Hourly vs. Salary: Workplace Differences for Bates College Staff

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Introduction
- David Graeber’s book, *Bullshit Jobs*, describes the idea that some jobs simply don’t need to exist, meaning that if the employee in the ‘bullshit job’ left and was not replaced, the organization would see no effect (Graeber, 2018).
- 37% of people identify with having a ‘bullshit job’ and these employees are completely miserable (Vendantam, 2018).

Job necessity: the necessity of a job, how important is it that this job exists?

Unscheduled time: time in the work day during which there are no immediate work-related tasks to be done; time typically spent on a personal phone, chatting with coworkers, etc.

Hypothesis: I expect to find that staff members receiving salary pay, reporting high job necessity, and little unscheduled time at work will report greater satisfaction with life, meaning in work, job control, and job satisfaction than staff members receiving hourly pay, reporting low job necessity, and much unscheduled time at work.

Limitations:
- ‘Bullshit jobs’: What can I do as a supervisor? Are employees receiving respect and recognition for their hard work? These are just a few factors that can contribute to an employee’s perception of their job.
- Few tasks? Are the tasks necessary, varied, and using the unique skills of the individual? Are employees given opportunities to lead or to determine the way they do their work.

Method
- Online survey sent to all Bates College staff via email; staff in Dining had a paper option
- 173 participants
  - 117 reported salary pay
  - 54 reported hourly pay
  - 2 did not report
- Scales
  - SWLS: Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985)
  - WAMI: Work and Meaning Inventory (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012)
  - JCS: Job Control Scale (Gonzalez-Mule & Cockburn, 2017)
  - MSQ: Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss, Davis, England, & Lotquist, 1977)
- Additional Survey Question Topics
  - type of pay; work hours; pretending to look busy at work; break time; demographics

Results
- 2 (Job Necessity: High vs. Low) x 2 (Type of Pay: Hourly vs. Salary) ANOVA on SWLS, WAMI, JCS, and MSQ scores:
  - **Main effect of type of pay on SWLS**: employees receiving salary pay reported greater satisfaction with life (M = 27.43, SE = .66) than employees receiving hourly pay (M = 23.14, SE = 1.17), F(1, 121) = 10.20, p = .002.
  - **Main effect of type of pay on WAMI**: employees receiving salary pay reported greater meaning in work (M = 41.56, SE = .73) than employees receiving hourly pay (M = 37.35, SE = 1.28), F(1, 121) = 8.13, p = .005.
  - **Main effect of job necessity on WAMI**: employees reporting high job necessity reported greater meaning in work (M = 41.07, SE = 1.29) than employees reporting low job necessity (M = 37.85, SE = .72), F(1, 121) = 4.77, p = .03.
  - **Main effect of job necessity on JCS**: employees reporting high job necessity reported greater job control (M = 3.07, SE = .08) than employees reporting low job necessity (M = 2.85, SE = .05), F(1, 121) = 5.22, p = .02.
  - No other main effects nor significant interactions found.

Discussion
- “What can I do as a supervisor?”: Be proactive! Check-in with employees often (without micromanaging) to provide space for feedback. Do they have too many or too few tasks? Are the tasks necessary, varied, and using the unique skills of the individual? Are employees given opportunities to lead or to determine the way they do their work?
- ‘Bullshit jobs’: This survey did not find 37% of Bates staff reporting a ‘bullshit job’ as Graeber suggested. Only about 9% of Bates staff reported that there would be little no immediate work-related tasks to be done; time typically spent on a personal phone, chatting with coworkers, etc. If the employee in the ‘bullshit job’ left and was not replaced, the organization would see no effect (Graeber, 2018).

“On average, while at work, how many hours per day do you spend on non-work-related tasks?”

References