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Teacher Job Satisfaction in Public Schools: The Relation to the Years of Teaching Experience

Xiaoyan Gu

SUNY College at Buffalo, gux01@mail.buffalostate.edu

Advisor

Reva M. Fish, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Social & Psychological Foundations of Education

First Reader

Jing Zhang, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Elementary Education & Reading

Department Chair

Kathy L. Wood, Ph.D., Associate Dean of the School of Education, Interim Chair of Elementary Education and Reading

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State University of New York
College at Buffalo
Department of Elementary Education and Reading

Teacher Job Satisfaction In Public Schools: The Relation to the Years of Teaching
Experience

A Thesis in
Elementary Education and Reading

By

Xiaoyan Gu

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science in Education
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Approved by:

Reva M. Fish, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Social and Psychological Foundations of Education
Thesis Advisor

Kathy Wood, Ph.D.
Associate Dean of the School of Education
Interim Chair of Elementary Education and Reading Department

Kevin Railey, Ph.D.
Associate Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

Abstract

This study examined the overall teacher job satisfaction in public schools and whether there was a relationship between years of teaching experience and teacher job satisfaction in public schools. Thirty-six teachers from western New York State were surveyed using Spector's Job Satisfaction Survey. The result showed that there was a moderate negative relationship between teacher job satisfaction of operating procedures and years of teaching experience, which means with the increase of the years of teaching experience, teachers in public schools were more dissatisfied about their heavy workload. However, there was no strong relationship between overall teacher job satisfaction and years of teaching experience.

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Job satisfaction is one of the important elements to measure employees' feelings about their job and has significant effects on the development of organizations and employees themselves (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001; Ostroff, 1992). Working conditions, including communication with supervisors and coworkers, and working pressures have effects on job satisfaction (Güleryüz, Güney, Aydın, & Aşan, 2008). Also, employee's characteristics, such as age and education background (Miller, & Travers, 2005), and benefits and promotions at work all influence employee' job satisfaction (Snipes, Oswald, LaTour, & Armenakis, 2005). Facing a shortage of teachers in education (Otto & Arnold, 2005), it is important to value teacher job satisfaction because it influences teacher turnover rate (Otto & Arnold, 2005) and quality of teaching (Demirtas, 2010). Even though many predictors of teacher job satisfaction have been found, such as pay (Certo & Fox, 2002), and working conditions (Minarik, Thornton, and Perreault, 2003), the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and years of teaching experience is still not clear (Grissmer & Kirby, 1992; Jarratt, 1983; Liu & Ramsey, 2008; Peire & Baker, 1997).

In this research, the Job Satisfaction Survey was used to measure the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and their years of teaching experience in public schools. By knowing this relationship, we can provide more support to teachers with low satisfaction of their job in certain career stages and give some suggestions about how to improve teacher job satisfaction at the beginning, middle, and end of their career, as needed.

Job Satisfaction

In the field of education, there are many studies about teacher job satisfaction (Demirtas, 2010; Jarratt, 1983; Norton, 1999; Otto & Arnold, 2005). Teachers' high turnover rates and their desire to leave the profession have resulted in public schools facing a shortage of teachers (Otto & Arnold, 2005). Research showed that high job satisfaction resulted in a low rate for teachers leaving their professions (Ingersoll, 2011). What is more, it was found that teachers with high job satisfaction could bring more enjoyment and motivation to both schools and students, which resulted in increased student success (Demirtas, 2010). In order to help solve the difficulty of losing teachers, many predictors of teacher job satisfaction have been found through research; for example, school environment, principals' leadership style, and the quality of communications with students and parents (Güteryüz, Güney, Aydın, & Aşan, 2008; Snipes, Oswald, LaTour, & Armenakis, 2005). However, teachers' characteristics, one facet of teacher job satisfaction, and in particular the years of teaching experience, have been paid less attention because the characteristics were difficult to manipulate compared with other external facets.

What Is Job Satisfaction?

