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Factors Associated With Employee Satisfaction in Minnesota Community Action Agencies

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ABSTRACT

In 2011, the state of Minnesota faced a difficult budgetary decision. At the time of this writing, the state HHS budget had been vetoed by the Governor and State Employees were preparing for a government shutdown. Disagreement between the Republican majority and the Democratic Governor on how to balance the state budget had serious implications for Community Action Agencies that received, on average, 10% of their annual funding from the State of Minnesota in 2010 (MNCAP, 2010).

Considering the fact that budget cuts would be imminent, and raises and bonuses unlikely, the researcher wanted to provide CAAs of MN with information that might assist with recruitment and retention of its workforce based on what current employees identify as being satisfied or dissatisfied with in their current place of employment.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What do employees of Minnesota Community Action Agencies report as factors associated with their job satisfaction?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research regarding employee satisfaction among social service and non-profit agencies has provided a significant amount of information related to the factors that retain or deter workers. In fact, job satisfaction is highly correlated with retention. In her research, Freund found that job satisfaction “was the most meaningful factor influencing withdrawal intention,” (2005, p. 16). While there are several theories offered to explain retention and attrition; they tend to share some common themes. Listed below are reasons regularly cited in the literature for why workers tended to stay or leave their job in the social service and/or non-profit sector.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH RETENTION	FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ATTRITION
Support from co-workers and supervisors	Heavy work load/stress
Recognition for excellent work	Poor organizational culture
Adequate compensation	Problems with management
Opportunities for advancement	Lack of opportunities for advancement

METHODOLOGY

Executive Directors from the 28 Minnesota Community Action Agencies were contacted by the researcher through Minnesota Community Action Partnership. The directors were asked to disseminate the survey to their respective staff via email.

The Job Satisfaction Survey© (Spector, 1985) was the survey instrument used to collect data on employee satisfaction among the respondents. The Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) was designed for use on non-profit, public, and human service organizations. The JSS includes nine subscales related to employee satisfaction including pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, coworkers, nature of work, and communication. The JSS© was included in an online survey along with questions related to demographics and distributed via email through the internet-based survey tool called Survey Monkey.

115 subjects responded to the survey.

Results from the survey were collected and analyzed.

DATA/RESULTS

The data suggests that, overall, employees of Community Action Agencies in Minnesota are relatively satisfied with their jobs.

If the research on factors related to retention is applied to the results from this survey administrators might feel relatively comfortable with the low potential for turnover at this point in time. The only domain where administrators might look to improve the overall satisfaction among their employees is in the area of opportunities for advancement. A majority of the respondents (54.6%) indicated that they were less satisfied than their colleagues regarding the possibility for promotion within their agency. On a positive note, an overwhelming majority (95.5%) of respondents indicated that they were somewhat –mostly satisfied with their coworkers. Satisfaction with interactions among coworkers is repeatedly associated with overall job satisfaction and retention in the literature. Also, a greater number of respondents indicated that they were more satisfied with contingent rewards (appreciation, recognition and rewards for good work) than their counterparts.

Confounding the results a bit is the fact that nearly half (44%) of the respondents indicated that they had been with their agency for 5 years or less. The remaining respondents were spread out relatively evenly over the course of 20 years or more. It is difficult to determine the reason for this trend. One speculation would be that recently hired staff were more likely to respond to the survey for some reason. Another thought is that agencies may have a higher number of workers who only remain employed for about 5 years before leaving for another opportunity. Further analysis into this tendency is recommended.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The research presented here should be considered preliminary. Some of the findings correlate with results from previous research conducted on employee satisfaction and factors related to retention or attrition among social services workers. Research specific to employees of Community Action Agencies and their satisfaction with work is not known to exist. For more comprehensive findings, further research is recommended. Responses were more representative of rural agencies which accounted for 81% of the respondents. The response rate may have been larger if the subjects weren't also facing the implications of a state shut down. The researcher was aware of the fact that agencies were preparing contingency plans during dissemination of the survey and were presumably busy with more pressing matters than assisting with this type of research. Also a 'comment box' was not utilized during the survey. Allowing for qualitative data may have proven very helpful in understanding further some of the puzzling results found in the research.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, it is recommended that agencies look at ways to increase advancement opportunities within their organization in order to alleviate some of the dissatisfaction identified in the research with regard to the possibility for promotion. If the reason for the high rate in responses among those employed for five years or less can be attributed to the fact that workers leave the agency for opportunities elsewhere, adding additional levels of management may help to reduce this trend. The prospect of advancement may prove to be an effective incentive for workers, thus increasing retention. Offering employees the opportunity to utilize their skills in unique ways may be an alternative advancement opportunity resulting in a more cost effective strategy. Agencies may also look at refiguring job duties, job descriptions and/or job titles. While workers reported relative satisfaction with contingent rewards, the gap between those who were more satisfied and less satisfied could be increased. It's probable that incorporating additional contingent rewards may increase agencies' chances of retaining quality, trained staff especially during economically uncertain times when raises or bonuses cannot be offered. Thaden, Jacobs-Priebe and Evans (2010) found that organizational culture (including contingent rewards) was significantly related to attrition among social services workers.

