Theses and Dissertations

2017

Employee satisfaction factors in administrative and executive assistants in the United States

Kathleen Olen

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION FACTORS IN

ADMINISTRATIVE AND EXECUTIVE

ASSISTANTS IN THE

UNITED STATES

A Research Project

Presented to the Faculty of

The George L. Graziadio

School of Business and Management

Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

In

Organization Development

By

Kathleen Olen

July 2017

This research project, completed by

KATHLEEN OLEN

Under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been

submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The George L. Graziadio School of Business

and Management in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Date: July 2017

Faculty Committee

Committee Chair, Julie A. Chesley, Ph.D.

Committee Member, Terri D. Egan, Ph.D.

Deryck J. van Rensburg, Dean
The George L. Graziadio
School of Business and Management

Abstract

This mixed methods research was designed to explore the factors that most impact the job satisfaction of contemporary Administrative and Executive Assistants in the United States. As part of a convergent parallel analysis, quantitative survey data and qualitative interviews were collected to correlate cognitive and affective results for an in-depth analysis. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) was used to examine 20 different factors of job satisfaction. Three sets of data were collected: current levels of job satisfaction for each factor, self-ranked lists of the factors indicating which factors are most-to-least important to respondents, and frequency with which factors were discussed by participants in the interviews. Anecdotal information from the interviews provided context to the data sets. The most impactful factors for this employee group were intrinsic factors, identified to be: *Co-Workers, Ability Utilization*, *Achievement*, and *Responsibility*. It was also reported that *Responsibility* acts as an antecedent factor to both *Ability Utilization* and *Achievement*. The least impactful factor was an extrinsic one: *Working Conditions*, while other factors that were identified to be low-impact require more research to validate. Three actionable recommendations were proposed for organizations as they seek to hire and retain administrative talent, and several related research topics were proposed.

Keywords: JOB SATISFACTION, JOB SATISFACTION FACTORS, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

Job satisfaction factors of current day administrative assistants are not well known. Up until the 1970's and 1980's, assistants were known as secretaries, and while feminist movements during those decades helped evolve the job title to escape sexist stigma and reflect the professional nature of the job (Kurtz, 2013), major shifts in the job itself have also occurred with little research from the scholarly community. The advent of superior office technology (including computers, printers, scanners, etc.) has created space for vastly increased task differentiation and responsibility in current assistant positions (Garfield, 1986).

In 1950, secretaries became the role most frequently filled by women (Kurtz, 2013). While both the titles and the work have evolved over many decades, administrative assistants' roles have remained one of the most female-dominated jobs in the United States, with 94% of the over two million people in the roles identifying as women (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). Not only are administrative and executive assistants numerous in our workforce, but they exist across nearly every sector and industry. Popular business publications (e.g., Harvard Business Review, Forbes, Inc. Magazine, The New York Times) routinely report on the bottom line benefits of administrative assistants, and count them as essential personnel in any office (Duncan, 2011; Korkki, 2012; Lapowski, 2014; Westwood, 2014).

Given their important role, the hiring and retention of quality administrative and executive assistants should be a high priority for organizations. Job satisfaction levels have the potential to lead to several positive or negative organizational behaviors up to and including turnover (Fields, 2002; Spector, 1997). As such, it is to the benefit of any

organization to understand the factors of job satisfaction specific to this employee group.   The job satisfaction factors for administrative assistants can be an important consideration for Managers, Recruiters, and Human Resources (HR) as they design, recruit, and hire administrative jobs.

Although job satisfaction is one of the most heavily researched areas of organizational behavior (Spector, 1997), there are limited academic studies conducted specifically about administrative assistant populations. While decades old survey data for secretarial job satisfaction exists (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967) as well as research on the job satisfaction of women in general (Spector, 1997), nothing has been written related to the job satisfaction of administrative and executive assistants.

By determining the factors impacting the job satisfaction of administrative and executive assistants, organizations will have the opportunity to gain insight into employee outcomes for both high performing assistants as well as those who have quit or been let go. In addition, they may appropriately adjust aspects of the job or organization to work towards better outcomes in the future.

The purpose of this study is to discover which factors of job satisfaction are the most (and least) impactful to administrative and executive assistants today in the United States. A convergent parallel mixed method design was used, which involved the correlation of quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data to provide and in-depth analysis of the research question.

Summary

This chapter introduced the background and purpose of the study, which will examine job satisfaction in administrative and executive assistants. In the following

chapters, the literature is reviewed, research methods are presented, results are discussed, and conclusions are delivered.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research project explores job satisfaction for administrative and executive assistants, addressing the following question: What factors of job satisfaction are the most (and least) impactful to administrative and executive assistants today in the United States? This chapter presents a review of existing literature regarding job satisfaction. The information is organized as follows: job satisfaction definitions, the importance of job satisfaction research, major theories which explain job satisfaction, measures and research methods, additional research considerations, and normative data.

Definitions of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is one of the most studied areas in organizational behavior, (Spector, 1997), yet, there is no one definition which permeates the body of research. It is suggested that job satisfaction is an essential component of an employee's life (Judge & Wanatabe, 1993), and "can be considered as one of the main factors when it comes to efficiency and effectiveness of business organizations" (Aziri, 2011, p.78).

Job satisfaction has been described as how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs (Spector, 1997). Armstrong (1996) clarifies further, stating that positive and favorable attitudes toward one's job indicate job satisfaction, while negative and unfavorable attitudes toward the job indicate job dissatisfaction.

One of the earliest definitions comes from Hoppock (1935), stating that job satisfaction is "any combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that causes a person truthfully to say, 'I am satisfied with my job'" (p. 47). While this view is predominantly focused on satisfaction in a positive light, it is still widely cited today, and other researchers have maintained that positive focus, like Locke

(1976), who defined job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 1304).

Other definitions highlight the idea that job satisfaction is a function of need fulfillment (Spector, 1997). For example, Cranny, Smith, and Stone (1992) describe it as the affective reaction to a job based on comparing actual outcomes with desired outcomes, and Porter and Steers (1973) say that job satisfaction is reflective of a cumulative level of met worker expectations. Pearson (1991) puts forth that employees are provided with a variety of features in their job to which they personally assign varying levels of importance, and when expectations are not met, dissatisfaction occurs.

With so many nuanced manners of defining job satisfaction, it is generally recognized as a multifaceted construct that includes employee feelings about a variety of both intrinsic and extrinsic job elements (Howard & Frink, 1996).

Why Assess Job Satisfaction?

Job satisfaction has been shown to be related to several employee outcomes, including performance, commitment, absenteeism, and turnover (Agho, Mueller, & Price, 1993; Tekell, 2008). Spector (1997) categorizes the potential effects related to job satisfaction as: performance, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), withdrawal behavior, absence, turnover, burnout, physical health, psychological well-being, counterproductive behavior, and life satisfaction. The topic continues to be important for organizations as they seek to curb the consequences produced by job dissatisfaction (Aziri, 2011). Kallenberg (1977) shares a more positive view that job satisfaction is an important area of study to improve productivity and quality of work experiences for employees, enable human dignity, improve physical and mental well-being, and overall

quality of life for workers (Kallenberg, 1977). While the strength of relationships between employee outcomes and levels of job satisfaction can vary between studies (George & Jones, 1997; Tekell, 2008), and the motivation for organizations to assess it can be 'humanitarian and/or pragmatic' (Spector, 1997), achieving job satisfaction has still been deemed an important goal.

Theories

Rast and Tourani (2012) presented a summary of the theoretical frameworks on which job satisfaction definitions and studies are based (Table 1). They organized the theories into two categories, Content Theories and Process Theories, more succinctly summarizing how research attempts to explain job satisfaction. Content theories focus on the idea that job satisfaction is gained through a sense of growth and self-actualization, and try to address the psychological needs of employees to inspire performance. Process theories focus on the extent of values and expectations being met on the job, and try to address the motives that affect the intensity and direction of those employee behaviors. The theories in the table have influenced the definitions of job satisfaction for over 50 years, and have helped shape how research measures and determines job satisfaction.

Table 1

Summary of Theoretical Frameworks and Relevant Theories (Rast & Tourani, 2012)

Category	Theory	Authors
Content	Need Hierarchy Theory Two- Factor Theory Achievement Theory X and Y Theory Existence, Relatedness, and Growth	Maslow (1943) Herzberg (1959) McClelland (1958) McGregor (1960) Alderfer (1969)
Process	Expectancy Theory Equity Theory Goal Setting Theory	Vroom (1964) Adams (1963) Locke (1968)

Measures

Job satisfaction is generally recognized as a global concept, comprised by various facets (Judge & Klinger, 2007). As such, it is measured in two ways - either by global (overall/in general) satisfaction, or by facet/factor satisfaction (Fields, 2002). Wright and Bonnet (1962) also note that facet measures are sometimes averaged to arrive at an overall satisfaction measure, though Scarpello and Campbell (1983) found that this practice did not achieve high enough correlations to support it. Global satisfaction is assessed less frequently than job satisfaction factors, for a few reasons. First, of the methods available for measurement, global satisfaction instruments have been statistically proven as less reliable over time (Spector, 1997). Assessing global satisfaction is more likely to reflect individual difference (Witt & Nye, 1992). It is used more in cases where the overall attitude is the main area of interest, when a study attempts to determine the effects of people liking or disliking their job (Spector, 1997).

The factor approach, which is used more frequently, is more useful when attempting to describe what aspect of a person's job produces satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Spector, 1997). There are many factors that have been proposed and used over time. Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969), considered five factors (pay, promotions, co-workers, supervision, and the work itself), while Locke (1976) proposed three additions by adding recognition, working conditions, and company and management. Another measure includes 20 factors (Weiss et al., 1967), which is considered more specific than most other satisfaction scales (Spector, 1997).

