

Exploring Gender Differences in Job Satisfaction: Insights From Utah and the United States

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This study examines gender differences in job satisfaction by comparing responses from men and women in Utah to those across the broader United States. Using data from a web-based survey of 566 respondents, the research investigates how geographical context influences perceptions of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, work-life balance, and workplace relationships. Findings reveal significant variations in job satisfaction by gender, with contextual differences in Utah providing unique insights into regional workplace dynamics. These results contribute to a deeper understanding of how gender and location intersect to shape employee experiences and offer practical implications for organizations aiming to foster equitable and satisfying work environments.

Keywords: job satisfaction, gender, regional differences, Utah, United States

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, gender job satisfaction has become an important focus for researchers, especially as the labor market has evolved to encompass greater diversity in both gender and generational perspectives. Traditional studies have often highlighted a paradox: women report higher job satisfaction than men, despite facing more challenging employment conditions such as lower pay and limited opportunities for advancement (Bender et al., 2005; Carleton & Clain, 2012; Clark et al., 1997; Grönlund & Öun, 2018; Hauret & Williams, 2017; Kaiser, 2005; Perugini & Vladislavljević, 2019; Sloane & Williams, 2000). However, the results of these studies have been inconsistent, with some offering contradictory conclusions about the determinants of job satisfaction across gender lines (Bokemeier & Lacy, 2016; Donohue & Heywood, 2004). This paper explores the complex relationship between gender, geographical context (comparing Utah to the broader United States), and job satisfaction by examining data from a web-based

survey of 566 respondents across the United States. Through this lens, the study seeks to uncover how intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, work-life balance, and workplace relationships influence job satisfaction across gender lines, offering new insights into the evolving dynamics of the modern workplace.

Additionally, this research takes a nuanced approach by exploring the influence of external factors, such as geographic and cultural contexts, on job satisfaction. For instance, the distinct labor market characteristics of regions like Utah, where women experience both higher labor force participation rates and a wider wage gap, offer a unique backdrop to understanding how local factors contribute to gendered experiences of work. By integrating these contextual elements, the study not only illuminates the overarching trends in job satisfaction but also addresses the variations that exist within specific populations, providing a more comprehensive picture of how both personal and environmental factors shape satisfaction. This approach contributes to a broader understanding of job satisfaction as a dynamic and multi-dimensional concept.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior research has examined gender job satisfaction and its determinants in various contexts. Seminal studies have consistently reported that women enjoy greater job satisfaction than men despite unfavorable employment conditions, with scholars offering various explanations for this paradox (Bender et al., 2005; Carleton & Clain, 2012; Clark et al., 1997; Grönlund & Öun, 2018; Hauret & Williams, 2017; Kaiser, 2005; Perugini & Vladisavljević, 2019; Sloane & Williams, 2000). However, gender job satisfaction researchers have adopted various methods that have resulted in inconsistent findings, and increasingly, a lack of support for the paradox.

The Job Satisfaction Paradox

A seminal British study identified a job satisfaction gender gap even after controlling for personal and job characteristics (Clark et al., 1997). The researchers posited that this may be due to women having lower career expectations based on discriminatory treatment, less pay, and lack of promotion opportunity. Another pivotal study, focused on EU countries, also established that women had significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than men even though they were disadvantaged in the labor market (Kaiser, 2005). Exceptions were found in Denmark, Finland, and the Netherlands, suggesting that equitable job opportunity decreases gender job satisfaction disparities and pointing to the importance of context.

A UK study found that higher job satisfaction for women was due to self-selection into jobs with attributes that women valued rather than to any innate gender differences (Sloane & Williams, 2000). A US study similarly found higher levels of job satisfaction for women; in this case, the gap was due to women choosing workplaces that offered greater flexibility (Bender et al., 2005). Women were overrepresented in these work environments, contributing to job satisfaction. Another US study found that job satisfaction was higher for only married women, possibly due to having more flexibility in whether or not to enter the workforce and in job choice. In contrast, unmarried women and married men may need to stay in unsatisfying employment (Carleton & Clain, 2012).

Building on these findings, a large-scale EU study identified salary, promotion, job stability, skills match, and autonomy as job satisfaction determinants with women showing greater preference for meaningful work and jobs supportive of work-life balance (Redmond & McGuiness, 2019). When these preferences were controlled for, the gap disappeared, indicating the significance of job self-selection. An EU study, however, found that the gender gap persisted even when controlling for work time flexibility (Kristensen & Johansson, 2008).

An early study found little support for explanations of higher job satisfaction levels for women based on explanations that men and women focus on different aspects of work, that the extent of family responsibilities influences satisfaction, or that men and women have different personal expectations for work (Hodson, 1989). Rather, women's positive job attitudes may be based on their use of different reference groups to evaluate their employment (e.g., household work compared to outside work) and the greater willingness of men to express dissatisfaction.

Several studies show minimal or no differences in gender job satisfaction. Although women receive fewer job rewards than men, experience different job conditions, and possess different work values, no differences in satisfaction were found in men's and women's job satisfaction levels in a large-scale US study, suggesting that determinants other than job rewards, job values, work conditions, and individual attributes are more salient (Bokemeier & Lacy, 2016). Research also shows that the gender job satisfaction gap does not occur for younger female workers in the US, and that it improves for female white-collar workers when childcare is offered but that neither salary level nor salary gaps impact female satisfaction, suggesting that some female groups value intrinsic work characteristics and work-life balance (Donohue & Heywood, 2004).

Gender Roles

Other research has identified nuanced findings with job satisfaction determinants not neatly aligned with traditional gender roles. In a global study of hospitality workers representing 37 countries, interesting work, work useful to society, job security, pay, manager relations, and work interfering with family predicted job satisfaction in expected directions for both men and women while other factors indicated gender differences (Andrade, Miller, & Westover, 2021). Working weekends was a negative factor only for women. Most work relations factors were more salient for women whose job satisfaction was negatively impacted by working weekends and discrimination. In another study, work-life balance perceptions were found to be not just a matter of balancing time but also balancing identity (Morgenroth et al., 2021). Women working in traditionally male-dominated workplaces experienced a lack of fit with leaders and also feelings of incompatibility between work and home identities. However, these balance issues were ameliorated with the presence of female leadership.

