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Job Satisfaction among Medical Specialists in Sudan

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Abstract

Maintaining a high Job satisfaction is crucial for ensuring optimal performance of employees. As stressful and sensitive the job of doctors could be, it is necessary to provide all the help and support to keep doctors running with the best they could. It is well established that dissatisfaction of doctors is associated with more adverse incidents, more job turnover and more migration of health care workers. More than three quarters of specialists were generally satisfied with their career despite 42% describing the career as stressful. However they were quite dissatisfied with factors like income and working environment. 57% of specialists had plans to work outside the country. On the contrary, factors causing high satisfaction included relationships with fellow specialists and other medical staff and the general outcome of patients. Specialists are quite happy with the career they chose despite the hardships they face. However the factors surrounding the jobs appear to be difficult and draining. Many specialists are intending to find jobs outside the country.

Keywords: Medical specialists; Job; Satisfaction.

Introduction

Job satisfaction is one of the important variables in work and organizational psychology and is considered to be a crucial variable in determining the quality of health-care systems [1]. Hopwood (1935) defined job satisfaction as "any combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that cause a person truthfully to say I am satisfied with my job" [2]. Research papers returning to as old as 1982 have been talking

about job satisfaction [3]. It is believed that the influence of satisfaction is crucial for human resource management as it is related to performance, counterproductive work behavior and employee health. Several factors have been thought to affect satisfaction including personal and environmental factors [4]. Some have gone even further and proposed a possibility of higher job satisfaction when matching the right job with the right personality, suggesting an interpersonal variation and putting a person's expectations and inspirations into the game [5]. Since satisfaction is affected by

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several, controllable factors, studying employees' satisfaction can help identify the causes of discontent, manipulate them, implement policies and therefore improve health care services. Several institutions have developed their own assessment forms to continuously monitor their employees' satisfaction and develop strategies for improvement [6]. Some major factors affecting physicians' satisfaction, according to a systematic review discussing physician satisfaction in the US from 1970 to 2007 are physician factors mainly age and specialty as well as job factors encompassing work demand, autonomy, colleague support, ability of forming and maintaining patient-physician relationships, practice environment, expected income and incentive types [7,8]. According to our search and knowledge there is no published data discussing the level of satisfaction among specialties and the factors affecting that in Sudan.

Materials and methods

A total of 400 Medical Specialists from the following specialties: Anesthesiology, Clinical immunology, Dermatology, Emergency medicine, General surgery, Internal medicine, Neurosurgery, Obstetrics and gynecology, Orthopedic surgery, Otolaryngology, Pediatrics, Pediatrics surgery, Plastic surgery, Psychiatry, Respiratory medicine who are working at teaching hospitals in Khartoum state at the time of study. Doctor's satisfaction with specific aspects of the job including income, work environment and other factors. The questionnaire was tested by giving it to several specialists and their remarks were noted. We received suggestions regarding the ranges within the questions and we edited the questionnaire as

accordingly. This is a Cross-Sectional Descriptive hospital Based Study. Data was collected by a questionnaire. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24 to assess the level of satisfaction of specialists and to identify the contributing factors. Frequency and descriptive statistics were obtained for the variables.

Results

In the following figures you will find a summary of the responses we received. The summary is divided into groups as we gathered similar questions under the same group.

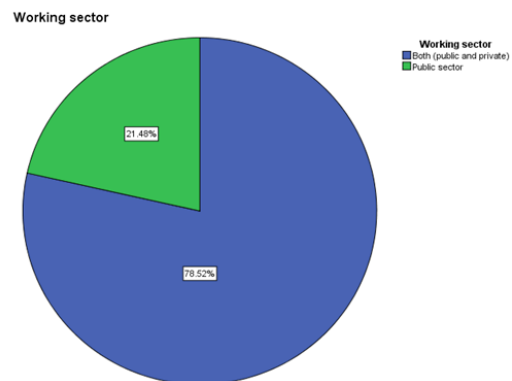


Figure 3: The distribution of participants over public versus Public and private sectors, Khartoum state teaching hospitals.

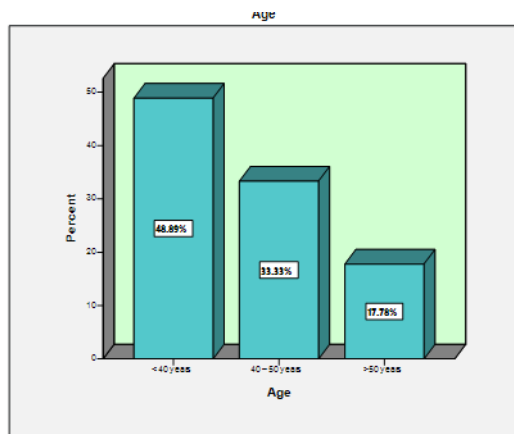


Figure 1: Age distribution of participants, Khartoum state teaching hospitals.

