

## Job satisfaction in residential care

### Summary

*Job satisfaction can be regarded as a constellation of attitudes about various aspects of a person's job. We studied 234 child care workers in residential homes and measured their job satisfaction with the Leiden Job Satisfaction Questionnaire for Care Professionals Working in Residential Services, LSG. We found five dimensions of job satisfaction: supervision, relationships with colleagues, participation, management of the work and commitment to the institution. We also studied the relationship between job satisfaction on the one hand and personal variables and organisational aspects on the other.*

### Introduction

Job satisfaction is one of the most frequently studied factors in organisational behaviour research. Unfortunately this is not so within non-profit organisations. It looks as if schools and institutions for child welfare believe that the teaching of and caring for young persons who are in trouble or who are on their way to adulthood is always of good quality. Yet the question is: are the education and the care provided well enough?

It is noteworthy that policy-makers and managing directors hardly take any interest in research directed at the effects of school and caring activities, while industrial organisations continuously test the quality of their products. Moreover, industrial organisations are also interested in the job satisfaction of their employees. However, the organisations for child welfare usually tacitly assume that their efforts are successful and that their field workers like their work. They firmly hold the illusion that caring is intrinsically rewarding and high-quality. Attractive though this ideology may sound, its premises should never go untested. The question is: What are the facts about job satisfaction in child welfare organisations?

## What is job satisfaction?

Job satisfaction relates to the way people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs. One of the most frequently cited definitions is offered by Locke (1976): 'Job satisfaction can be defined as a pleasurable state or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences'. A broader definition was given by Bullock (1952), who stated that 'Job satisfaction is considered to be an attitude that results from a balancing and summation of many specific likes and dislikes experienced in connection with the job. This attitude manifests itself in evaluation of the job and the employing organization'.

Job satisfaction is usually assessed as an attitudinal variable. It can be regarded as a general feeling about the job or as a constellation of attitudes about various aspects of the job. In this respect two different approaches can be found: the general and the facet approach (Spector, 1997). The first approach is used when the focus is on the overall or 'bottom line' attitude (e.g. if one wishes to examine the effects of people liking or disliking their jobs). The facet approach is used to find out which parts of the job produce satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In our research we used both approaches to get a complete picture.

An overview of the vast job satisfaction literature clarifies that there are many parts of the job that can produce satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Facets frequently assessed include rewards, such as pay or fringe benefits, the nature of the relations with other people, such as coworkers or supervisors, the nature of the work itself and the organisation within which it is performed. The table below presents the facets that can be found in some of the most popular job satisfaction instruments (source: Spector, 1997).

**Table 1.** *Facets of job-satisfaction*

- appreciation
- communication
- coworkers
- job conditions
- nature of the work itself
- organisation itself
- pay
- personal growth
- supervision
- promotion opportunities

## The consequences of job dissatisfaction

Many behaviours and employee outcomes are hypothesised to be the result of job dissatisfaction. These include not only variables directly related to the job, such as job performance and

job turnover rates, but also indirect variables, such as health and life satisfaction. Overall we can categorise the potential effects of job dissatisfaction in five groups.

- *Job performance*; it is usually assumed that people who dislike their jobs are less motivated and less interested in their jobs, work with great reluctance and therefore perform less well.
- *Withdrawal behaviour*; people who dislike their jobs will avoid them, either permanently by quitting or temporarily by being absent or coming in late; organisations are concerned about absenteeism because it may reduce organisational effectiveness and efficiency.
- *Turnover*; if the job satisfaction level is sufficiently low the person will develop a behavioural intention to quit the job; that intention may lead to job search activities which, if successful, will lead to turnover.
- *Burnout*; job dissatisfaction correlates significantly with burnout; burnout is an emotional state with symptoms of emotional exhaustion and poor work motivation.
- *Well-being*; it is supposed that job dissatisfaction can influence both physical and psychological health.

