

Technical Report

RELATIONSHIP OF JOB INVOLVEMENT
TO PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND
SATISFACTION OF EMPLOYEE NEED

by

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Sasi Misra

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**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT
AHMEDABAD**

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ABSTRACT (within 250 words)

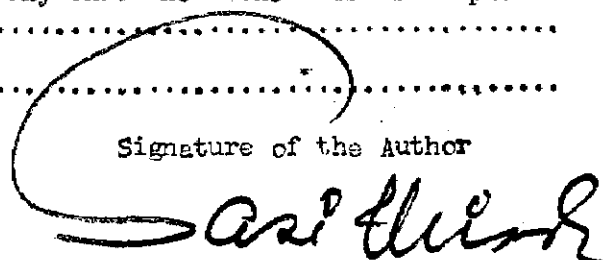
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RELATIONSHIP OF JOB INVOLVEMENT TO PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND
SATISFACTION OF EMPLOYEE NEEDS

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ABSTRACT

Relationship between attitude of job involvement and patterns of perceived need importance, need satisfaction, and need strength were explored. Data were collected from 64 high-involved and 77 low involved employees of two Indian organizations. Results revealed that the attitude of job-involvement acted as a moderator variable only with respect to employee's cognitive evaluation of the importance of need on the job. High involved employees as compared to low involved employees, attached greater importance to safety and self-actualization needs and lesser importance to physiological and social needs. With respect to the patterns of need satisfaction and need strength, the high and low involved employees did not differ. Both groups were least satisfied with and felt strongest needs in physiological and self-actualization areas. Several hypotheses derived from Maslow's need hierarchy notion could not be supported by the results. It was postulated that the cognitive value system of perceived need importance which is influenced by job involvement attitude is different from experiential evaluation of need satisfaction and strength which are more a function of the cue properties of the job and its environment.

RELATIONSHIP OF JOB INVOLVEMENT TO PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND SATISFACTION OF EMPLOYEE NEEDS

The attitude of work alienation or job involvement has been considered as very central to work motivation (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Seeman, 1971) and yet very few studies have been done to explore the relationship between job involvement and patterns of perceived needs and their satisfactions on the job. Most of the theories of human motivation (Alderfer, 1972; Herzberg, 1966; Maslow, 1954) direct their efforts to identify the strength of various need categories and to suggest that job behavior is primarily determined by the perceived strength and satisfaction of these needs in the employees. Very little attention has been paid by these theories to job involvement as a moderator variable influencing employee's perception of importance, strength and satisfaction of his needs. The present study is an attempt to explore the relationship between the attitude of job involvement and patterns of perceived importance of the needs, and their satisfaction on the job.

The attitude of job involvement or its opposite job alienation represents the degree to which the total job situation is thought of as being central to one's life or self-concept. In this sense, it is similar to what Seeman (1971) refers to as "self-estrangement". An employee perceives himself as self-estranged when he thinks he is engaged in activities on the job that are not meaningful in themselves, but are simply means to other ends. Thus, for the alienated employee, work is something which is not intrinsically meaningful and rewarding. An involved employee on the other hand expects his work to be intrinsically rewarding because he thinks work provides him the opportunity for self-expression. Both Marx and Fromm (1966)

have used the concept of alienation in this sense.

From psychological point of view, the specific attitude of job involvement is different from and independent of both the actual feelings of need satisfactions experienced by the employee on the job (Lawler & Hall, 1970; Seeman, 1971), and his cognitive value system with respect to the perceived instrumentalities of the job for need satisfactions (Rowe, 1973). The job involvement attitude refers to "the internalization of values about the goodness of work or the importance of work in the worth of the person" (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965, p.24). It represents an employee's ego-involvement or commitment in his job. In some ways, it reflects the degree to which the employee has internalized the 'protestant ethics' during his socialization process. It is the by-product of his background and personal experiences in the past and is often carried by him from job to job. Thus, it is conceived as a more stable individual characteristic and therefore more a function of the person than of the job (Lawler & Hall, 1970). The attitude of job satisfaction on the other hand, is much more of a transient state of the employee. It is determined by the degree of fulfillment of an employee's needs on the job due to the presence or absence of certain job factors or outcomes such as salary, independence, etc. Thus, while the job involvement dimension varies from complete identification (attitude of belongingness) to lack of any relation (don't care attitude) with the job, the job satisfaction dimension varies from specific need-fulfillment to need-frustration on the job depending upon the attainment of desired

