

Career Satisfaction of Dentists in Thanjavur - A Questionnaire Study

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Abstract

Job satisfaction is vital to survive in this competitive society and to progress in life gradually. The enthusiasm in handling various tasks in a job takes one to the upper level. This applies to dental field also where it requires complete interest and involvement to treat patients. There are several factors, which affects the person's career. The main objective of this research is to evaluate the career satisfaction of dentists practicing in Thanjavur, a town in Tamilnadu through a prepared questionnaire.

Key Words: Dentistry, gender, job satisfaction, work environment factors.

Introduction

In India, dentistry is attractive, interesting but not an easy profession. ¹ It has been frequently described as a stressful job and also associated with greater incidence of illness, alcoholism and suicide than other profession. ² Many studies have shown high preference of physical and psychological illness in dental practice also. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that dentistry has been classified even as hazardous profession. Like other profession dentistry is a rewarding job also. Various elements like autonomy, working hours, social status and many other factors give and increase job satisfaction every day. Thus job satisfaction is the most important factors for successful practice. ¹ Job satisfaction has been linked to various aspects of patient care and health system outcomes as well as to general life satisfaction and job performance. Job satisfaction has been discussed in relation issues such as high turnover of dental staff, potential loss of productivity resulting from turnover and movement away from dental field entirely. Changing workplace structure, financial changes and shortages in auxiliary staff, all contribute to the changes experienced in dental workplace and each have implication for recruitment and retention of dentists in active clinical practice. Measures of job satisfaction among dentists may help to solve issues impacting on recruitment and retention of dentists in active clinical practice. This job satisfaction may be an important predictor of movements within the dental profession and intent to change jobs. Levels of job satisfaction among dentists practicing in private and public sectors, between male and female dentists and among dentists of different age group are therefore key issues to be examined. The existence of any systematic variation in levels of job satisfaction between dentists by these factors may give some indication of areas in which dentist's job satisfaction may be improved ³.

The purpose of this study was to examine job satisfaction among dentists in Thanjavur, one of the cities of Tamilnadu with the population of over 24 lakhs. There are about 60 dental clinics in Thanjavur where more than 70 dentists are practicing. Aspects of

job satisfaction were examined in order to develop an understanding of specific issues, which impact upon retention of dentists.

Materials and Methods

This questionnaire-based study was conducted among registered dentists in Thanjavur. This questionnaire was given to almost 40 dentists in Thanjavur from which 28 dentists came out with positive responses. The negative responses are mainly due to their busy schedule and unwillingness to participate in the study and disclose details. The questionnaire was not given to all the dental practitioners in Thanjavur due to various constraints of the authors.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used for this survey is based on a job satisfaction questionnaire developed by L. Luzzi, A.J. Spencer, K. Jones, D. Teusner ³ for dental practitioners in Australia. This questionnaire was divided into 4 parts. The first part consisted of the dentist's' personal data which includes their age, gender, location of the dental practice (Urban / Rural), experience, income etc. It helped in finding out whether their satisfaction level is based on their personal data. The second part consisted of questions based on various aspects of their field. This data mainly helped us to conclude their level of satisfaction in their job. The third and fourth part explained the global satisfaction and helped to ensure their interest in dentistry. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements. Responses to the questions were graded from negative to positive. The positive responses were graded 3 while the negative responses were graded 1. The results were tabulated with their mean scores on each category.

Results

This survey was conducted for 28 dentists in Thanjavur.

Out of 28 respondents, 16 (57.1%) are males and 12 (42.9%) are females. Almost 18 (64.2%) dentists were

working in urban area while 10 (35.8%) dentists were working in rural area. All the respondents studied in India only. Almost 20 (71.4%) dentists were working as general dentists while 8 (28.6%) dentists working as specialists in the appropriate branches (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of Dentists in each Speciality

Speciality	No of Dentistry
General Dentists	20
Conservative Dentistry and Endodontists	2
Oncologists	1
Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons	3
Orthodontists	2
Total	28

Table 2: Overall mean scores for Job Satisfaction

	Mean Score	Std. Error
Autonomy	2.36	0.106
Relationship with Colleagues	2.39	0.119
Relationship with Patients	2.25	0.122
Relationship with Staffs	2.25	0.122
Personal Time	1.86	0.067
Intrinsic Satisfaction	2.36	0.128
Social Status	2.21	0.094
Resources for Infrastructure	2.25	0.098
Working Hours	2.11	0.060
Working Environment	2.86	0.067
Social Security	2.43	0.120

