

## Hospitality Job-Esteem Instrument Development

By Dr. Douglas G. Miller\*

A possible phenomenon hindering the success of the hospitality industry is the negative perception many service employees have of their jobs. Many front-line service employees often feel their work is insulting, demeaning, and humiliating as they cater to the needs and sometimes eccentric wants of customers. Hospitality industry employees are especially vulnerable to these feelings due to the nature of the services provided. Experts believe that this perception can cause poor service delivery, dislike for the guest, negative job attitudes, and high turnover rates (Bowen and Lawler, 1995).

If employees do not take pride in their jobs or find dignity in what they do, they are more likely to leave the industry. Perhaps a greater concern occurs when employees with negative attitudes toward their jobs do not leave the industry but stay and provide poor service. The success of the hospitality industry may rest in part with its ability to change this negative image of service employment by substituting a positive image. An instrument was needed to measure the unique problems associated with negative employee attitudes toward hospitality service.

The construct "job-esteem" has been created for this project and is used to describe the level of respect and dignity an individual believes is associated with his/her job.

Job-esteem is the self-analysis of the social value and dignity associated with one's job. Similar, but not synonymous, concepts of self-esteem, job satisfaction, work ethic, job involvement, and job-related anomie are identified as contributing forces that influence job-esteem (See Figure 1).

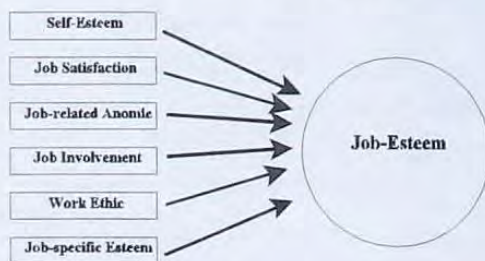


Figure 1. Components of Job-Esteem

The study of job-esteem is important to the hospitality industry because of the service nature of positions and the transient nature of many of the jobs. Many employees find cleaning guests' rooms, carrying guests' luggage, and serving guests' food to be demeaning and servile. This negative perception lowers employee job longevity. Understanding job-esteem would enhance the industry's ability to address these issues. To have the desired effect on job-esteem, the beliefs and attitudes that are components of this construct must be identified. Self-esteem, anomie, job satisfaction, job involvement, and work ethic are part (some with more influence than others) of job-esteem.

### Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is defined as the level of respect one has for oneself (Baron and Bryne, 1991). People with high self-esteem are psychologically better adjusted, better students, better at handling criticism, and better at coping with failure (Baron and Bryne, 1991). When Tharenou (1979) evaluated self-esteem in the work place, she found that high self-esteem was positively related to high job satisfaction and intention to stay on the job. Although research has failed to show a connection between self-esteem and job performance (Marsh, 1993; Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, and Dunham, 1989), business practitioners insist there is a connection. Job-esteem is similar to self-esteem because it encompasses the attitude, feelings, and emotions that one has for his/her specific job. Respect and dignity associated with a job affect one's self-esteem and visa-versa; the level of one's self-esteem affects the level of respect and dignity that an individual associates with his/her job. Job-esteem, therefore, may, be considered a *component* of self-esteem as an individual's employment influences his/her overall self-esteem.

### Anomie

Another factor affecting job-esteem is anomie. Anomie is defined as "social instability resulting from a breakdown of standards and values" and also as "personal unrest, alienation, and uncertainty that comes from a lack of purpose or ideals" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1995). Durkheim researched the anomie

phenomenon (an ancient Greek concept) while measuring suicide rates in late nineteenth-century industrial Europe. His explanation for most suicides was that people had lost touch with their values and norms. Individuals felt removed or aloof from society partly due to the specialization of labor. During this societal shift, many individuals left their home villages and moved into the cities where the factories were located. In doing so, they lost contact with family, traditions, and agrarian norms. They had become lost and confused with no identity and no sense of purpose. Durkheim claimed anomie was a result of "egoistic individualism." In other words, individuals with anomie focused on satisfying the ego or personal needs, while ignoring the needs of the group (Kendall, 1996). However, Durkheim proposed a solution for anomie. He reasoned that combining the individual's needs with the group's (or society's) needs would satisfy the identity of the individual and the need for group norms and values.