A multitude of methods exist to assess job satisfaction, usually in the form of questionnaires or interviews, though interviews are less likely to be used considering they

cost more time and money to complete (Spector, 1997). Many of the surveys and

questionnaires that exist today have been carefully crafted, and are statistically

considered both reliable and valid (Spector, 1997). Fields (2002) provides a

comprehensive look at 21 different instruments used to assess job satisfaction, while

Spector (1997) describes six of those 21, which are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Frequently Used Job Satisfaction Instruments

Instrument	Author(s)	Measure	No. of Factors	No. of Items
Job Descriptive Index (JDI)	Smith, Kendall, & Hulin (1969)	Factor	5	72
Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS)	Spector (1985)	Factor	9	36
Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)	Weiss et al. (1967)	Factor	20	100 or 20
Job Diagnostic Survey	Hackman & Oldham (1975)	Factor	5	15
Job in General Scale (JIG)	Ironson et al. (1989)	Global	-	18
Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire Subscale	Cammann et al. (1979)	Global	-	3

Affective and Cognitive Satisfaction

A major consideration in job satisfaction research is how measures differ as they

tap into affective and cognitive satisfaction (Moorman, 1993), which deals with the effect

of individual personalities on job satisfaction.

Affect, or affective satisfaction, refers to the emotions and valence of emotions people associate with their job (Bagozzi, 1978). Affect can be broken down further, into positive affect (PA) or negative affect (NA). High PA people may be described as extroverted, outgoing, or energetic (Watson, Clark, MacIntyre, & Hamaker, 1992; Yik & Russell, 2001) while NA people may be described as pessimistic, negative, or generally uncomfortable (Watson & Clark, 1984). As expected, high PA individuals are more likely to be satisfied with work while people high in NA view their lives with more stress, no matter the situation (Watson et al., 1988). Essentially, affective satisfaction acknowledges that employees each bring their own positive or negative disposition to a job, and will process their satisfaction according to their natural affect (Staw, Bell, & Clausen, 1986).

Cognition, or cognitive satisfaction, is "often characterized as the content of thoughts or beliefs about an attitude object or statement of fact in question, usually in comparison to a standard or expectation" (Tekell, 2008, p. 5). It can be thought of as the rational part of attitudes that rely on unemotional comparisons (Moorman, 1993). It helps attitudes to develop based on accessible information (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), and can help determine both meaning as well as importance of various factors (Moorman, 1993).

While the literature generally accepts that affect and cognition influence one another (Tekell, 2008), Judge and Klinger (2007) assert that it is very difficult to separate measures of affect from measures of cognition, making their acknowledgement in job satisfaction research problematic. However, they go on to note how the two concepts help researchers understand the nature of job satisfaction. Many of the major assessment methods have been reviewed to understand their affective/cognitive

tendencies. Specifically, Brief and Roberson (1989) found that the JDI and the MSQ were mostly cognitive instruments, but they did have some affective influence present.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Satisfaction

Another consideration in job satisfaction research, specifically related to measurement and analysis of factors, is that of intrinsic or extrinsic satisfaction. This delineation is based on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) which suggests that a specific set of factors cause job satisfaction, while a different set of factors cause dissatisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959; Herzberg, 1966).

Hygiene factors which are considered extrinsic include supervision, working conditions, co-workers, pay, policies and procedures, status, personal life, and job security (Herzberg et al., 1959; Herzberg, 1966). These are tangible, basic factors which are expected in a job, so they should cause dissatisfaction when absent, but do not increase satisfaction (or motivation) when present. Motivation factors which are considered intrinsic include achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth. These are considered more emotional (less tangible) factors, which, when present, cause satisfaction and motivation. Therefore, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are considered independent of motivation factors.

The application of Herzberg and colleagues (1959) theory to the analysis of job satisfaction factors can provide an avenue for researchers to identify the source (extrinsic or intrinsic) of job satisfaction factors, and address them appropriately. Operationally, this would describe a situation where intrinsic factors are leading to high satisfaction, and extrinsic factors are not leading to dissatisfaction.

Normative Data

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ: Weiss, et al., 1967) provides normative data on the factor satisfaction several different occupational groups, as defined by the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. These data include secretaries, which are today most frequently titled Administrative and Executive Assistants. As the instrument which collects data on the most facets of job satisfaction (20), in addition to the availability of normative data for this group of employees, it was the most attractive for use in this research. As seen in Table 3, which are the top MSQ factors in which secretaries expressed satisfaction in 1967, were *Moral Values, Supervision-Technical, Security, Supervision-Human Relations,* and *Achievement.*

Table 3

MSQ Normative Data for Secretaries (Weiss et al., 1967)

Rank	Variables (Factors)	N Valid	Mean	Std Deviation	Reliability	Std. Error of Measurement
1	Moral Values	118	21.54	2.72	0.85	1.07
2	Supervision - Technical	118	20.98	3.33	0.81	1.44
3	Security	118	20.80	2.97	0.76	1.45
4	Supervision – Human Relations	118	20.79	3.84	0.86	1.46
5	Achievement	118	20.73	3.10	0.87	1.13
6	Coworkers	118	20.32	3.50	0.88	1.24
7	Social Service	118	20.31	2.87	0.91	0.86

8	Variety	118	20.30	3.75	0.87	1.33
9	Independence	118	20.22	3.45	0.91	1.03
10	Activity	118	20.02	4.01	0.92	1.15
11	Ability Utilization	118	19.53	3.85	0.91	1.13
12	Responsibility	118	19.46	2.90	0.76	1.43
13	Creativity	118	19.29	3.46	0.88	1.20
14	Recognition	118	19.07	4.70	0.95	1.01
15	Social Status	118	18.00	3.52	0.87	1.27
16	Authority	118	17.33	3.10	0.82	1.30
17	Working Conditions	118	17.23	5.47	0.93	1.49
18	Company Policies & Practices	118	16.86	5.58	0.93	1.50
19	Advancement	118	16.67	4.80	0.94	1.21
20	Compensation	118	16.36	5.47	0.94	1.40
	General Satisfaction	118	77.64	10.00	0.88	3.51

Reprinted with permission by Vocational Psychology Research, University of Minnesota, under Creative Commons Licensing

The MSQ also includes a *General Satisfaction* measure which is a cumulative

measure using scores from each of the 20 factors to achieve a score range of 20 to 100

(Weiss et al., 1967). The *General Satisfaction* mean for the entire population of the study (n=2,955), was 75.6, slightly lower than that of the secretaries in this study, with a mean of 77.64, indicating that secretaries enjoyed a slightly higher level of overall job satisfaction among workers in the United States at the time of the study.

While updated MSQ data for the general population does not exist today, Gillespie et al. (2016) noted the importance of normative data for use on score interpretation, when they provided an update to national general satisfaction levels using the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969) and Job in General (JIG) scale (Ironson et al., 1989). While the JIG "*General Satisfaction*" mean for a representative US worker population sample (n=1,475) in 2016 was 40.68 (Gillespie et al., 2016), it is not beneficial to compare JIG and MSQ, as they have a low correlation (r=.60) as noted by Scarpello and Hayton (2001). Analysis and interpretation of scores are best done in comparison to those of the same scale (Scarpello & Hayton, 2001), though in the case of the MSQ, it is possible to interpret scores by ranking the 20 factors (Weiss, et al., 1967). This method is relative, indicating areas of greater or lesser satisfaction with the job.

A showcase of the rank of the 20 MSQ factors and means for both the general population and secretaries can be found in Table 4 (Weiss et al., 1967). This table is organized in alphabetical order by factor, and the rank scores were achieved by order of highest to lowest mean for each group. This table provides normative information, specifically having to do with the secretarial sample.

Table 4

MSQ Factor Comparison of Secretaries to the General American Population
(Weiss et al.,1967)

General Population Rank	Secretarial Rank	Variables (Factors)	Secretarial Mean	General Population Mean
9	11	Ability Utilization	19.53	19.10
4	5	Achievement	20.73	20.10
6	10	Activity	20.02	20.03
20	19	Advancement	16.67	16.50
15	16	Authority	17.33	18.20
18	18	Company Policies & Practices	16.86	17.30
19	20	Compensation	16.36	16.90
5	6	Coworkers	20.32	20.10
14	13	Creativity	19.29	18.20
8	9	Independence	20.22	19.20
1	1	Moral Values	21.54	20.90
17	14	Recognition	19.07	17.60
7	12	Responsibility	19.46	19.30
3	3	Security	20.80	20.20

2	7	Social Service	20.31	20.70
16	15	Social Status	18.00	18.00
12	4	Supervision – Human Relations	20.79	18.70
11	2	Supervision - Technical	20.98	18.70
10	8	Variety	20.30	19.00
13	17	Working Conditions	17.23	18.60

Summary

This chapter examined literature regarding job satisfaction definitions, the importance of job satisfaction research, major theories which explain job satisfaction, measures, popular research methods, and additional research and analysis considerations, like affective and cognitive satisfaction, and intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction factors, as well as provided normative data. This literature provided a base on which the research was designed, conducted, and examined. Chapter 3 states the mixed method approach and design principles used in this research as supported by the theories, instruments and considerations discussed in the literature review.

Chapter 3: Methods

Mixed Method Research Design

To discover the job satisfaction factors that are most impactful to administrative assistants, a mixed method approach was used. This chapter presents a detailed overview of the research design, which included a quantitative survey and qualitative interview. A mixed methods design was used in order to combine the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods, with the intent of developing a stronger understanding of the research question. Creswell (2014) argues that by blending the use of methods, the outcome will be stronger than by using either method on its own. In this case, the collection of quantitative data provided a reliable data set and the qualitative interviews provided an additional data set with which to correlate results. Most importantly, anecdotal information was used from these interviews to explain the data. By using this convergent parallel approach, the researcher accounted for both cognitive and affective manners of data collection. The MSQ (Weiss, et al., 1967) is considered a mostly cognitive instrument (Brief & Roberson, 1992), while interviews created more space for the emotions and valence of emotions (Bagozzi, 1978) to be expressed, focusing on affective satisfaction. Together, the different manners of collection should help provide stronger insights about the data.