Job dissatisfaction among residential child care workers can obviously have negative consequences. Research into, and indeed concern over these consequences has so far been minimal. Some indications exist, however. In the sixties and seventies in the Netherlands more than a quarter of child care workers left their institutions within one year. In some residential centres the turnover went up to nearly 40%. This was not only a consequence of job dissatisfaction, however. The most important reason to quit was the need to get more time for recreation, and for activities with the family. In addition, a significant correlation was found between job dissatisfaction and the intention to look out for another job (Brandjes et al., 1982). Moreover, that job dissatisfaction was correlated with disfunctioning. Disaffected residential child care workers judged their own functioning negatively, showed more dispositional anxiety and had more physical problems. Our study a few years later showed a significant relation between job satisfaction and the way child care workers treated the children in their groups. The less their job satisfaction, the less the care-providers emotionally supported the children, and the fewer efforts they made to reinforce the ego-strength of their children.

Baier (1978) studied job satisfaction in the field of special education in Germany. He also concluded that job dissatisfaction among teachers had significant negative influences on their performance as a teacher.

## The assessment of job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is usually measured by means of interviews or questionnaires. The interview method is less popular than questionnaires. We, too, used a questionnaire to assess the job satisfaction of child care workers in residential care. The easiest way to assess job satisfaction is probably to use one of the existing scales. However, the major disadvantage of this policy is that these scales are limited to only those facets the developers picked to compose their instruments. Moreover, these scales are usually developed for industrial organisations. They do not

include specific areas of satisfaction or dissatisfaction related to job situations in child care organisations. This is why we developed our own job satisfaction scale for residential child care workers (The Leiden Job Satisfaction Questionnaire for Care Professionals Working in Residential Services, LSG). Several years ago we started the development of this scale, which includes 140 items covering the typical situation of daily guiding a group of troublesome children (Van der Ploeg et al., 1978). We elaborated this experimental scale into a more reliable and valid instrument. In its definitive version, the scale contains 46 items (Van der Ploeg & Scholte, 1997). These cover statements about the various aspects of the specific job situation in the residential child care services, such as 'In our work we receive insufficient information about the children', 'Within our team the interrelations are not bad at all' and 'The opinion of child care workers does not count in the intake of new children'. The items are rated on 5-point scales ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The positive answers are considered to reflect job satisfaction, the negative answers constitute indications of job dissatisfaction.

## Research design

The objective of our research is to gain insight into the question of how much - or how little - satisfaction residential child care workers experience in their jobs. More specifically, we will study the following research questions.

- a. Is the overall evaluation of the job constituted by underlying dimensions, and if so, how does the residential child care worker evaluate these dimensions?
- b. Are there any significant connections between job satisfaction on the one hand and characteristics of the person and the organisation on the other?

As the existent body of job satisfaction research in non-profit organisations is very limited, particularly within the context of residential centres for children with problem behaviour, our research is exploratory in nature.

We studied 234 residential child care workers. This group was composed of participants in a congress for Dutch child care workers about their role in residential settings. After the congress, all 500 participants received our job satisfaction scale and a short questionnaire covering items like age, gender, schooling, professional training, kind of children in the group and type of residential centre. In total, 264 care workers responded. Thirty persons were excluded from our study because the youngsters they worked with were more than 25 years old.

## Brief description of the research population

Most of the care workers studied were women (65%). The residential child care workers had a mean age of 33. They had a great deal of experience: 10 years as a child care worker, 6 years in the same institution and 4 years in the same (actual) group. More than half these care workers began their professional careers as residential child care workers (56%). The others (44%) had had several other occupations, partly within and partly outside the field of child welfare.

Nearly all child care workers had attended an appropriate vocational training course. Seventy per cent attended high-level vocational programmes and 23% intermediate level courses. Five per cent held university degrees; the rest had no professional training.

To what extent is this research population representative for all child care professionals working in residential institutions for children in Holland?

The comparative national figures are as follows (Ligthart & Van Daal, 1992): mean-age = 32 years, proportion female = 65%, experience in the same job = eight years and vocational training = 55% higher, 20% intermediate, 4% university, 4% no training and the rest = different kinds of training. This suggests a satisfactory similarity between our sample and the national figures as for the following biographical variables: age, gender, vocational training and length of experience in the same job. The research population is therefore fairly representative, implying that our findings can be considered at least indicative for the national situation of child care workers in Holland.

## Dimensions of job satisfaction

Given the experimental character of our job satisfaction scale (LSG) it is obvious to explore the structure of this instrument with factor analysis first (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). Principle component analysis with oblimin rotation over the 46 items of the scale revealed five identifiable factors covering 40% variance. To augment the significance of the factors we only used items with high loadings on one factor ( $>.40$ ).