Like many other concepts in social science, job satisfaction does not have a clear definition that has been widely accepted (Demirtas, 2010). According to Evans (1997), job satisfaction is an ambiguous term. Because "satisfaction" could mean "satisfactory" in some certain situations, but "satisfying" in other situations, it is hard to define the term

satisfaction. Evans (1997) combined “job comfort” and “job fulfillment” together to define job satisfaction as “a state of mind determined by the extent to which the individual perceives her/his job-related needs to be being met” (p. 833). Job satisfaction was also described as “a positive or pleasant emotional state resulting from a person’s appreciation of his/her own job experience” (Demirtas, 2010, p. 1069). Locke (1976) provided another definition of job satisfaction: “the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating one’s job values”(p. 316). Among these three definitions, the most often used by other researchers is Locke’s (Ho & Au, 2006; Ma & MacMillan, 1999; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). In this research, Locke’s definition of job satisfaction was also used to understand teacher job satisfaction.

The Outcomes of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been shown to have multiple relations with employees’ job performance. Judge et al. (2001) summarized seven models of the relationship of job satisfaction and job performance: job satisfaction causes job performance; job performance causes job satisfaction; job satisfaction and job performance are reciprocally related; the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance is spurious; the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance is moderated by other variables; there is no relationship between job satisfaction and job performance; and there are alternative conceptualizations of job satisfaction and/or job performance. These seven models have been supported by multiple studies, especially that job performance causes job satisfaction and that there are alternative conceptualizations of job satisfaction and/or

job performance (Judge et al., 2001). Ostroff (1992) reported that organizations with more satisfied employees were more effective than other organizations, which supports the job satisfaction causes job performance model. However, Laffaldano and Muchinsky (1985) argued that the relation between job satisfaction and job performance was low. Ostroff (1992) explained that research showed the model stating there was no relationship between job satisfaction and job performance existed at the individual level, not the organization level.

Predictors of Job Satisfaction

Personal characteristics such as age, education background and self-control (Miller, & Travers, 2005), as well as working conditions such as peer communication, and work place stress have influence on job satisfaction (Güleryüz, et al., 2008). What is more, the satisfaction level with their supervisors, salary, coworkers, and promotions also impact people's overall job satisfaction (Snipes, et al., 2005).

Measurement of Job Satisfaction

A Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) developed by Spector was widely used to measure the level of job satisfaction in the public service field (Kim, Murrmann & Lee, 2009; Li & Lambert, 2008; Naderi Anari, 2012; Murray, 1999). In this survey, nine subscales were designed to measure job satisfaction on pay, promotion, supervision, benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, nature of work, communication and overall job satisfaction. This job satisfaction survey was also used to measure teacher job satisfaction in some studies (Crossman & Harris, 2006; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). In this study,

Spector's Job Satisfaction Survey was used to measure teacher job satisfaction level in public schools.

Teacher Job Satisfaction

Importance of Teacher Job Satisfaction

Based on Locke's (1976) definition of job satisfaction, teacher job satisfaction could be described as teachers' positive emotional state resulting from their appreciation of being teachers. Improving teacher job satisfaction is important because research showed that younger teachers were more likely to leave their jobs because of low job satisfaction, which leads to a shortage of teacher (Green-Reese, Johnson, & Campbell, 1991). Also, teachers with high job satisfaction provided higher quality teaching and their students were more successful (Demirtas, 2010), which meant high teacher job satisfaction benefits education overall. In order to improve the quality of teaching and ease the difficulty of a shortage of teachers, it is very important to maintain teachers' high job satisfaction.

External Predictors of Teacher Job Satisfaction

Since teacher job satisfaction could influence teacher career stability, researchers have paid attention to the predictors that could influence teacher job satisfaction. Research regarding Spector's nine facets of job satisfaction is described below.

Pay, benefits and promotions. Elam (1989) reported one of the reasons for teachers' dissatisfaction was low salary, and Certo and Fox (2002) reported that teachers with higher salaries had higher level of job satisfaction. Poor school districts faced the

risk of losing teachers and having low teacher quality where there was low job satisfaction among teachers (Billingsley, 2004). Also, benefits such as a good retirement system, travelling welfare, and subsidies for future education would have a positive influence on teacher job satisfaction (Chen, Yang, Shiau, & Wang, 2006). As for promotion, Wong and Wong (2005) found that teachers in Hong Kong had a low satisfaction about promotion, which influenced the organization outcomes, especially the commitment to their schools.