Mean scores for different criteria, which were used to assess job satisfaction, were taken (Table: 2). Mean values greater than 2.25 were taken as the positive response ³. About 67.8% of the subjects had mean scores greater than 2.25 indicating that the majority of the respondents are satisfied with the various aspects of the job. Apart from personal time, social status, working hours the mean scores of the rest are greater than 2.25. While mean values of the factors such as relationship with patients and staffs were at the limit. Highest mean scores reported were for working environment, social security, and relationship with colleagues. Working environment satisfaction involves the factors relating to the place of employment, such as quality of the air, noise level, adequate parking etc. Social security measured satisfaction related to their confidential level of income. While the relationship with colleagues, measured satisfaction with their relationships to other dentists both personally and in the clinical practice. Factors, which are less satisfied, are personal time, working hours and social status. The personal time and working hours are both related to their inadequate time for family, friends, relatives etc. The satisfaction in social status was measured in relating to their respect in society. From the mean values of job satisfaction, percentage of each category is assessed (Chart 1). The percentages of job satisfaction is more or less the same for all the aspects included in that category.

Indian Dental Association
Madras Branch

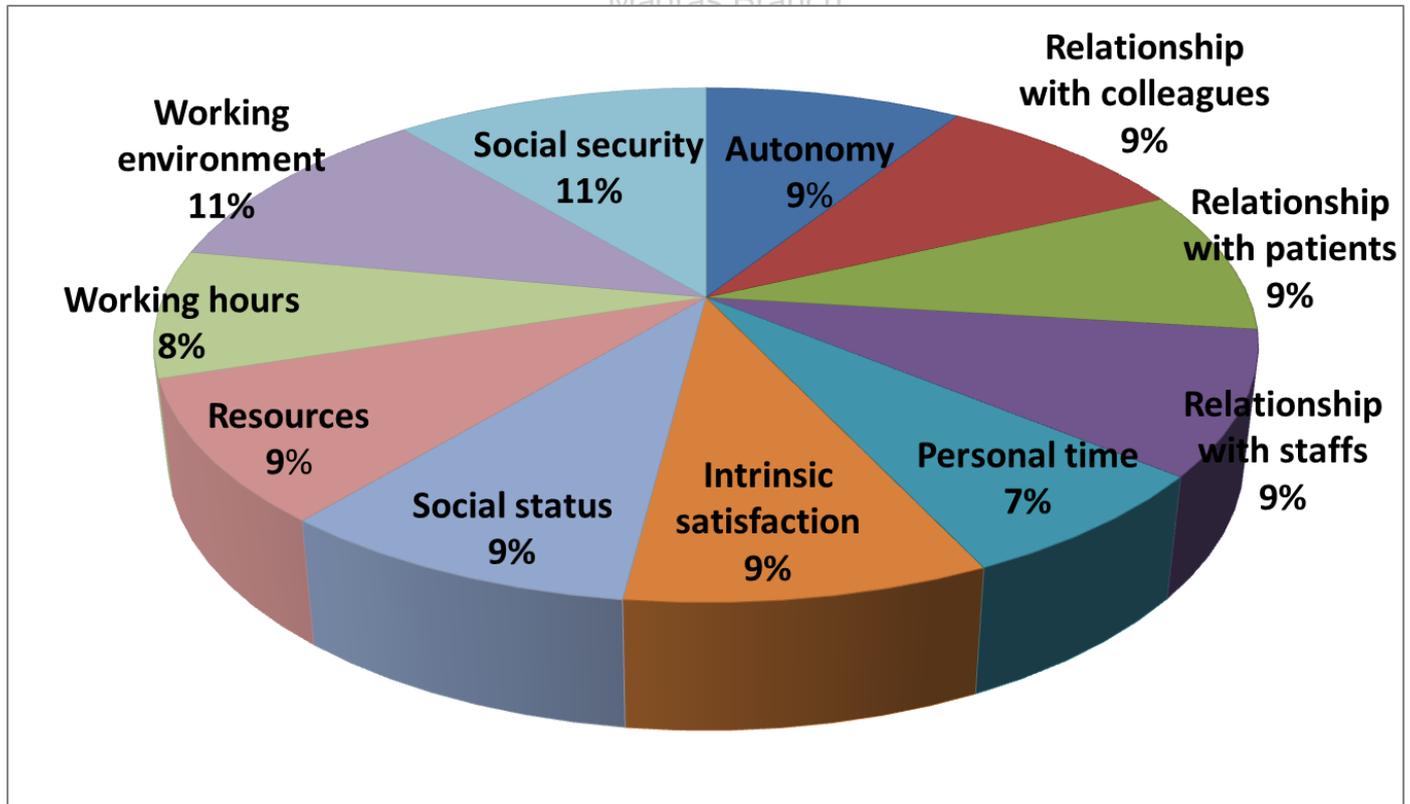


Chart 1: Percentage dimension of job satisfaction in each category

Overall mean scores of the global satisfaction is assessed (Table: 3). The levels of the global job satisfaction of the dentists is as follows:

- 17.8% of the dentists were dissatisfied
- 28.6% of the dentists were slightly satisfied
- 53.6% of the dentists were fully satisfied with their job.

The study reveals that majority of the dentists were satisfied with their job. Mean scores are also greater than 2.25 in the global job, career and speciality satisfaction depicting the dentist’s satisfaction in overall dimension.

Table 3: Overall mean scores for global job satisfaction

	Mean score	Std. Error
Global job satisfaction	2.36	0.147
Global career satisfaction	2.39	0.149
Global specialty satisfaction	2.39	0.139

NOTE :

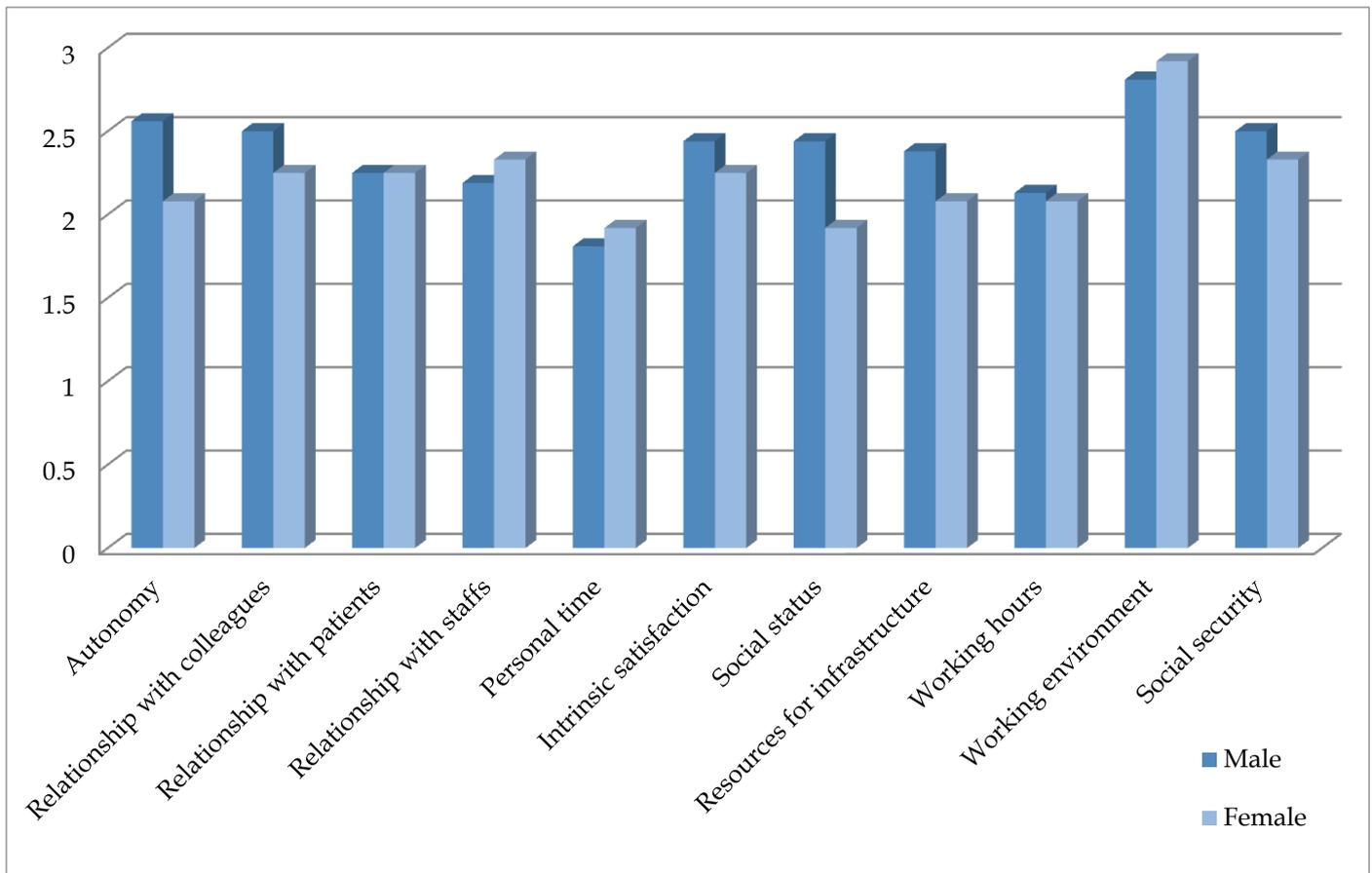
Global job satisfaction - overall job satisfaction as a dentist in his/her clinical work