We found the following five dimensions of job satisfaction of child care workers in residential settings. For each dimension we also explored whether they constituted a reliable scale. To this end we analysed the items in each dimension according to the Alpha procedure proposed by Cronbach (Carmines & Zeller, 1993). Finally we calculated a score on each job satisfaction scale by taking the mean of the individual items making up the scale. Mean scores of two or less represent dissatisfaction and mean scores of four or higher represent satisfaction, while mean scores between two and four represent neutral evaluations of the aspect of job satisfaction measured by the scale under discussion.

### *Supervision*

Items with high loadings on this factor refer to the way child care workers are supervised, how their problems are attended to and how they are supported to do their work as well as possible. Thirteen items loaded high on this factor. As mentioned above, each item is a short evaluative description of the job. Some examples are:

- in our work we do not get enough advice from our staff;
- the head of our home devotes no attention to our problems;
- the supervision we get is of inferior quality.

We found an internal consistency reliability of .85 (Carmines & Zeller, 1993). The mean score on this factor is 2.98 ( $sd=.77$ ). As mentioned above, we used a 5-point scale ranging from 1

(little job satisfaction) to 5 (much job satisfaction). The calculated mean score is nearly identical to the theoretical mean score of 3.00. So, overall the child care workers in residential homes score between satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

To get an exact impression of how many workers judged their job positively as for supervision, we estimated how many workers evaluated the items with a mean score of 1 or 2 (indications of job dissatisfaction). We found that nearly half the child care workers (47%) are not satisfied with this part of their job.

Clearly, the perceived quality of supervision plays an important role in the job of the residential child care workers. The extent to which child care workers believe their supervisors are competent, treat them with respect and are really interested in their opinions largely determines whether the care workers like or dislike their jobs.

### *Relations with colleagues*

This factor clusters items related to the team of the child care workers. On this dimension five items loaded high ( $<.40$ ). Some examples are:

- in our team the interrelationships are not so bad;
- to avoid conflicts with my colleagues I often check myself;
- our team is very cohesive.

The reliability analysis leads to an alpha .67. The mean score on this factor is 4.38 ( $sd=.68$ ). This suggests that nearly all the child care workers are positive about the climate in their team. Taking mean scores 1 and 2 together, we found that only 11% were not satisfied.

It is noticeable that so many child care workers experience job satisfaction at this point, as research has shown the importance of working in cohesive teams. Working in a team characterised by open and supporting relationships is one of the most central predictors of optimal functioning as a child care worker in a residential setting (Brandjes et al., 1982).

### *Participation*

On this factor, 8 items all referring to the same subject had high loadings ( $>.40$ ): the extent of the participation by residential child care workers in the work they do. Examples are:

- in recruiting new child care workers we never ask the opinion of the present child care workers;
- when it comes to the point, it is not the child care workers that take the decision hut the staff;
- the child care workers have no say in the intake of new children.

The internal consistence reliability is .72. The mean score on this factor comes to 3.32 ( $sd=.72$ ). Taking mean scores 1 and 2 together we conclude that 35% are not satisfied with this aspect of the job. More than one-third feel they cannot participate in decisions that affect them. The perceived freedom child care workers are given in decision-making is frustratingly small. They want more freedom to shape their own work. In fact they are not allowed to

express opinions about issues affecting their work and experience an expanded sense of control in the group and in the institution. Such harsh control by superiors can have negative effects on a person's job satisfaction.

### *Management of the work*

We reduced nine items to the same denominator which points to the way the work in the institution is organised. Some illustrative items are:

- we put in too much overtime;
- we use too much time for additional activities (meeting, registration etc.), so we have no time enough for our real work in the group;
- there are many opportunities in our institution to quickly solve any problems that present themselves.

The alpha is .75. The mean score is 3.67 (sd=.71). Nearly one quarter (22%) of workers are not positive about the way things are organised in their institutions. These child care workers perceive several unproductive conditions of the job environment that interfere with their job objective, which is to help the children in the group to overcome their problems.

### *Commitment to the institution*

It is supposed that organisational commitment involves three components: emotional attachment to the organisation, the potential costs in leaving the company and the feelings of obligation to stay with the company. Our fifth factor refers to this aspect of job satisfaction, as it clusters variables measuring the extent to which child care workers identify themselves with their institutions and are willing to stay or, conversely, feel the urge to leave. The following items are illustrative:

- i would like to find a job outside the group work;
- i constantly look out for another job that offers more opportunities for personal growth and promotion;
- i wonder whether I will be able to continue doing this work in this institution for the next two years.

