MORE AND LESS: PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE PROFESSIONAL PART-TIME EMPLOYEE

Debra M. Tucker

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
in
Adult and Continuing Education

A. K. Wiswell, Chair
H. W. Stubblefield
R. L. McKeen
L. R. Hoffman
S. L. Patrick
M. P. Cohen

February 13, 1997
Falls Church, Virginia

Key Words: part-time, flexible work options, adult learners, alternative work schedules
Copyright 1997, Debra Miller Tucker
The workforce of today is a far cry from the workforce of yesteryear. Not only have there been changes in who works, but how one works as well. The traditional nine-to-five work day has been replaced by a plethora of flexible work options, including flextime, telecommuting, and part-time employment. Until recently, most part-time workers were those who worked in low-level, low-paying jobs. However, with the influx of women in the workplace, as well as the desire for more leisure time and the need for retraining and updating of skills, more people than ever before desire professional part-time jobs. Although considerable research exists comparing full-time to part-time workers, little research is available which examines the experiences of the professional part-time employee.

The central question of this study concerned which factors exist within an organization, as well as within the part-time professional and supervisor, to influence levels of job satisfaction and commitment.

A questionnaire was mailed to 805 members of the Association of Part-Time Professionals which gathered demographic characteristics about the employee and supervisor, and the provision of benefits for employees. Additional questions concerned attitudes of co-workers, anticipated effects on career advancement, access to staff training, and provision of space, equipment, and clerical support. The final sample included 319 part-time professionals across the career spectrum.

A variety of statistical techniques was used to examine the relationships among organizational and supervisor characteristics and the individual characteristics of the participants. Factor analyses were employed to identify the different participant attitudes. The bivariate relationships between attitudes and respondent and organizational characteristics were used to develop multivariate models.

Participants generally had high levels of job satisfaction and relatively neutral levels of commitment. Part-time professionals felt positive about their access to equipment, clerical assistance, and office space, but less so about their economic compensation. They were generally satisfied with the work they were asked to do and their treatment by supervisors and co-workers. Access to benefits was variable.

Implications for the Adult Educator/Human Resource Specialist are discussed with recommendations made as to how both can promote and advance the needs of the part-time professional. Areas for future research are also presented.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To write a dissertation is a long and often lonely process. This document would never have been completed without the support, encouragement, and guidance of so many others. I would like to thank the members of my committee for their many words of encouragement and for offering their assistance in many different ways. To Harold Stubblefield, I give my thanks for demonstrating both in and out of the classroom what it means to be the consummate adult learner. For Steven Patrick, my gratitude for exposing me to the human side of business and for reminding me of the good old days at Georgia. To Ron McKeen, thanks for demonstrating that learning can be fun, and to Libby Hoffman, thanks for jumping in and helping when I needed another faculty member. To Michael Cohen, thanks for making me less frightened of all those statistics.

As my chairperson, Bert Wiswell spent countless hours with me both in and out of the classroom. He was always the voice of reason in my sea of hysteria and knew just what to say to make me believe in myself. Thank you for your guidance and support during these last nine and one-half years.

There were several women who offered invaluable advice to me as I developed my questionnaire and began the writing process. Arlene Johnson at the Families and Work Institute and Marcia Kropf at Catalyst provided my with expertise about what was known, but more importantly, what was unknown about the professional part-time worker. Each gave wonderful suggestions about material I should incorporate in my research. I would also like to thank Maria Laqueur, Executive Director of the Association of Part-Time Professionals (and her assistant, Connie Houston) for working with me from the rough beginning of this project to its completion. A special thanks is also due to Sara Templeman, one of the most patient and knowledgeable word processing professionals around. Her troubleshooting with me from the initial stages of my questionnaire to the final completion of this document saved me hours of headaches and solved many perplexing problems.

