

Original Research

Career satisfaction among specialist dental practitioners in Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Aim: To ascertain empirically the level of career satisfaction and the factor affecting it to achieve work-life balance.

Materials and Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among dental specialists in Saudi Arabia using a 25-item online survey questionnaire through emails, social media, and direct interview techniques. The questionnaire included the factors that measure job satisfaction in dentistry, like working hours per day, work-life balance, income level, environment working place and, self-improvement, attitude, and respect from the patient and society. Data were analyzed using SPSS.

Results: Of the 315 respondents, the majority were Saudi (68.6%) and male (72.7%). Most of them were satisfied with their work-life balance (63.2%). Almost half of the respondents are satisfied with their current work and the opportunities they offer. Further analysis revealed that most of the respondents will not change their specialty (67.7%) and would recommend their specialty to senior dental students (74.6%).

Conclusion: This study showed an acceptable level of satisfaction in almost every aspect (environmentally, psychologically, physically, financially, socially, and personally), great outcomes, and job performance. Nevertheless, some dissatisfaction was identified in a working environment which had a great effect on the overall satisfaction including the availability of materials, the continuous progression in learning and career development, salary, and top officials.

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction is conceptualized as a general attitude toward one's job and one's contentment with it.¹ One of the most widely used definitions in organizational research is that of Locke (1976), who defines job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences".² Satisfaction is highly related to job and career attrition and is ultimately related to job performance and patient care.³

Low job satisfaction of dentists can lead to high turnover with resultant loss of productivity and reduced quality of patient care.⁴ One question that is put frequently to dentists is "If you had it to do over again, would you become a dentist?".⁵ Dentist knowledge and attitude

toward patients, availability of equipment, patient satisfaction towards dentists, continuous professional development opportunities, and dentist work experience are some factors influencing the success of a dental practice and job satisfaction amongst dentists.⁶⁻⁷ Thus, the present study is undertaken to ascertain empirically the level of career satisfaction and the factor affecting it to achieve work-life balance.

Materials and Methods

A cross-sectional survey using a self-administered questionnaire was conducted among dental specialists in Saudi Arabia by using e-survey google forms that were widely spread throughout the population. The questionnaire was done both in Arabic and English language. Ethical approval was obtained from the

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research center of Riyadh Elm University and the institutional review board (FUGRP/ 2018/236).

The questionnaire composed of 25 questions included the factors that measure job satisfaction in dentistry, such as, working hours per day, work-life balance, income level, environment/working place, self-improvement, attitude, and respect from the patient and society. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution and percentages were calculated for all the demographic variables and questionnaire items. The relationship between the demographic variables and questionnaire items was assessed by applying the Chi-square test. A value of $p \leq 0.05$ was considered statistically significant. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, version 25.0 (IBM Corp, Armonk, NY, USA).

Results

Of the 315 respondents, the majority were males (72.7%). Most of the specialists were between the age of 31-40 (51.7%), and over one-third had 3-8 years of experience (35.4%). Furthermore, around two-thirds were Saudis (68.6%) and living in the Riyadh region (65.6%). Over half (54.6%) pursued their specialty in Saudi Arabia. Most of them (62.7%) work in public clinics. Just over half (53%) work less than or 8 hours/day. Descriptive analysis of the demographic characteristics are shown in table 1. Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents by specialty.

Work-life balance showed satisfaction among 63.2% of the respondents (Figure 2). Moreover, 56.5% were satisfied by their working place and 52.7% believed that adequate career enhancement opportunities are gained in their current working place. When specialist was asked if they would recommend their specialty to seniors, 74.6% agreed.

Over half (57.5%) of the specialists agreed that they took into consideration of country's needs when they chose their specialty. When asked if they would reconsider changing their specialty, 67.6% reported they will not change their specialty. On another aspect, 67.6% were contented by the respect and patient attitude towards them. Lastly, 48.3% reported that a full devoting to work would affect a specialist's personal life in a harmful manner. Association between respondents' satisfaction by specialty is shown in figure 3.

At the end of the survey, specialists were given an open question to discuss the most unsatisfied things about their working environment, the answers were concluded to the most repeated response as follows: overloading with tasks, long working hours, stress, faculty and workmates attitude, facilities, materials and human resources, salary, lack of patient cooperation and education, and inflexible work manager.

Discussion

Several studies have addressed job satisfaction among healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia, mostly among nurses and/or physicians.⁸⁻¹¹ Their reported findings varied considerably across different occupational settings and professional groups. We have not come across any study on job satisfaction among dental specialists. The primary purpose of this study was to point out the career satisfaction in each specialty for further life-work balance by measuring different aspects and factors that could affect it.