The reliability analysis shows an alpha .70. The mean score on this dimension is 3.18 (sd=1.18). Computing the part of child care workers dissatisfied with their job we found that 40% show little or no involvement in the institution. These workers are trying to find alternative employment. Since job satisfaction is not sufficiently high, the child care worker develops the behavioural intention to quit the job. That intention may lead to job search activities which, if successful, add to job turnover. Of course the child care workers are not likely to quit without other job offers. We know that the opportunities for alternative employment for child care workers in the Netherlands are limited, so we must conclude that many child care workers employed in residential institutions experience a lack of job satisfaction.

### *Total score*

Besides the five factors of job satisfaction we also calculated the total score for all the 46 items of the job satisfaction scale (LSG). Here we found a reliability score of .90 and a mean score of 3.50 (sd.58). This suggests that, overall, residential child care workers are just about sufficiently satisfied with their job. Taking the mean scores of 1 and 2 together we found that nearly one third (32%) experience job dissatisfaction.

The above analysis suggests that five factors are constitutional for job satisfaction among residential child care workers. However, the intercorrelations between these factors are rather high, so theoretically we cannot conclude that they are independent. The strong intercorrelations suggest one overall dimension of job satisfaction composed of the five distinguished factors strongly intertwined.

From a practical point of view, however, it is highly relevant to make a distinction between the various factors, as they can be used to form a picture of the concrete aspects of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction child care workers in residential settings experience. For example, we found that residential child care workers were not satisfied with all the aspects of their job. The mean scores showed that care workers were most satisfied about relationships with colleagues (4.38); the least satisfaction was noted with respect to supervision (2.98). We further concluded that about one third of the residential child care workers were not satisfied with their jobs. More specifically, it turns out that nearly half the child care workers are disappointed about the way they are being supervised and supported. In addition, a large number of workers feel little commitment to their institutions and have the intention to leave. We will now explore some personal and institutional variables that can be related to this.

### **Job satisfaction in relation to personal and organisational variables**

Many variables have been hypothesised to be of influence to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. These include not only variables intrinsically related to the job, but also personal and organisational aspects. Many studies have reported interrelationships between these variables and job satisfaction, although it still remains to be proven that the reported connections indeed are causal, as most studies were based on correlational analysis.

In our exploratory research we also explored some of these variables in their connections with job satisfaction among child care workers in residential settings. To this end we carried out a multiple regression analysis, a statistical method that produces a more elaborate picture of interrelationships than correlational analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). The latter technique explores the relationships only in a bivariate way. However, in reality the various independent variables are not isolated from each other. They are intertwined and produce a combined effect on job satisfaction. A multiple regression analysis makes it possible to trace which set of variables increases or reduces the chance of job satisfaction. In our analysis we explored the following groups of variables.

- *Personal characteristics:* age, gender, professional training, type of collective labour agreement, number of years of experience within current group, institution and job.



- *Characteristics of the group and the institution:* age of the clients in the group, their problems (light or heavy), the size of the institution and, possibly, a recent take-over by another institution.

The table below presents only those variables that significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) added to the multivariate prediction of job satisfaction in residential child care workers.

**Table 2.** *Multivariate prediction of job satisfaction*

predictors	dimensions					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
age	-.26		-.40			-.26
training		-.22		-.17	-.22	-.25
work experience	-.35	-.29				
labour agreement					-.29	-.17
size of home	-.22		-.33			-.23
type of problems	-.23		-.38	-.22		-.25
take-over		-.21				
% variance explained (R <sup>2</sup> )	24	20	22	21	21	24
F-statistic	2.40	1.89	2.12	2.00	2.00	2.35
P-value	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

key:

1 = supervision

2 = relations with colleagues

3 = participation

4 = organisation of the work

5 = commitment to the institution

6 = overall satisfaction

This table allows us to conclude that, overall, job satisfaction reduces and dissatisfaction increases when the residential child care worker is:

- older;
- has had more professional training;
- works in a larger institution;
- works with more problematic children;
- works under a collective labour agreement from the medical department.

