

Job Satisfaction among Pediatric Dentists in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Objective: To determine the level of job satisfaction among pediatric dentists practicing in Saudi Arabia.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among pediatric dentists practicing in Saudi Arabia from March 2017 to October 2017 using an online survey questionnaire through the SurveyMonkey website. Data were collected through a 25-item questionnaire that explored the demographic characteristics of the participants, the motives for choosing pediatric dentistry and factors contributing to job satisfaction. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the level of job satisfaction. Data analysis included descriptive statistics and Chi-square test was employed to determine significant differences among the responses.

Results: Among the 128 pediatric dentists contacted, 103 completed the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 80.4%. A majority of the participants chose pediatric dentistry because it was considered to be a challenging profession (37.9%), which was followed by those who chose this profession for financial advantages (27.1%) [$p = 0.001$]. The agreement levels for the statements related to job satisfaction were found to be significantly different ($p < 0.05$), except for the statement related to parents' expectations with regard to treatment outcomes ($p = 0.681$). Overall, 84.9% of the pediatric dentists were satisfied with their job.

Conclusion: The surveyed pediatric dentists in Saudi Arabia showed a high level of job satisfaction. The results of this study will be useful to policy makers in the dental profession to develop strategies to further improve the level of job satisfaction among pediatric dentists in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction; Pediatric Dentists; Saudi Arabia

Introduction

Job satisfaction has been recognized as an attitude to a job that arises from job experiences in either the positive or negative direction and the way in which those experiences align with the employee's psychological well-being [1]. Positive work settings uplift employee confidence and efficiency, providing structure to the employees' livelihood, a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment and a basis for self-esteem and personal identity. On the other hand, negative work settings lead to dissatisfaction; the inflexibility and lack of clear direction and participation make employees feel secluded and unsatisfied. The latter could lead to an upsurge in emotional ailments such as depression and anxiety as well as physical ailments such as repetitive strain [2].

Job satisfaction among dental practitioners at international and regional levels has been studied by different researchers. Most of these studies assessed levels of satisfaction as being positive, neutral or negative [3-7]. The predictors of satisfaction were identified as income, working hours and personal time, whereas those related to dissatisfaction included absence of autonomy, stress at work, time pressure, workload, lack of appreciation, limited personal time, delivery of care, and certain aspects of practice management [3]. Determining the levels of satisfaction of health care providers is very important for maintaining an adequate workforce.

Dentistry is a rapidly expanding profession in Saudi Arabia, which is evident in the Ministry of Health (MOH) statistics published annually, and all dentists working in Saudi Arabia fall under two categories: the governmental sector, such as colleges of dentistry, the MOH Primary Health Care Centers and other hospitals, or private dental clinics. According to the 2016 MOH statistics in Saudi Arabia, there were 4.4 dentists per 10,000 population [8].

Studies on dental job satisfaction may improve the understanding of the various factors that may cause dissatisfaction and, therefore, may help implement strategies advocating a positive approach to training future dentists in their chosen career path. A more contented pediatric dental workforce can in turn directly benefit society, which comprises a young population. In Saudi Arabia, 30.3% of the population is under 15 years of age [8,9]. Research on job satisfaction among pediatric dentists is relatively scarce. The purpose of this study was to determine the level of job satisfaction among pediatric dentists practicing in Saudi Arabia.

Materials and Methods

The population of this cross-sectional study consisted of all pediatric dentists registered in the Saudi Dental Society and practicing in Saudi Arabia. The study was approved by the Research and Ethical Committee of Human Studies at the College of Dentistry Research Center (FR 0401) of King Saud University, Saudi Arabia. A list of email addresses of the participants in the study was obtained from the Saudi Dental Society. Written informed consent was obtained from the participants prior to starting the study. Those who agreed to participate in the study were requested to complete an online questionnaire through the SurveyMonkey website. The study was conducted from March 2017 to October 2017. The survey questionnaire was developed and modified from the Dentist Satisfaction Survey by Shugars, *et al* [10]. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-five items: four items related to demographic characteristics, one item regarding the motive for choosing pediatric dentistry and twenty items to measure responses to job satisfaction factors, such as satisfaction with the quality of life as a pediatric dentist, work load, salary and perks, work environment, administrative support, professional environment, communication with staff, job description, balance between professional and family life, growth opportunities and relationship with children and their parents.