Indeed, both women and men have more positive views of their organizations as evidenced by job satisfaction, dedication, less burnout, and more engagement with higher percentages of women in the workplace (Clerkin, 2017). Satisfaction is higher in gender-balanced work contexts; men show lower job satisfaction and commitment in male-dominated environments while women exhibit less commitment (Olafsdottir, & Einarsdottir, 2024). Study participants with women bosses also reported feeling more supported and experiencing less burn-out, but more so for female participants.

Overall, findings indicate change over time in gender roles impacting both work and home environments and differences in national and cultural contexts, suggesting the importance of continued research on gender job satisfaction. The methodology also has an impact. In one study, researchers highlight that study participants perceive job satisfaction questions differently depending on cultural and national contexts and that simple cross-country comparisons may mask differences (Kristensen, & Johansson, 2008). When vignette anchoring is used instead of a standard ordered probit model, rankings change with Scandinavian countries ranked lower in job satisfaction than the Netherlands.

Work-Life Balance and Work Rewards

A study in eight post-Communist regions found that work-life balance significantly impacted life satisfaction with no gender differences but that the impact of education had a greater influence on women's subjective well-being (Bari & Róbert, 2016). In India, both men and women employees reported problems with work-life balance and stated beliefs that flex time, part-time work, and childcare facilities could address this (Doble & Supriya, 2010). However, evidence suggests that flexible work policies have not improved career progress for women (Padavic et al., 2020). US doctors and nurses, male and female, reported spillover of work into family life, creating health issues, and identified flexible working time as a solution (Mulik, 2017).

In the EU, work-life balance is a policy priority with government support for two-income families, the effect of which is apparent in lower levels of work-life conflict in Finland and Norway, but not in France where traditional home labor roles prevail despite childcare support (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006), pointing to the role of culture. In the US, work-life balance is gendered based on findings that women report greater balance when they can focus on family; men report less balance with a lack of personal time and more balance when they can schedule work around family needs (Keene & Quadagno, 2004).

A global study found no differences in extrinsic determinants of job satisfaction for men and women across countries with slight differences in intrinsic work characteristics; most work relation and work-life balance variables were more salient to women than men (Andrade et al., 2019). A qualitative study of men and women in the US found that women prioritize work-life balance and co-worker relationships and men value material success (Dyke & Murphy, 2006), once again suggesting that women focus on intrinsic job attributes and men on extrinsic rewards. Further support for this is offered by Muskat and Reitsamer (2019) who found that job security impacted job satisfaction more for males than females, appreciation for work impacts both but women remain satisfied without it, and that decision-making input, particularly related to one's work area, contribute to job satisfaction.

Additional studies have shown variations in determinants of job satisfaction for men and women. Rather than intrinsic characteristics being more salient for women, both men and women in a US study consisting of participants who worked during COVID-19 were found to value interesting work (Hall et al., 2023). Job autonomy was more predictive of job satisfaction for women than men whereas a global study conducted a few years prior found autonomy more predictive of job satisfaction for men (Andrade, Schill, Westover, & King, 2021). Similarly, the intrinsic work attributes of helping others and having a job useful to society did not predict job satisfaction for either men or women (Hall et al., 2023). Pay was not a predictor for men or women while job security was salient to men and stressful work to both (Hall et al., 2023). This study indicates how disruptive global events such as the pandemic can impact job satisfaction determinants.

Contextual Factors

The current study compares job satisfaction determinants for workers in the US state of Utah with the US as a whole. As such, this review provides some contextual information. Women in Utah have higher labor force representation than the overall national rate – 62.5% compared to 58.8%; these rates include women seeking work (Blackburn et al., 2024). Utah women hold more part-time positions than women nationally – 36.4% compared to 28.7%. Utah women are less likely to work full-time year round than women in the US as a whole – 38.5% vs. 41.8%. Utah men are more likely to work full-time and year-round than Utah women – 87.5 % compared to 75%. Participation in the workforce for Utah women declines at around age 25, dipping below the national average, and continues at a lower rate through age 54. This trend can partially be explained by the motherhood penalty in that women lose time in the workforce and opportunities to advance when they stop out for childbirth and childcare (Larsen, 2024). When men take leave for birth or adoption, they report less career impact than do women.

Occupational segregation for Utah women is also evident with a high percentage working in occupations requiring lower skills such as healthcare support, health technologists, and personal care and services sectors. These lower-skilled jobs offer lower salaries. Only 39.6% of Utah women are employed in professional or managerial positions, many requiring four-year degrees and offering better salaries and benefits. US Census data shows that women in Utah earn 73.5% of what men earn, the largest gender wage gap in the US (Henderson & Addison, 2024). This wage gap could be attributable to Utah women being less likely than US women generally to work in jobs that require higher levels of education (Blackburn et al., 2023). In fact, women nationally have more graduate degrees than men (13% vs. 12.4%), but the rate is 9.3% to 14.1% in Utah. Other sources show that the wage gap decreases when occupation, experience, education, and other factors are controlled for, which puts it at 3% with other estimates at 14% (Larsen, 2024). However, even these lower gaps amount to thousands of dollars in annual salary. Utah does not have an equal pay law and has generous exemptions for its wage anti-discrimination law.

RESEARCH MODEL AND DESIGN

Building on the established research model and design below, this study aims to explore the nuanced relationships between gender, generational differences, and job satisfaction in both Utah and the broader U.S. workforce. The operationalized variables for job satisfaction, intrinsic rewards (such as job autonomy and meaningful work), extrinsic rewards (such as pay and job security), work-life balance, and work relations, will be examined across gender and geographical contexts. The following hypotheses are

developed to guide the analysis and to test how gender and context shape job satisfaction in today's evolving workplace.