Below we shall discuss these findings in more detail.

### **Age**

A great deal of research has shown that age and job satisfaction are related. The exact nature of the connection is not clear, as some studies have found a curvilinear (Zeit, 1990), whereas others have found a linear relationship (Brush et al., 1987). The findings of the linear studies seem to contradict each other: in some research the older employees are more satisfied while in other studies it is the younger staff who show more satisfaction. Studies within the residential care sector mostly support the latter finding: the older child care worker shows more job dissatisfaction. Several authors suppose that this dissatisfaction is caused by a perceived heavier workload and the confrontation with a future without meaningful prospects.

Our research confirms the hypothesis that older child care workers in residential setting are less satisfied with their jobs. The overall dissatisfaction particularly reflects inadequate supervision and insufficient participation.

Yet our analysis has also shown that not only age but also other variables, like level of professional training, the type of problems of the children in the group and the size of the institution, strongly affect a staff member's evaluation of his or her job. This means that they will report even more dissatisfaction with the job when, in addition to age, certain personal traits and organisational aspects are taken into account.

This suggests that improved supervision and increased participation are the keys to improving motivation among older child care workers.

### **Gender**

Connections between gender and job satisfaction have been extremely inconsistent across many studies (Spector, 1997). When the results of different studies are meta-analysed, the mean correlations tend to be almost zero across dozens of studies and thousands of people (Brush et al., 1987; Witt & Nye, 1992). In our multiple regression analysis we did not find a significant independent relationship between gender and job satisfaction either.

However, studies in residential centres for troublesome youngsters and in schools concluded that women are more satisfied with their jobs than men (Baier, 1978; Brandjes et al., 1982). Our study also revealed a significant correlation between job satisfaction and gender. Female child care workers show more commitment to the institution than male. Yet this effect vanishes in the more sophisticated regression analysis. The reason is that women are younger and have had less vocational training. This means that job satisfaction is not a matter of gender, but of age and vocational training.

### **Professional training**

Our findings showed that higher vocational training leads to less satisfaction. This confirms the findings of previous research in residential institutions (Ter Hoeve, 1977; van der Ploeg et al., 1978). The finding is remarkable, however, because it contradicts the obvious assumption that more professional training produces more job satisfaction (Mottaz, 1984). Having more knowledge about the job engenders more possibilities to control it and to perform it with

more pleasure. Apparently, however, increased professionalism does not make child care workers any happier. It seems that this phenomenon can be attributed to two mechanisms.

First, more professional training may create higher expectations and make people more critical about their jobs. Second, more professional training produces more opportunities to find alternative jobs, which in turn promotes the search for those jobs.

Our analysis showed that more professional training, combined with higher age and a longer career within the same job (more work experience), and with the institutional variables of a larger home and more problematic children, reduces job satisfaction. In fact this is a strong indication that residential homes have to be alert to keep the jobs they offer sufficiently challenging, especially for highly trained staff. It points to the need to give the highly skilled workers more participation, autonomy, control and responsibilities.

### *Work experience*

There are three time-related variables associated with job satisfaction: age, length of time in the current job, and length of time of service within the organisation. Most studies that investigate time-related correlates of job satisfaction examine only age and length of time within the organisation, ignoring length of time in the current job (Ronen, 1978).

We explored all three variables, and also the length of time spent within the last group, in relation to job satisfaction. We only found a relationship between job satisfaction and the number of years spent as a residential child care worker. The longer the work experience within this job, the less satisfaction with the job was reported. Work experience or seniority has a negative effect on job satisfaction. The literature suggests a curvilinear connection between work experience and job satisfaction (Herzberg et al. 1957), according to the following pattern: after the first few years job satisfaction drops sharply; then it begins to climb again as the expectations adapt to a more realistic evaluation of the level of rewards that can be attained.

However, in this study the job satisfaction of residential child care workers gradient decreases. Instead of a better balance between expectations and perceived reality, the gap widens. The rewards, such as improved participation and increased autonomy, do not seem to match the increasing rate of perceived efforts. This suggests that in the residential homes the experienced child care workers have the feeling that their competence is insufficiently appreciated, which keeps them from making valuable job efforts.

