that they will be able to psychologically adjust to enforcing the law, yet not so much authoritarianism that they lack the ability to use discretion.

The organizational characteristics of support from peers and management were also important, although weaker, predictors of officer job satisfaction. The existence of a police officer subculture or subcultures has been well documented (Crank, 1998; Manning, 1977), although much of this literature has focused on its negative aspects, such as the unwillingness to report the misconduct of fellow officers. The police subculture
has positive aspects as well, such as camaraderie and protection for officers. The more officers on an agency bond and get along with each other, the higher their job satisfaction. If the positive aspects of teamwork, cooperation, and camaraderie can be fostered, while controlling some of the more deviant aspects of the police subculture, higher officer job satisfaction could result without the negative externalities for society.

Fostering perceptions of organizational support may be more daunting. It is well documented that police officers generally hold negative and cynical views toward their managers (Crank & Caldero, 1991; Manning, 1977; Reuss-Ianni, 1983). The variation between officers in levels of perceived organizational support, however, suggested there are varying degrees of negativity. Recall that perceived organizational support was operationalized with statements regarding pressure from top administrators for supervisors to give out complaints, special assignments based on politics rather than merit, and the presumption of guilt when complaints are filed against officers. The common theme across all three of these statements was the perception of procedural fairness, or lack thereof, on the part of top administrators. The fair, impartial, and transparent administration of personnel decisions and misconduct investigations, therefore, may help police managers increase the job satisfaction of their officers.

As with the previous literature on job satisfaction, employee ascribed characteristics had very little explanatory power. That being said, two demographic variables were revealed as statistically significant across models. As tenure increased, job satisfaction declined. This was an interesting finding when one considers the limited amount of tenure across this sample. Apparently, the effects of job burnout show up very early in the police career. Second, African American police officers has slightly elevated levels of job satisfaction in comparison to White and Hispanic officers. This finding was inconsistent with the previous literature on police job satisfaction. While some qualitative studies have suggested that African American police officers tend to hold lower levels of job satisfaction than do White officers (Kuykendall & Burns, 1980; Leinen, 1984), empirical studies have consistently found that officer race was not a statistically significant predictor of job satisfaction (Buzawa et al., 1994; Dantzker & Kubin, 1998; Zhao et al., 1999). The sample in the present study seems unusual in this regard. Perhaps this was due to sampling error, as only 3% of the sample was African American, or maybe the agencies in the sample had work environments that successfully empowered African American officers. The present study lacks sufficient information to draw any firm conclusions. In general, the findings emphasized the importance of a multidimensional approach to the study of officer job satisfaction, and the importance of officer immediate work environment characteristics to satisfaction. This study, however, was not without its limitations. First, the data for this study came from officers representing 11 law enforcement agencies located in one metropolitan area in the southwestern United States. Although this sample both included large and small agencies, as well as urban and suburban agencies, these findings may have limited generalizability because of the region’s distinctive environment.
There may be aspects of police culture or working environments that are correlated with the Phoenix area that may have influenced the results. Second, as this study involved a secondary analysis of data collected for another purpose, the measures used to create the indices in this study were not originally designed for that purpose. There is a risk, therefore, that these measures are lacking in validity. Third, because the data consisted of the fourth wave of a longitudinal survey, the potential risk of a maturation effect (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) or disengagement was present as the respondents took the same survey for the fourth time in 2 years.

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggested that further, multidimensional study of police officer job satisfaction is warranted. Future research should expand the investigation of job task and organizational environment characteristics, exploring new variables that have yet to be tested. Future studies need to account for and look at the possibility differences exist in the correlates of job satisfaction across specific job positions, such as detectives or supervisors versus patrol officers. Furthermore, longitudinal studies are needed to investigate the possibility that the correlates of job satisfaction change over the career of an officer.

As the total multivariate model only explained approximately 25% of the variation between officers (a value similar to previous studies of police job satisfaction), clearly there are other correlates of police officer job satisfaction that are, as yet, undiscovered. As job task characteristics have been the most fruitful thus far in explaining officer job satisfaction, perhaps expanding the analysis of job task characteristics would create a more efficient model. For example, other job task characteristics, such as shift preference, patrol district preference, availability of backup, level of citizen cooperation in the area, amount of required paperwork, types of calls handled, and complexity of department policies, should be investigated as job task correlates of job satisfaction. As organizational characteristics contributed to explaining individual officer variation in job satisfaction (albeit less of a contribution than job task characteristics), the analysis of organizational characteristics should be expanded further. For example, characteristics such as officer pay, benefits, promotion and transfer opportunities, layers of command, supervisor to officer ratio, and agency prestige could be investigated for possible associations with police officer job satisfaction.

**Author's Note**


**Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

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References


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**Richard R. Johnson** received his doctorate in criminal justice from the University of Cincinnati. His current research interests involve police supervision and management issues.