Hypothesis 1a: *Women in Utah will report lower job satisfaction compared to women in other U.S. states.*

Hypothesis 1b: *Men in Utah will report lower job satisfaction than men in other U.S. states.*

Hypothesis 2: *Relations with management will positively impact job satisfaction for both men and women but will have a stronger positive effect on women's job satisfaction, particularly in Utah.*

Hypothesis 3: *Intrinsic rewards such as having an interesting job will be a stronger predictor of job satisfaction for women than for men, particularly in contexts where extrinsic rewards like pay are less equitable, such as in Utah.*

Hypothesis 4: *Pay will be a stronger predictor of job satisfaction for both men and women in Utah compared to those outside of Utah, due to the unique labor market conditions, including the significant gender wage gap and higher rates of part-time employment.*

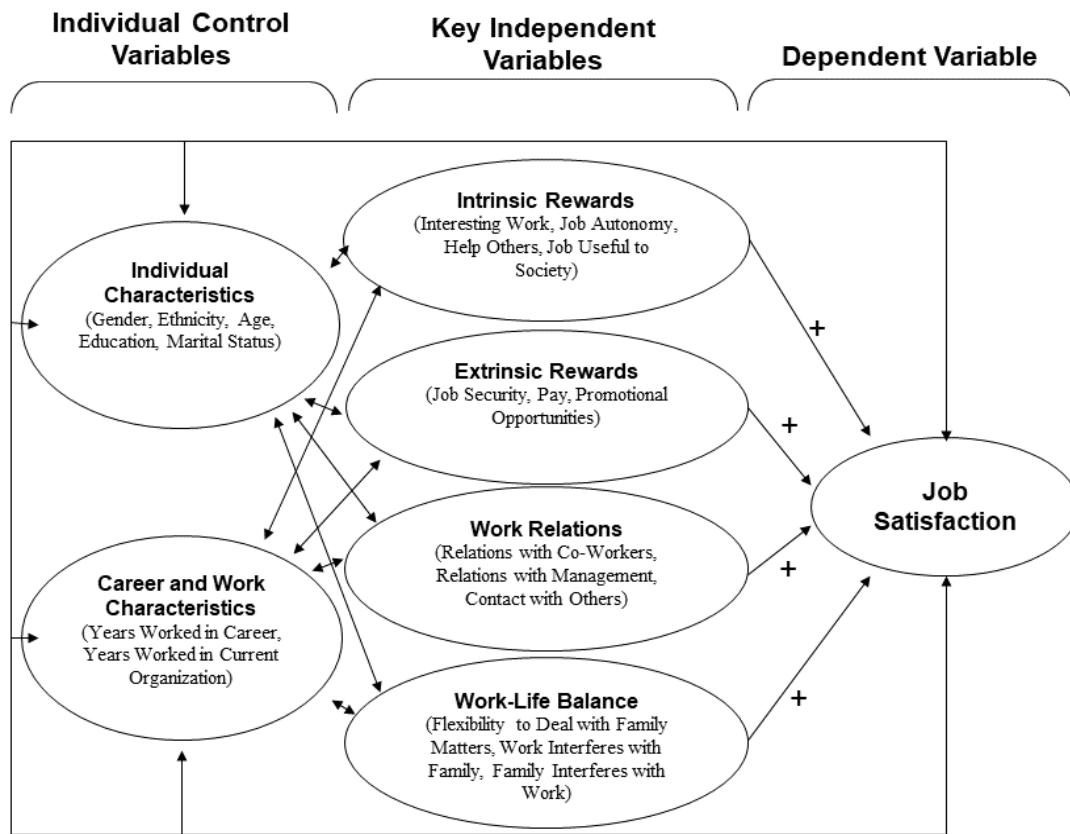
Hypothesis 5: *Work interference with family will have a stronger negative impact on job satisfaction for women than for men, as women typically face greater family responsibilities and societal expectations regarding work-life balance.*

Men are more likely than women to agree with the statement, "I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization," due to a stronger focus on job security and extrinsic rewards such as pay and promotion opportunities.

Hypothesis 6: *Men in and outside of Utah are more likely to express long-term commitment to their organization than women.*

Modeled, in part, after the International Social Survey Work Orientations Module and the work of Andrade et al. (2023), we developed a web-based survey to explore the shifting nature of the workplace. The survey included a range of questions related to intrinsic, extrinsic, workplace relations, work-life balance, and employee activation variables. The survey was administered during winter 2024 using a stratified random sampling method across the United States, resulting in 566 completed surveys.

FIGURE 1
RESEARCH MODEL



Operationalization of Variables

We operationalized the study variables following the approach of Andrade et al. (2023). Additionally, building on the survey conducted by Andrade et al. (2023), new survey questions were added to the follow-up survey, which allowed us to utilize new variables in the analysis. See Table 1 below.

TABLE 1
STUDY VARIABLES AND MEASUREMENTS

Variable	Item
<i>Dependent Variable</i>	
Job satisfaction	“How satisfied are you in your main job?” (0) extremely dissatisfied to (10) extremely satisfied
<i>Intrinsic Rewards</i>	
Interesting Job	“My job is interesting.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Job autonomy	“I can work independently.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Help others	“In my job I can help other people.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Job useful to society	“My job is useful to society.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Extrinsic Rewards</i>	
Pay	“My income is high.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree

Job security	“My job is secure.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Promotional opportunities	“My opportunities for advancement are high.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Work stress	“How often do you find your work stressful?” (1) never to (5) always
<i>Work Relations</i>	
Relations with management	“In general, how would you describe relations at your workplace between management and employees?” (1) very bad to (5) very good
Relations with coworkers	“In general, how would you describe relations at your workplace between workmates/colleagues?” (1) very bad to (5) very good
Contact with others	“In my job, I have personal contact with others.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Work-Life Balance</i>	
Flexibility to deal with family matters	“How difficult would it be for you to take an hour or two off during work hours, to take care of personal or family matters? (1) not difficult at all to (5) very difficult
Work interference with family	“How often do you feel that the demands of your job interfere with your family?” (1) never to (3) always
Family interference with work	“How often do you feel that the demands of your family interfere with your job?” (1) never to (3) always
<i>Worker Engagement</i>	
Job engagement	“Overall, how engaged are you in your (main) job?” (1) not at all engaged to (10) extremely engaged
Do what you do best	“I Have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Understanding of Meaning and Purpose</i>	
Meaningful work	“I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Purposeful work	“I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Sense of Encouragement and Belonging</i>	
Supervisor encouragement	“My supervisor shows me encouragement for my work efforts.” (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree
Where I am meant to be	“I believe that my work group is where I am meant to be.” (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree
<i>Leadership Efficacy</i>	“I see myself as a leader.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Career Meaning and Commitment</i>	
Meaningful career	“I have found a meaningful career.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
Organizational Commitment	“I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.” (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree
<i>Controls</i>	Dummy variables for race, ethnicity, education level, marital status, and state of residence; Continuous variables for birth year, full-time years worked in career, and years worked in current organization.

Statistical Methodology

Following the approach of Andrade et al. (2023), we used a multi-step approach to analyze respondents' work experience and characteristics data as well as their job satisfaction responses. First, we conducted bivariate and descriptive analyses of work characteristics and attitudes by generation as well as for the full sample. Next, we tested for statistically significant differences in job satisfaction between females and males using t-test analyses. We then examined generation-specific OLS and ordered probit regression models to evaluate the relative contribution of work characteristics and experiences to job satisfaction for females and males both inside and outside of Utah. Finally, using moderation analyses, we tested for statistically significant differences between generations in the impact of work-life and worker activation determinants on job satisfaction.

RESULTS

Participant Demographics

More than 550 respondents ($n=566$) participated in the modal stratified random sample in Utah and other areas of the U.S. The respondents were full-time workers who worked before the COVID pandemic and were employed at the time of the study. As seen in Table 2, males comprised 46.11% ($n=261$) of the sample and females 53.89% ($n=305$). Respondents provided details on their racial and ethnic background; as seen in Tables 3 and 4 below, 67.67% of the sample was White or Caucasian, 19.96% of the sample was Black or African American, 9.72% of the sample was Asian, just over 1% was Native American or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Less than 2% of the sample reported they're race as "other". They also reported their ethnicity, and 88.34% of respondents were not Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin, and 11.66% of respondents were.

TABLE 2
GENDER OF RESPONDENT

	Freq.	Percent
Female	305	53.89
Male	261	46.11
Total	566	100

TABLE 3
RACE OF RESPONDENT

	Freq.	Percent
White	383	67.67
Black or African-American	113	19.96
Asian	55	9.72
Native American or Alaska Native	2	0.35
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	4	0.71
Other	9	1.59
Total	566	100

TABLE 4
ETHNICITY OF RESPONDENT

	Freq.	Percent
Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin	66	11.66
Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin	500	88.34
Total	566	100

As seen in Table 5, over 44% ($n=249$) of the sample have only some college or less, and a little under 56% ($n=314$) have a college degree or higher. As seen in Table 6, 62.7% of respondents are married or cohabitating and 36.59% of the sample are single (with just 4 respondents preferring not to say). As seen in Table 7, 1977 is the average birth year of respondents, 20.57 is the average full-time years worked in the respondent's career, and 13.94 is the average years worked in the respondent's current organization.

TABLE 5
EDUCATION LEVEL OF RESPONDENT

	Freq.	Percent
Less than high school	6	1.07
Highschool diploma	96	17.05
Some college, but no degree	147	26.11
Bachelor's degree	192	34.1
Master's degree	97	17.23
Doctoral degree	25	4.44
Total	563	100

TABLE 6
MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENT

	Freq.	Percent
Married or cohabitating	353	62.7
Single	206	36.59
Prefer not to say	4	0.71
Total	563	100

TABLE 7
OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENT

	Freq.	Percent
Birth year	1977.34	13.99
Full-time years worked in career	20.57	13.92
Years worked in current organization	13.94	86.29

Descriptive Results

Table 8 below shows the means of job satisfaction and other main study variables, by location and gender, as well as significant differences where present. While many differences could be highlighted, there is a statistically significant difference in reported job satisfaction between men and women both inside and outside of Utah, though there is no significant difference between women in and out of Utah, thus not supporting Hypothesis 1a. However, men outside of Utah have a significantly higher level of job satisfaction than men in Utah supporting Hypothesis 1b. Additionally, there is a statistically significant difference in reported employee engagement between men and women, with men overall experiencing higher levels of employee engagement both in and out of Utah, but men outside of Utah have the highest employee engagement levels overall. While men both in and outside of Utah report higher pay than their female counterparts, interestingly, women outside of Utah also have significantly higher pay than women in Utah.

Regression Results

Following the approach of Westover and Andrade (2024), we examined the association between job satisfaction and the independent variables across multiple regression analyses. The first model (Table 9) examined the influence of intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards, work relations, work-life balance variables, and control variables on job satisfaction by generation and gender. In the second model (Table 10) we focused on the “worker activation” variables and represented what we consider to be “the best” model.

Table 9 shows variation in standardized beta coefficient statistical significance for each variable. For women in Utah, “interesting job” and “pay” are each statistically significant variables in predicting worker job satisfaction for females in Utah, while “relations with management” and “work interference with family” were also significant for women outside of Utah, while pay wasn’t. For Utah men, “interesting job,” “pay”, “relations with management”, and “work interferes with family” are each statistically significant variables in predicting worker job satisfaction, while “job security”, “promotional opportunities” were also significant predictors of job satisfaction for men outside of Utah partially supporting hypothesis 2. Additionally, there were variations in adjusted r-squared values for the female OLS regression models (Utah female adjusted r-squared = 0.604; outside of Utah female adjusted r-squared = 0.519) and male OLS regression models (Utah male adjusted r-squared = 0.697; outside of Utah male adjusted r-squared = 0.627), meaning the model accounted for over 60% and 52% of the variation in job satisfaction for women in and out of Utah respectively and 70% and 63% of the variation in job satisfaction for men in and out of Utah respectively.

