



JOB SATISFACTION IN VARIOUS MEDICAL SPECIALITIES

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Authors declare no conflict of interest

Abstract

Purpose: The present study aimed to evaluate job satisfaction in different medical specialties in Lithuania.

Methods: A cross-sectional study among 272 Lithuanian doctors working in both private and public sectors was performed. A previously developed and validated instrument addressing three sections (demographic questionnaire, UWEC and Warr-Cook-Walls scales) and including statements evaluating doctors' attitude to their chosen profession was used. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS W20 (descriptive analysis, Student t test).

Results: Response rate was 45.33%. The survey revealed that dentists were more satisfied with their job (4.2 ± 0.7) than medical doctors (3.95 ± 0.7) ($p = 0.004$). Both dentists and medical doctors working in capital city notified the same extent of job satisfaction ($p = 0.103$), while in other Lithuanian regions dentists were more satisfied ($p = 0.027$). The ones working in private practice were the most satisfied (4.44 ± 0.6), and doctors working in public sector were the least satisfied (3.9 ± 0.76) ($p < 0.05$). Gender differences, according to objective complex Warr-Cook-Walls scale, were not significant ($p = 0.584$), but based on their own subjective opinion, men were more critical about their job ($p = 0.006$). Regarding duration of experience, the most satisfied doctors were who had 10-15 years of work experience ($p = 0.032$). Both dentists and medical doctors were least satisfied with their salaries (3.3 ± 1.17 and 3.11 ± 1.22 , respectively). Almost a half (48.7%) of medical doctors stated not getting enough recognition for a good work. As the most positive feature in their profession both groups notified the variety of activities and tasks (90.8%).

Conclusion: Dentists were more satisfied with their job than medical doctors. The extent of job satisfaction was associated with area of residence, experience, and gender. The most valuable factor was variety of job activities, while salary was the least satisfying factor.

Keywords: Dentists, Experience, Job satisfaction, Medical doctors, Private, Public, UWEC scale, Warr-Cook-Walls scale.

Introduction

A significance of job in everyday life is widely reported. Not only it gives people money to survive, but also it bestows on one a personal identity, self-actualization and social image (1). Job satisfaction is defined as pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (2). The term determines whether the employee is happy, is contented with trying to reach his/her goals, and has fulfilled needs at work. Job satisfaction depends on motivation, meeting aims, and avoiding the creation of stress-inducing atmosphere at work. It is also influenced by the position of employer, appropriate aiming, understood commissions, communication and colleagues. Studies have shown that people who are more satisfied with their job less frequently endure a burnout stress syndrome and exhaustion (3). Dentists and medical doctors belong to a risk group which is more likely to deal with burnout stress syndrome and exhaustion. It has been revealed that, among dentists, 41% of women and 59% of men were undergoing occupational stress (4). Therefore, it is important to find out all conditions and aspects of work which dissatisfy employee. Subsequently, this will help to create and maintain working conditions for doctors that satisfies them most and reduce the risk of health disorders.

The job satisfaction model, suggested by Hackman and Oldman, demonstrates cohesion between working place conditions and work performance, including employee job satisfaction (5). It states that there are five core job characteristics (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) which impact three critical psychological states (experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility for outcomes, and knowledge of the actual results), in turn influencing work outcomes (job satisfaction, absenteeism, work motivation, etc.) (6).

A theory presented by J. Holland suggests that people are more likely to have job satisfaction when their personality and job types are match (7). The following types of job are defined: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. As dental and medical professions are considered as the investigative type, people having the same type of personality will be more satisfied with their job (7).

	Private		Public		Both	
	<i>N</i>	Percent (%)	<i>N</i>	Percent (%)	<i>N</i>	Percent (%)
Dentists	44	41,12%	29	27,1%	34	31,78%
Medical doctors	18	10,91%	120	72,72%	27	16,36%

Table 1. The distribution of respondents according to their practice (private or public)

Although job satisfaction of dentists was investigated in Lithuania in 2008 (8), overall doctors job satisfaction was not analyzed. According to the authors' knowledge, there is no study evaluating the correlation between medical and dental professions and job satisfaction in Lithuania. Such study is important for future dental and medical students as popularity of these professions has been increasing and students need to understand the positive and negative features of these professions. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate job satisfaction among doctors of different medical specialties in Lithuania.