A distinction is made between anomie and job-related anomie. Job-related anomie is the level of an employee's belief that his or her organization is void of values and norms. Many authors have warned of the increased potential for anomie in today's work environment. Recently, social bonds have loosened while new forms of alienation and domination of profit motives have increased (Muckenberger, 1996). Generation X members, those born between 1965 and 1980, are particularly prone to feelings of alienation, cynicism, and detachment--classic symptoms of anomie (Corbo, 1997). Eighteen-to-35-year-old hospitality employees make up the largest percentage of hotel front-line employees.

### Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is "the emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job and as such can be negative, positive, or neutral" (Arvey, 1995). Spector's (1997) widely used Job Satisfaction Survey dissects job satisfaction into these nine parameters: pay, promotion, supervision, benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, coworkers, nature of work, and communication. "Satisfaction" parameters represent both the affective and cognitive aspects of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction makes up a part of job-esteem, but the two concepts are not the same. For example, the job incumbent in a service role could have high job satisfaction but low job-esteem (See Figure 2).

		Job Satisfaction	
		High	Low
Job-Esteem	High	1 High Job Satisfaction High Job-Esteem	2 Low Job Satisfaction High Job-Esteem
	Low	3 High Job Satisfaction Low Job-Esteem	4 Low Job Satisfaction Low Job-Esteem

Figure 2. Comparison of Job-Esteem and Job Satisfaction

#### Box No. 1. High Job Satisfaction/High Job-Esteem

Such a combination is not uncommon and intuitively makes sense. Emotionally and cognitively, the job holder who is highly satisfied with pay, benefits, supervisors, and all other elements of job satisfaction will also be more likely to find the job to have elements of pride and dignity.

#### Box No. 2. Low Job Satisfaction/High Job-Esteem

A low-satisfaction, high-esteem relationship is not common but possible. A housekeeper may believe in the dignity of caring for travelers and may value the role of providing this needed service. However, this housekeeper's job satisfaction may depend on factors such as work conditions, supervisors, and co-worker relationships. In other words, this housekeeper with high job-esteem for housekeeping may not find job satisfaction at the Hawaii Marriott Hotel but may be satisfied at the Hawaii Hilton.

#### Box No. 3. High Job Satisfaction/Low Job-Esteem

Such a combination seems to be the least likely of the four. An individual who perceives cleaning rooms for strangers as demeaning will have low job-esteem as a housekeeper at any hotel. However, this housekeeper is not precluded from having high job satisfaction because of low job-esteem. Many hotel companies go to great lengths to improve satisfaction of employees by manipulating the work environment. Employees may ignore their feelings of low job-esteem if they have excellent working conditions, benefits, pay, and supervision resulting in high job satisfaction. Boxes No. 2 and No. 3 in particular, are important to the claim that the two constructs are different.

#### Box No. 4. Low Job Satisfaction/Low Job-Esteem

A large number of hospitality service-sector employees have low job satisfaction (Barron and Maxwell, 1998; Price, 1994). The assumption that a number of these individuals also have low job-esteem is reasonable.

#### Job Involvement

Definitions of job involvement are found in the organizational behavior literature. (Saleh and Hosek, 1976), defined job involvement as the degree to which the total job situation is a "central life interest" or the degree to which it is perceived to be a major source for the satisfaction of important needs. The central life interest implies the importance of the job on factors outside the job itself. The assumption can also be made from this definition that individuals are unique in the degree to which they view their employment as the most important function in their life. Job-esteem, although it does have impact on central life issues, has few implications for how the job is perceived in terms of order of importance relative to other life activities.

Lodahl and Kejner (1965) defined job involvement as the degree of importance of work in one's self-image. This definition also implies the significance of the job on the individual's work and non-work life. Reasonably, a job affects one's *total* life; but the job does not need to be a *major source* or *central interest* in order for job-esteem to be an effective factor in the satisfaction and success of the employee.