Finally, Table 10 shows variation in standardized beta coefficient strength and statistical significance for each variable. For women in Utah, “interesting job” and “pay” are each statistically significant variables in predicting worker job satisfaction for females in Utah, while “relations with management” and “work interference with family” were also significant for women outside of Utah, while pay wasn’t. For Utah men, “interesting job,” “pay”, “relations with management”, and “work interferes with family” are each statistically significant variables in predicting worker job satisfaction, while “job security”, “promotional opportunities” were also significant predictors of job satisfaction for men outside of Utah. Additionally, there were variations in adjusted r-squared values for the female OLS regression models (Utah female adjusted r-squared = 0.604; outside of Utah female adjusted r-squared = 0.519) and male OLS regression models (Utah male adjusted r-squared = 0.697; outside of Utah male adjusted r-squared = 0.627), meaning the model accounted for over 60% and 52% of the variation in job satisfaction for women in and out of Utah respectively and 70% and 63% of the variation in job satisfaction for men in and out of Utah respectively.

TABLE 8
VARIABLE MEANS AND TEST OF DIFFERENCES, BY LOCATION AND GENDER

Dependent Variable	Utah		Outside of Utah		All		All	
	Females	Male	Females	Male	Females	Male	Mean	Std. Dev.
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Job Satisfaction	5.05	1.74	5.23	1.59	5.07	1.69	5.48	1.44
Intrinsic Rewards								
Interesting job	3.81	1.05	3.94	0.97	3.74	1.10	3.89	0.92
Job autonomy	4.06	1.06	4.20	0.84	4.03	1.02	4.00	0.99
Help others	4.24	0.88	4.24	0.80	4.15	0.88	4.04	0.86
Job useful to society	4.14	0.88	4.10	0.94	4.01	1.02	3.87	1.02
Extrinsic Rewards								
Pay	2.66	1.12	3.00	1.13	2.94	1.23	3.32	1.13
Job security	3.95	0.98	4.07	0.81	3.94	1.01	3.94	1.00
Promotional opportunities	3.08	1.21	3.02	0.99	3.11	1.21	3.49	1.18
Work Relations								
Relations with management	3.72	0.98	3.71	1.02	3.64	1.02	3.93	0.90
Relations with coworkers	4.13	0.74	4.13	0.75	3.90	0.96	4.13	0.84
Contact with others	4.34	0.77	4.15	0.92	4.18	0.96	4.06	0.86
Work-life Balance								
Flexibility to deal with family matters	2.08	0.95	1.99	1.01	2.18	0.98	2.09	0.97
Work interference with family	1.69	0.60	1.70	0.65	1.74	0.71	1.87	0.68
Family interference with work	1.60	0.56	1.59	0.61	1.59	0.69	1.65	0.73
Worker Activation								
Job engagement	7.78	2.02	7.99	1.73	7.66	2.31	8.30	1.74
I see myself as a leader	3.71	1.63	3.68	1.55	3.93	1.62	4.31	1.33
I have found a meaningful career	3.82	1.24	3.94	1.15	3.88	1.13	4.11	1.05
Work that has a satisfying purpose	3.77	1.15	3.86	1.10	3.89	1.13	4.01	0.94
Supervisor Encouragement	4.93	1.80	5.12	1.59	5.09	1.69	5.40	1.47
Where I am meant to be	4.86	1.82	5.16	1.62	4.94	1.80	5.41	1.49
My work contributes to my life's meaning	3.77	1.15	3.86	1.10	3.89	1.13	4.01	0.94
Organizational commitment	4.82	1.96	5.14	1.89	5.00	1.84	5.40	1.64

TABLE 9
MODEL 1 - OLS TRADITIONAL JOB SATISFACTION REGRESSION RESULTS, BY LOCATION AND GENDER

	Utah		Outside of Utah		All	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Intrinsic Rewards						
Interesting job	0.251**	0.549***	0.323***	0.250***	0.319***	0.315***
Job autonomy	0.076	0.135	0.029	0.010	0.065	0.044
Help others	0.114	0.170	0.096	0.007	0.102	0.060
Job useful to society	-0.041	-0.217*	0.035	0.027	-0.010	-0.065
Extrinsic Rewards						
Pay	0.243**	0.242**	0.120	0.215**	0.157**	.227***
Job security	-0.018	0.002	-0.028	0.175**	-0.038	.100*
Promotional opportunities	0.143	-0.070	0.066	0.188*	0.115	0.109
Work Relations						
Relations with management	0.268	0.195*	0.215***	0.145*	0.233***	0.238***
Relations with coworkers	-0.026	-0.078	0.083	0.034	0.052	-0.011
Contact with others	0.038	-0.069	0.025	-0.025	0.026	-0.047
Work-Life Balance						
Flexibility to deal with family matters	-0.129	0.073	-0.043	0.007	-0.067	0.016
Work interference with family	0.041	-0.246**	-0.135*	-0.073	-0.063	-0.129*
Family interference with work	0.041	0.033	0.104	0.019	0.065	0.057
Controls						
Race	0.032	-0.085	-0.021	0.078	-0.018	0.034
Ethnicity	-0.006	0.022	-0.022	0.017	-0.010	0.024
Education Level	-0.047	0.021	-0.020	0.014	-0.020	0.010
Marital Status	-0.096	-0.020	0.025	-0.114*	-0.029	-0.063
Years Worked in Career	0.109	0.072	-0.036	0.138*	0.025	0.011
Years Worked in Current Organization	-0.125	0.034	0.093	-0.008	-0.057	-0.001
N	111	94	189	167	300	261
Adjusted R-Squared	0.605	0.697	0.519	0.627	0.554	0.644
F	9.88***	12.25***	11.66***	15.7***	18.68***	23.40***