Survey

The MSQ (Weiss, et al., 1967) long-form was chosen to collect quantitative data to provide a snapshot of current satisfaction levels, by factor. The MSQ (Weiss, et al., 1967) highlights 20 factors of job satisfaction, more than any of the other frequently-used

survey instruments of its kind. This made it an attractive option for this factor-focused

study. Those 20 factors include:

Table 5

MSQ Factors and Definitions (Weiss et al.,1967)

Factor	MSQ Definition
Ability Utilization	The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities.
Achievement	The feeling of accomplishment that I get from the job.
Activity	Being able to keep busy all the time.
Advancement	The chances for advancement on this job.
Authority	The chance to tell other people what to do.
Company Policies & Practices	The way company policies are put into practice.
Compensation	My pay and the amount of work I do.
Co-workers	The way my co-workers get along with each other.
Creativity	The chance to try my own methods of doing the job.
Independence	The chance to work alone on the job.
Moral Values	Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience.
Recognition	The praise I get for doing a good job.
Responsibility	The freedom to use my own judgement.
Security	The way my job provides for steady employment.
Social Service	The chance to do things for other people.
Social Status	The chance to be "somebody" in the community.
Supervision – Human Relations	The way my boss handles their employees.
Supervision - Technical	The competence of my supervisor in making decisions.
Variety	The chance to do different things from time to time
Working Conditions	The working conditions.

The long-form survey consists of 100 questions, of which all 20 factors are addressed by five questions each, using a five-point Likert scale to describe how respondents currently feel ranging from Very Dissatisfied (1) to Very Satisfied (5).

The MSQ (Weiss, et al., 1967) was used in this study under Creative Commons Licensing through Vocational Psychology Research (VPR) in the Department of Psychology at the University of Minnesota -Twin Cities. It is considered a reliable and valid instrument, basing its construct validity (Dawis, Lofquist, Weiss, 1968).

After respondents completed the 100-question MSQ (Weiss, et al., 1967), respondents were presented with the names of the 20 factors of job satisfaction that were assessed by the instrument and asked to place the factors in a ranked order from 1-20, where one represented the most impactful contributing factor to their job satisfaction, and 20 representing the least impactful contributing factor to their job satisfaction. The full text of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

Collecting data on respondent's current satisfaction by factor first, followed by the ranking, achieved two things. First, respondents had time during the survey to reflect on the experiences that are related to each factor being assessed (without it being explicitly named). This helped prime respondents for the ranking activity. Second, by collecting both the current levels of satisfaction and the factor rankings, an opportunity for analysis was created to discover potential disconnects between the two.

Interview

The researcher next conducted 10 interviews as a follow-up to the survey instrument. The purpose of the interviews was to help discover what factors of job satisfaction participants found most impactful to their job satisfaction, as well as provide

additional anecdotal context of how these factors have shown up for participants. Though

survey respondents provided a ranked list of what factors are most impactful to their

satisfaction, the interview process provided qualitative data to validate the participants

factor rankings.

The interviews were conducted by asking six, open-ended questions. Each

interview lasted more than 30 minutes, but less than one hour. The interview questions

were:

1. Tell me about your level of job satisfaction today, and what you feel has
   contributed to it.
2. During the survey, you ranked twenty items in terms of how important they are to
   your satisfaction. Can you recall for me what you were thinking about or what
   stood out for you as you decided how to rank the items?
3. Tell me about the most satisfying aspect of your job.
4. Tell me about the least satisfying aspect of your job.
5. If you could change something about your job that would increase your level of
   satisfaction, what would it be?
6. What else were you hoping to discuss today that we have not had an opportunity
   to talk about in terms of your job satisfaction or dissatisfaction?

The questions were designed to give participants ample opportunity for leading

the conversation through storytelling. By giving interview participants an avenue to speak

about the feelings and experiences that were elicited for them through the open-ended

interview questions, the research gained an understanding of the personal meaning and

context under which participants experience the various factors of job satisfaction

(Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). This was a clear benefit only gained by this qualitative

approach. The researcher did not review the survey results in advance of the interviews

as a measure to avoid bias.

Once interviews were completed, recordings were transcribed and reviewed

during two coding exercises to identify themes based on the twenty factors that are

measured by the MSQ (Weiss, et al., 1967). Themes occurred both with positive and negative discussions of a variable. For instance, if a participant discussed their pleasure or displeasure with their compensation, both would be noted as it is clear in either instance that the level of compensation has impacted the satisfaction of the interview participant. Frequency of the factors were tallied across all interviews to discover the most frequently discussed variables. A ranked list of variables (from most-discussed to least-discussed) was created to compare to the ranked factors list from the survey instrument in order to validate the self-reported list to what participants most frequently indicated had an impact on their level of satisfaction.

Participation & Data Collection

Survey responses were collected over a two-month period starting in January 2017 and concluding in March 2017. Survey respondents were sourced nationally from the researcher's personal and professional networks, achieving a survey response rate of 45% (based on 259 sent invitations). The criteria for survey participation was that potential respondents must be currently employed in the United States and possess the title of either Administrative Assistant or Executive Assistant. Potential respondents received an email introducing the study (Appendix 2) and contained a link which led to the online survey portal. Respondents had the opportunity to indicate interest in the interview process after the survey, from which pool the interview participants were chosen by the researcher.

10 interviews were conducted over the period of one month, starting in February 2017 and concluding in March 2017. The interview participants were chosen intentionally to best represent a demographic cross-section of the survey respondents,

based on those respondents who indicated an interest and availability to be interviewed. The demographic makeup of the interview participants was divided into three categories: education, age range, and geographic region. All participants held a high school diploma, while 30% had completed some college, 70% were college graduates, and 10% had completed some post-graduate study. 10% of the participants were between the ages of 18-25, 20% between the ages of 26-35, 40% between the ages of 36-45, 20% between the ages of 46-55, and 10% between the ages of 56-65. 20% of participants lived in each the Northeast, Midwest, and Southwest, while 40% lived in the West, and no participants lived in the Southeast.

Summary

This study was conducted using a mixed-methods approach with a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. The MSQ (Weiss, et al., 1967) drew 123 respondents and provided quantitative data on current levels of job satisfaction, broken down by 20 factors. 118 of those survey respondents then ranked the 20 factors, in order of personal impact on their level of job satisfaction, providing a snapshot of what assistants report as their most influential factors of job satisfaction. A 10-person, cross-sectional demographic representation of those respondents was then selected for a follow-up interview, in order corroborate the most influential factors contributing to the job satisfaction for the administrative population studied, as well as contribute contextual and anecdotal information to the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the data collection, and a convergent parallel analysis of the results is provided.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter reports the findings of the survey instrument and interview analysis. These results supported the discovery of the most (and least) impactful job satisfaction factors for administrative and executive assistants today in the United States. Data collected included three sets of information including:

1. Current levels of job satisfaction as reported by survey respondents.

2. Self-reported ranked lists capturing the significance of each factor by survey respondents.

3. Interview data which captured the frequency with which factors were discussed by interview participants.

Survey Results

The first data collected was of current satisfaction levels for administrative and executive assistants via the MSQ (Weiss, et al., 1967). Table 6 reports the mean scores for each of the 20 factors, as well as *General Satisfaction*, along with the standard deviation, reliability, and the standard error of measurement for each variable. It is important to note that while the purpose of the research is to report on the most impactful job satisfaction factors of administrative and executive assistants, the current levels of satisfaction by factor may provide important insights which validate or highlight disconnects in the other data sets.

Table 6

MSQ Complete Statistical Analysis: Administrative and Executive Assistants

Rank	Variables (Factors)	N Valid	Mean	Std. Deviation	Reliability	Std. Error of Measurement
1	Moral Values	123	22.02	2.69	0.78	1.26
2	Social Service	123	21.53	2.83	0.91	0.81
3	Working Conditions	123	21.12	3.34	0.91	0.98
4	Coworkers	123	20.66	3.12	0.84	1.22
5	Independence	123	20.65	2.93	0.87	1.02
6	Achievement	123	20.28	3.47	0.88	1.19
7	Supervision – Human Relations	123	19.98	4.25	0.91	1.23
8	Responsibility	123	19.91	2.97	0.83	1.22
9	Security	123	19.88	3.49	0.86	1.26
10	Ability Utilization	123	19.47	4.56	0.95	0.95
11	Activity	123	19.41	4.07	0.88	1.36
12	Supervision - Technical	123	19.37	3.56	0.83	1.44
13	Creativity	123	19.35	3.65	0.88	1.24
14	Variety	123	19.26	3.95	0.89	1.26
15	Recognition	123	19.21	4.4	0.95	0.97
16	Social Status	123	18.69	3.03	0.84	1.21
17	Company Policies & Practices	123	18.01	4.04	0.88	1.34
18	Authority	123	17.45	3.23	0.85	1.24
19	Compensation	123	17.10	4.8	0.91	1.37
20	Advancement	123	16.11	4.5	0.93	1.13
	General Satisfaction	123	78.25	10.45	0.91	44.00

Table 6 reveals the factors that Administrative and Executive Assistants surveyed currently experience the most satisfaction with: *Moral Values, Social Service,* and *Working Conditions*. The factors which respondents were least satisfied with were *Authority, Compensation*, and *Advancement.*

To compare the data from this research to the normative set in provided in Table 2, Table 7 was created to aggregate the information. *Moral Values* remained the highest rated factor of satisfaction between the two data sets. *Advancement* and *Compensation* remain the lowest rated satisfaction factors, although they flipped the 19th and 20th rank position. The data also shows that as a cumulative measure, *General Satisfaction* is slightly higher today for Administrative and Executive Assistants than it was for secretaries in 1967. The mean for this research was 78.25, and the mean for the normative set 77.64.