Finally, (Allport, 1943), defined job involvement as the degree to which the job meets the need for prestige and self-respect or the level of importance to one's self-esteem. A job may very well enhance or diminish an individual's overall self-esteem. A worthy, and perhaps ethical, goal of any organization is to increase an employee's self-esteem; whether it improves the productivity of the employee is immaterial.

#### Work Ethic

Many definitions for work ethic exist; most notable is the Protestant work ethic, which implies that a religious obligation to work hard is a commandment from God. This concept was first proposed by Weber in 1905 and has undergone exhaustive study ever since. Furnham (1987) defined work ethic as a "dispositional variable characterized

by a belief in the importance of hard work, rationality, and frugality, which acts as a defense against sloth, sensuality, and religious doubt." Job-esteem is expected to be associated with work ethic because *work in itself* is a source of pride for some workers. For workers with a "traditional" work ethic, the job they do may not matter; the key point is that they are, in fact, working. Perhaps a strong work ethic exists today in the American worker. If so, it is one hidden underneath the anxiety, mistrust, and alienation people currently feel. Whatever the case, the general agreement is that the issue needs much more attention than it is being given. The study of job-esteem is designed to contribute to this needed understanding.

#### Occupational Prestige

An explanation of occupational prestige is needed because some may mistakenly assume it is the same concept as job-esteem. Occupational prestige is determined by perceptions the *public* has for particular job classifications (Hope, 1972). Therefore, occupational prestige is different from job-esteem because only an incumbent in the particular occupation being analyzed can make a personal evaluation of his/her job-esteem. For example, an individual who has never worked in a restaurant may rank restaurant jobs as having low occupational prestige, but this individual is not able to evaluate the job-esteem without having experienced the job. On the other hand, a restaurant server may recognize that outsiders see his/her position as having low prestige-- but this fact does not necessarily mean he/she will feel a low level of job-esteem.

#### Job-Esteem

Each of the key components of the construct presented above--self-esteem, anomie, job satisfaction, job involvement, and work ethic--are contributors to job-esteem but are not synonyms of job-esteem. Also included in the job-esteem diagram (Figure 1) showing the association of the above constructs to job-esteem is a sixth item titled *job-specific esteem*. Job-specific esteem is proposed to be a global construct that is relevant in any industry. Therefore, for the concept to be effective in a measurement situation, a unique set of items addressing the specific job studied must be included. For example, determining the job-esteem of hotel employees requires ascertaining attitudes toward serving paying guests, whereas the job-esteem of

steel factory workers will require a unique set of items dealing with the manufacturing sector.

### Instrument Development

Gable and Wolf's (1993) and Mueller's (1986) texts on instrument development were studied and utilized in developing the instrument for measuring job-esteem in a hospitality setting. Gable and Wolf (1993) stated that after development of construct definitions, the second step is to "generate the perceptions, attributes, or behaviors of a person with high or low levels of this characteristic." They indicated that the most useful technique was conducting extensive interviews with the targets.

A number of existing scales determined to be most adaptable for the purpose of measuring job-esteem were consulted, including Spector's (1997) Job Satisfaction Survey; Srole's (1956) Anomia Scale; Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale; Lorence and Mortimer's (1985) Job Involvement Scale; and Wayne's (1989) Work Ethic Scale.

Additional items were added to address hospitality-specific job-esteem, referred to as hospitality esteem. The instrument was written with the criteria that each item had to be related to the concept of respect and dignity associated with an employee's hotel service job. (Appendix A shows the completed measurement tool; Appendix B lists each item and its corresponding construct.)

### Conclusions

Job-esteem is of particular concern to the hospitality industry because of the personal nature of the service required by hospitality employees. Due to this highly personal service aspect, many individuals in the industry see their role as one of servitude. Yet, guest satisfaction in the hospitality industry is strongly related to employee behaviors (Gundersen, Heide, and Olsson, 1996).