Note: Beta values; Significance levels: * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

TABLE 10
MODEL 2 - NEW OLS JOB SATISFACTION REGRESSION RESULTS, BY LOCATION AND GENDER

	Utah		Outside of Utah		All	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Worker Engagement						
Overall, how engaged are you in your (main) job	-0.010	0.083	0.189***	0.094	0.126***	0.081*
I Have the opportunity to do what I do best every day	0.107*	0.174**	0.031	0.050	0.046	0.120***
Understanding of Meaning and Purpose						
I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful	0.096	0.029	0.091	0.165**	0.064	0.120**
I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose	-0.056	0.046	0.136*	0.152**	0.061	0.103*
Sense of Encouragement and Belonging						
My supervisor shows me encouragement for my work efforts	0.295***	0.098	0.137**	0.145**	0.198***	0.114**
I believe that my work group is where I am meant to be	0.129*	0.199*	0.242***	0.095	0.219***	0.146**
Leadership Efficacy						
I see myself as a leader	-0.100**	-0.067	-0.057	-0.007	-0.082**	-0.022
Career Meaning and Commitment						
I have found a meaningful career	0.281***	0.199*	0.000	0.102	0.115*	0.106*
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization	0.269***	0.362***	0.326***	0.323***	0.316***	0.343***
Controls						
Race	0.032	-0.012	0.019	0.059	0.024	0.032
Ethnicity	-0.021	0.026	-0.036	-0.008	-0.029	0.013
Education Level	-0.023	-0.026	-0.012	-0.013	-0.008	-0.026
Marital Status	0.001	0.044	0.074*	-0.079*	0.036	-0.026
Years Worked in Career	0.023	-0.040	-0.052	-0.002	-0.046	-0.091
N	111	94	189	167	300	261
Adjusted R-Squared	0.877	0.831	0.785	0.831	0.811	0.83
F	56.76***	33.60***	49.93***	59.47***	80.98***	80.53***

Note: Beta values; Significance levels: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

REVISITING HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1a proposed that women in Utah will report lower job satisfaction compared to women in other U.S. states. However, the results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in job satisfaction between women in Utah and their counterparts in other U.S. states. These findings do not support Hypothesis 1a, suggesting that women in Utah experience similar levels of job satisfaction compared to women nationwide, despite factors like lower pay and fewer promotional opportunities in the state. This result challenges the assumption that Utah's specific labor market conditions would lead to lower job satisfaction among women and suggests that women in Utah may find similar sources of job satisfaction as women in other parts of the country, possibly through intrinsic rewards or adjusted expectations.

Hypothesis 1b proposed that men in Utah will report lower job satisfaction than men in other U.S. states. The results support Hypothesis 1b, as men in Utah reported significantly lower job satisfaction compared to their counterparts in other U.S. states. This finding aligns with the assumption that Utah's labor market conditions, which may include limited promotional opportunities and less favorable working conditions in certain industries, contribute to lower satisfaction levels among men. The result underscores the regional differences in job satisfaction for men, suggesting that men in Utah may face unique challenges that impact their overall satisfaction compared to men nationwide.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that relations with management will positively impact job satisfaction for both men and women but will have a stronger positive effect on women's job satisfaction, particularly in Utah. However, the results do not fully support Hypothesis 2, as the data from Table 9 show that relations with management did not have a statistically significant impact on job satisfaction for women in Utah. However, relations with management positively impacted women more than men outside of Utah. This suggests that, contrary to the hypothesis, men in Utah may rely more on supportive management relationships for their job satisfaction, whereas women may derive satisfaction from a broader range of factors.