Table 7

Comparison of 1967 Secretarial Data to 2017 Administrative and Executive Assistant Data

Factors	2017 Rank	1967 Rank	2017 Mean	1967 Mean	2017 Standard Deviation	1967 Standard Deviation
Ability Utilization	10	11	19.47	19.53	4.56	3.85
Achievement	6	5	20.28	20.73	3.47	3.10
Activity	11	10	19.41	20.02	4.07	4.01
Advancement	20	19	16.11	16.67	4.5	4.80
Authority	18	16	17.45	17.33	3.23	3.10
Company Policies & Practices	17	18	18.01	16.86	4.04	5.58
Compensation	19	20	17.1	16.36	4.8	5.47
Coworkers	4	6	20.66	20.32	3.12	3.50
Creativity	13	13	19.35	19.29	3.65	3.46
Independence	5	9	20.65	20.22	2.93	3.45
Moral Values	1	1	22.02	21.54	2.69	2.72
Recognition	15	14	19.21	19.07	4.4	4.70
Responsibility	8	12	19.91	19.46	2.97	2.90
Security	9	3	19.88	20.8	3.49	2.97
Social Service	2	7	21.53	20.31	2.83	2.87
Social Status	16	15	18.69	18	3.03	3.52
Supervision – Human Relations	7	4	19.98	20.79	4.25	3.84
Supervision - Technical	12	2	19.37	20.98	3.56	3.33
Variety	14	8	19.26	20.3	3.95	3.75
Working Conditions	3	17	21.12	17.23	3.34	5.47
General Satisfaction			78.25	77.64	10.45	9.46

Most factors ranked similarly from one data set to the other, but a few notable movements did occur. The satisfaction level associated with *Working Conditions* rose by 14 spots from 1967 to 2017, bringing it from a bottom-three factor to a top-three factor. Three factors saw a large drop in rankings from the normative set to the current one, indicating a significantly lower level of satisfaction today. *Supervision – Technical* dropped by ten positions in the rankings, while *Security* and *Variety* each dropped by six positions.

Table 8 summarizes the results of the self-ranking exercise completed by 118 of the survey respondents. The results were calculated by finding the mean ranking for each factor, and assigning an overall rank for each factor in order of lowest mean to highest mean.

Table 8

MSQ Factor Impact as Ranked by Administrative and Executive Assistants

Rank	MSQ Factors, Self-Ranked	Mean Ranking
1	Compensation	6.00
2	Co-workers	7.76
3	Achievement	8.2
4	Independence	8.68
5	Moral Values	8.86
6	Responsibility	9.05
7	Security	9.34
8	Ability Utilization	9.87
9	Activity	10.22
10	Creativity	10.62
11	Working Conditions	10.99
12	Recognition	11.12
13	Variety	11.33
14	Advancement	11.50
15	Company Policies & Practices	11.95
16	Authority	13.48
17	Social Service	14.46
18	Supervision: Human Relations	15.33
19	Social Status	16.23
20	Supervision: Technical	16.91

The top five factors which respondents indicated were impactful to their level of

job satisfaction were *Compensation*, *Co-Workers*, *Achievement, Independence,* and

Moral Values. Of those factors, respondents reported higher levels of current satisfaction

with *Moral Values, Co-workers, Achievement,* and *Independence*, and a lower level of

satisfaction with *Compensation*. While *Compensation* was listed as the number one most

impactful factor to respondent's job satisfaction, it ranked 17th in terms of current

satisfaction, indicating a strong, negative impact on current administrative satisfaction

levels.

The five factors which respondents indicated were the least impactful to their

level of job satisfaction were *Supervision – Technical*, *Social Status, Supervision –*

Human Relations, Social Service, and *Authority*. While respondents indicated that

Authority is a low-impact factor, the survey reported a relative level of dissatisfaction

with it, as it ranked 18th of all 20 factors. On the other hand, respondents indicated that

Social Service is a low-impact factor, while simultaneously reporting much higher levels

for current satisfaction with it, ranking it as the factor with the second highest level of

satisfaction.

Interview Results

After interviews were transcribed, the frequency with which participants spoke

about each of the 20 MSQ (Weiss, et al., 1967) job satisfaction factors was identified and

calculated through the completion of two coding exercises. The instances were summed

by factor across all interviews to achieve the total frequency with which participants

discussed each factor. The factors were then ranked by most-discussed, to least-discussed

as reported in Table 9.

Table 9

Frequency of MSQ Factors in Administrative and Executive Assistant Interviews

Rank	MSQ Satisfaction Factor	Frequency
1	Co-workers	38
2	Supervision – Human Relations	37
3	Variety	31
4	Recognition	30
5	Responsibility	29
6	Social Service	29
7	Company Policies & Practices	24
8	Ability Utilization	23
9	Achievement	22
10	Advancement	22
11	Compensation	18
12	Creativity	18
13	Social Status	15
14	Supervision - Technical	15
15	Working Conditions	15
16	Moral Values	11
17	Security	10
18	Independence	9
19	Activity	8
20	Authority	7

The four most frequently mentioned factors of job satisfaction during the interviews were: *Co-workers, Supervision – Human Relations, Variety,* and *Recognition*, all of which were mentioned 30 or more times over 10 interviews. Three of those four factors: *Co-workers*, *Supervision – Human Relations,* and *Recognition,* specifically deal with employee's relationships/interactions at work, and are all categorized by the MSQ as intrinsic (motivation) factors (Weiss et al., 1967).

Co-workers, the most frequently discussed factor, manifested in positive, negative, and comparative manners, detailing how participant's relationships make them feel on the job. When positive, participants often described how their co-workers contribute to their sense of belonging and feeling part of the team. Discussions about co-workers referenced peers and managers, regarding how everyone "gets along." The following quotes illustrate the way participants shared about their coworkers:

> For me the driving force is really the people I work with and it doesn't get much better than what I've got right now. Both my direct manager and the broader [...] team [...], for me, that's kind of the gravy. I mean, as an [assistant], the people you work with can make or break the role.

> Everyone is wonderful. The team is really strong, we know we can ask questions, we can work together to get answers, you know, occasionally a conflict will arise but we can work through it really well [...], especially with this particular team.

> ...the [other] admin I work with here in my office is great to work with. I lean on her a lot. She's so helpful. She taught me so much!

Relationships with co-workers were also discussed in negative terms. This usually manifested in stories where participants felt disrespected or discounted, often having to do with their job title as an administrative or executive assistant. One person lamented that "people kind of look at you as an admin[istrative assistant] like you are, you know, a little bit of a lower level," and looked to other areas of the job to derive

satisfaction. Another described feeling defensive when her job was compared to the secretaries of Mad Men:

> They made a comment to the fact that I was an assistant, and that I was like Peggy and Joan in Mad Men. And [I thought,] "You have no idea what an assistant does," but it still, I think, it bugs me. [...] We're not just sitting there waiting for the phones to answer, we're not hanging up their coats. Yeah, I go get him lunch if he's super busy, but that's not my job, that's not why I'm there.

Another manifestation of *Co-workers* during the interviews was the comparison between their current and former job situations. This was always mentioned to illustrate that the participant's current workplace featured better relationships than their previous one. People indicated that the improved relationships were a contributor to high satisfaction levels, and that the poor relationships contributed to their departure. Some examples of what was said, were:

> I started here I had a job which was extremely unpleasant with a boss who was very condescending occasionally yelled. He was a total jerk to many people. It wasn't just directed at me but it was really unpleasant. [...] I was basically at the breaking point and I thought, "I have to get out of here."

> [It's] a very very very stark contrast to my previous employer. [...] the extreme dichotomy, and knowing what I came from, and knowing what I'm in now make it... I'm just very much more aware of how very very good I have it right now.

Another type of relationship, the factor *Supervision – Human Relations*, deals with how managers have handled, or managed, the interview participants. More personal stories existed about managers, as they tended to be the person that the assistant directly supported. Many of the stories centered around a mutual respect, support, and partnership, but a few described manager's behavior that led to the participant's frustration or desire to leave. The following quotes illustrate the types of stories that were shared:

> We have a great relationship. [...], he doesn't just sit in his office, we literally sit next to each other, so I just think that, [...] we're true partners.
>
> [...] if I'm going to be in a job like [this] I really want to respect the people that I'm working for in order to feel good about [...] serving them. And now that I have [...] bosses once again that I really respect as people, and admire, it makes me feel a lot better about my work.
>
> I work for a manager who wants me doing that deeper work, the meatier things. I know he supports that. [...] I worked for someone who used to have me work on his junior high school child's student projects. It wasn't [here] but it was part of the reason I don't work for him anymore.

While this factor was the second frequently most discussed during the interviews, it ranked 18/20 by survey respondents, who indicated that it has a relatively low impact on their job satisfaction. Based on the frequency which this topic was discussed, it appears to be a more impactful factor than indicated on the self-rank exercise.

Recognition was described by participants most often by sharing stories of when they had been recognized for their contributions. The researcher noticed that these stories were always delivered with a higher tone of excitement than most others. There were also occasional instances where people had shared the disappointment of not being recognized, when they felt they ought to have been. These instances were usually accompanied by disclaimers or justifications to mask the complaint. The following quotes provide an example of the types of sentiments shared related to participant's satisfaction with the level recognition of they receive:

> They popped up and said, "Hey, I just wanted to let you know, I couldn't help but overhear your conversation, and that is a really good idea." [...] and I was like, "Whoa, so this is what it's like to work at a really good workplace!"
>
> He wrote me a personal thank you card thanking me for my hard work and appreciating that I was there and I [thought], "I will treasure this forever." [...] it was very real and very sincere.