Working conditions. Working conditions, including supervision, operating procedures, co-workers, and communication, have been important factors to influence teacher job satisfaction (Norton, 1999). McGlamory and Edick (2004) reported the Cadre project, a support program for newly certified elementary or secondary teachers, could provide teachers with more personal and professional development, significantly increasing their job satisfaction and trend to stay in their profession. Minarik, Thornton, and Perreault (2003) found several factors that could cause low teacher job satisfaction, such as not enough mentoring, lack of administrative and community support, students' misbehaviors, and unsafe working conditions. Other research showed that bad working conditions and heavy teaching workload also reduced teacher job satisfaction (Liu & Ramsey, 2008). Moreover, the way that principals manage their schools, the relationships with coworkers were the other two main factors and lack of peer support was another facet to influence teacher job satisfaction (Minarik, Thornton, & Perreault, 2003). In some school districts, teachers were assigned to teach other subjects rather than their own

specialty because of the shortage of teacher; which resulted in teachers not having enough time to prepare for teaching and dissatisfaction with their job (Liu & Ramsey, 2008).

Nature of work and contingent rewards. Teachers who love their jobs will have a higher level of job satisfaction. Norton (1999) found that teachers who were committed to the role of teacher would have a higher job satisfaction than those who were not. Minarik, Thornton, and Perreault (2003) also found that if teachers were not given enough contingent rewards for their teaching skills and knowledge would cause teachers leave their profession. This included not feeling appreciated at work and efforts not being appropriately rewarded.

Teacher Characteristics and Teacher Job Satisfaction

Besides external predictors from the work environment, teachers' personal characteristics also had an influence on their own job satisfaction. Gender and nationality were critical elements that could influence teacher job satisfaction. Liu and Ramsey (2008) found that female teachers were less satisfied with their job than male teachers. Miller and Travers (2005) reported that teachers who were born overseas were less satisfied with their job because of the ethnic discrimination in their work places. They also reported poor health conditions of teachers would lead to lower job satisfaction. Teachers' self-efficacy directly influenced their job satisfaction (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). The researchers reported that teachers with a high level of self-efficacy, had better classroom management and instructional strategies, which resulted in higher job

satisfaction in their teaching. Teachers were more dissatisfied with their jobs if they thought they could not meet their own expectations and the challenges from their work; this showed that low self-efficacy would lower teacher job satisfaction (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni & Steca, 2003).

Years of teaching experience. Teachers' years of teaching experience, another important teacher characteristic, was another predictor of teacher job satisfaction, and researchers have reported different outcomes of the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and years of teaching experience. Norton (1991) and Wise, Darling-Hammond and Berry (1987) found that 50% of new teachers quit in their first five years of teaching. Ingersoll (2011) reported that teachers tend to leave their profession at the first few years of teaching because of low job satisfaction. Grissmer and Kirby (1992) identified a change in the relationship between teacher attrition rate and teaching experience: the attrition rate was high for early career teachers, low for mid-career teachers, and high for late-career teachers who were near retirement. Liu and Ramsey (2008) found that teacher job satisfaction become higher with increase years of teaching. They explained that most dissatisfied teachers had already left their profession after a few years of teaching and would not be included in research about job satisfaction. In contrast, Parkhouse and Johnson (1980) argued that physical education teacher job satisfaction would decrease with years of teaching. Perie and Baker (1997) also reported the teachers' experience was negatively related to teacher job satisfaction. Finally, there

was also research that concluded there was no relationship between teacher job satisfaction and teaching experience (Jarratt, 1983).

Studies about the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and years of teaching experience were inconsistent. In order to have a better understanding of the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and year of teaching experience, the present study used Spector's (1985) Job Satisfaction Survey to measure the job satisfaction level of teachers in Western New York State schools.

Method

Participants

In order to find out the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and their years of teaching experience, 36 teachers from public schools in western New York were surveyed by using Spector's Job Satisfaction Survey. All participants were employed by public schools as full time teachers. Teacher aids and substitute teachers were excluded from this research. A convenience sample was used in this research. Participants were accessed from three different resources: Professional Development School (PDS) meetings, graduate classes for full time teachers in one comprehensive public college in western New York, and researcher's personal networking in one public elementary school in western New York.