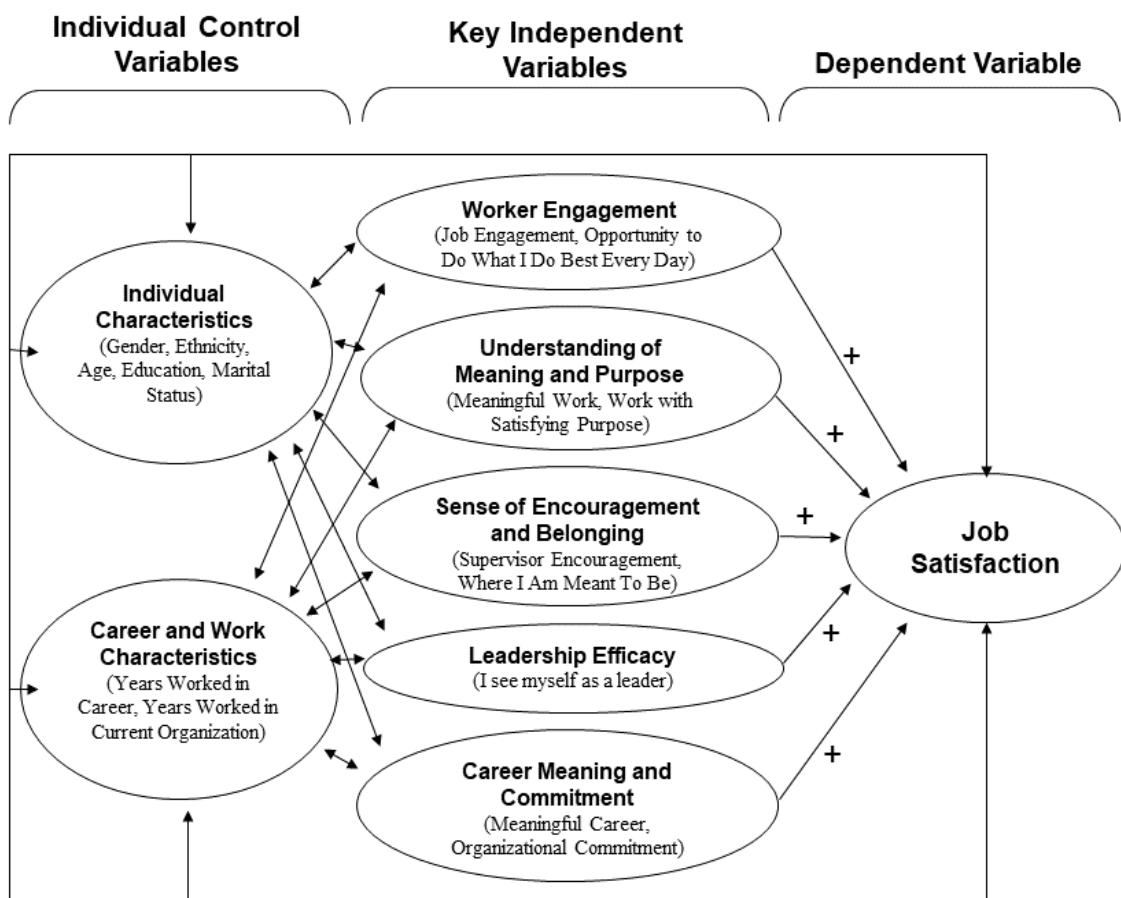
Hypothesis 3 proposed that intrinsic rewards, such as having an interesting job, would be a stronger predictor of job satisfaction for women than for men, particularly in contexts where extrinsic rewards like pay are less equitable, such as in Utah. However, the results do not fully support this hypothesis. According to Table 9, "interesting job" is a significant predictor of job satisfaction for both men and women in Utah, but its impact is stronger for men in Utah compared to women. Additionally, when comparing to men and women nationwide, the data shows that men in Utah place a higher importance on intrinsic rewards, while outside of Utah, these intrinsic factors are generally more balanced between genders.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that pay would be a stronger predictor of job satisfaction for both men and women in Utah compared to those outside of Utah, due to the unique labor market conditions, including the significant gender wage gap and higher rates of part-time employment. The data from Table 9 supports this hypothesis. Pay is a significant predictor of job satisfaction for both men and women in Utah, indicating that compensation plays a key role in determining job satisfaction in the state's challenging labor market. However, the relationship between pay and job satisfaction is insignificant for women outside of Utah, suggesting that women in other states may derive satisfaction from other factors, such as intrinsic rewards, rather than compensation. Pay remains a significant factor for men outside of Utah, though less so compared to Utah men. This supports the idea that in Utah, where wage disparities and economic pressures are more pronounced, pay has a stronger influence on job satisfaction for both men and women compared to those outside the state.

Hypothesis 5 proposed that work interference with family would have a stronger negative impact on job satisfaction for women than for men, given that women often face greater family responsibilities and societal expectations regarding work-life balance. The data from Table 9 provides partial support for this hypothesis. Work interference with family is a significant predictor of job satisfaction for both men and women overall, but with important nuances. For women outside of Utah, work interference with family significantly negatively impacts job satisfaction, aligning with the hypothesis. However, this relationship is not significant for women in Utah, indicating that work-family conflict may play a lesser role in shaping job satisfaction for women in this context. Similarly, the relationship is not significant for men outside of Utah, suggesting that work-family balance issues are less impactful for this group compared to men in Utah.

Hypothesis 6 proposed that men in and outside of Utah are more likely to express long-term commitment to their organization than women. However, the data shows that this is only true for men in Utah, while outside of Utah, there is no significant difference between men and women in terms of long-term organizational commitment. In Utah, men's stronger focus on extrinsic rewards such as pay, job security, and promotion opportunities drives their higher likelihood of committing to spending their entire career with their current organization. This contrasts with women in Utah, who face challenges like the gender wage gap and fewer advancement opportunities, making them less likely to express such long-term commitment. Outside of Utah, however, the data indicates that men and women are equally likely to express long-term organizational commitment. This suggests that in more equitable labor markets, both genders may prioritize similar factors—whether intrinsic or extrinsic—in deciding their long-term career paths with their employer.

FIGURE 2
REVISED RESEARCH MODEL



DISCUSSION

The findings from this study contribute to the broader understanding of job satisfaction across gender and regional lines, particularly in contexts where labor market conditions vary. Through a detailed analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as pay, relations with management, and work-family balance, the study identifies important nuances in how these factors interact with gender and geography to influence overall job satisfaction.

One of the significant findings is the important role of pay as a predictor of job satisfaction for both men and women in Utah, where its impact was almost identical. This finding highlights Utah's unique labor market conditions, where wage gaps and limited opportunities make compensation a central concern for both genders. However, outside of Utah, pay was not a significant predictor of job satisfaction for women, suggesting that women in other regions may derive satisfaction from intrinsic factors such as meaningful work and workplace relationships. This distinction may indicate that women in areas with more equitable labor markets place less emphasis on pay, potentially due to better overall working conditions and access to other non-monetary rewards.

In terms of work interference with family, the data supports the hypothesis that this factor negatively impacts job satisfaction for both genders. However, the relationship was not significant for women in Utah, indicating that work-family conflict may not play a central role in shaping their job satisfaction in the state. This could suggest that women in Utah have either adapted to the challenges of balancing work and family life or that other factors more strongly influence their satisfaction. In contrast, the impact of work-family conflict was more pronounced for women outside of Utah, where it had a stronger negative effect on their job satisfaction compared to men. This highlights how work-family balance issues may affect women more deeply in regions where traditional gender roles may be less rigid, and workplace support for family responsibilities may vary.

The study also underscores the complex role of intrinsic rewards, such as having an interesting job, in shaping job satisfaction. Contrary to expectations, having an interesting job was a stronger predictor of job satisfaction for men in Utah than for women, challenging the assumption that women would prioritize meaningful and engaging work more highly. This suggests that while both men and women in Utah value intrinsic rewards, men may be more sensitive to these factors when other extrinsic rewards, like pay and advancement opportunities, are limited. However, outside of Utah, an interesting job was a more meaningful predictor of job satisfaction for women than for men, highlighting the importance of engaging and fulfilling work for women in regions where labor market conditions may offer more equitable opportunities.