> I think recognition is one of the things I find would be really nice if I got more of… I think I rated that relatively [high, since] there is nothing better than an "atta girl" or "atta boy." [...] You can make up for a lot of things just by appreciating your employees. [...] and I'm not four [years old] or something like that, but it would just be nice to have it verbalized.

Participant's satisfaction with the level of *Variety* in their work was usually expressed by a proud explanation of all the different tasks and responsibilities that they take care of in their job. The researcher noted that *Variety* was always mentioned as a positive aspect of their job. The only time a participant expressed dissatisfaction related to *Variety* was when there was not enough, consistent with the expected treatment of an extrinsic factor. The following quotes illustrate typical manners in which participants discussed *Variety*:

> I've gotten these jobs that aren't just the traditional, except for the one place that was, but I think I learned a lot about how to be a good [assistant] in terms of the calendar and the travel and being very organized with that, but I just got so bored about that after a while because there was nothing different about that role."

> There was a chance to do a lot more than the core [assistant] responsibilities: the calendar, the travel, the gatekeeper, all that good stuff. So, I was able to work on a lot of events, helping shape our office operations, hiring a couple people to do that, also, when the time came that we expanded and had a need for more [staff], I was the hiring manager and also managed them. So, I think that that piece of having more than the "core" is super fulfilling.

Aggregated Data Analysis

Table 10 aggregated data from all three data sets (current levels, self-reported factor rankings, and interview factor data). It allowed the researcher to review data from all three measures leading with the factor first, in alphabetical order, showcasing what rank each factor falls to for each data set. For example, *Recognition* was ranked 4th in the interview data, 12th in the self-ranked data, and 15th in current level of satisfaction. The

review of this table produced a list of the most and least impactful factors of job

satisfaction for the study population based on relative rank across all three measures

collected during the study.

Table 10

Aggregate MSQ Satisfaction Rankings Information (by Factor)

MSQ Satisfaction Factor	Interview Rank	Self Rank	Current Level Rank
Ability Utilization	8	8	10
Achievement	9	3	6
Activity	19	9	11
Advancement	10	14	20
Authority	20	16	18
Co-workers	1	2	4
Company Policies & Practices	7	15	17
Compensation	11	1	19
Creativity	12	10	13
Independence	18	4	5
Moral Values	16	5	1
Recognition	4	12	15
Responsibility	5	6	8
Security	17	7	9
Social Service	6	17	2
Social Status	13	19	16
Supervision: Human Relations	2	18	7
Supervision: Technical	14	20	12
Variety	3	13	14
Working Conditions	15	11	3

The researcher identified four factors which were ranked in the top ten for both the survey self-rank measure and the interview measure. This means that each of these factors was very impactful by survey respondents and was also frequently discussed by the interview participants. All four factors were ranked in the top ten for level of current satisfaction. These factors are *Ability Utilization*, *Achievement*, *Co-Workers*, and *Responsibility*. While *Co-Workers* has consistently been a top factor throughout the analysis, the other three factors appear to be positively correlated with one another.

Responsibility, Achievement, and *Ability Utilization* were frequently seen "lumped" together in the interview data. The MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) Manual defined *Responsibility* as "the freedom to use my own judgement." During the interviews, this usually showed up in instances where the participant's judgement or decision caused a change to how things were done in their job or at the company. As an outcome of those stories, participants frequently indicated pleasure with *Achievement*, defined as a "feeling of accomplishment," *Ability Utilization*, defined as "the chance to do something that makes use of my abilities" (Weiss et al., 1967), or both. This indicates that *Responsibility* may be identified as an antecedent to the two other factors.

One participant described a situation where she was tasked with monitoring and reconciling some information across a few platforms. Having judged the new responsibility as both important and inefficient, she decided to initiate a change which made a difference in how the work got done. She said:

> So, while I was working on that project I started researching [solutions to] bridge that gap [...]. I was the instigator for that whole project and we looked at several software solutions for it, and we issued an RFP, and then we ultimately selected the vendor we use now. [...] It was pretty exciting.

This is a great example of how *Responsibility* was expressed in a way which shows its positive contribution to the assistant's job satisfaction. There were also stories where interview participants expressed frustration when they were not free to make judgements or decisions. Another participant told a story about how she identified an area of cost savings, researched solutions, and presented options to their manager, but felt her judgement was not valued. She said:

> When [I] give an input about something, I would like a little better response than [a blanket response] of, "Yeah, well, that's not going to happen." [...] It's kind of offensive that they assume that somebody that is doing my kind of job is not bright enough to have any valid ideas.

Lacking the freedom to exercise her own best judgement had negatively affected her satisfaction with *Ability Utilization*, which she described as her "underutilization." Without the opportunity to follow through with this and other proposed ideas, she never mentioned a positive experience of *Achievement* during the interview.

One other participant had expressed a high level of satisfaction related to *Responsibility*, sharing that she feels a sense of pride that her manager respects and trusts her "to take care of things the right way, and just go for it." When asked to share more about what that trust and respect means to her, she was explicit in sharing her experience as it impacts her satisfaction with *Ability Utilization* and *Achievement*. She said:

> I've worked for certain types of individuals that, either they don't think that a woman should be in a in a work environment or they don't give you the credit as [] a woman [] and your abilities to achieve. [My manager] has the utmost respect for me, and sees my abilities, and [my] achievements, and allows me to achieve, and never discriminates.

The researcher also identified five factors which were ranked in the bottom ten for both the survey self-rank measure and the interview measure. This means that each of these factors was considered to have low-impact by survey respondents and were also

infrequently discussed by the interview participants. The five factors include:

Advancement, Authority, Social Status, Supervision - Technical, and Working Conditions.

Four of those five factors also appeared in the bottom half of the rankings related
to their current satisfaction level, whereas *Working Conditions* was the third highest
ranked aspect of current satisfaction. This placed *Working Conditions* as the least
impactful factor to assistants currently, as it was reported as a low-impact factor,
participants discussed it infrequently, and survey respondents were relatively quite
satisfied with the conditions in comparison to other factors.

Authority was ranked quite low in all three data sets, with an Interview rank of 20,
self-rank of 16, and current satisfaction rank of 18. While it was only mentioned seven
total times total during the 10 interviews and survey respondents reported and that it was
a low-impact factor, it still appears that respondents remain unhappy about their current
level of satisfaction around the amount of authority they have. Yet, of the three
interviews where participants had authority, two wanted to get rid of it. One assistant
described her dissatisfaction with Authority as a discomfort with conflict, by saying, "Oh
my goodness, I hate it. I hate managing people. [...] I think a lot of it is my personality. I
do not like conflict at all and I don't like to tell people what to do." The other participant
did not hesitate to relieve herself of "managerial duties" when asked about the one thing
she would change about her job to increase her satisfaction.

When recalling how she decided to rank factors, another participant immediately
recalled Authority as a factor that stood out and exclaimed, "I remember thinking [...]
that's not even why I'm here."   The same assistant, later, said:

> I've been asked to kind of lead [the other assistants] without leading since
> there's no "direct-direct" reporting to me [...] and my most satisfying work

has just been working in partnership with our admin team and then also coaching and training [them.]

This illustrated the infrequent, yet inconsistent feelings that are associated with *Authority* for the study population. While the participant described great satisfaction with leading the administrative team in an unofficial capacity, she had initially balked at the idea that an assistant should have or desire any authority.

Advancement, like *Authority*, reported the lowest levels of current satisfaction, yet, survey respondents ranked it as a low-impact factor. On the surface, it appears to have been discussed more frequently in interviews than any other of the other "low-impact" factors, however, this data point is skewed. While analyzing the frequency with which interview participants spoke about this topic, there is a clear outlier, where one participant discussed *Advancement* on seven occasions. The five other participants who discussed the factor did so, on average, only one to four times.

The data itself did not seem to tell a coherent story, as three interviews conveyed satisfaction with their advancement opportunities, and three did not. To illustrate the varied nature of the discussion about *Advancement*, two quotes are presented. The following is an example where a participant expressed a particularly negative view while describing her lack of opportunity for growth:

> Unfortunately, I kind of feel like there are areas in which I'm not growing professionally because I'm not doing [certain tasks, and that is] another reason I feel conflicted about the role, because yes, you work [...] at a high level but you also take out trash and clean the coffee machine.

Another participant mentioned she not only looks at advancement opportunities within her firm from time to time, but that her manager would be enthusiastic about helping her advance:

> If you don't look at other [internal] opportunities you've probably short sighted yourself. So, I keep an eye out for opportunities, but I really like the group I work with! [...] [My boss] would be my biggest fan and supporter [...], so I have to be careful about the timing of it because if I if I have to make too soon I may find that I've got his full enthusiasm behind me and I'm not ready for it.

Only six of the 10 interview participants made mention of *Social Status* during their interview, which is consistent with survey respondents ranking it as one of the factors with the least impact on their job satisfaction. Overall, while the level of current satisfaction for this factor is low, relative to other factors, what is discovered in thee interviews is that this factor appears to be an affective component of job satisfaction, which varied with the personalities of the interview participants.

To illustrate the affective nature of this factor, the researcher noted that three of the six people who spoke about *Social Status* were supporting CEO's, however, there were two other assistants who support CEO's that never discussed social status. Additionally, *Social Status* manifested in both positive and negative manners, and it was a nearly equal split between those who mentioned it in the negative, in the positive, or discussed both.