goals through job activity. It is quite conceivable that an employee may be highly satisfied but not involved or highly involved but not satisfied. While some have argued that job-involvement is positively related to job satisfaction, at least in the area of Herzberg's motivators, and therefore the former can be predicted from the knowledge of the latter (Weissenberg & Bruenfeld, 1968), it is doubtful whether this relationship is a stable one. Since job involvement is more of an individual difference type variable dependent on past socialization of the employee and job-satisfaction is more of a job or situational difference type variable dependent on presence or absence of job factors, the relationship between the two is expected to be minimal.

According to expectancy theories of motivation (Vroom, 1964; Porter Lawler, 1968), satisfaction in a job is not only dependent on the presence or absence of job factors that are intended to satisfy employee needs but also on the importance that the employee attaches to these needs or job factors. Each employee has a cognitive value system with respect to what job factors he considers more important than others. This determines the valence of outcomes from the job for the employees. While one employee may feel very satisfied in an organization that has excellent fringe benefit plans because in his scheme of things, fringe benefits are the most important outcomes that he is looking for from his job, another employee in the same situation may not feel very satisfied because he attaches lesser importance to fringe benefits compared to other job factors. Thus, employees differ with respect to the perceived importance

of various job factors they want on the job. It is proposed here that the cognitive value system representing employee's perceived importance of job factors rather than the experiential system representing degree of satisfaction with various job factors (Rowe, 1975) is influenced by the attitude of job involvement. The employee's attitude of job involvement would influence selective perception of instrumentalities of the job or what he expects from the job and thereby would determine the valence of various job factors for him. Within any organisation, there are always some employees who are more job-involved than others. But all employees consider their job as being instrumental in satisfying some of their needs. Differences in their job-involvement attitude may influence the employees to look at the same job in very different perspectives, and may direct them to emphasize different kinds of goal attainments in the job. But their satisfactions on the job may depend upon whether or not the job actually offers them to an adequate extent what they want and consider important. The need strength in the employees for various job factors will also depend on their level of satisfactions or frustrations actually experienced on the job due to the presence or absence of various job factors and not on their job involvement attitude.

In the context of Maslow's (1954) need categories and their hierarchy, the present study is designed to explore the relationships of job involvement to experiential and cognitive systems operating within employees.

The following specific hypotheses are tested:

Hypothesis 1. The job-involved employees will attach greater importance to those job factors or outcomes that tend to satisfy higher order needs like ego and self-actualization needs than to those job factors that tend to satisfy lower order needs like physiological, safety, and social needs.

Hypothesis 2. The reverse of hypothesis 1 will be true for the job-alienated employees.

Hypothesis 3. The job-involved and job-alienated employees will not differ either with respect to their levels of satisfaction or with respect to their need strength for the various job factors.

An additional purpose of the study is to test some of the implications of Maslow's (1954) theory of growth motivation in a cultural setup different from the one to which Maslow's theory is mostly applied. The present study was conducted in a developing country where for most of the employees the lower order needs are not adequately met. Thus, it is expected that the employees in general will show a greater concern for and experience greater dissatisfaction with these needs as compared to higher order needs. For the same reasons, the strength of lower order needs should be higher for them than the strength of higher order needs which in case of many employees may perhaps be psychologically non-existent. Thus, the following three additional hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis 4. The employees will show greater dissatisfaction with job factors that satisfy lower order needs than higher order needs.

Hypothesis 5. Consequently, the employees will show greater need strength for the lower than higher order needs.

Hypothesis 6. The overall job satisfaction of employees will depend more on the satisfaction of lower than higher order needs.