Table 1

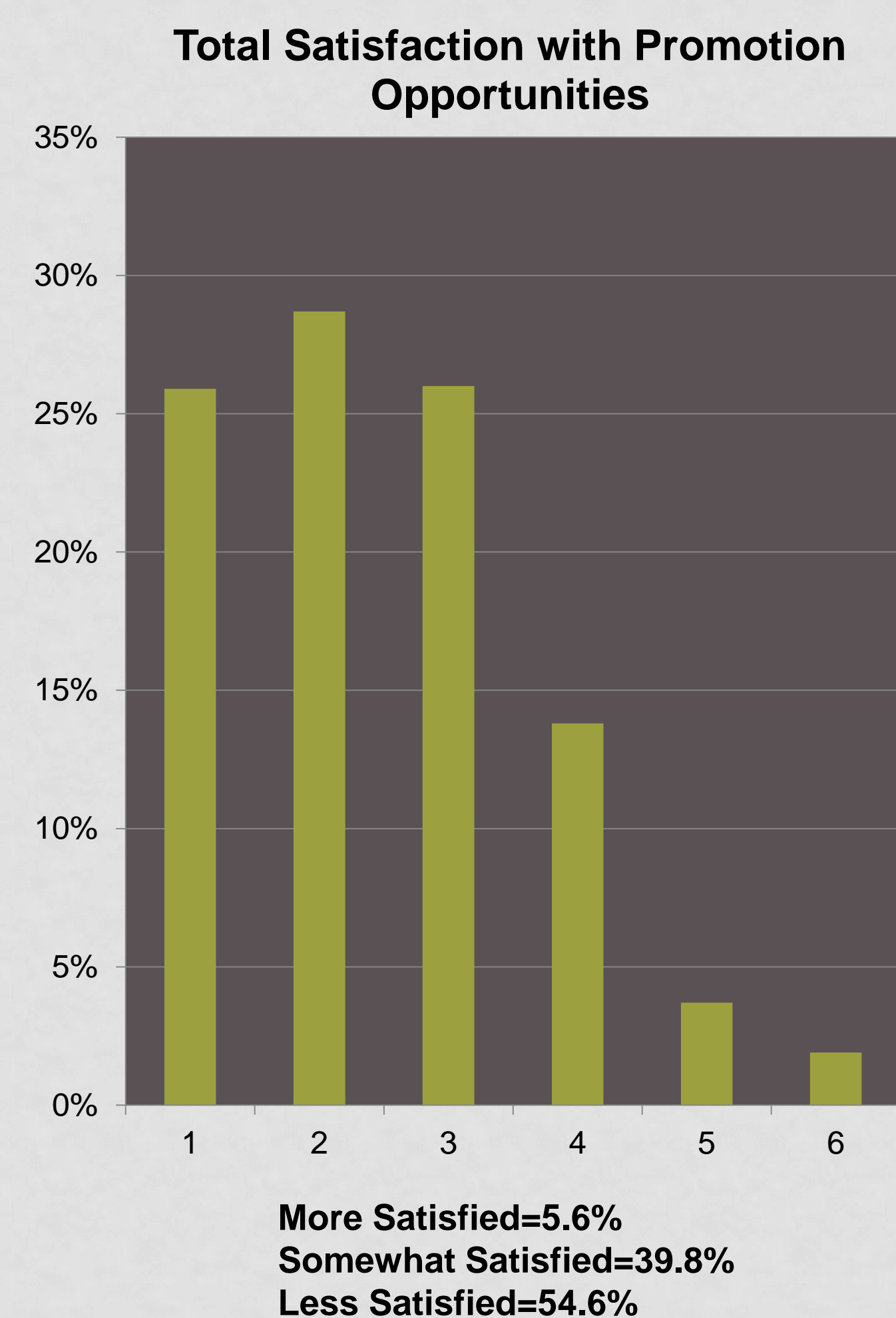