One participant who spoke about both positive and negative impacts of *Social Status* started by saying, "I used to lie and not tell people I was an assistant, because I was embarrassed [and] because I thought it was a job you didn't have to have special skills for, and I thought people would be disappointed in me." Later in the interview, she went on to say, "I [realized]... I am supporting a CEO! I am a CEO's assistant [and] that is a big deal. I don't think anybody would not think it's a big deal." While another

assistant referred to her *Social Status* in the office as the "low end of the totem pole," yet

another spoke about the importance of her Social Status in the office, having said:

> For me, in such a role, what's important is that I truly am considered a
> right-hand person, that he depends on me whether he's here in the office or
> out of the office that I can you know speak on his behalf to him on behalf
> of him.

Lastly, while *Supervision - Human Relations* had more to do with the perceived

amount of respect and support participants felt they received while being managed,

Supervision - Technical had more to do with how much participants felt they assigned

trust and competence to their managers. They were often seen together in the interview

data when interview participants described their relationship with the person or people

they supported, but it was less frequently discussed. That indicates it is more important

for participants to feel well managed by their supervisor than it is for the participants to

judge the supervisor as competent at their job.

Supervision - Technical was self-ranked last overall by survey respondents,

indicating that it is the factor which impacts their job satisfaction the least, and both

supervision factors were in the bottom three which employees say impact them. Current

satisfaction levels indicate that assistants are generally satisfied with both supervision

aspects of their jobs, relative to the other factors.

Summary

This chapter reported the findings of the survey instrument and interview analysis,

which were deigned discover the most (and least) impactful job satisfaction factors for

administrative and executive assistants today in the United States. A robust analysis was

provided by examining three sets of data, including current satisfaction levels, a self-

ranking survey exercise, and qualitative data derived from interviews. Each set of data

were examined on their own, in comparison with one another, and in aggregate. In all, insights on 16 of the 20 MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) factors were offered based on the data collected. Chapter 5 will draw conclusions from the analysis, discuss limitations of the study, and offer suggestions for future research with the study population and topic.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to understand the satisfaction factors which impact contemporary administrative and executive assistants. This chapter concludes the research by discussing data insights and summarizing findings as applied to the research question. Limitations, recommendations, and suggestions for future research projects are also explored.

Findings as Applied to the Research Questions

Research Question 1. What are the most impactful job satisfaction factors for Administrative and Executive Assistants? The top five factors identified by respondents to a self-rank survey exercise were: *Compensation, Co-Workers, Achievement, Independence,* and *Moral Values.* The top five factors which were most frequently discussed during qualitative interviews were: *Co-workers, Supervision – Human Relations, Variety, Recognition,* and *Responsibility.* Four factors were highly ranked in both the self-report and interviews, including: *Ability Utilization*, *Achievement*, *Co-Workers*, and *Responsibility*. All four also enjoyed high levels of current satisfaction relative to the ranking.

Co-Workers was the single most impactful factor of job satisfaction discovered in this study. It was the most frequent factor discussed by interview participants, as well as a top-ranked item during the survey. While the factor was discussed in positive, negative, and comparative terms, a theme of respect surfaced in most interviews. Interview participants either spoke about dissatisfaction from feeling disrespected by other co-workers (usually because of their job title), or the satisfaction derived from being in a job where they were treated with respect by their co-workers. It is clear that

*Co-worke*rs is a key factor which contributes to the satisfaction of this employee population.

Herzberg (1959, 1966) calls *Co-workers* and *Supervision – Human Relations* extrinsic (or hygiene) factors, but this does not seem to be the case for administrative assistants. The findings of this research indicate that it is source of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, based on the level of respect they feel they are receiving from their co-workers and managers. Interview participants noted that negative co-worker relationships in previous jobs lead to their departure, and several participants verbalized how important the positive relationships are to their level of satisfaction. The findings here demonstrate a high need for "affiliation" among this employee group, according to McClelland's Theory of Needs (McClelland, 1973), and a focus on Maslow's (1943, 1954) love needs and esteem needs – specifically relating to the feeling of belonging and feeling of respect they experience at work.

Responsibility, Achievement, and *Ability Utilization* were identified as high-impact factors which, like *Co-Workers*, were consistently ranked high across all data sets. Additional insight from interviews named *Responsibility* as an antecedent factor to *Achievement* and *Ability Utilization*, based on the frequency with which these factors were discussed in tandem by interview participants. This notion is supported by their close relative rankings across all data sets, and indicates that this employee group has a high need for "achievement" according to McClelland's Theory of Needs (McClelland, 1973). This theory helps explain why some interview participants expressed displeasure with less challenging job duties such as making coffee or filing routine expense reports, and why *Variety* was always expressed as a positive aspect of the job.

Research Question 2. What are the least impactful job satisfaction factors for Administrative and Executive Assistants? The five least-impactful factors identified by respondents to a self-rank survey exercise were: *Supervision - Technical, Social Status, Supervision - Human Relations, Social Service,* and *Authority.* The five factors which were least frequently discussed during qualitative interviews were: *Authority, Activity, Independence, Security,* and *Moral Values.*

Five factors were ranked as having little impact in both the self-report and interviews, including: *Advancement, Authority, Social Status, Supervision - Technical, and Working Conditions.* Four of these five were also ranked in the bottom half of relative current satisfaction levels, whereas *Working Conditions* was the third highest ranked aspect of current satisfaction. This identified *Working Conditions* as the single least impactful factor to assistants currently, as it was reported as a low-impact factor, participants discussed it infrequently, and survey respondents were generally quite satisfied with the conditions in comparison to other factors.

It was noted that *Advancement, Authority, Social Status* were ranked quite low in all three data sets, which analysis revealed was difficult to explain. While this was mentioned infrequently during interviews and survey respondents reported them as low-impact factors, it still appeared that respondents remained relatively unhappy about their current level of satisfaction around the three factors. As extrinsic satisfaction factors, it is expected that the absence of *Authority*, *Advancement*, or a high level of *Social Status* would lead to dissatisfaction, however, the Two-Factor Theory does not help explain this behavior when the population of the study says the factors do not matter much to them, or that they do not want them (Herzberg et al., 1959; Herzberg, 1966). Looking at it from

the other direction, McClelland's Theory of Needs (McClelland, 1973), may be applied to this situation to indicate a low need for "power," but it does not account for why the current levels of satisfaction remain low for these areas. Further research may be needed to understand this dichotomy.

Recommendations for Use

The research indicates there are a few clear actions that organizations can take to improve or maintain high satisfaction in administrative or executive assistants.

One suggestion as indicated by this research, *Co-Worker* relationships or "affiliation needs" (McClelland, 1973) with other co-workers are key to assistants. Organizations should aim to foster relationships of mutual respect between their administrative assistant(s), their peers, and their managers to keep their job satisfaction high and turnover rates low.

Another suggestion is that organizations should create opportunities for this employee group to have positive experiences related to *Responsibility, Achievement*, and *Ability Utilization* by aligning job responsibilities so that they can use their judgment to make decisions, make use of their abilities, and feel a sense of accomplishment. Less challenging tasks/duties should be minimized or decentralized among assistants to increase the time assistants spend on activities which provide them greater satisfaction in these three areas.

Finally, while *Authority*, *Advancement*, and *Social Status* were found overall to be low-impact factors, organizations should assess individual assistants' needs in these areas to mitigate any low satisfaction levels or provide appropriate opportunities where needed.

Limitations

A few limitations were called to attention as part of this research. As mentioned earlier, MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) factor definitions were not provided as part of the self-ranking exercise, leaving factors open to personal interpretation by participants. In a repeated exercise, the definitions should be clearly stated to achieve results with a higher reliability.

Through the interviews, it became clear to the researcher that participants ranked the list of 20 factors in wildly different ways. Some reported ranking based on what they wanted or preferred, some based their reporting on what they feel they have more or less of currently, and one admitted she did not put much thought or effort into it. Another participant reported that factors at the bottom were items she did not think she could get in her job, even if she wanted them. In a repeated exercise, instructions should be more intentional and contain examples for participants to achieve a higher reliability and validity.

While the research was able to refer to a normative MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) data set that was specific to Administrative Assistants (Secretaries), there was no current MSQ data set for the general working population of the United States to relate with the results of this research. While other survey instruments did have such a dataset (Gillespie et al., 2016), there was no reliable way to correlate the two different measures (Scarpello & Hayton, 2001).

Recommendations for Further Research

The researcher proposes three follow-up topics of study inspired by this research. The first suggestion is that the researcher hypothesized that *Responsibility* is an

antecedent factor to *Achievement* and *Ability Utilization*, based on the qualitative data collected. While the survey data seems to support the hypothesis, a study to explore this and other antecedent relationships between MSQ factors would be useful to all future MSQ analyses. Another avenue based on the research is that while respondents indicated that *Advancement*, *Authority*, and *Social Status* were not significant to their job satisfaction, they were still unhappy with the level of status, authority, and opportunity for advancement they possessed. The researcher recommends further study be completed on the relationship between Administrative Assistants and these job satisfaction factors to explore the nature of these relationships.

Also, since there is no current normative MSQ (Weiss et al., 1967) data set for the working population of the United States, the researcher proposes that creating one would be an important addition to the current body of scholarly research. The MSQ is reliable and frequently used to study various employee subgroups, and an available normative dataset would help strengthen future research. Finally, while job satisfaction means for *Working Conditions* was low compared to other factors in the normative data, survey respondents reported a relatively high level of satisfaction today. Further research should be conducted to explain this increase in satisfaction, and what effect that has had on Administrative and Executive Assistants, and employees in general.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to understand the satisfaction factors which impact contemporary administrative and executive assistants. This final chapter concluded the research by summarizing findings as applied to the research question and literature, and provided recommendations for organizations to maintain or improve job

satisfaction among this employee group. Limitations and suggestions for future research

projects were also proposed.

