Job satisfaction among Occupational Therapists

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INTRODUCTION
Job satisfaction is a well-known concept and is defined as the attitude of a worker towards his or her job, often expressed as a pleasurable response of liking and disliking the work itself, the rewards (pay, promotions, recognition) or the contexts (working conditions, colleagues)\(^1\).

Whilst there have been international studies investigating the level of job satisfaction of occupational therapists, there are currently no studies carried out to date in South Africa. From a perusal of some of the international studies\(^2-5\), it appears as though the major contributor to job dissatisfaction is poor working conditions with factors supporting job satisfaction including enjoyment experienced from teamwork, that is, working with other occupational therapists and colleagues from other health backgrounds, client interaction and interpersonal relationships with co-workers, work that is challenging and rewarding, autonomy, reasonable workload, high quality supervision, and equitable salaries and a sense of pride and achievement when therapeutic goals are achieved.

Anecdotal evidence from occupational therapists reveal that they appear to be dissatisfied with their jobs. This study was therefore positioned as a pilot study that may identify whether occupational therapists are satisfied with their jobs, but will also serve in creating a platform for further research and development in the professional discipline of occupational therapy.

METHODS
A cross-sectional survey design was utilised with a purposive sample of 95 occupational therapists working in various settings in the eThekwini district of KwaZulu-Natal based on a set of selection criteria. Surveys were distributed electronically, via post and physically to therapists in the district. Forty-nine questionnaires were returned for analysis reflecting a 51.5% response rate. The questionnaire comprised of two sections. Section A, was focussed on obtaining demographic information of the participants. Section B comprised a standardised questionnaire, the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS)\(^6\). The JSS\(^6\) is a multidimensional instrument designed for use in human service organisations and is a 36 item, nine facet scale which assesses employee attitudes about their jobs. The nine facets or subscales include salary, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operation procedures, co-workers, nature of work and communication. The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 15 was used for analysis.

RESULTS
Public sector occupational therapists made up the greater number of respondents (n=33 or 67.4%). Thirty point six percent (n=15) of the respondents had been qualified for between 4-7 years with a majority of the respondents primary area of practice being in the paediatric field of occupational therapy (n=24 or 49%). The majority of respondents earned a salary of between R122 284 – R146 684 (n=19 or 40.8%) at the time of the study. A majority of respondents did not possess post-graduate qualifications (n=42 or 83.67%). Of the respondents that did hold post-graduate qualifications, a post-graduate diploma was identified as the most commonly held qualification (n=4 or 8.16%). From the study, 55.1% (n=27) of occupational therapists revealed that they were in part-time private practice over weekends, over and above their normal work.

Job Satisfaction
The arithmetic mean and standard deviation were computed for the various dimensions measured by the JSS. The results are presented in Table 1. The norms of the original Spector’s Job Satisfaction Questionnaire are also presented for comparative purposes\(^6\).

Table 1: Comparison of dimensions of job satisfaction norms\(^6\) against the sample of OTs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JSS Dimensions</th>
<th>Occupational Therapists</th>
<th>JSS Norms(^6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>12.43</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fringe benefits</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingent rewards</td>
<td>14.06</td>
<td>3.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating conditions</td>
<td>14.90</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-workers</td>
<td>14.65</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of work</td>
<td>15.35</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>14.12</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SCORE</td>
<td>126.24</td>
<td>6.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results in Table 1 draws comparisons between the JSS norms and the results collected from the present sample. The results indicate that occupational therapists are most satisfied with the nature...
of their work (mean = 15.35), followed by the operating conditions (mean = 14.90; SD = 1.60) and their co-workers (mean = 14.65; SD = 2.10). They are, however, less satisfied with promotional opportunities (mean = 14.00; SD = 1.31) and least satisfied with the pay they receive (mean = 12.43; SD = 1.65).

**Dissatisfaction versus Satisfaction**

![Figure 1: Level of Job Satisfaction](image)

Figure 1 shows the results of the cut scores of the JSS, reflecting the level of job satisfaction experienced by occupational therapists. Spector derived the following cut scores to represent dissatisfaction versus satisfaction, 36 to 108 for dissatisfaction, 44 to 216 for satisfaction, And between 108 and 144 for ambivalent. Figure 1 shows that the scale with the highest percentage of dissatisfaction was pay, and that with the highest level of satisfaction was nature of work. Overall, all participants were classified as ambivalent (unsure).

**Job Satisfaction and demographic variables**

No significant associations were found between demographic variables and overall job satisfaction.

**DISCUSSION**

This study sought to determine the level of job satisfaction in a cohort of occupational therapists within one district of KwaZulu-Natal. The results suggest that overall, occupational therapists are unsure (ambivalent) of their level of job satisfaction. Occupational therapists appeared to experience the highest level of satisfaction with the nature of their work, operating conditions and working with co-workers, whilst pay (salary) was a major source of job dissatisfaction. The average salary level of occupational therapists in the sample was between R122 841 to R146 684. The results also indicated that 55.1% of occupational therapists were involved in part-time practice in addition to the full time work within the public sector. The reason for taking up part-time work was identified by the sample was between R122 841 to R146 684. The results also indicated that 55.1% of occupational therapists were involved in part-time practice in addition to the full time work within the public sector. The reason for taking up part-time work was identified by the therapists to be a huge source of satisfaction.

Given these vital changes to the public sector, the situation may have changed with public sector therapists. A follow up study to determine levels of satisfaction may be useful in understanding the potential impact of these measures, namely, OSD and moratorium on private remunerative work.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study provides initial data on the level of job satisfaction in a small group of occupational therapists and may be used as a starting point to determine factors that enhance a positive work experience and satisfaction in the profession. It has emerged that pay and promotional opportunities appear to be the two dimensions of work that therapists are dissatisfied with. There has been advocacy for allied health professions, amongst others, with the introduction of OSD to respond to the pay and promotional issues that were of concern. As mentioned above, studies to investigate the impact and influence of these changes within the public sector may be useful in understanding whether occupational therapists indeed remain satisfied in their jobs.

On a micro-level, employing bodies may be encouraged to evaluate components of job satisfaction amongst occupational therapists to ensure that suitable career path opportunities are developed for them as part of the retention policy of the employing body. Perhaps there may also be a need for additional research to investigate the potential relationships and the effect these variables and other extraneous variables, such as role ambiguity, job level, contingent rewards and working conditions, may have on job satisfaction amongst occupational therapists and for measures to be put into place to address these issues.

**REFERENCES**

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