The questionnaire was pretested for reliability and content validity ($\alpha = 0.91$). A five-point Likert scale was employed to measure responses in five categories: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The data were entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software, version 20 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Data analysis included descriptive statistics and Chi-square test was employed to determine significant differences among the responses. The significance level was set at $P < 0.05$.

Results

Among the 128 contacted pediatric dentists, 103 agreed to participate in the study and submitted a completed questionnaire, with a response rate of 80.4%. The demographic characteristics of the participants are given in table 1. The male participants constituted 51.4%, and the females constituted 48.6%. In addition, a majority (46.6%) of the participants were between the ages of 30 and 40 years. A majority of the pediatric dentists surveyed worked in the governmental sector (66.1%).

Demographic characteristics		Total N = 103 n (%)
Nationality	Saudi	70 (67.9)
	Non-Saudi	33 (32.1)
Gender	Male	53 (51.4)
	Female	50 (48.6)
Age (in years)	≤ 30	21 (20.4)
	> 30 - 40	48(46.6)
	> 40 - 50	24 (23.3)
	> 50	10 (9.7)
Type of practice	Governmental	68 (66.1)
	Private	35 (33.9)

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the participants.

The motives for choosing pediatric dentistry reported by the participants were found to be significantly different, as shown in table 2 ($p = 0.001$). A majority of the participants chose pediatric dentistry because it was considered to be a challenging profession (37.9%), which was followed by participants who chose this profession for financial advantages (27.1%). Prestige and professional growth were considered motives for choosing pediatric dentistry by 18.5% and 16.5% of the participants, respectively.

Motives	Total N = 103 n (%)	p-value
Professional growth	17 (16.5)	0.001*
Prestigious specialty	19 (18.5)	
Challenging profession	39 (37.9)	
Financial advantages	28 (27.1)	

Table 2: Motives for choosing pediatric dentistry.

* $p < 0.05$, significantly different using Chi-square test

The percentages of respondents who reported their various levels of agreement with the factors contributing to job satisfaction are shown in table 3. The agreement levels for the statements related to job satisfaction were found to be significantly different ($p < 0.05$), except for the statement “significant number of parents have unrealistic expectations regarding treatment outcomes” ($p = 0.681$).

Satisfaction factors	Strongly agree and Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly disagree and Disagree (%)	p-value
I am satisfied with the quality of life as a pediatric dentist	65.7	27.9	6.4	0.001*
I have adequate time for my personal and family life	30.3	42.2	27.5	0.032*
Amount of workload is too much	39.8	35.6	24.6	0.028*
I am satisfied with the salary and perks	51.6	33.3	15.1	0.012*
Work environment is conducive and professional	57.7	36.9	5.4	0.001*
Support from administrative office is suitable	66.2	27.4	6.4	0.001*
I have adequate time for my professional development	47.9	32.9	19.2	0.014*
I have no problems communicating with staff	83.0	16.4	0.6	0.001*
Paperwork and administrative duties affect my professional capabilities	56.9	30.6	12.5	0.001*
Job description is well defined	85.0	10.9	4.1	0.001*
Administration supports professional development	68.5	24.6	6.9	0.001*
I am satisfied with the practice management system	58.9	34.3	6.8	0.001*
Facilities and resources are adequate for delivery of optimal dental care	76.4	21.0	2.6	0.001*
I am satisfied with the working quality of the axillary staff	71.2	23.2	5.6	0.001*
There is flexibility in choosing work methods	61.6	26.2	12.2	0.001*
I communicate openly and effectively with the parents of the child	83.1	16.0	0.9	0.001*
I have good relations with children and their parents in the clinic	97.2	2.5	0.3	0.001*
Children come to the clinic on time and adhere to their appointment	31.4	49.5	19.1	0.037*
Significant number of parents have unrealistic expectations regarding treatment outcomes	31.9	35.6	32.5	0.681
Overall, I am satisfied with my job as a pediatric dentist	84.9	13.4	1.7	0.001*

Table 3: Participant’s responses to satisfaction factors.