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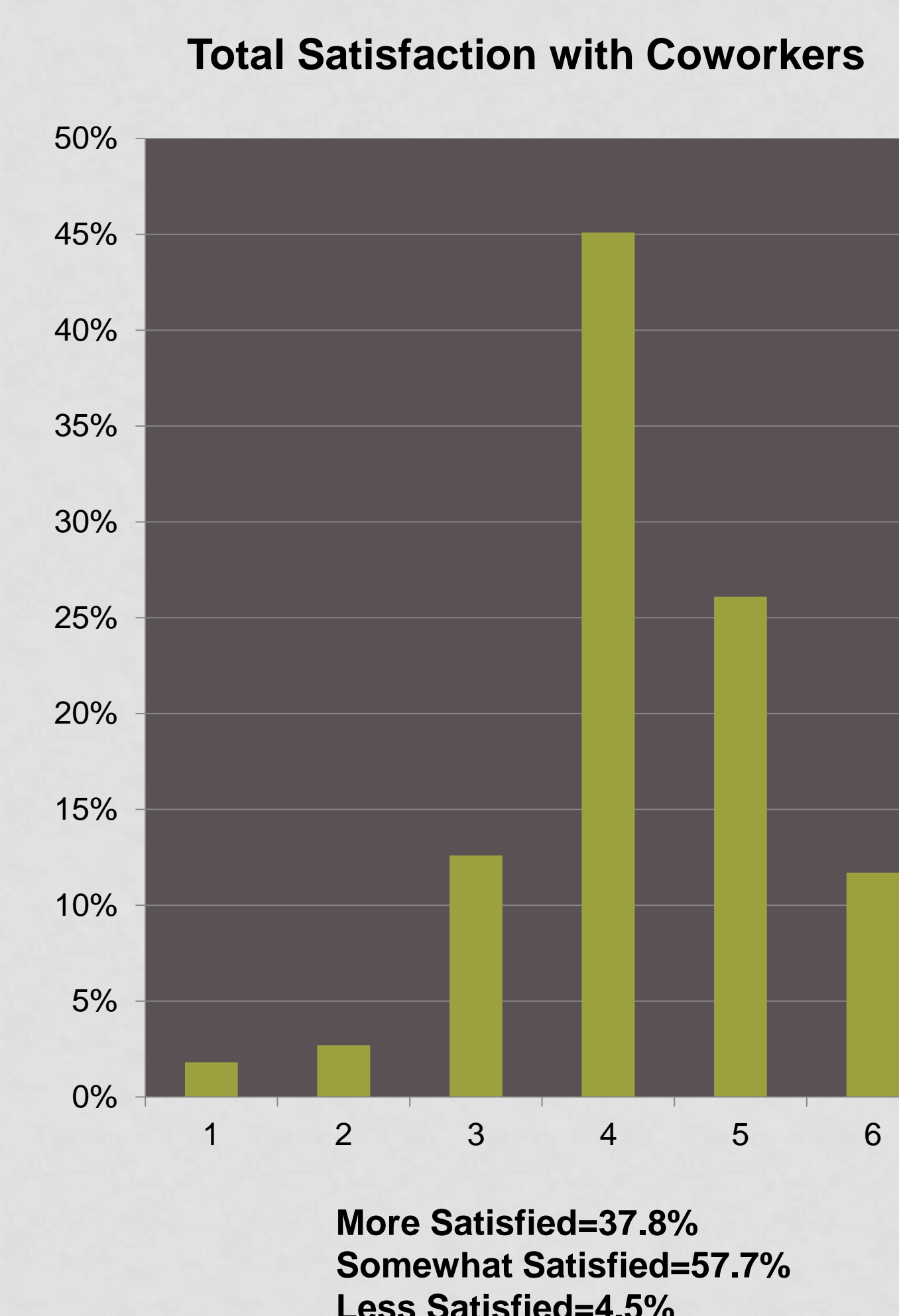