Materials and Methods

The study was performed in 23 Lithuanian regions including both private and public dental and medical practices. Job satisfaction of dentists and medical doctors was measured. To evaluate the level of job satisfaction, a validated questionnaire was used in order to get accurate and objective answers about chosen specialty and working conditions. The questionnaire consisted of short argument type questions, and the respondents had to express their agreement or disagreement so that their answers could be unified and easily evaluated.

The questionnaire was anonymous so that respondents could answer all questions sincerely. It consisted of three different sections: general demographic questions and Warr-Cook-Wall and UWES scales. General demographic questions comprised gender, age, specialty, sector (private or public) that doctors were working at, and working experience. UWES scale reveals doctors' opinion about their job from the positive perspective and consists of three parts: vigor, dedication and absorption (15). Each part includes 4 or 5 arguments defining each position. Warr-Cook-Wall scale includes 10 positions: 9 of them measure different aspects of job and working atmosphere influencing the job satisfaction (16). The last one summarizes subjective opinion of respondents when all aspects together are taken into consideration. To assure the accuracy of both scales after translating them from their original language, back translation was performed. Likert-type scale was used with answers ranging from 1 to 6 allocated according to the level of agreement with the given statement. Medium mean of the scale was eliminated to avoid misleading data.

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS V20. Descriptive analysis, Student's *t*-test were used to analyze data.

Results

Overall, 600 questionnaires were distributed to various specialties doctors at randomly selected clinics in various regions of Lithuania. 272 doctors agreed to participate in the study. Response rate was 45.33 %. Majority of respondents were women (68%). 39.34 % of the study population were dentists ($n=107$) and 60.66 % were medical doctors ($n=165$). The distribution of the respondents according to their practice (private or public) is shown in Table 1.

As it is shown in Fig.1, both dentists and medical doctors reported higher satisfaction rates using subjective evaluation compared with complex Warr-Cook-Wall scale. In addition, dentists (4.22 ± 0.7) were more satisfied with their profession than other doctors (3.93 ± 0.7) according to Warr-Cook-Wall scale evaluation ($p = 0.004$).

The results revealed no difference in job satisfaction of dentists (4.12) and medical doctors (4.08) working in capital city, Vilnius ($p = 0,103$)(Fig. 2), while the dentists working in other cities of Lithuania notified being more satisfied than medical doctors (4.32 and 4.00, correspondingly; $p = 0.027$).

The study showed that job satisfaction depended on duration of working experience (Fig. 3). According Warr-Cook-Wall scale, the doctors who had been working for less than 3 years (3.94) and the doctors who had more than 25 years of working experience (3,91) were least satisfied with their job. The most satisfied group were those who had been working for 10-15 years (4.37; $p = 0.032$).

The present data shows that job satisfaction depended on healthcare sector where doctors worked (Fig. 4). The most satisfied group with their job were doctors who worked in private practice (4.44 ± 0.6), while the least satisfied were those who were involved only in public practice (3.92 ± 0.76 ; $p < 0.05$).

The results revealed that women (4.05) were more satisfied with their profession than men (3.97) but gender differences according to objective Warr-Cook-Wall scale were not statistically significant ($p = 0.584$).

Table 2 and 3 present different aspects of job satisfaction of medical doctors and dentists in Vilnius and other Lithuanian regions.



		Physical working conditions	Freedom to choose your own method of working	Your colleagues and fellow workers	Recognition you get for good work	Your remuneration	Opportunity to use your abilities	Your hours of work	Amount of responsibility you are given	Amount of variety in your job	Overall	Average
Dentists (N=107)	Average	3,63	4,61	4,95	3,81	2,99	4,80	3,45	3,90	5,31	5,59	4,30
	Standart deviation	1,12	1,17	1,05	1,35	1,18	1,07	1,37	0,98	0,60	0,84	0,74
Medical doctors (N=165)	Average	3,93	3,94	4,76	3,20	2,77	4,42	3,38	3,94	5,30	5,32	3,93
	Standart deviation	1,12	1,15	1,00	1,24	1,20	1,11	1,16	1,09	0,80	0,95	0,67

Table 2. Assessment of different job satisfaction factors in Lithuania in dentists and medical doctors