METHOD

Sample

Data were collected from a total of 141 employees belonging to two different industrial organizations; one located in mid-western and the other in the north-western region of India. Within each organization, the sample included the non-supervisory rank and file, and supervisory lower and middle management personnel. A detailed breakdown of the sample with respect to various demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1 HERE

Inspection of the last column of Table 1 reveals that the sample was predominantly married adult males, coming mainly from urban backgrounds, and with more than two years of work experience within the organization. Nearly half of the sample were college graduates and the other half high school graduates. A high percentage of these belonged to lower and lower middle class income categories. Although the sample does not represent a wide cross-section of employees throughout India with respect to the demographic characteristics, the sample approximates very closely the typical educated industrial employees in urban India.

Procedures

The rank and file members in the sample were interviewed individually on the basis of a questionnaire.² The management personnel included in the sample however, were asked to fill-in the questionnaire themselves, and to consult the interviewer only when they faced any problem with respect to any given item in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of five parts. The first part was intended to collect personal demographic data from the respondents, such as their age, sex, marital status, urban-rural background, level of education, income, and length of service within the organization. The second part listed 13 job factors and the respondents were asked to rank them by assigning numbers 1 to 13 according to the perceived importance of these factors for them on the job. These job factors represented the five Maslow-type need categories. Three job factors, salary, fringe benefits, and physical working condition, represented 'physiological' need category. The 'safety' need category was represented by two job factors, job security and management policy and practices. The 'social' need category included three job factors, good interpersonal peer relations on the job, considerate, and technically competent supervisors. The 'ego' need category included two factors, recognition and responsibility on the job. Finally, the 'self-actualization' need category was represented by three factors; the interesting nature of work, opportunity for advancement, and achievement.

In part three of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to indicate their present level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction in their job with respect to each of the 13 job factors. For this purpose, a six-point scale was used. Ordinal weights of 1, 2, and 3 were assigned to extremely, moderately and mildly dissatisfied and weights of 4, 5, and 6 were assigned to mildly, moderately and extremely satisfied points of the scale, respectively. Besides the 13 items for each of which the respondents were required to indicate their levels of satisfaction, there was another item that was intended to measure the respondent's overall job satisfaction on a similar six-point scale.

The fourth part of the questionnaire was designed to measure the strength of the needs of the respondents. For each of the 13 job factors, the need strength was measured by asking the respondent to indicate the amount of change they would like to see on their jobs. For this purpose, a nine-point floating-anchor type scale was used, in which, the middle point with an ordinal weight of 5 indicated 'no change' for each respondent. Each respondent was instructed that for any given job factor, if he does not want any change from what he now has because the job factor as presently exists is all that he needs to work most effectively, he may respond by circling the midpoint of the scale. If however, he wants more or less of the job factor than what his job presently has, he may circle appropriate points to the right with increasing ordinal weights or left with decreasing ordinal weights respectively. The amount of desired change indicated on this scale for each job factor was the measure of the

need strength. This method of measuring need strength by providing a floating midpoint anchor to each respondent is considered better than the one devised by Porter (1961) and generally used by other investigators. Porter asked the respondents to indicate how much there is and how much there should be of a job factor, both on seven-point scales and used the discrepancy score as a measure of need strength. However, since respondents may have varying standards of judging on a seven-point scale, their perceptions of how much there is of a job factor, the discrepancy score is liable to be contaminated by regression effect.³

The final part of the questionnaire consisted of 20 items of the job-involvement scale developed by Lodahl and Kejner (1965). The respondents were asked to indicate on a four-point scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) their degree of agreement or disagreement to each item.

RESULTS

In order to test the first three hypotheses, the respondents were divided into two groups of high and low job-involvement. Since the job-involvement scale had a possible range of scores from 20 to 80, respondents who obtained a score of 50 or above were assigned to high job-involvement groups. The high job-involved group (mean = 59.98 SD = 4.42) consisted of 64 respondents, and the low involved group (mean = 39.44 SD = 6.11) consisted of 77 respondents. The various demographic characteristics of the two groups are presented in Table 1. Chi-square tests on the frequency data for each of the demographic

variables revealed significant relation in three cases. High involved group tended to have greater number of respondents who were married rather than single ($\chi^2 = 4.92, p < .05$), and who had more job experience ($\chi^2 = 8.98, p < .01$), and more income ($\chi^2 = 8.84, p < .05$). For the rest of the demographic variables, the high and low involvement groups seemed more or less matched.