After being approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of college, the data were collected in two ways. One way was that the researcher distributed in person and collected them when they were completed. The second way was to ask professors who

had access to public school teachers to distribute the surveys. After the participants completed the surveys, the professors returned the surveys to the researcher.

All participation was voluntary. The participants were asked to finish their surveys independently, which took them approximately 10 minutes.

The years of teaching experience reported by the 36 teachers ranged from one month to 30 years and seven months. Twelve (33.3%) teachers reported that they had less than five years teaching experience.

Instrument

Job satisfaction survey. The Job Satisfaction Survey designed by Spector is a 36-item Likert-scale survey that assesses nine facets of job satisfaction in public service. The nine facets are pay, promotion, supervision, benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, co-workers, nature of work, and communication. The Job Satisfaction Survey is in Appendix A.

Reliability and validity. Spector (1985) reported that the internal consistency reliability of each of the nine subscales was above 0.5 based on a sample of 2870. Also, test-retest reliability was taken from a smaller sample of 43 respondents after 18 months and the correlation coefficients between subscales ranged from 0.37 to 0.74, which meant a high stability of responses over time.

Spector (1985) indicated that the discriminant and convergent validities of the Job Satisfaction Survey were provided by a multitrait-multimethod analysis. He reported the results of the multitrait-multimethod analysis met all four criteria of Campbell and Fiske

(1959) discriminant and convergent validities. Also he analyzed the individual items of Job Satisfaction Survey using principal components with varimax rotation and the results showed that there was suggestive convergent validity in the individual items.

Years of teaching experience. Participants were asked to provide information about how many years and months they have been a full time teacher. This question was presented after the Job Satisfaction Survey.

Data Analysis

Data were entered into the Statistical Package for Social Services (SPSS) software version 21.0. Participant responses to all survey questions were recorded. Year of teaching experience was converted to the number of months of experience. Scale and subscale scores were computed using Spector's instructions for scoring the survey, including reverse scoring negatively worded items in the JSS.

In order to answer the research question, "What is the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and years of teaching experience?" Pearson correlation analysis was used to analyze the strength and direction of this relationship.

Results

Teacher Job Satisfaction in Nine Subscales

Teacher job satisfaction in each subscale was determined by summing the four associated questions in each of the nine subscales. According to Spector, subscale scores ranging from 4 to 12 indicate dissatisfaction, 12 to 16 indicate ambivalent, and 16 to 24 indicate satisfaction with the job. Among all nine subscales of job satisfaction, the most

satisfaction was indicated in the nature of work with 34 of 36 (94.4%) of the sample reporting satisfaction. Questions such as “I like doing things I do at work” and “I feel a sense of pride in doing my job” were included in the subscale “nature of work”. The least satisfied aspect of teaching was in the operating procedures subscale where 4 of 36 (11.1%) people reported satisfaction. Questions such as “I have too much to do at work” and “I have too much paperwork” were included in the subscale “operating procedures”. Numbers and percentage of satisfaction for each of the nine subscales are shown in Table 1.

Table 1:
Numbers and Percentage of Satisfaction for Nine Subscales

	Numbers of Satisfaction	Percentage of Satisfaction
Pay	14	38.9%
Promotion	7	19.4%
Supervision	28	77.8%
Benefits	19	52.8%
Contingent Rewards	16	44.4%
Operating Procedures	4	11.1%
Co-workers	32	88.9%
Nature of Work	34	94.4%
Communication	22	61.1%

Overall Teacher Job Satisfaction

The overall teacher job satisfaction was measured by summing the total of all 36 items. According to Spector’s guideline for interpreting the total job satisfaction score from his Job Satisfaction Survey, ranges from 36 to 108 indicate dissatisfaction, from 108 to 144 indicate ambivalent, and from 144 to 216 indicate satisfaction with the job.

Among 36 respondents, 16 (44.4%) the teachers reported satisfaction in their job, 20 responses were ambivalent, and none were in the dissatisfaction range.

