



A study to assess the Job Satisfaction of Omani Physicians and Nurses Working in Ministry of Health Hospitals in Muscat, Oman

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To determine the level of job satisfaction among physicians and nurse professionals in Omani hospitals and factors that influence job satisfaction in the public health sector in the country.

Methods: The study included two tertiary hospitals in Oman. The 500 employees included in the survey represent 47% of all Omani physicians and nurses in Khoula and Royal hospitals under the umbrella of the Ministry of Health. One structured survey questionnaire, consisting of 100 items, was administered to the participants. The researcher examined the correlation between independent variables (age, gender, level of professional education and number of years of employment), and the dependent variables (intrinsic, extrinsic and general determinants of job satisfaction), by applying correlation analysis and analysis of variance. In addition, inferential analysis was employed to describe characteristic components of the variables.

Results: Both the physicians and nurses had good intrinsic job satisfaction, but poor extrinsic satisfaction, which led to decreased overall job satisfaction among all physicians and nurses aged between 30 and 40 years. Job satisfaction was explained by age ($p < 0.01$) and years of employment ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Satisfied employees are crucial to the success of all institutions. Therefore, the health institutions must ensure their employees are satisfied. It is recommended that the Ministry of Health in Oman should monitor and address healthcare employees' needs on an annual basis.

KEYWORDS : Intrinsic job satisfaction, extrinsic job satisfaction, Omani Physician and Omani Nurses

Background

According to the World Health Organization report (2000), the Omani health care system was considered to have a high level of efficiency and performance. However, nine years later, Omani physicians and nurses are considering leaving Oman to accept lucrative job offers in developed countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and neighboring places like the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. This study aims to identify the different factors that affect job satisfaction among physicians and nurses in two main Omani hospitals, Khoula and Royal Hospital, located in Muscat, Oman.

Literature Review

A number of previous studies focused on job satisfaction (Mihalič, 2008). The first study on employee motivation was the Hawthorne study by Elton Mayo in the early 1900's. To determine the factors that influence employee motivation, he adjusted the working environment, beginning with putting lights on in one group and switching them off for another group. His aim was to observe the difference in performance between the two groups. He also analyzed social factors using lunch-time restrictions. Although the study did not present significant findings, it was a pioneer study that explored the subject of employee motivation (Meeusen, Brown-Mahoney, Van Dam, Van Zundert, & Knape, 2010).

Many factors determine job satisfaction, including wage, job environment, social aspects, and social recognition (Lu, While & Bariball, 2005). For instance, in regard to the wage, most employees are simply motivated by a pay rise. The working environment also affects employee satisfaction. This may include cleanliness of the work-place or the degree of noise, among others (Stewart, 2007). More importantly, social factors such as friendly co-workers influence employee motivation extensively (Bokti&Talib, 2009). Incentives and social recognition from the employer, such as 'employee of the month award' or promotions also help to boost employee satisfaction (Hesketh&Fleetword, 2009). Brush & Solchalski (2007) identified poor relationship between physicians, and the management of the hospitals they work for, as the main factors that causes low morale in the general medical/health care system itself. Notably, the attitude and aspirations of new employees in the health sector impact their job satisfaction levels (Kankaanranta, 2008). For instance, if a newly employed nurse has no interest in her career, then she will experience low job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction deteriorates when physicians and nurses prefer to travel abroad to find more lucrative job offers. Such professionals

have been shown to be generally unhappy when working for the local hospitals (Moulds et al. 2009). The exodus of physicians and nurses causes a shortage of these professionals locally. This will result in overwork, with eventual poor job satisfaction among the remaining personnel.

Statement of the problem

There has been little research touching on the subject of job satisfaction determinants, especially among physicians and nurses in Oman. There is a need to analyze this issue so as to inform measures that can be used to improve human resource management in the health sector in Oman. This study intends to examine the overall level of job satisfaction, as well as the factors that affect job satisfaction among Omani physicians and nurses, working for Ministry of Health Hospitals in Muscat, Oman. This would help to inform the Ministry of health's efforts to provide the best health care services to the Omani people.