Employee behaviors include displaying a genuine empathy for the guest and positive emotions (King, 1992), as well as exhibiting job-specific skills. Also, most hospitality operations do not have the opportunity to employ only those individuals who are predisposed to a high degree of these behaviors because of the current labor shortage in the service industries. Therefore, managers and supervisors in the industry are required to elicit and affect positive

behaviors from subordinates through training, motivation, modeling, and other techniques. Understanding the nature of job-esteem and being able to measure job-esteem levels of employees is beneficial to employees and hospitality providers.

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**Appendix A: Job-Esteem Instrument**

1. Serving the visitors to Hawaii gives me a great sense of pride.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
2. I would be embarrassed if my friends saw how I had to serve guests in my job.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
3. It is demeaning to work in a job that requires serving hotel guests.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
4. I encourage my friends to get a job in the hotel industry.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
5. Caring for the needs of hotel guests is very rewarding.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
6. Overall, I believe that hotel guests see me as their paid servant.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
7. When I travel I treat hotel employees much better than I am treated by our guests.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
8. At times I think I have not done much to deserve my paycheck.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
9. I am able to do my job as well as most other people.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
10. I feel that I have many good qualities that help me do my job.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
11. I feel that I am as valuable an employee as anyone else in my department.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
12. I feel that my job performance is not much to be proud of.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
13. I certainly feel useless at work.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
14. My job is enjoyable.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
15. I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
16. My supervisor is competent in doing his/her job.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
17. When I do a good job, I receive the recognition for it that I should receive.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
18. My supervisor is unfair to me.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
19. I do not feel that the work I do is appreciated.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
20. I have to work harder at my job because of the incompetence of people I work with.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
21. I like doing the things I do at work.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
22. My supervisor shows too little interest in the feelings of employees in our department.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
23. I enjoy my coworkers.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
24. I feel a sense of pride in doing my job.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
25. For my job, I do some extra work that isn't required.  
Often \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_ Never \_\_\_
26. My work shifts seem to drag.  
Often \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_ Never \_\_\_

27. I think about my job when I'm doing something else.  
Often \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_ Never \_\_\_
28. Talking to my managers is of little use because they often aren't really interested in the problems of the average worker.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
29. In spite of what some people say, the work conditions of the average worker here are getting worse, not better.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
30. These days workers here don't really know who they can depend on.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
31. Most employees here can still be depended upon to come through in a crisis.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
32. People who work hard enough can usually get ahead.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
33. Most employees here will go out of their way to help other employees.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
34. I feel that my job is meaningless.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
35. I expect working as a hospitality employee to be a meaningful and fulfilling part of my life.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
36. A good hospitality employee values a job well done.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
37. Dignity exists in hard work.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
38. I should give my best effort regardless of how unimportant my job may seem.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
39. My work is worthwhile only when it earns me self-respect.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
40. I take pride in the quality of my work effort.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_
41. I seek a feeling of personal fulfillment from working in addition to my paycheck.  
Strongly Agree \_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_ Strongly Disagree \_\_\_

**Appendix B: Items and Corresponding Construct**

Items	Hospitality Esteem (Researcher)	Self-Esteem (Rosenburg)	Job Satisfaction (Spector)	Job Involvement (Lorence)	Anomie (Srole)	Work Ethic (Wayne)
1	X					
2	Xr					
3	Xr					
4	X					
5	X					
6	Xr					
7	Xr					
8		Xr				
9		X				
10		X				
11		X				
12		Xr				
13		Xr				
14			X			
15			X			
16			X			
17			X			
18			Xr			
19			Xr			

Items	Hospitality Esteem (Researcher)	Self-Esteem (Rosenburg)	Job Satisfaction (Spector)	Job Involvement (Lorence)	Anomie (Srole)	Work Ethic (Wayne)
20			Xr			
21			X			
22			Xr			
23			X			
24			X			
25				X		
26				Xr		
27				X		
28					Xr	
29					Xr	
30					Xr	
31					X	
32						X
33						X
34						Xr
35						X
36						X
37						X
38						X
39						Xr
40						X
41						X