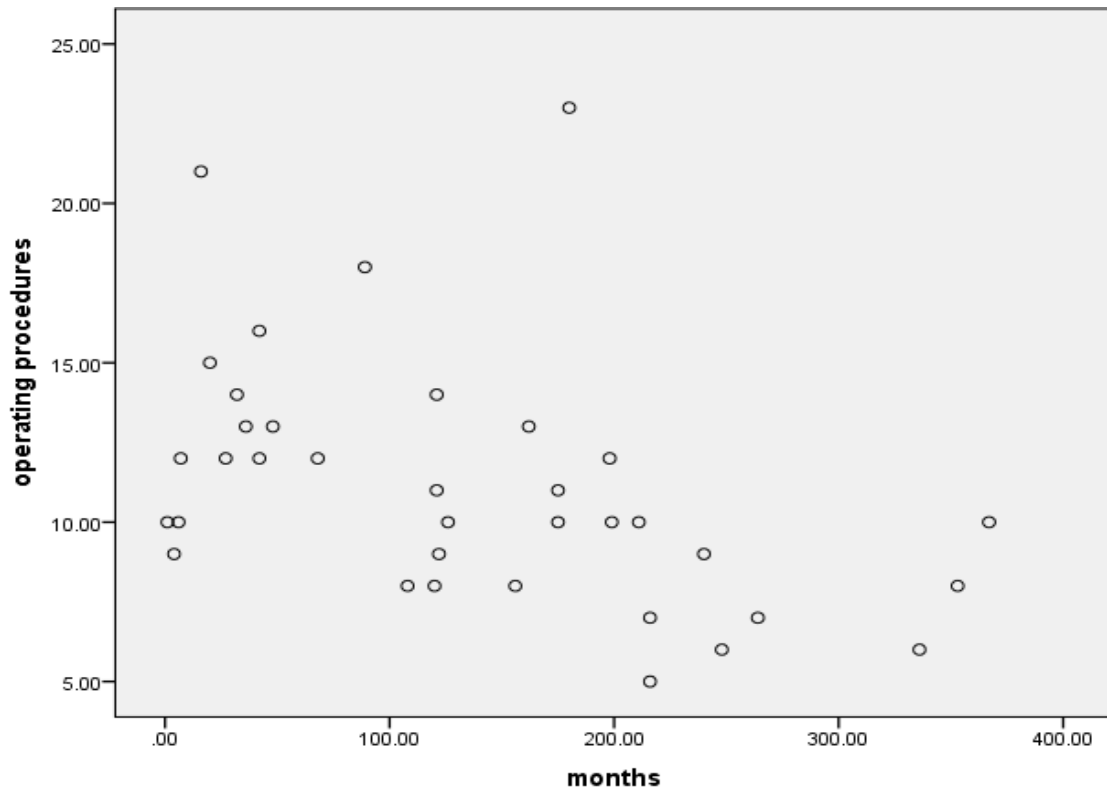
The Relationship Between Teacher Job Satisfaction and Years of Teaching

Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between years of teaching experience and teacher job satisfaction. A general rule of thumb for interpreting the Pearson correlation coefficient is that values close to 0.00 indicate no relationship at all; values near 0.30 or -0.30 indicate a weak relationship; values near 0.50 or -0.50 indicate a moderate relationship; values near 0.70 or -0.70 indicated a strong relationship; and values of 1.00 or -1.00 indicate a perfect relationship.

Based on these guidelines, the only subscale with more than a weak relationship with years of teaching was the subscale operating procedures was $r = -0.452$, which indicated a weak to moderate negative relationship between the satisfaction level of operating procedures and years of teaching experience. Questions such as “Many of our rules and procedures make doing a good job difficult” and “My effort to do a good job are seldom blocked by red tape” were asked in subscale operating procedures, which meant with the increasing of years of teaching experience, teachers felt more dissatisfaction about the operating procedures in their work. A scatterplot of the relation between the satisfaction level of operating procedures and years of teaching experience is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1:

The Satisfaction Level of Operating Procedures and Years of Teaching Experience



The value of r for overall job satisfaction was -0.132 , which indicated that there was no relationship between the overall teacher job satisfaction level and years of teaching experience. The value of r for teaching experience and all nine subscales and overall job satisfaction are presented in Table 2.