The aim and objective of the study

Therefore the main objective of this study is to examine the factors that affect job satisfaction of Omani physicians and nurses working in the Ministry of Health Hospitals in Muscat, Oman. Its aim is to endeavor to understand the level and extent of job satisfaction among Omani physicians and nurses in Oman.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature review and analysis of the current situation, the following two hypotheses were developed in the study:

1. The nurses and physicians did not enjoy a high level of job satisfaction while working in the Ministry of Health Hospitals in Oman.
2. There is an existing relationship between respondents' demographic factors (gender, age and years of experience) and the extrinsic, intrinsic and general job satisfaction levels of Omani physicians and nurses.

Methodology

Sample and Study Design

This study was conducted in two tertiary hospitals in Muscat; Khoula hospital and the Royal Hospital. During the conduct of the study in 2010, there were a total of 1066 Omani physicians and nurses working in both of these two hospitals. With this figure as the study population, a sample size of 283 participants was obtained using Creative Research Systems. However, 217 more participants were added to this

figure to attain a confidence interval of 95%. Therefore, a total of 500 surveys were prepared for data collection, representing 47% of the total of 1066 Omani physicians and nurses currently working in the two main tertiary hospitals.

Conceptual Framework

The independent variables included various factors that affect employee satisfaction, such as the physicians’ and nurses’ demographic data. The dependent variables were mainly factors that were intrinsic, extrinsic and general to job satisfaction. The intrinsic dimension includes employee’s personal characteristics (Wild,Parsons &Dietz, 2006).Examples of these factors were task variety, applicable skills and autonomy (Table 1). The extrinsic dimension, on the other hand, included conditions existing in the work-place environment, such as wage and the existing co-workers (Table 2). The resultant job satisfaction was expected to be a factor of both the intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions. Additionally, the physicians’ and nurses’ job satisfaction was influenced by general scales of job satisfaction (Table 3 and 4) (SkelaSavič,Pagon & Robida, 2007).

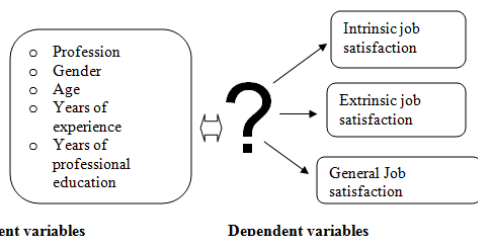


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Table 1: Scales of intrinsic dimensions of job satisfaction

Dimension	Scale
Intrinsic	Ability utilization
	Achievement
	Activity
	Authority
	Creativity
	Moral values
	Responsibility
	Security
	Social service
	Social status
	Variety

Table 2: Scales of the extrinsic dimension of job satisfaction

Dimension	Scale
Extrinsic	Advancement
	Organization policies and practices
	Compensation
	Recognition
	Supervision-human relations
	Supervision-technical

Table 3: Scales of general dimension of job satisfaction

Dimension	Scale
General Satisfaction	Ability utilization
	Achievement
	Activity
	Authority
	Creativity
	Moral values
	Responsibility
	Security
	Social service
	Social status
	Variety
	Advancement
	Organization policies and practices
	Compensation
	Recognition
	Supervision-human relations
	Supervision-technical
Co-workers	
Working conditions	

Table 4: Description of intrinsic, extrinsic, and general satisfaction scales

Scale	Description
Ability Utilization	Using the workers personal abilities on the job
Achievement	The feeling of accomplishment and employee receives from his/her job
Activity	The ability of an employee to keep busy at work
Advancement	The presence of opportunity for career advancements
Organization Policies	The implementation and practice of policies in the organization
Compensation	The balance of pay to the amount of work required from the perspective of the employee
Coworkers	The relationship with colleagues at work
Creativity	The ability of the employee to incorporate his/her thoughts and methods at work
	The ability of the employee to work alone
Moral Values	The use of own conscience as guide at work
Recognition	The praise and reward an employee gets for performing good at work
Responsibility	Taking decisions based on own judgment at work
Security	The job provides steady employment and job security
Social Service	Providing services to others
Social Status	The place in the community view
Supervision-Human	The relationship between the employer and employee
Supervision-Technical	The ability of the supervisor to made decisions using the decision making process
Variety	The variation the job provides in the duties
Working Conditions	The conditions of the job environment

Data Collection

Out of the 500 prepared surveys, 425 were distributed to the nurses while 75 were distributed to the physicians. The nurses collected 386 of the filled surveys (90.8%) while 59 surveys were collected from the physicians (66.7%). Participation was entirely voluntary, and permission to conduct the study was granted by the Ministry of Health research authority. To ensure anonymity, the surveys were distributed to volunteering participants who were expected to deliver the completed surveys to a special collection box within 14 days. This box was located in an office in the hospital and it was only accessible by a senior member of the study support team.