A total of 315 dental specialists were involved as a study group in this research and according to that, the following findings were built-in consonance with their answers. Depending on the analysis, the most satisfying specialty among the included ones was periodontics followed by an almost equal percentage between orthodontics and oral and maxillofacial surgery. This

Table 1. Demographics

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	229	72.2
	Female	86	27.8
Nationality	Saudi	216	68.5
	Non-Saudi	99	31.5
Age (years)	≤30	82	26.0
	31-40	163	51.7
	41-50	47	14.9
	51-60	23	7.3
Current workplace	Public	197	62.7
	Private	117	37.3
Working hours/day	≤8 hours	167	53.0
	>8 hours	148	47.0
Years of experience	<3	63	20.1
	3-8	111	35.4
	9-15	83	26.4
	16-25	57	18.2

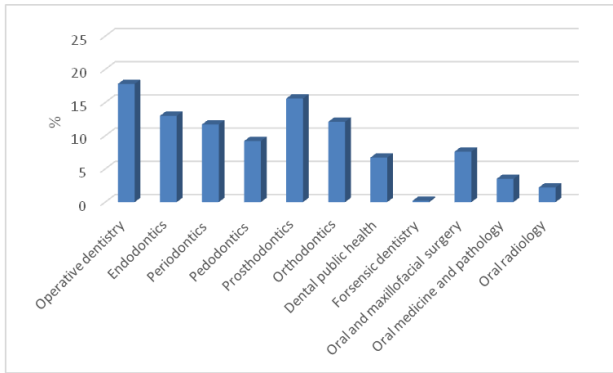


Figure 1. Distribution of participants by specialty

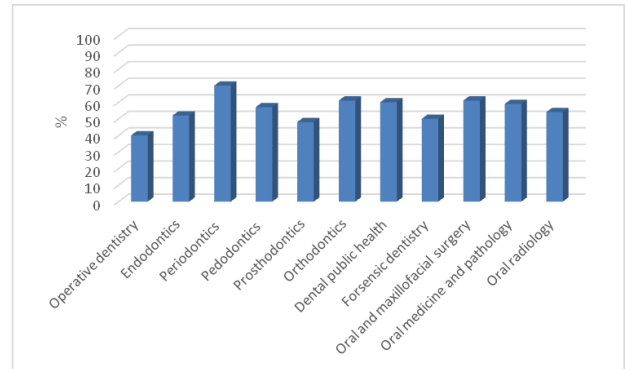


Figure 3. Respondents' satisfaction by specialty

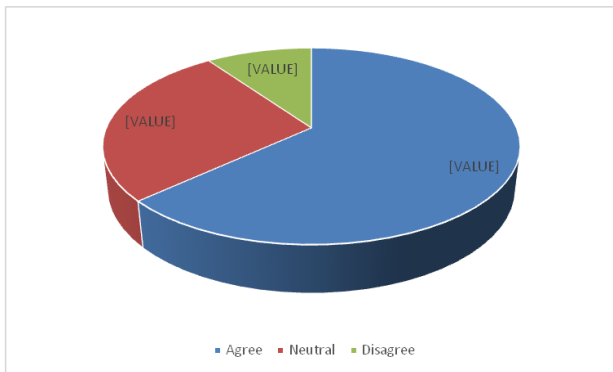


Figure 2. Respondents' satisfaction with work-life balance

result is supported by past research that showed 80.7% satisfaction among orthodontists with their profession irrespective of gender grouping.¹² On the contrary, operative, and prosthodontics were the least satisfied. It should be noted that this result goes along with lacking equipment and materials and since a great majority of participants were from the operative department, it played a major role.

Similarly, satisfaction percentages were roughly given to each specialty from the most to least as follows: periodontics (70%), orthodontics (61%), oral and maxillofacial surgery (61%), public health (60%), oral medicine, and pathology (59%), pedodontics (57%), oral radiology (54%), endodontics (52%), forensic dentistry (50%), prosthodontics (48%), Operative dentistry (40%). Taking another aspect of concern regarding the working sector, private clinics workers are more satisfied than the public ones. In the light of country needs and work-life balance, it is easy to see a proximate percentage between specialist's satisfaction and the ones who thought about country needs at that time, suggesting it is important to choose a specialty depending on the field demands and obligations to achieve the balance and the satisfaction wanted.

Conclusion

This study showed an acceptable level of satisfaction in almost every aspect (environmentally, psychologically, physically, financially, socially, and personally), great outcomes, and job performance. Nevertheless, some dissatisfaction was identified in a working environment which had a great effect on the overall satisfaction including the availability of materials, the continuous progression in learning and career development, salary, and top officials.

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