References

Adams, J. S. (1963) Toward an understanding of inequity. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67, 422-436.

Agho, A.O., Mueller, C.W. and Price, J.L. (1993). Determinants of Employee Job Satisfaction: An Empirical Test of a Causal Model. *Human Relations*, 46, 1007-1027.

Alderfer, C. P. (1969). An empirical test of a new theory of human needs. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 4(2) 142-175.

Armstrong, M. (2006). A Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice, Tenth Edition, Kogan Page Publishing, London, 264.

Aziri B. (2011). Job Satisfaction: A Literature Review. *Management Research and Practice*, *3*(4), 77-78.

Brief, A. P., & Roberson, L. (1989). Job Attitude Organization: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 19(9), 717-727.

Cammann, C., Fichman, M., Jenkins, D., & Klesh, J. (1979). The Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire. Unpublished manuscript, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Cranny, C. J., Smith, P. C., & Stone, E. F. (1992). Job satisfaction: How people feel about their jobs and how it affects their performance. Lexington Books: New York.

Dawis, R.V., Lofquist, L.H., Weiss, D.J. (1968). A theory of work adjustment: A revision. *Minnesota Studies in Vocational Rehabilitation*, *23*, 15.

Duncan, M. J. (2011, May). The Case for Executive Assistants. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2011/05/the-case-for-executive-assistants

Fields, D. L. (2002). Taking the measure of work: A guide to validated scales for organizational research and diagnosis. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage.

Fisher, C. D. (2000). Mood and emotions while working: Missing pieces of job satisfaction? *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *21*, 185-202.

Fritzsche, B. A., & Parrish, T. J. (2005). Theories and research on job satisfaction. In R. Brown & R. Lent, Eds. Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work (p.180-202). New York: Wiley.

Garfield. E. (1986). From Scribes to Secretaries in 5,000 Years; From Secretaries to Information Managers in 20. *Essays of an Information Scientist*, 9, 112-117.

Gillespie, M. A., Balzer, W. K., Brodke, M. H., Garza, M., Gerbec, E. N., Gillespie, J. Z., Gopalkrishnan, P., ... Yugo, J. E. (2016). Normative measurement of job satisfaction. *US. Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *31*, 2, 516-536.

Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1975). Development of the Job Diagnostic Survey. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60(2), 159-170.

Herzberg, F. (1959). The motivation to work. New York: Wiley.

Herzberg, F. (1966). Work and the nature of man. Cleveland: World Publishing Co.

Highhouse, S., & Becker, A. S. (1993). Facet measures and global job satisfaction. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *8*, 117-127.

Hoppock, R. (1935). Job satisfaction, by Robert Hoppock. New York and London: Harper and Brothers.

Howard, J. L., Frink, D. D. (1996). The effects of organizational restructure on employee satisfaction. *Group and Organization Management*, 21(3), 278-303.

Hulin, C. & Smith, P. (1964). Sex differences in job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *48*, 88-92.

Ironson, G. H., Smith, P. C., Brannick, M. T., Gibson, W. M., et al. (1989). Construction of a Job in General scale: A comparison of global, composite, and specific measures. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 74(2), 193-200.

Judge, T. A., & Klinger, R. (2007). Job satisfaction: Subjective well-being at work. In M. Eid & R. Larsen (Eds.), The science of subjective well-being (p. 393-413). New York: Guilford Publications.

Judge, T. A., & Watanabe, S. (1993). Another look at the job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *78*, 939-948.

Kalleberg, A. L. (1977). Work Values and Job Rewards: A Theory of Job Satisfaction. *American Sociological Review*, *42*(1), 124–143.

Korkki, P. (2012, October). Assistants, Yes, but They Can Do It All. Retrieved from: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/07/jobs/administrative-assistants-on-the-workplacesfront-lines.html

Kurtz, A. (2013, January). Why Secretary is Still the Top Job for Women. Retrieved from: http://money.cnn.com/2013/01/31/news/economy/secretary-womenjobs/index.html?iid=HP_LN

Lapowski, I. (2014, January). The Most Important Person in Your Office Isn't Who You Think. Retrieved from: https://www.inc.com/issie-lapowsky/the-most-important-personin-the-office.html

Locke, E. A. (1968). Toward a theory of task motivation and incentives. *Organizational behavior and human performance*, 3(2), 157-189.

Locke, E. A. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In M.D. Dunnerre (Ed.), Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology (p. 1297-1343). Chicago: Rand McNally.

Maslow, A.H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*. *50* (4): 370–96. doi:10.1037/h0054346

Maslow, A (1954). Motivation and personality. New York, NY: Harper.

McClelland, D. C. (1965). Toward a theory of motive acquisition. *American Psychologist*, 20, 321–333.

McClelland, D. C., Clark, R. A., Roby, T. B., & Atkinson, J. W. (1958). The effect of the need for achievement on thematic apperception. In J.W. Atkinson (Ed.), Motives in fantasy, action and society (p. 64–82). Princeton, NJ: Van Norstrand.

McClelland, D. C., & Steele, R. S. (1973). Human motivation: A book of readings. Morristown, N.J: General Learning Press.

McGregor, D. (1960). The human side of enterprise. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Moorman, R. H. (1993). The Influence of Cognitive and Affective Based Job Satisfaction Measures on the Relationship Between Satisfaction and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. *Human Relations*, 46(6), 759-776.

Pearson, C. A. L. (May 01, 1991). An Assessment of Extrinsic Feedback on Participation, Role Perceptions, Motivation, and Job Satisfaction in a Self-Managed System for Monitoring Group Achievement. *Human Relations*, 44(5), 517-537.

Porter, L. W., & Steers, R. M. (1973). Organizational, work, and personal factors in employee turnover and absenteeism. *Psychological Bulletin*, 80(2), 151-176.

Rast, S & Tourani, A. (2012) Evaluation of Employees' Job Satisfaction and Role of Gender Difference: An Empirical Study at Airline Industry in Iran. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, *3*(7), 91-100.

Salancik, G. R., & Pfeffer, J. (1978). A social information processing approach to job attitudes and task design. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23(2), 224-253.

Scarpello, V., & Campbell, J. P. (1983). Job satisfaction: Are all the parts there? *Personnel Psychology*, *36*, 577-600.

Scarpello, V., & Hayton J.C. (2001). Identifying the Sources of Nonequivalence in Measures of Job Satisfaction. In Schriesheim, C., & Neider, L. L. (Eds.). Equivalence in measurement. (p. 131-160). Greenwich, Conn: Information Age Publishing

Schein, E. H. (2013). Humble inquiry: The gentle art of asking instead of telling. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Smith, P. B., Dugan, S., & Trompenaars, F. (1997). Locus of control and affectivity by gender and occupational status: A 14 nation study. *Sex Roles*, *36*, 51-77.

Smith, P.C., Kendall, L. M., and Hulin, C.L. (1969). The Measurement of Satisfaction in Work and Retirement. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Spector, P. E. (1997). Job satisfaction: Application, assessment, cause, and consequences. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015). Secretaries and Administrative Assistants. *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Retrieved from: http://www.bls.gov/ooh/officeandadministrativesupport/secretariesandadministrat veassistants.htm

Vroom, V. H. (1964). Work and motivation. New York: Wiley.

Watson, D., & Clark, L. A. (1984). Negative affectivity: the disposition to experience aversive emotional states. *Psychological Bulletin*, 96(3), 465-90.

Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegan, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *54*(6), 1063–1070.

Weiss, D. J., Dawis, R. V., England G.W., Lofquist, L.H. (1967). Manual for the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. Minneapolis: Work Adjustment Project, Industrial Relations Center, University of Minnesota.

Westwood, R. (2014, December). 4 Reasons Successful Entrepreneurs Need Executive
Assistants. Retrieved from:
https://www.forbes.com/sites/ryanwestwood/2014/12/02/4reasons-successful-
entrepreneurs-need-executive-assistants/#1fce1c7123ef

Witt, L. A. (1994). Perceptions of organizational support and affectivity
as predictors of job satisfaction: Final report. Washington, D.C: U.S. Dept. of
Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration, Office of Aviation Medicine.

Appendix A

Complete Survey

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
Graziadio School of Business and Management

Job Satisfaction Survey

Welcome to My Survey

INFORMED CONSENT

* 1. By clicking the "YES" button below, I agree to participate in the research study being conducted by Kathleen Olen under the direction of Dr. Julie Chesley, and this agreement is based on my understanding and acceptance of the following :

The purpose of the research is to discover and report on current job satisfaction factors for administrative personnel, of which I am one. During the survey, which usually takes less than 30 minutes, I will be asked to reflect on my current job satisfaction levels. At the end of the survey, I will have the option to consent to a voluntary and confidential follow-up phone interview.

My participation is confidential and voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

Since my individual responses and personal information will be kept confidential, there is minimal to no risk associated with my participation. I may request further information about the research or request a copy of the completed research by emailing the researcher, Kathleen Olen, at kathleen.olen@pepperdine.edu at any time.

By completing the survey, I will be entered in a drawing for a $25.00 Starbucks Gift Card. If I consent to and complete an interview, I will be entered in an additional drawing for a $30.00 Amazon Gift Card. There will be one winner per drawing.