Job Involvement and Perceived Importance of Needs

From the responses to part two of the questionnaire, five mean rankings, one for each of the five sets of job factors corresponding to the five need categories were calculated for each respondent. A 2 x 5 analysis of variance on repeated measures was performed on these mean rank scores. There were two levels of job involvement and five need categories. The main effect of need categories ($F(4,695) = 51.097, p < .01$) and the interaction effect ($F(4,695) = 2.550, p < .05$) were found to be significant. Inspection of the means as presented in Table 2 shows the nature of the main and interaction effects. For the entire sample, the importance attached to the five categories of needs is arranged in the following order: self-actualization, ego, safety, physiological and social. However, when the high and low involvement groups are compared with one another, certain interesting patterns emerge. It will be noticed that social and physiological needs are considered by both the groups to be of least importance. However, in the case of both the need categories, the low-involved group considers them to be of greater importance than the high

involved group. On the other hand with respect to self-actualization need category which is considered the most important by both the groups, the high involved group attaches greater importance to it than the low involved group. The high involved group also attaches greater importance to safety need category than the low involved group. These results only partially support Hypotheses 1 and 2.

TABLE 2 HERE

It seems that although the respondents in general value higher order need satisfaction more than lower order need satisfaction on the job, their job involvement attitudes seem to have some moderator influence on their cognitive value systems. High job involvement attitudes on the part of the respondents tend to result in a greater emphasis on self-actualization and safety needs and a lesser emphasis on social and physiological needs, whereas low job involvement attitudes seem to produce the opposite pattern. With respect to ego needs, the difference among the two groups is very minimal. Although the observed differences with respect to the perceived importance of self-actualization, social and physiological needs are consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 2, the greater emphasis placed on safety need by high involved group was rather unexpected. In Indian job market context, where the rate of unemployment is very high, it is quite reasonable to expect a greater importance attached to job security by all employees. But why should high involved group attach greater importance to it than the low involved group? One explanation of this finding may be that for the on-the-job satisfaction of self-actualization

needs which the high involved group consider to be most important, they have to have their safety needs met. In their cognitive value system, they may be considering their safety need satisfaction as a crucial step to their self-actualization need satisfaction. The validity of this explanation, however, remains to be tested by future research.

Job Involvement and Need Satisfaction Experienced on the Job

Levels of actual satisfaction derived from the job with respect to each of the five need categories were calculated for each respondent from his responses to part three of the questionnaire. Again a 2 x 5 analysis of variance similar to the one described earlier was performed on the satisfaction scores. Neither high-low involvement effect, nor its interaction with need category effect was found to be significant. This supports hypothesis 3 that with respect to actual levels of need satisfaction the job-involved and job-alienated employees will not differ from one another. The only main effect that was significant was the need category effect ($F(4, 695) = 6.527, p < .01$). The mean satisfaction scores as presented in Table 3 reveals that both the groups of respondents are most satisfied with social needs, and next in order comes safety and ego needs. The needs that they are least satisfied

TABLE 3 HERE

with are in the areas of physiological and self-actualization need categories. These results do not support hypotheses 4. Although the respondents are least satisfied with job factors like salary, fringe benefit and working conditions, they are also less satisfied with self-

actualization goals such as interesting nature of work, opportunity for advancement, etc., that their job provides. It appears that the lack of opportunity for lower order need satisfaction does not necessarily make the higher order needs psychologically non-existent for the respondents. The respondents seem to react to the presence or absence of each category of job factors. Due to the underdeveloped nature of the economy, the employees feel a lack of adequate satisfaction of physiological needs. But at the same time, they also feel the lack of satisfaction of their self-actualization needs. This may be caused by the traditional management system of operation within the organization.