Global career satisfaction - overall satisfaction with his/her chosen career as a dentist

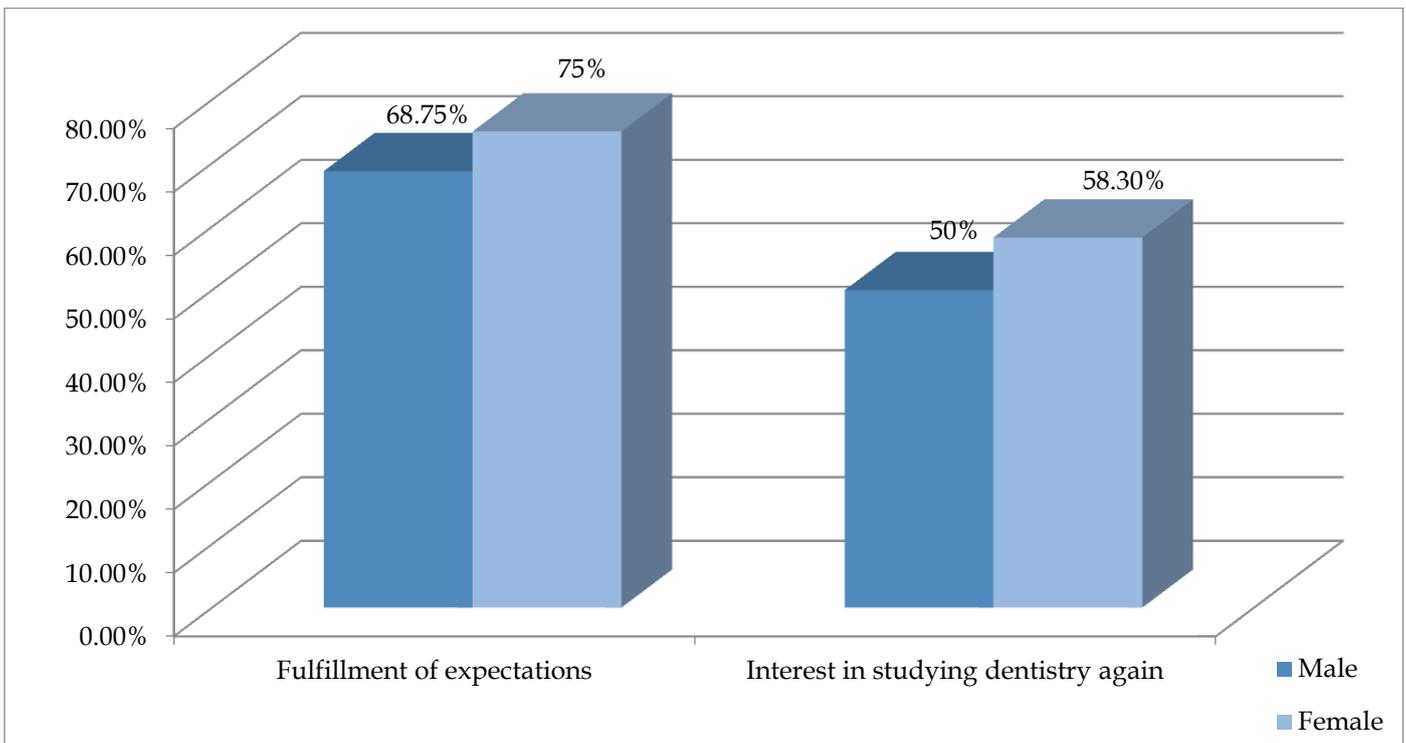
Global specialty satisfaction - overall satisfaction with his/her chosen specialty

Overall mean scores of job satisfaction by gender is evaluated (Graph 1). Mean scores of males was significantly higher than females with regard to autonomy, relationship with colleagues, intrinsic satisfaction, social status, resources etc. Female dentists reported higher mean values for relationship with staffs, personal time and working environment.