◯ YES

◯ NO

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
Graziadio School of Business and Management

Job Satisfaction Survey

Demographic Information

1. Please select your age group.

○ 18 to 25

○ 26 to 35

○ 36 to 45

○ 46 to 55

○ 56 to 65

○ 66 and over

○ Decline to answer

2. Please select your highest level of education completed.

○ Less than 12 years

○ High School Diploma

○ Some College

○ College Graduate

○ Some Post-Graduate Study

○ Master's Degree

○ Doctoral Degree

○ Decline to answer

Other (please specify)

[   ]

3. I identify my gender as...

○ Female

○ Male

○ Decline to answer

Other (please specify)

[   ]

4. I have been in my current occupation for...

○ 1 year or less

○ 2 to 5 years

○ 6 to 10 years

○ 11 to 20 years

○ 21 to 30 years

○ 31 years and over

○ Decline to answer

5. What company do you currently work for?

[   ]

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
Graziadio School of Business and Management

Job Satisfaction Survey

Instructions & Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to give you a chance to tell how you feel about your present job, what things you are satisfied with and what things you are not satisfied with.

On the basis of your answers and those of people like you, we hope to get a better understanding of the things people like and dislike about their jobs.

Below you will find statements about your present job.
- Read each statement carefully.
- Decide how satisfied you feel about the aspect of your job as described by the statement.
    Keeping the statement in mind :
     - if you feel that your job gives you more than you expected, check the box under "Very Satisfied."
     - if you feel that your job gives you what you expected, check the box under "Satisfied."
     - if you cannot make up your mind whether or not the job gives you what you expected, check the box under "Neither
        Satisfied or Dissatisfied."
     - if you feel that your job gives you less than you expected, check the box under "Dissatisfied."
     - if you feel that your job gives you much less than you expected, check the box under "Very Dissatisfied."

- Remember : Keep the statement in mind when deciding how satisfied you feel about that aspect of your job.

- Please answer every item.

- Be frank and honest. Give a true picture of your feelings about your present job.

- The 100 statement survey should not take more than 15-20 minutes to complete on average.

* 1. The chance to be of service to others.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 2. The chance to try out some of my own ideas.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 3. Being able to do the job without feeling it is morally wrong.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 4. The chance to work by myself.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 5. The variety in my work.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 6. The chance to have other workers look to me for direction.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 7. The chance to do the kind of work that I do best.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 8. The social position in the community that goes with the job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 9. The policies and practices toward employees of this company.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 10. The way my supervisor and I understand each other.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 11. My job security.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 12. The amount of pay for the work I do.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 13. The working conditions (heating, lighting, ventilation, etc.) on this job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 14. The opportunities for advancement on this job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 15. The technical "know-how" of my supervisor.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 16. The spirit of cooperation among my co-workers.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 17. The chance to be responsible for planning my work.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 18. The way I am noticed when I do a good job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 19. Being able to see the results of the work I do.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 20. The chance to be active much of the time.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 21. The chance to be of service to people.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 22. The chance to do new and original things on my own.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 23. Being able to do things that don't go against my religious beliefs.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 24. The chance to work alone on the job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 25. The chance to do different things from time to time.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 26. The chance to tell other workers how to do things.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 27. The chance to do work that is well suited to my abilities.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 28. The chance to be "somebody" in the community.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 29. Company policies and the way in which they are administered.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 30. The way my boss handles his/her employees.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 31. The way my job provides for a secure future.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 32. The chance to make as much money as my friends.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 33. The physical surroundings where I work.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 34. The chance of getting ahead on this job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 35. The competence of my superior in making decisions.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 36. The chance to develop close friendships with my co-workers.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 37. The chance to make decisions on my own.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 38. The way I get full credit for the work I do.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 39. Being able to take pride in a job well done.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 40. Being able to do something much of the time.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 41. The chance to help people.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 42. The chance to try something different.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 43. Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 44. The chance to be alone on the job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 45. The routine in my work.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 46. The chance to supervise other people.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 47. The chance to make use of my best abilities.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 48. The chance to "rub elbows" with important people.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 49. The way employees are informed about company policies.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 50. The way my boss backs up his/her employees (with top management).

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 51. The way my job provides for steady employment.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 52. How my pay compares with that for similar jobs in other companies.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 53. The pleasantness of the working conditions.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 54. The way promotions are given out on the job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 55. The way my boss delegates work to others.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 56. The friendliness of my co-workers.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 57. The chance to be responsible for the work of others.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 58. The recognition I get for the work I do.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 59. Being able to do something worthwhile.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 60. Being able to stay busy.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 61. The chance to do things for other people.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 62. The chance to develop new and better ways to do the job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 63. The chance to do things that don't harm other people.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 64. The chance to work independently of others.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 65. The chance to do something different every day.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 66. The chance to tell people what to do.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 67. The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 68. The chance to be important in the eyes of others.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 69. The way company policies are put into practice.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 70. The way my boss takes care of the complaints of his/her employees.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 71. How steady my job is.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 72. My pay and the amount of work I do.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 73. The physical working conditions of the job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 74. The chance for advancement on this job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 75. The way my boss provides help on hard problems.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 76. The way my co-workers are easy to make friends with.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 77. The freedom to use my own judgement.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 78. The way they usually tell me when I do my job well.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 79. The chance to do my best at all times.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 80. The chance to be "on the go" at all times.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 81. The chance to be of some small service to other people.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 82. The chance to try my own methods of doing the job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 83. The chance to do the job without feeling I am cheating anyone.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 84. The chance to work away from others.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 85. The chance to do many different things on the job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 86. The chance to tell others what to do.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 87. The chance to make use of my abilities and skills.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 88. The chance to have a definite place in the community.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 89. The way the company treats it's employees.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 90. The personal relationship between my boss and his/her employees.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
	○	○	○	○	○

* 91. The way layoffs and transfers are avoided in my job.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
	○	○	○	○	○

* 92. How my pay compares with that of other workers.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
	○	○	○	○	○

* 93. The working conditions.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
	○	○	○	○	○

* 94. My chances for advancement.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
	○	○	○	○	○

* 95. The way my boss trains his/her employees.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
	○	○	○	○	○

* 96. The way my co-workers get along with each other.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
	○	○	○	○	○

* 97. The responsibility of my job.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
	○	○	○	○	○

* 98. The praise I get for doing a good job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 99. The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

* 100. Being able to keep busy all of the time.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
○	○	○	○	○

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
Graziadio School of Business and Management

Job Satisfaction Survey

Factors of Job Satisfaction

* 1. Please rank the twenty items below, in the order that they contribute positively to your level of job satisfaction. The top of the list should reflect those items that are most important to your job satisfaction, and the bottom of the list should reflect those items least important to your job satisfaction.

::	◆	Ability Utilization
::	◆	Acheivement
::	◆	Activity
::	◆	Advancement
::	◆	Authority
::	◆	Company Policies & Practices
::	◆	Compensation
::	◆	Co-workers
::	◆	Creativity
::	◆	Independence
::	◆	Moral Values
::	◆	Recognition
::	◆	Responsibility
::	◆	Security

- Social Service
- Social Status
- Supervision: Human Relations
- Supervision: Technical
- Variety
- Working Conditions
- General Satisfaction

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
Graziadio School of Business and Management

Job Satisfaction Survey

Permission to Follow Up

Thank you for your participation!

I am hoping to gather more information from a selection of participants via phone interviews. If you would be willing to speak with me for approximately 30 minutes on the topic of job satisfaction, please indicate "yes" below, and provide the best email address where I can contact you to schedule time to speak.

I expect interviews to take place in the next few months, and all interview participants will be entered in an additional raffle for a $30.00 Amazon gift card.

While the identity of interview subjects will be confidential, transcript excerpts and information gathered from the interview itself will be published as part of my thesis. I am happy to answer any questions you may have prior to participation.

* 1. Would you be willing to participate in an 30 minute interview to discuss the results of this survey?

○ YES

○ NO

○ MAYBE (I'm interested, but have additional questions or concerns)

2. If yes or maybe, please provide the best email address where I can reach you to follow up and schedule an interview.

[   ]

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
Graziadio School of Business and Management

Job Satisfaction Survey

Thank you!

Thank you for completing this survey; I truly appreciate that you have taken the time to assist me with my master's research.
I welcome all questions or feedback about this research at kathleen.olen@pepperdine.edu.

Best,
Kathleen

Appendix B

Email Introduction to Potential Survey Participants

Good morning,

My name is Kathleen, and as you've heard, I'm conducting a job satisfaction survey of administrative and executive assistants as part of my master's program thesis research, through Pepperdine University's Graziadio School of Business & Management. The title of my thesis is "*Employee Satisfaction Factors in Administrative and Executive Assistants*."

While the research itself will help me identify what's most important to employees in your field, I hope that the results will be useful to administrative managers, HR professionals, and even recruitment teams in helping to identify opportunities to increase overall satisfaction and performance and decrease absenteeism and turnover in such an important role.

I'm very personally invested in this research. Even though I'm currently a student, I'm actually an executive assistant, too! I've been in various administrative roles since 2008 and continue to work full-time while in school. I am endlessly enthusiastic about the value of administrative work and am excited to contribute the results of this research to the academic and business communities.

Your participation in my research is completely voluntary and confidential. No individual survey results will ever be shared, and the final thesis will only include data that I have altered to remove any personally identifiable characteristics.

The survey itself includes 100 satisfaction-related questions (along with some demographic data), *but should not take more than 30 minutes to complete - most people take less time*. Since I'm trying to learn about your current job satisfaction, it is most accurate to answer using your gut instinct.

I appreciate how important your time is, and as an incentive to participate, I am raffling off a $25.00 Starbucks gift card to one survey participant. In order to be eligible, the survey must be completed in full.

Lastly, there is an opt-in at the end of the survey to participate in a follow-up, one-on-one phone interview in the coming weeks. These confidential and voluntary interviews are an important piece of my research and I hope you will consider speaking with me! To thank interviewees, I am raffling off a $30.00 Amazon gift card to one interview participant.

Best Regards,

Kathleen Olen
MSOD Candidate
Pepperdine University, Graziadio School of Business & Management
312-399-1395 m
kathleen.olen@pepperdine.edu