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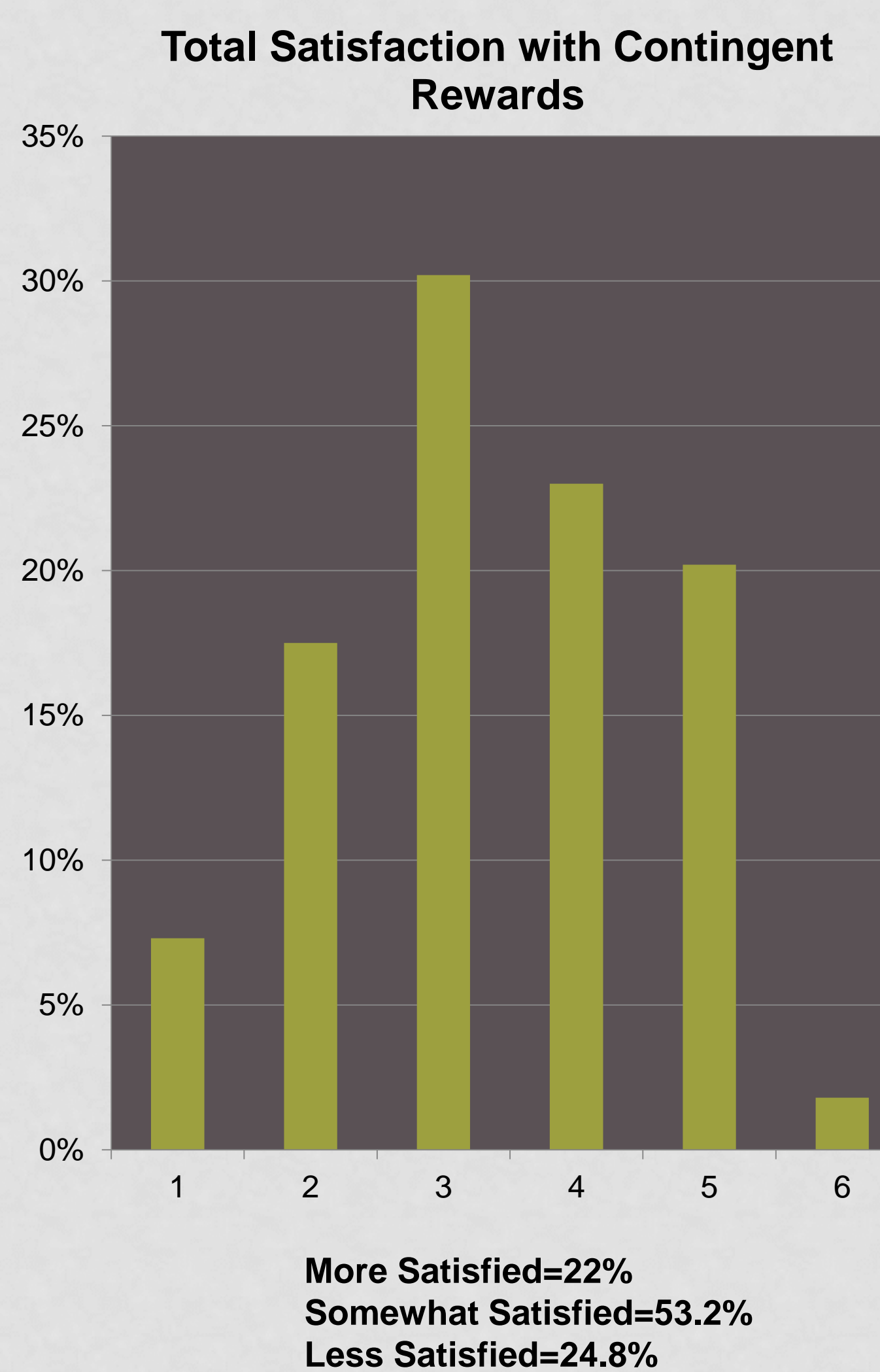