Table 2:

Value of r of Nine Subscales and Overall Job Satisfaction

	Value of <i>r</i>
Pay	0.133
Promotion	- 0.207
Supervision	0.148
Benefits	0.065
Contingent Rewards	- 0.115
Operating Procedures	- 0.452
Co-workers	0.038
Nature of Work	- 0.306
Communication	- 0.304
Overall Job Satisfaction	- 0.132

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to find out whether there was a relationship between teacher job satisfaction and years of teaching experience. The correlation analysis showed that there was no significant relationship between overall teacher job satisfaction and the years of teaching experience, which supported Jarratt's (1983) finding. However, there was a weak to moderate negative relationship between the satisfaction of operating procedures and the years of teaching experience. This result showed that with the increase of teaching experience, teachers were less satisfied with the load of teaching in their work.

The analysis in this research showed that the overall teacher job satisfaction was not high. Less than half (44.4%) of the participants reported satisfaction in their job, and most of the participants (55.6%) had ambiguous attitude about their job. Teachers were unhappy about their job mainly because the operating procedures in their job, which meant they had too much paperwork to do and they had a heavy teach load at work. This

result supported Liu and Ramsey's (2008) finding that bad working conditions, especially heavy workload reduced teacher job satisfaction.

There were some limitations to the sample used in this research. The sample was small with only 36 participants. Also, most of the participants were from one school district, which could have influenced the results of the weak relationship between teacher job satisfaction towards operating procedures at work and years of teaching experience and the lack of any other relationships found between years of teaching experience and job satisfaction.

In future research, more participants from a variety of school districts should be included in the sample. Also, more demographic data could be included in the research to explore the relationship between other teacher characteristics and job satisfaction, such as teaching subject, gender, and education background.

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Appendix A: Job Satisfaction Survey

<p align="center">JOB SATISFACTION SURVEY Paul E. Spector Department of Psychology University of South Florida Copyright Paul E. Spector 1994, All rights reserved.</p>							
<p align="center">PLEASE CIRCLE THE ONE NUMBER FOR EACH QUESTION THAT COMES CLOSEST TO REFLECTING YOUR OPINION ABOUT IT.</p>		Disagree very much	Disagree moderately	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree moderately	Agree very much
1	I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	There is really too little chance for promotion on my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	My supervisor is quite competent in doing his/her job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	I am not satisfied with the benefits I receive.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	When I do a good job, I receive the recognition for it that I should receive.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	Many of our rules and procedures make doing a good job difficult.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	I like the people I work with.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	I sometimes feel my job is meaningless.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	Communications seem good within this organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	Raises are too few and far between.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	Those who do well on the job stand a fair chance of being promoted.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	My supervisor is unfair to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	The benefits we receive are as good as most other organizations offer.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	I do not feel that the work I do is appreciated.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	My efforts to do a good job are seldom blocked by red tape.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	I find I have to work harder at my job because of the incompetence of people I work with.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	I like doing the things I do at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	The goals of this organization are not clear to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6

TEACHER JOB SATISFACTION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: THE RELATION TO YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

PLEASE CIRCLE THE ONE NUMBER FOR EACH QUESTION THAT COMES CLOSEST TO REFLECTING YOUR OPINION ABOUT IT. Copyright Paul E. Spector 1994, All rights reserved.		Disagree very much	Disagree moderately	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree moderately	Agree very much
19	I feel unappreciated by the organization when I think about what they pay me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	People get ahead as fast here as they do in other places.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	My supervisor shows too little interest in the feelings of subordinates.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	The benefit package we have is equitable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	There are few rewards for those who work here.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	I have too much to do at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	I enjoy my coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26	I often feel that I do not know what is going on with the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	I feel a sense of pride in doing my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28	I feel satisfied with my chances for salary increases.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	There are benefits we do not have which we should have.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30	I like my supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31	I have too much paperwork.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32	I don't feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33	I am satisfied with my chances for promotion.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	There is too much bickering and fighting at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35	My job is enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36	Work assignments are not fully explained.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Years of teaching experience: _____ year(s) _____ month(s)