Finally, the findings regarding long-term organizational commitment reveal notable regional and gender-based differences. Men in Utah were more likely to express a desire to remain with their current organization for the rest of their careers, driven by the importance of job security and stability. This contrasts with women in Utah, who face more significant barriers to career progression and may be less willing to commit long-term to their organizations. Interestingly, this trend reverses outside of Utah, with women nationwide reporting higher long-term commitment compared to men, which aligns with the literature suggesting that women when faced with more favorable labor conditions, may exhibit higher organizational loyalty due to stronger workplace relationships and intrinsic job satisfaction.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS AND WORKERS

Recommendations for organizations and employees regarding job satisfaction are slightly varied for Utah compared to findings in other areas. While closing the gender wage gap is a viable recommendation everywhere, within Utah, where the gap is significant, organizations would benefit from more equitable wage distribution across genders. Such an approach would significantly respond to the main job satisfaction preference for men and women in Utah. Prioritizing equality via competitive compensation for employees raises morale and long-term satisfaction of workers, while fostering employee loyalty and longevity within an organization. Organizations can reduce gender pay gaps by regularly evaluating their compensation plans for disparities and making needed adjustments to equalize those discrepancies. As financial compensation is particularly salient for men and women in Utah, organizations could also rely on additional financial incentives to increase employee satisfaction in the workplace.

For organizations outside of Utah, the gender pay gap, while perhaps less pronounced, still exists, making payment reconciliation a continued necessity. Additionally, where incentives for women go beyond pecuniary, organizations must become familiar with other forms of intrinsic rewards that improve job satisfaction, loyalty and high-level commitment for female workers. They can customize their incentives to

match the needs and preferences of workers of both genders in terms of providing interesting work, job autonomy, and opportunities to help others.

As men in Utah are prone to value more intrinsic compensation, particularly having interesting work, organizations in this region would do well to offer enrichment opportunities in the workplace. This would mean organizations placing more emphasis on autonomy, skill development, and challenging projects for workers that would enlarge and diversify the landscape of their work. Such recommendations could also apply to women outside of Utah who align with these intrinsic incentives.

Organizations should procure leadership training for management to answer the significant preference for supportive management when it comes to male workers in the state of Utah. Leadership training would ultimately benefit all workers, but it could provide a strategic intervention directly anchored in this specific motivating factor for Utah male workers.

The unique findings regarding job flexibility and commitment in Utah are potentially tied to less equitable working environments for women – making it difficult to make Utah-specific gender recommendations for job satisfaction in these areas. It is likely that if and when some changes are enacted, shifts in preferences may also change. For regions outside of Utah, the preferences indicate a need for flexible working arrangements, options for parental leave, and flexible work arrangements. Organizations should prioritize actively recognizing the contributions of both men and women in flexible work situations.

Overcoming barriers women face in the Utah workplace due to the more regional and cultural nuances that exist include organizations providing customized opportunities to further develop skills, enhance capabilities, and ensure career progress. Mentorship and career development options help workers to have a larger long-term vision of their place within an organization, enhancing satisfaction and potentially increasing company commitment.

Considering these findings, workers can be mindfully selective in the organizations to which they will commit based on their own preferences related to job satisfaction. They can take a proactive approach to their employment by choosing positions that most closely align with their values and goals. Workers can be discerning of the organizations they select by determining if a potential job provides fair wages, flexibility, career development opportunities, supportive management, and an array of preferred and customized incentives.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this research pose some interesting questions for future research. Future studies could investigate the underlying causes for both men and women in Utah prioritizing pay so significantly as opposed to other possible incentives. Additional examination surrounding the cultural and regional underpinnings that impact job satisfaction in Utah could offer further context surrounding the distinct employment landscape in this state.

Future research might consider factors such as cultural and religious customs, education, and family dynamics in conjunction with considering why the work-home balance may be less of a priority than women in other states and job satisfaction. Prospective longitudinal studies might also assess likely contributing factors to Utah female workers and their lower organizational commitment and job advancement. Additionally, comparative analyses between Utah and other regions where pay equality is more prominent could potentially yield added insight regarding the contrast between Utah women's preference for extrinsic rewards over more intrinsic rewards.

Concentrating on the role of limitation in pay and job advancement could produce valuable insight towards further explaining the unexpected findings in this study. Ideally, additional research in these areas could illuminate more specifics in the complexities surrounding job satisfaction, particularly concerning gender and geography. Finally, in an ever-changing work landscape, these future studies point to improving job satisfaction for all workers and strengthening organizations by giving organizations and individuals the information needed to inspire strategic implementations for their employees.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to better understand the differences in gender preferences for job satisfaction within varied areas within the United States. In a survey of over 500 workers, results yielded substantial differences in preferences regarding extrinsic rewards, work-life balance, and workplace relationships as it related not only to gender but also geographical regions. The findings indicated that job satisfaction preferences for both genders in Utah, where the labor market has a markedly different makeup, did not line up with national trends. Specifically, pay was a significant job satisfaction determinant for both men and women workers in Utah as opposed to women's more intrinsic-based preferences in other parts of the United States.

Findings disclosed that the work-family balance was less of an issue for women workers in Utah than their female counterparts outside of Utah. Men in Utah indicated job satisfaction preferences that were also different from their male peers in other regions regarding intrinsic rewards. These results highlight how varied contextual factors, particularly geographical and related influences, can impact job satisfaction preferences, sometimes completely reversing gender-related preference patterns.

In terms of application, considering these factors requires informed and customized organizational responses. Ultimately, organizations can take gender and geographical impacts into consideration when tailoring interventions that incentivize workers in ways that engender satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment. As equality in the workplace increases, regional factors shift, and gender-based preferences evolve, job satisfaction preferences will continue to change. A committed approach to examining the components and nuances of job satisfaction in these areas offers profound insights that can bolster the workplace community.

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