Majority of the dentists (71.4%) reported that their expectations were fulfilled and comparatively many (53.6%) had an interest in studying dentistry again. Overall mean scores for expectations and interests in dentistry is evaluated by gender (Graph: 2). It is clear that male dentists have reported positive responses than female dentists for fulfillment of expectations and interest in dentistry.



Graph 1: Job satisfaction mean scores by gender



Graph 2: Expectations mean scores by gender

Discussion

Before discussing the results it seems better to discuss about the limitations of this study. This study was only taken across the registered dentists working in Thanjavur. This study does not include the dentists who are not in practice. The results which is being provided by this study was only applicable to those registered dentists who participated in completing the survey but does not include other non participating dental practitioners in Thanjavur. Overall this study reveals that most of the dental practitioners in Thanjavur are satisfied with their job. The study also indicates that they are also satisfied with various components of their job like autonomy, working hours, social status, intrinsic satisfaction etc.,. Satisfaction rate were high for all components except personal time, working hours and social status.

Mostly dentists working in urban areas are quite satisfied with their job than those who work in rural areas. This may be because of the high number of patients and better facilities in urban areas as compared to rural areas. It may also be due to the lack of awareness of dental diseases in the rural areas.

Most of the dentists who have taken part in the survey have completed bachelor's degree only. But the satisfactory level is more for those who have completed masters. This could be because of their ability to perform specialty treatment procedures in addition to the treatment performed by the general dentists.

Other than these components, income and years of practice also have a great impact in satisfaction of dentists. Many gave negative responses to reveal their income but the obtained results shows high income leads to increased satisfaction of the dentists. In this study, the years of practice of the dentists are between 2 and 20 years. Satisfactory level is higher for the dentists whose experience is more than 7 years. The dentists with years of practice more than 15 years reported dissatisfaction in their personal time. This may be due to the increased patient flow because they are more experienced in their field.

Autonomy, social status, infrastructure of clinic, working hours and working environment are moreover satisfactory to all dentists. Only about 3.6% of the respondents reported dissatisfaction in these aspects. While the components like relationship with patients, staffs, colleagues, intrinsic satisfaction and personal time of dentists is relatively dissatisfied by the dentists. These dissatisfaction occurs mainly due to their work loads, job related stresses etc.,. This makes them lose involvement in their work, ultimately leading to lack of interest in their work.

Males and females significantly differed in their satisfactory level in various components. In autonomy, social status, infrastructure female dentists satisfaction is quite low than males. However, the satisfactory level of personal time and working environment of female dentists is quite higher than males. This may be because of the ability of the female dentists to give time to themselves and to their family.

Dentistry has become a difficult profession with increased competition from fellow practicing dentists and reduced employability for fresh graduates. Job satisfaction is a crucial element in everyone's career irrespective of what profession they choose and dentistry is no exception. It is imperative that as medical professional that we find satisfaction in our jobs and do not feel any kind of undue stress which may affect our personal and professional lives.

Our study is a maiden attempt to assess career satisfaction of dentists in Thanjavur, a town in Tamilnadu. Overall the dentists in Thanjavur are moderately satisfied with their job. However 18% of the dentists are dissatisfied. This dissatisfaction level is less for dental specialists compared to general practitioners. Almost 71.4% of the dentist's job meet their expectations. But the rest have not met their expectations. 54% of the dentists are interested to study dentistry again while the rest are not even ready to study dentistry. It is the duty of the governing bodies to improve the status of the dental profession by bringing in reforms to reduce competition and improve employment, so that dentists can be completely satisfied in their careers.

This study shows that there should be special attention to increase the level of job satisfaction among dentists and thus improve the dental care system. Job satisfaction is the most important factor for successful practice and every dentist aspires to achieve the same.

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