Instruments

Each participant completed a self-administered questionnaire and survey. The questionnaire was prepared by the author based on both the available literature on job satisfaction and a revised Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). The first part of the questionnaire included demographic data, including age, gender, number of years of employment in the current position and the level of professional education. The second part consisted of items on scales of intrinsic, extrinsic and general dimensions of job satisfaction. Written consent was obtained from Professor J. W. Wess who originated the MSQ before inducting the revised MSQ into the instrument.

Statistical Analysis

The study has two main objectives: to determine the strength of the relationship between demographic factors and job satisfaction

dimensions, and to examine the general extent of job satisfaction among Omani physicians and nurses working in Khoula and Royal hospitals. The Pearson Correlation, t test and the inferential statistics were used to achieve the first objective, whereas Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and hierarchical regression analysis were used to achieve the second objective (Sparrow,Hird, Hesketh&Cooper,2010).

Pearson Correlation values are distinct and integrate nonzero, which are absolute and symmetrical in nature, and range from -1 and +1. A value of +1 depicts a perfect positive correlation, implying that an increase in one variable results in an increase the value of the other variable. The t test, on the other hand, assumes equal variances (Creswell, 2009). For this study, the significance level for the t test was set at 0.05 (or 5%) giving a significant p-value of less than 0.05 (Burns & Grove 2005). ANOVA was used to test differences between two means and also to test the hypothesis regarding the differences among the means of several independent groups.

Hierarchical regression analysis was applied to investigate the degree to which dimensions of job satisfaction of Omani physicians and nurses was contingent on the participants' demographics. The variables were arranged in different hierarchical steps. The first step entailed assessment of the background variables, such as profession, gender, age, years of experience of the respondents, the number of professional education years. In the second step, intrinsic dimensions were evaluated to establish their relationship with respondents' demographics. In this step, intrinsic factors such as ability utilization are assessed to establish how they relate to physicians and nurses demographics. The next step entailed an evaluation of the extrinsic factors, for instance recognition, and their relation to respondents' demographics. Finally, an assessment was made to assess the general job satisfaction dimension and its relationship with respondents' demographics.

Results

The study included 386 nurses and 50 physicians working in the two hospitals. In terms of gender, 85% of the nurses were female, while 15% were male. On the other hand, 24% of the physicians were female, and 76% were male. In terms of years of employment, the nurses had around 5-10 years of experience the most, whereas physicians had 10-15 years of experience in the field.

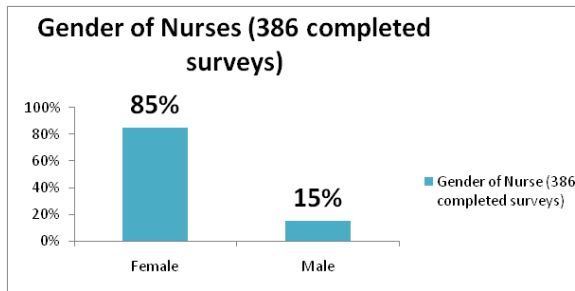


Figure 1: Gender of the nurses who completed the survey

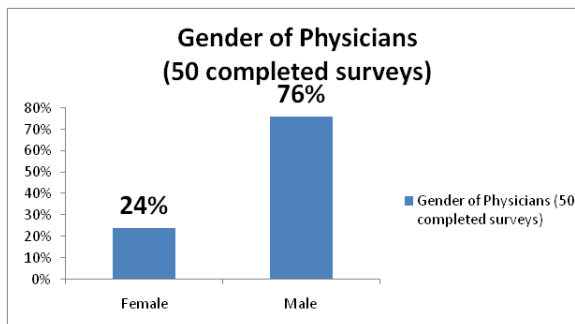


Figure 2: Bar graph showing the gender of the physicians who completed the survey