* $p < 0.05$, significantly different using Chi-square test

A majority of the respondents agreed to all the satisfaction factors except the statements “I have adequate time for my personal and professional life” and “children come to the clinic on time and adhere to their appointment”, which received neutral responses. Along with the statement “significant number of parents have unrealistic expectations regarding treatment outcomes”, the statements “amount of workload is too much” and “paperwork and administrative duties affect my professional capabilities” were negatively worded statements, and a majority of the participants agreed to the latter two statements. Overall, 84.9% of the respondents were satisfied with their job. More than two thirds of the surveyed pediatric dentists agreed to having good relations in the clinic with not only the children and their accompanying parents (97.2%) but also other staff (83.0%). Similar levels of agreement were found regarding the job description being well defined (85.0%) and the availability of adequate facilities and resources for delivery of optimal dental care (76.4%).

Discussion

This survey explored the motives of pediatric dentists practicing in Saudi Arabia for choosing the profession and the factors associated with their job satisfaction. Although the literature on job satisfaction is extensive, there has been little research into job satisfaction among dental professionals in Saudi Arabia; in particular, there has been no research on job satisfaction among pediatric dentists in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, job satisfaction in pediatric dentistry has not been adequately reported. Only two studies have described job satisfaction in a sample of pediatric dentists [3,4]. In the present study, overall satisfaction was high, with 84.9% of the pediatric dentists indicating that they were satisfied with their job. Another study on pediatric dentists in the United States also reported high levels of overall job satisfaction [4]. In contrast, 65% of the pediatric dentists in Puerto Rico expressed overall dissatisfaction with their job [3].

The challenging nature of the profession and financial advantages were the participants’ motives for choosing pediatric dentistry. The motivations of aspiring dentists have been a subject of study for many decades, but comparing aspiring dentists with dental specialists is irrelevant. It has been reported that the motives for choosing a career path in dentistry appear to operate on two levels based on rationality and consciousness and are multifactorial [11,12]. It is in human nature to strive to achieve the motives one had when choosing a particular career path and feel accomplished for mental and physical well-being.

The survey instrument used in this study was intended to measure the level of pediatric dentists’ job satisfaction. The findings of this study revealed that a majority of the pediatric dentists agreed to having too much workload and had issues with paperwork and administrative duties, which affected their professional capabilities. This important finding should be taken into serious consideration, as in the long run, mental exhaustion or burnout may occur. A large majority of the pediatric dentists surveyed (97.2%) revealed that they had good relations with the children and their parents in the clinic. Furthermore, three fourths of the participants agreed that their job description was well defined, they had adequate facilities and resources available for optimal delivery of dental care, and they had no problem communicating with people that they encountered in the workplace.

The findings of the present study showed that the level of satisfaction among pediatric dentists was comparatively greater than that observed in other studies conducted among general dentists in different countries [13-15].

Dentistry, as a healing profession, is a unique social interaction influenced by specific demands of clinical practice, exposure to an intimate and very delicate part of the human body, and the personal and emotional characteristics of a dental health care provider and its recipient [16]. A study in the United States revealed that 83.0% of the participants perceived dentistry as being a very stressful profession [17]. Less than half of the participants (47.9%) in the present study revealed that they had adequate time for their professional development, which correlated with a majority of the respondents agreeing to having too much workload, which may imply to be potential stressors to the profession.

The dental field in Saudi Arabia, similar to all other health care professions, has considerably demanding work responsibilities. Dental care for children in Saudi Arabia is provided mainly by pediatric dentists who have been well trained within the country or abroad to provide dental care for children and are mostly employed under the governmental sector or in private dental clinics [18].

Some of the limitations of this study should be considered when interpreting the results. The cross-sectional design and non-reporting bias are some limitations of the study. As with any self-reported questionnaire-based survey, under-reporting bias may also occur. The responses to the satisfaction factors may vary according to years of experience of the pediatric dentists and between genders. Such comparisons would be informative and should be targeted in future research.

Conclusions

Within the limitations of this study, it can be concluded that overall, pediatric dentists in Saudi Arabia have a high level of job satisfaction. The results of this study will be useful to policy makers in the dental profession to develop strategies to further improve the level of job satisfaction among pediatric dentists in Saudi Arabia.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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