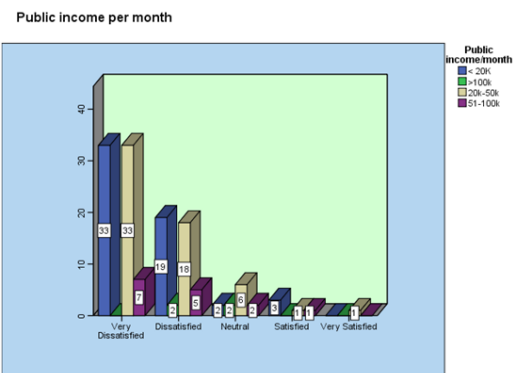


Figure 4: Satisfaction level with public income per month, Khartoum state teaching hospitals

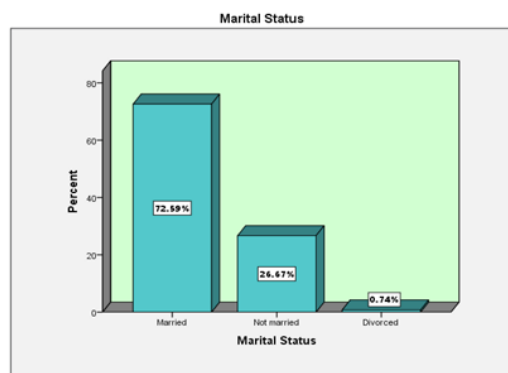


Figure 2: Marital status of participants, Khartoum state teaching hospitals.

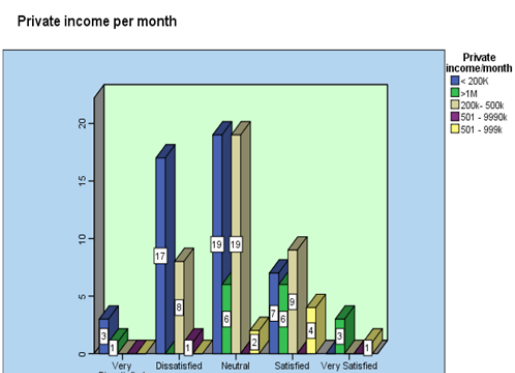


Figure 5: Satisfaction level with Private income per month, Khartoum state teaching hospitals.

Public working environment

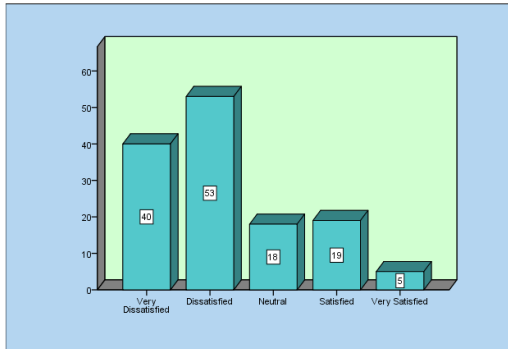


Figure 6: Level of satisfaction with Public working environment, Khartoum state teaching hospitals.

Private working environment

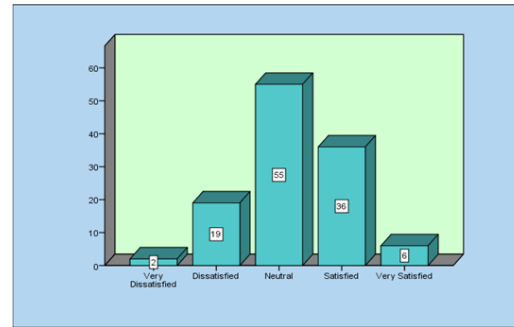


Figure 7: Level of satisfaction with Private working environment, Khartoum state teaching hospitals.

Table 1: Satisfaction with the number of patients seen per week, Khartoum state teaching hospitals, 2022% within Average patients seen/week.

		Satisfaction with work load					P-value
		Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very dissatisfied	Very satisfied	
Average patients seen/week	<50 patients	22.6%	51.6%	4.8%	17.7%	3.2%	0.023
	> 80 patients	38.9%	22.2%		38.9%		
	51 - 60 patients	41.7%	37.5%	8.3%	8.3%	4.2%	
	61 – 70 patients	55.0%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%		
	71 – 80 patients	18.2%	27.3%	9.1%	45.5%		
Total		32.6%	37.8%	6.7%	20.7%	2.2%	

Table 2: Satisfaction with average weekly work hours, Khartoum state teaching hospitals.