Part three of the questionnaire included an item to measure the overall satisfaction experienced by the respondents on the job. Analysis of the overall satisfaction score revealed that the high involved group (mean = 4.68, SD = 1.16) was not different from the low involved group (mean = 4.62, SD = 1.29). This again supports hypothesis 3, and is consistent with the comparisons between the two groups with respect to each need category as presented in Table 3.

Job Involvement and Need Strength Experienced on the Job

Levels of need strength of each need category was calculated for each respondent from his responses to part four of the questionnaire. It may be recalled that need strength was measured on a nine-point scale in terms amount of desired change, either more or less of a job factor, from the existing level represented by a score of 5. Thus, farther away

a score is from 5, greater was the need strength. Analysis of variance was performed on the need-strength scores in the same manner as was done for satisfaction scores. Here again, no significant effect was obtained either for the high and low involvement group or for its interaction with need categories. These results support hypothesis 3 that the need-strength of high and low involved groups will not differ from one another. The main effect of need category, however, was found to be significant ($F(4,695) = 8.96, p < .01$). The mean need-strength scores are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4. HERE

For both high and low involved groups, the social needs appear to have least strength, and next in order comes ego and safety needs. The physiological and self-actualization need categories are the strongest needs experienced by the respondents. The pattern of need strength as shown in Table 4 is quite consistent with the pattern of need satisfaction shown in Table 3.

Those need categories that are shown to have high levels of satisfaction in Table 3, are the ones that have low strength. These findings are in line with the notion that need satisfaction decreases need strength. However, the findings do not support hypothesis 5 that strength of lower order needs will be greater than that of higher order needs. Although physiological needs appear to be the strongest, next in strength comes self-actualization needs. The greater strength of these two need categories reflects greater environmental deprivation of appropriate goals for material comfort and personal growth.

Relation of Overall Job Satisfaction to Satisfaction with Various
Need Categories

In order to test hypothesis 6 that the overall job satisfaction will depend more on the satisfaction of lower than higher order needs, the overall job satisfaction scores of the respondents were correlated with their satisfaction with each of the job factors. The product moment correlations are presented in Table 5. Inspection of Table 5 shows a trend opposite of hypothesis 6. The magnitude of correlations tend to be higher for higher order need categories than for lower order need categories. This suggests that satisfaction of ego and self-actualization needs are better predictors of overall job satisfaction among the respondents than satisfaction of physiological and safety needs.

TABLE 5 HERE

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study provided support to the notion that employee's attitude of job involvement can act as a moderator variable and can influence employee's cognitive evaluation of the importance of various job factors. However, the job involvement attitude does not influence either the actual experience of satisfaction on the job or the employee's strength of various needs. Need satisfactions and need strengths are very much a function of the job and its environment in which appropriate goals for need satisfaction may be present or absent in varying degrees. Thus, high and low involved employees did not differ with respect to their

need satisfactions and need strengths, but did attach differential importance to job factors representing higher and lower order needs.

The respondents in the present study belonged to India, a developing country, where the lower order needs are expected to be the most salient force governing their behavior. Contrary to such expectations, the results revealed that the respondents in their cognitive evaluation consider self-actualization on the job to be most important and social and physiological need satisfaction to be least important (Table 2). The respondents also exhibit a stronger desire for self-actualization need satisfactions alongside physiological need satisfaction (Table 3 and 4). Furthermore, their overall job satisfaction is more strongly related to higher order need satisfaction than to lower order need satisfaction (Table 5). These findings provide lack of support for hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 and thus questions the validity and generalizability of Maslow's need hierarchy concept. For instance, the need hierarchy concept cannot explain how the self-actualization need satisfaction be desired so strongly by the employees when their physiological needs are also very strong. The present results however are consistent with the notion that various needs co-exist within the employees with varying degrees of strength and that the satisfaction and strength of these needs are a function of the cue properties of the job and its environment.