My parents, Robert and Dorothy Miller, have always encouraged me to follow my dreams and deserve special thanks. To my mom, thanks for teaching me that nothing is more important than education, and for always believing that I would accomplish this goal even when I wasn’t so sure myself. To my dad, thanks for teaching me not to take myself too seriously. To my friends near and far, I owe each of you a debt of gratitude for listening to me complain, yet liking me in spite of it. A special thanks to Susan Arthur for all her help in babysitting, stuffing envelopes, and coding surveys, and to Susan Kaye and Florence Robinson for providing childcare on a moment’s notice whenever I needed quality time at my computer. To my in-laws, my deepest thanks for giving up part of your vacation to help put labels on envelopes and for helping me get organized for my mailing.

To the two most important people in my life, my husband, Clyde, and my daughter, Carter, I will never be able to thank you enough for all the sacrifices you have made to enable me to live out my dream. Carter has spent her entire life with a mom in a doctoral program and has patiently waited for me to finish. Clyde has been my anchor and source of strength throughout each of my trials and travails, and his faith in me has sustained me through many rough periods. His patience and integrity continually amaze me, and this document would have never been completed without his help and guidance. Words cannot convey the depth of gratitude and love I feel for him.

Finally, the memory of my dear friend, Dr. Esther Sanford, has been with me both as a source of comfort as well as inspiration as I struggled to finish this program. During one of my
last conversations with her, she told me to finish my dissertation no matter what. I have carried this thought with me when I vowed I could not go on, and her angel has served as my own private cheerleader. It is to her that this dissertation is dedicated.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION
Background of the Problem
Statement of the Problem
Purpose of the Study
Research Questions
Significance of the Study
Definition of Terms
Limitations of the Study

CHAPTER II - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE
Motivations for Part-time Employment
Advantages of Using Part-time Employees
Disadvantages of Using Part-time Workers
Classifying Part-time Jobs
Who Decides About Part-Time Employment
Changing Corporate Culture: Flexible Work Options
Attitudes Toward Part-time Employees
Job Attitudes Among Part-time Employees
Summary

CHAPTER III - METHOD
Participants
Procedures
Instrumentation
Questionnaire Design and Development
Data Preparation
Data Analysis

CHAPTER IV - RESULTS
Participant and Organizational Characteristics
Employment Information
Representativeness of the Participants
Recoding and Construction of the Indexes of Benefits
Development of the Measures of Employee Attitudes
Construction of the Indexes of Employee Attitudes
Relationship with the Categorical Independent Variables
Relationships with the Benefits Measures
Relationships Among the Dependent Measures
Explaining the Attitudes of Part-Time Professionals
Qualitative Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

CHAPTER V - DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Summary of the Study
Discussion
Conclusions
Implications for the Adult Educator, HRD Specialist
Areas for Future Research
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Statistical Characteristics of Benefit Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Means and Standard Deviations for Likert-Type Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Factor Analysis of Job Satisfaction Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Factor Analysis of Organizational Commitment Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Factor Analysis of Part-Time Experience Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Factor Analysis of Supervisor Behavior Items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Indexes of the Statistical Characteristics of Attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F-Values for Anovas for Job and Organizational Characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>F-Values for Anovas for Supervisor and Participant Characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>F-Values for Anovas for Characteristics of Participant’s Job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>F-Values for Anovas for Job Characteristics and Demographic Variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Correlations of Attitudes with Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Correlations Among Employee Attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Multivariate Model for Explaining Job Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Multivariate Model for Explaining Organizational Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Multivariate Model for Explaining Commitment to Part-Time Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Multivariate Model for Explaining Attitudes about the Distribution of Non-monetary Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Multivariate Model for Explaining Attitudes about the Distribution of Monetary Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Multivariate Model for Explaining Attitudes about Career Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Multivariate Model for Explaining Attitudes about Co-Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Multivariate Model for Explaining Attitudes about Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Multivariate Model for Explaining Attitudes about Overall Accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Multivariate Model for Explaining Attitudes about Taking Leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Attitude Means for Significant Effects of Specific Supervisor Characteristics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>