% within working hours/week		Satisfaction with work load					P value
		Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very dissatisfied	Very satisfied	
Working hours/week	<30 hours	31.1%	46.7%	6.7%	11.1%	4.4%	0.155
	> 50 hours	38.5%	28.2%	5.1%	25.6%	2.6%	
	31 – 40 hours	32.1%	25.0%	14.3%	28.6%		
	41 – 50 hours	26.1%	52.2%		21.7%		
Total		32.6%	37.8%	6.7%	20.7%	2.2%	

Discussion

We found in this study that, in contrasts to other studies conducted on doctors in Sudan [2,9,11], the majority of specialists were generally satisfied with their career. However, there were many aspects that appeared to cause significant displeasure to most participants. About 87% were dissatisfied with their income from public hospitals and about 69% were dissatisfied about the working environment in public hospitals. Specialists appear to compensate for the weak income they receive from public hospitals by working simultaneously in the private sector which provides far better income. Yet, these extra working hours do not seem to provide enough income to make the specialists satisfied. In fact, most specialists feel “Neutral” about their income from private hospitals including those who make more than one million pounds per month.

A study conducted in al Gezira state in 2016 suggested that doctors expect to gain high income because they went through harsh and long years of education [12]. However, it is unlikely that a person would pursue additional sources of income despite the stress this causes unless they actually need the money, especially that this means they may have very unexpected work hours. Sixty three percent of our participants’ jobs involve on-call shifts. This goes hand in hand with the fact that about 45% of specialists spend very little time for social interaction with their families and friends. In addition, only 36% of the participants stated that their jobs had a good impact on their lives. We looked for the relationship of working hours per week as well as number of patients seen per week with the satisfaction of specialists with workload in proportion to the payback they get. Chi square test was used for both variables. The p value for the average patients seen per week in relation to Satisfaction was 0.023 which is statistically signifi-

cant. However, the number of patients seen do not seem to affect the level of satisfaction as the p value calculated was 0.155 suggesting the absence of relationship between the two variables. It was very remarkable that 79% of specialists were satisfied with their relationship with each other, and 68% are satisfied with their relationship with other medical staff. Specialists apparently have excellent relationships within their work environment, again, that being due to the advanced level of education they received reflecting on their social status and prestige [13].

On the other hand, many patients do not seem to have the same respect for specialists. More than half of specialists face some sort of violence, physical or verbal. In 2020, a paper stated that one in every two doctors in Khartoum state face some sort of violence, and this indeed is a strong cause of distress and burnout among doctors [10]. However, despite all the negativity and hardships surrounding their jobs, 79% of the specialists would still choose the same specialty again if they went back in time, and around the same percentage would definitely recommend the field to their students. Perhaps the reason behind this is that specialists have no other alternative. While collecting data, we noticed that many specialists do not show up to the referred clinics at the hospital and leave the work to registrars. Working with very scarce resources, around two-third of specialists find the outcome of their patients generally satisfying. So is also possible that they take their careers as hobbies rather than jobs, and hence take psychological satisfaction for the services they provide [22]. Furthermore, 57% of specialists have intentions of working abroad. This points towards their hope for finding better work conditions in the future, but at the same time, is a red flag for the country's health system.

Conclusion

We choose this topic hoping to increase the quality of health care services and decrease the migration rate of specialists. We faced several challenges while conducting the research ranging from academic obligations to the political situation of the country. In this study we demonstrated that medical specialists who work at teaching hospitals are generally satisfied about their jobs. However when exploring specific factors closely we found variation in the level of satisfaction. The results demonstrate:

General satisfaction with relationships with patients, other specialists and other medical staff members.

General dissatisfaction with income, working environment, work load and academic advancement opportunities.

General neutral stance with social time spent with family, clear statement of job tasks and job autonomy.

Recommendations

We advise the federal ministry of health to revise the income pay in proportion to workload.

We call the Sudan Medical Specialization Board to offer more academic advancement opportunities.

We recommend hospitals to implement plans and protocols to improve the working environment and assure doctor's safety.

We encourage hospitals to create a friendly working environment.

Larger scale research to be conducted investigating larger number of medical specialists and including more variables like administrative tasks, educational background and personal characteristics as they have been show to affect satisfaction in literature.

Declarations

Conflict of interest: None to declare.

Statement of informed consent: Approval of this study was obtained from our institutional review board.

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