		Physical working conditions	Freedom to choose your own method of working	Your colleagues and fellow workers	Recognition you get for good work	Your remuneration	Opportunity to use your abilities	Your hours of work	Amount of responsibility you are given	Amount of variety in your job	Overall	Average
Vilnius (N=98)	Average	3,88	4,02	4,80	3,29	2,61	4,47	3,24	4,01	5,35	5,34	4,10
	Standart deviation	1,12	1,26	0,90	1,21	1,14	1,12	1,21	1,13	0,68	0,72	0,71
Other (N=174)	Average	3,79	4,28	4,56	3,51	3,31	4,71	3,76	3,92	5,31	5,56	4,31
	Standart deviation	1,14	1,15	1,08	1,11	1,21	1,11	1,16	1,01	0,76	1,00	0,74

Table 3. Differences of job satisfaction in different Lithuanian regions

Discussion

It was the first study in Lithuania to describe the differences in job satisfaction among medical doctors and dentists. Given that the number of respondents was 272, the response rate was 45.33%, and no data about doctors' job satisfaction is available in some Lithuanian regions, generalizations from this study should be done with caution.

In general, the majority of doctors who participated in the survey were satisfied with their profession. 93% of participants stated they are satisfied with their profession notifying higher than average values (Warr-Cook-Wall scale evaluation – 3 or more). It was observed that dentists are more satisfied with their profession than medical doctors. This data is supported by other investigations reporting high levels of job satisfaction among dentists in Lithuania (8) and in the other countries (9). Although it was the first attempt to investigate the levels of job satisfaction in various specialties of doctors in Lithuania, there were similar studies evaluating the same aspects of job satisfaction in the other countries. The authors of the present study tried to create a model of positive and negative factors of medical and dental specialties which could be modified in order to improve their job satisfaction. Furthermore, these results may help the future dental and medical students to choose their career.

The study revealed that Lithuanian doctors who lived and worked in rural environment or smaller towns tended to be more satisfied with their job than those who worked in the capital. The data showed that, in periphery of Lithuania, doctors were more satisfied with their salary and working hours, while doctors in Vilnius had a higher satisfaction level about their colleagues. The possible explanation for this phenomenon could be a slightly different economic situation in periphery with higher purchasing power, which enables doctors to work less to support themselves. The similar results regarding the higher job satisfaction in rural areas can be found in an Australian study (10).

High positive ratings of colleagues in the capital city may be induced by working in larger clinics or health centers, where healthcare staff is more expanded and people may communicate more.

Recently graduated doctors may experience difficulties in finding a job, stressful situations, and lack of self-confidence which may consequently lead to a less satisfaction with

their job. When the experience is gained, job satisfaction proportionally grows. According to the results of the present study, it reaches a peak after 10 to 15 years from the beginning of medical or dental practice. Later, a decrease of satisfaction can be observed, and doctors who have more than 25 years of experience feel almost as much unsatisfied with their job as their youngest colleagues. Various reasons may be responsible for this observation such as experiencing monotony at work after long years of medical or dental practice, feeling exhausted or suffering from a "burn-out syndrome".

Doctors who worked in private practice were more likely to experience job satisfaction in comparison with those who worked in both private and public or only in public sectors. Least satisfying job conditions tended to be in public sector. A study performed in Finland also revealed analogous results: doctors involved in private practice felt better than the ones working in the public sector (11). Higher levels of job satisfaction, dedication to the work place, and less stress in private practice has been reported. Moreover, a self-perception of physical health of the doctor and the type of the practice has been found to be interrelated: dentists who worked in private or both in private and public practice reported being healthier than those who worked only in public sector (9).

According to the results of Warr-Cook-Walls scale, doctors valued components of autonomy in job, which included variety of tasks, opportunity to use their abilities, freedom to choose their own method of treatment, and responsibility. Social environment at work has also been highly valued. Colleagues and fellow workers played an important role in enhancing overall satisfaction. Unfortunately, this aspect could only be evaluated in the group of medical doctors as many dentists work alone, and their answers could not be evaluated in this category.