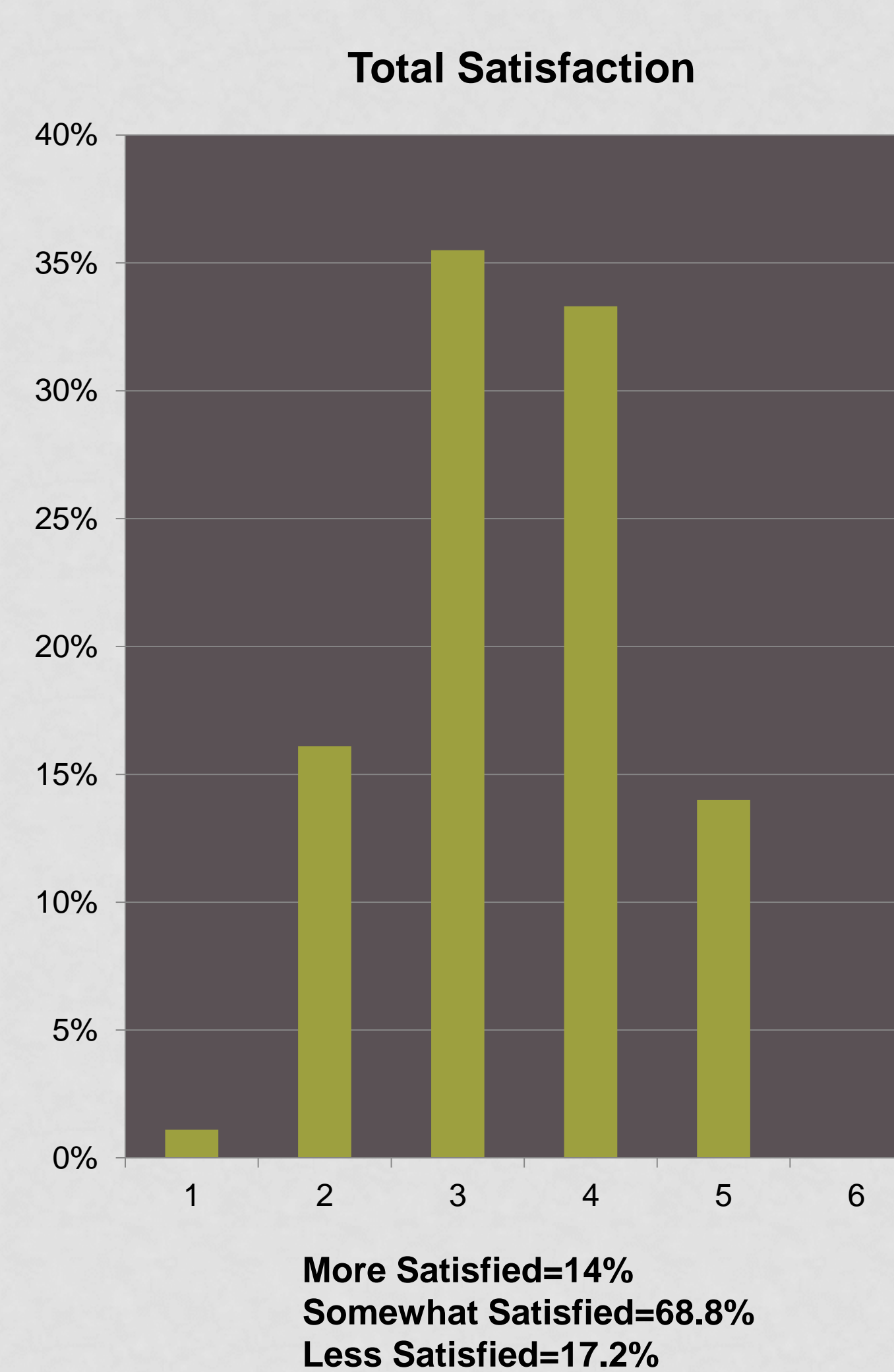


Table 4



REFERENCES

References are available from the author upon request.