



# Determinants of police job satisfaction: Does community matter?

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## Abstract

Research on police job satisfaction has found that work-related factors had greater influence on job satisfaction than personal characteristics. These studies, however, tend to overlook the effects of community characteristics on officers' perception of satisfaction with their job except very limited studies (e.g. [Buker and Dolu, 2010](#)). The current study contributes to the literature by examining relative effects of demographic, work-related, and community characteristic factors on police officers' work satisfaction and exploring invariance of relationships among these variables across types of duty. To this end data of Korean police officers are analyzed with multilevel modeling techniques (HLM). The results indicate that neither community characteristics nor demographic characteristics have any influence on job satisfaction, while work-related variables, in particular, support from coworkers and support from supervisors significantly affect officers' satisfaction with job.

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## 1. Introduction

Studies on police administration have shown that police officers' job satisfaction had significant influence not only on work-related outcomes, such as job performance, commitment and turnover rates, but also on the relationship between police officers and citizens (Agho et al. 1993; Kang and Nalla, 2011; Lee and Moon, 2011; Yang et al. 2012). Studies, for example, found that the more satisfied officers are, the more likely they are to be receptive to changes and to support community policing strategies (Wycoff and Skogan, 1994; Pelfrey, 2007).

Attention to determinants of police job satisfaction from researchers and administrators has been increasing since 1990s. Prior studies have divided determinants of police job satisfaction into two categories: (a) demographic variables and (b) work-related variables (Zhao et al. 1999; Carlan, 2007; Ercikti, 2008; Miller et al. 2009; Nalla et al. 2011; Holt et al. 2012; Johnson, 2012; Nalla and Kang, 2012). A recent study (Jo and Hoover, 2012) summarized the findings of prior research, conducted in America as well as in Asian countries and suggested that work-related variables, such as autonomy, job security, and social contribution, had greater effects than demographic variables including age, race/ethnicity, and gender on officers' satisfaction with their job. According to this study, however, the determinants of police job satisfaction varied across duty types.

Recently, very limited studies have expanded the source of job satisfaction among police officers by incorporating community characteristics (Buker and Dolu, 2010). Given that officers face a variety of unexpected situations which require swift decisions in contacts with citizens, research on the influence of community characteristics on officers' job satisfaction provides significant contribution to the literature of police administration. In their study, Buker and Dolu found the ratio of crime to officers and the ratio of crime to population were significantly related to officers' satisfaction with their supervisor and with coworkers, respectively.

The current study contributes to the literature in two ways. First, this study tests the validity of Buker and Dolu's study by including three categories of job satisfaction determinants — demographic, work-related, and community characteristics. Second, this study explores whether or not the determinants of police job satisfaction vary across different types of duty. These two research questions are examined with data of South Korean police officers.

## 2. Literature review

Researchers have emphasized the significant role of job satisfaction in workplace by stating that dissatisfaction “robs the profession of the very values needed to accomplish its goals” (Graves, 1996, p. 20) and that satisfied employees are “more open-minded and creative in their thinking” (Donovan and Halpern, 2002, p. 32).

These arguments have been empirically supported that job satisfaction affected not only work-related outcomes but also the relationship between police officers and citizens (Agho et al. 1993; Wycoff and Skogan, 1994; Pelfrey, 2007; Kang and Nalla, 2011; Lee and Moon, 2011; Yang et al. 2012). Regarding the association between police officers' job satisfaction and work-related outcomes, Yang et al. (2012), for example, found that leadership competency had only an indirect effect on performance through officers' satisfaction with their job. More specifically, it was a key to increase police officers' satisfaction with their personnel growth, supervision, and advancement to achieve a successful outcome in terms of goal attainment, quality of performance, and project schedule success. Job satisfaction has also been found to affect officers' cynicism that in turn influenced strategic commitment and community oriented

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