Although according to the data of Lithuanian Department of Statistics in 2012, an average doctor salary was almost twice as high as the average salary in Lithuania (doctors – 3975lt, average – 2171lt) (14), this was the least satisfying factor reported by the participants of the study. The doctors stated that their salary did not correspond to their work results and the endeavor they made.

Both dentists and medical doctors stated not getting

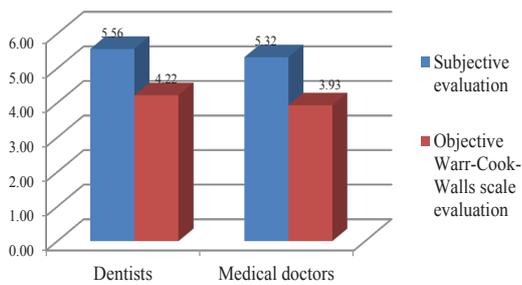


Fig. 1. Job satisfaction among dentists and other medical doctors

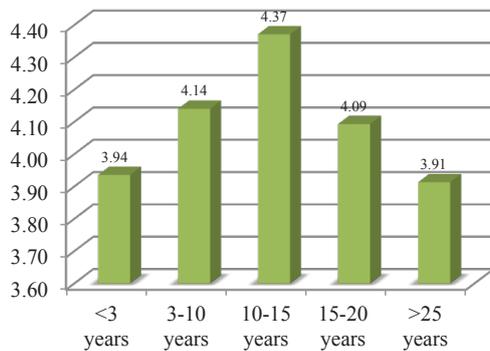


Fig. 3. Job satisfaction differences according to duration of working experience

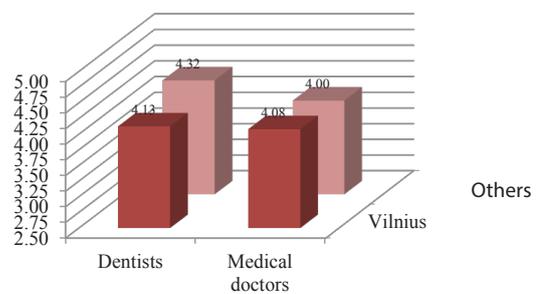


Fig. 2. Differences between various medical specialties in different parts of Lithuania

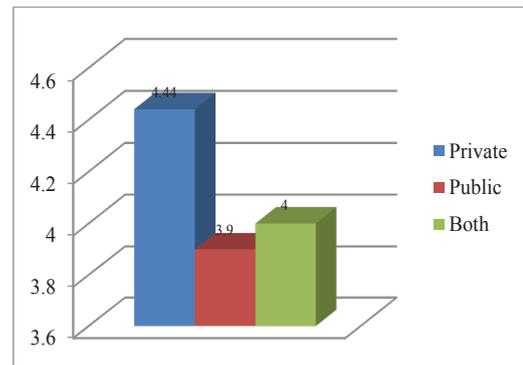


Fig. 4. Job satisfaction dependence on a type of practice

enough recognition for their work, but such tendency was more pronounced in the group of medical doctors. This criteria reflects how much respect and value doctors get from their colleagues. A team work could improve this aspect as it was previously shown that doctors who work alone are less satisfied with their job (12).

The majority of the dentists participating in the study reported discomfort at work because of physical working conditions. Headaches, insomnia, depression, and other psychological disorders were shown to be caused by frequent encounter with stressful situations at work. It has been previously shown that only about 25% of Lithuanian dentists did not suffer from symptoms of depression, and only 10% did not experience increased anxiety (8). In addition, physical musculoskeletal disorders provoked by persistent sedentary position are more common in dentistry, and it is reported that 60% of dentists suffer from backache, overweight or obesity (13).

Gender differences according to the objective complex Warr-Cook-Walls scale were not significant, but based on their own subjective opinion, men were more critical about their job than women. It can be presumed that female doctors are more optimistic. A study from Germany reported female gender as one of the factors positively influencing overall job satisfaction (17).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the survey revealed that dentists were more satisfied with their job than medical doctors. The extent of job satisfaction was associated with the area of residence, experience, and gender. The most satisfying factor was variety of job activities, while salary was the least satisfying factor.

Acknowledgment

We are grateful to all administrative persons of healthcare institutions who helped in handing out the questionnaires, and we thank all the doctors who took the time to respond to the survey. The authors alone are responsible for the views expressed.

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