### *Size of residential institutions for children*

The relationship between size of institution and job satisfaction have been investigated in many different settings. Reviews in this area have generally concluded that size is negatively related to various aspects of work. For example, Argyle (1972) stated that 'it has repeatedly been found that in smaller units job satisfaction is greater, absenteeism, labour turnover, accident, and labour disputes are less, in many cases by a large amount'. Schumacher's book 'Small is beautiful' (1973) also supported this idea and its implications.

Yet, the relationship between size and satisfaction is complex. It seems likely that large

units may have some benefits, e.g. more efficiency, while small units have others, e.g. easier communication and broader participation in decisions (Rump, 1979).

Our analysis confirms the negative relationship between the size of the residential institution for troublesome children and job satisfaction among child care workers. The negative effect of large institutions is proportional to the number of problematic children in the child care worker's group, his or her level of vocational training and his or her age. The smaller institutions offer more opportunities for participation and autonomy.

Considering these findings, it is clear that the many efforts made to set up large-scale organisations should be monitored critically. This policy is not only being pursued by industrial organisations, but also by schools and welfare organisations. The phrase 'small is beautiful' has changed in 'big is beautiful'. The most important argument in justification of this policy is that it leads to more efficient and higher-quality services. Unfortunately, however, the validity of these arguments has never been proven. If we regard job satisfaction as an important criterion for quality, larger organisations obviously run more risk of producing less instead of more quality.

### *The kind of problems children have*

There are indications that working with more problematic children is detrimental to job satisfaction. In earlier studies (Van der Ploeg & Scholte, 1988) we concluded that the most satisfied child care workers in residential homes were guiding the least difficult children. This correlation was also found in special schools: teachers who worked with more problematic children (e.g. children suffering from conduct disorders, limited motivation and attention deficits) showed less job satisfaction (Baier, 1978).

The current investigation confirms that tendency anew. The risk of job dissatisfaction increases in particular in combination with substandard supervision. This finding is easy to explain. Living with problematic children day after day is a hard job, as it produces a great deal of tension and stress. Such child care workers are continuously exposed to the possibility of physical and psychological harm, and in most cases have no option to remove the source of the threat. It is not without reason that in some residential settings child care workers are trained to handle aggressive children or parents. The question here is whether residential institutions do enough to give the child care workers the supervision they need.

## Conclusions

Summarising our results, we conclude that one third of the child care professionals working in residential homes in the Netherlands are not satisfied with their jobs. The aspects in the job producing most dissatisfaction are insufficient supervision and a restricted participation.

We further found that a remarkable number of child care workers feel no commitment to their institutions, as 40% per cent have the intention to leave.

The risk of job dissatisfaction turned out to be higher in proportion to the child care workers' age, level of vocational training and work experience. The organisational features of larg-

er institutions and more problematic children added to the erosion of job satisfaction. The finding that the most experienced child care workers are the least satisfied with their jobs was rather unexpected. We propose two possible explanations.

First: the better trained and older child care workers are, the more they experience their jobs as stressful. The daily confrontation with the children and their problems becomes too heavy a burden. Their motivation drops steadily and they develop a growing dislike for their jobs, culminating in a determination to leave when possible. The risk of stress among the highly trained and older child care workers is even higher when they work in groups with more problematic children and in larger institutions.

The residential homes must be alert to these phenomena. We recommend that they detect job dissatisfaction at an early stage and offer the child care workers 'at risk' of a motivational dropout enough opportunities to grow in their jobs, or offer satisfactory job alternatives. If the residential homes are unable to offer these unmotivated child care workers opportunities for promotion, they should help them in searching other employment outside the institution and perhaps outside the field of residential care altogether. All residential homes should anticipate this problem by devoting attention to *career planning for child care workers*.

Second: the older and more professional child care workers perceive an increasing gap between their psychological needs and the rewards of their jobs. This adversely affects the intrinsic as well as the extrinsic aspects of the job. The latter refers to the insufficient quality of guidance and supervision; the former to dissatisfaction with the use of the knowledge and experience of the child care worker. More specifically: the better trained and older the child care workers are, the more disappointed they are about the level of responsibility they are allowed to have, the initiatives they can take, the decisions they can make and, last but not least, the response they get from the management of their institutions.

This suggests that dissatisfied workers perceive insufficient opportunities for development and personal growth. The study in hand suggests that residential institutions underestimate and underappreciate the job efforts of the more experienced child care workers.