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Footnotes

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2. A copy of the questionnaire can be obtained from the authors.
3. For instance, two respondents may indicate their job perceptions with respect to "how much there is now" of a job factor by circling 3 and 5 on the 7-point scale. When they are again asked to indicate "how much there should be" of the same job factor also on a 7-point scale, one respondent has 4 points to move to the right of the scale where as the other has only half as much scope for such movement, even if the latter may actually want equal amount of change in the job factor.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents Expressed

in Percentages

	<u>High Involvement</u> (N = 64)	<u>Low Involvement</u> (N = 77)	<u>Total</u> (N = 141)
<u>Organizational level</u>			
Supervisory	37.50	52.25	46.31
Non-Supervisory	62.50	46.75	53.69
<u>Job experience</u>			
Less than 2 years	14.06	36.36	26.24
More than 2 years	85.93	63.63	73.75
<u>Income level</u>			
Lower (below Rs 300)	21.87	29.87	26.24
Lower middle (Rs 300-699)	35.93	48.05	42.55
Upper middle (Rs 700-1,200)	25.00	7.79	15.60
Upper (Above Rs 1,200)	17.18	14.28	15.60
<u>Education</u>			
Less than High School	9.37	10.38	9.92
High School Grad.	43.75	42.85	43.26
College Grad.	46.87	46.75	46.80
<u>Age</u>			
20-30 years	54.68	70.12	63.12
31-40 years	40.62	25.97	32.62
41-50 years	4.68	3.89	4.25
<u>Sex</u>			
Male	92.18	84.41	87.94
Female	7.81	15.58	12.05
<u>Marital Status</u>			
Married	70.31	51.94	60.28
Single	29.68	48.05	39.71
<u>Background</u>			
Rural	39.06	40.25	39.71
Urban	60.93	59.74	60.28

Table 2
Perceived Importance of Need Categories

<u>Need Categories</u>	<u>High Involvement</u>		<u>Low Involvement</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Physiological	7.22	2.87	6.93	2.32	7.06	2.55
Safety	5.93	2.04	6.62	2.64	6.31	2.40
Social	9.58	2.12	8.78	2.04	9.15	2.11
Ego	6.20	2.20	6.04	2.45	6.11	2.33
Self-actualization	5.46	1.59	5.97	2.06	5.74	1.87

Note: Higher scores signify lower perceived importance.

Table 3
Level of Need Satisfaction Experienced
on the job

<u>Need Categories</u>	<u>High Involvement</u>		<u>Low Involvement</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Physiological	4.55	.99	4.16	1.02	4.33	1.02
Safety	4.81	.95	4.72	1.14	4.76	1.05
Social	4.90	1.10	4.96	1.02	4.93	1.06
Ego	4.71	1.33	4.77	1.22	4.74	1.26
Self-Actualization	4.50	.77	4.52	1.20	4.51	1.02

Note: Higher scores signify higher levels of satisfaction.

Table 4
Level of Need Strength Experienced on the Job

<u>Need Categories</u>	<u>High Involved</u>		<u>Low Involved</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	<u>Main</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Main</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Main</u>	<u>SD</u>
Physiological	6.80	1.16	6.61	1.15	6.70	1.16
Safety	6.44	1.39	6.22	1.26	6.32	1.32
Social	5.96	1.34	5.86	1.21	5.91	1.27
Ego	6.10	1.60	6.01	1.20	6.05	1.39
Self-Actualization	6.58	1.10	6.37	1.14	6.46	1.12

Note: Higher scores signify higher levels of need strength.

Table 5

Correlations (product moment) between overall job satisfaction and satisfaction with specific job factors representing five need categories

Need Categories	Job Factors	r
<u>Physiological:</u>	Salary	.17
	Fringe benefits	.19
	Physical working conditions	.35
<u>Safety:</u>	Security	.29
	Management policy & practices	.47
<u>Social:</u>	Technically competent supervision	.41
	Considerate and supportive supervision	.44
	Likeable coworkers	.51
<u>Ego:</u>	Recognition	.60
	Responsibility	.63
<u>Self Actualization:</u>	Advancement opportunity	.40
	Interesting work	.60
	Achievement	.50

Correlations are based on N = 141. A correlation of .19 or greater is significant at the .05 level of confidence.