Our study further clarifies that child care workers need *more participation and autonomy together with more qualified supervision*. It will be hard to find any residential policy-maker who would not subscribe to the view that the child care worker is the main player in the aid process in residential care. It is time that this view were implemented at the practical level by giving the child care workers the position that they deserve.

If residential institutions do not remove the factors that promote job dissatisfaction among their child care workers, the problem they are facing will persist. The straitened labour market limits the number of alternative job opportunities, while the number of dissatisfied child care workers wanting to leave is growing. Meanwhile, the variables that predict job dissatisfaction become more and more prevailing: the child care workers grow older and have more work experience, while the organisations they work in are growing and the youngsters in care are becoming more difficult. The outcome is not hard to predict: unless policies regarding job satisfaction are changed, the residential institutions must face increasing numbers of dissatisfied child care workers who want to leave the institution but are unable to do so and will stay only for lack of any alternatives.

## References

- Argyle, M. (1972). *The social psychology of work*. London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press.
- Baier, H. (1978). Störfaktoren der Schulischen Arbeit des Lehrers an Schulen für Lernbehinderte. *Zeitschrift für Heilpädagogik*, 29, 195-204.
- Brandjes, M., Nass, C.H.Th., Van der Ploeg, J.D. & Defares, P.B. (1982). *Arbeidsbevrediging en verloop onder groepsleiding*. Wageningen: SOPS.
- Brush, D.H., Moch, M.K. & Pooyan, A. (1987). Individual demographic differences and job satisfaction. *Journal of Occupational Behaviour*, 8, 139-155.
- Bullock, R.P. (1952). *Social factors related to job satisfaction*. Columbus: Ohio State University.
- Carmines, E.G. & Zeller, R.A. (1993). *Reliability and Validity Assessment*. Londen: Sage.
- Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., Peterson, R.O. & Capwell R. (1957). *Job attitudes: review of research and opinions*. Pittsburgh: Psychological Services.
- Ligthart, L.E.E. & Daal, E.C. van (Red.) (1992). *Groepsopvoeder...nog steeds een vak apart*. Oosterhout: FICE.
- Locke, E.A. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. In: M. Dunette (Ed.). *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*. Chicago: Rand-McNally.
- Mottaz, C. (1984). Education and work satisfaction. *Human Relations*, 37, 985-1004.
- Price, J.L. & Bluedorn, A.C. (1980). Test of a causal model of organizational turnover. In: D. Dunkerley & G. Salaman (Eds), *The international yearbook of organizational studies* (pp. 217-236). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Ronen, S. (1978). Job satisfaction and the neglected variable of job seniority. *Human Relations*, 31, 297-308.
- Rump, E.E. (1979). Size of psychiatric hospital and nurses' job satisfaction. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 52 255-265.
- Schumacher, E.F. (1973). *Small is beautiful*. London: Oxford University.
- Smith, P.C., Kendall, L.M. & Hulin, C.L. (1969). *Measurement of satisfaction in work and retirement*. Chicago: Rand-McNally.
- Spector, P.E. (1997). *Job satisfaction*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Tabachnick, R.G. & Fidell, L.S. (1989). *Using multivariate statistics*. New York: Harper-Colins, Publishers.
- Ter Hoeve, A., (1977). *Over de loopbaan van groepsleiders. Onderzoeksrapport WIJN-Noord*. Groningen: WIJN.
- Van der Ploeg, J.D., Groenier, K.H. & Van der Meulen, J.H. (1978). *Onderzoek naar de arbeidsbeleving van pedagogische medewerkers*. Amsterdam: UVA, Vakgroep Orthopedagogiek.
- Van der Ploeg, J.D. & Scholte, E.M. (1988). *Tehuizen in beeld*. Leiden: WOJ.
- Van der Ploeg J.D. & Scholte, E.M. (1996). *Bj-centra in beeld 3*. Amsterdam/Delft: Nippo/Eburon.
- Van der Ploeg, J.D. & Scholte, E.M. (1997). *Arbeidsatisfactie onder groepsleiding*. Utrecht: NIZW.
- Witt, L.A. & Nye, L.G. (1992). Gender and the relationship between perceived fairness of pay or promotion and job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77, 910-917.
- Zeit, G. (1990). Age and worksatisfaction in a government agency. *Human Relations*, 43, 419-438.