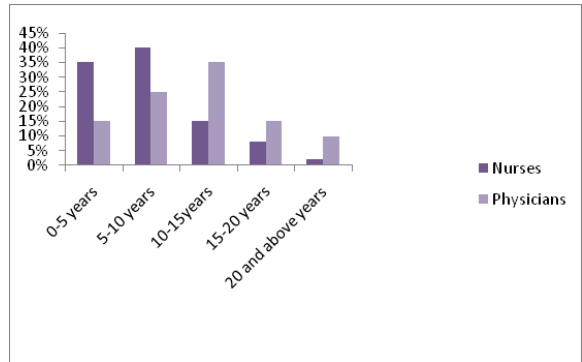


Figure 3: Participant's duration of employment in their current job positions.

Correlational Analysis (Intrinsic Factors)

The nurses ranked the most important intrinsic factors as responsibility, achievement, ability utilization, social service. The mean for intrinsic factors for nurses was 3.3998. On the other hand, the physicians identified responsibility, achievement, moral values and ability utilization as the most important intrinsic factors that drive their job satisfaction. The mean intrinsic factor was 4.198 for the physicians.

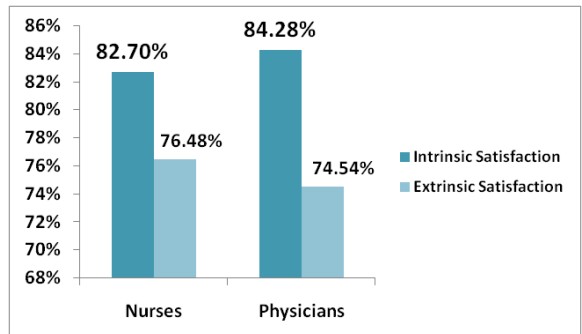


Figure 4: Bar graph showing a comparison of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that determine job satisfaction among physicians and nurses

Correlational Analysis (Extrinsic Factors)

The nurses ranked organizational policies and practices, advancement and technical supervision as the most important extrinsic factors that contributed to their job satisfaction, by order of importance. The physicians reported the same factors, but technical supervision was more important to them than the advancement. The mean for the intrinsic factors was 3.824 and 3.727, for nurses and physicians respectively. The intrinsic factors were more important in determining job satisfaction among physicians and nurses than the extrinsic factors.

The nurses reported the lowest ranking items for general job satisfaction as independence, supervision (human relations), compensation and recognition, in the order of least important to most important. On the other hand, the physicians ranked extrinsic job satisfaction determinants as recognition, supervision (human relations), social service and compensation in the same order.

The study demonstrated a significant positive relationship between the intrinsic satisfaction factors and the duration of the job, as well as between the extrinsic satisfaction of nurses and physicians and the duration on the job ($p < .05$). On the contrary, there was a significant negative relationship between the overall job satisfaction for both physicians and nurses in the 30 to 40 years age group ($p < .01$). Thirdly, there was a significant negative relationship between the overall satisfaction and the extrinsic satisfaction for physicians and nurses between the age of 30 and 40 years ($p < .05$).

Additionally, physicians and nurses, working in both the Khoula and Royal Hospital, identified specific intrinsic and extrinsic factors that were the main drivers for their overall satisfaction level. However, these intrinsic and extrinsic factors differed between the two sample

groups. Furthermore, the regression analysis method used did not highlight any demographic variable that was useful in explaining the variance of job satisfaction levels among nurses and physicians. Therefore, both hypotheses were rejected.

Discussion

Research has reported that there is growing competition in the health sector, just as in all other business environments. Such a competitive environment may easily tip a successful enterprise into failure. Leaders in an institution are the most charged with the responsibility of predicting performance, maximizing cost-savings and increasing productivity of health care employees (Willem,Buelens, & De Jonghe,2007). Leaders also need to plan ahead in order to improve employee productivity in the current economic trends. Planning ahead helps to minimize costs whenever possible (Reinardy 2007).

Research in the past decade has also shown that organizational outcomes can benefit from improved leader-member exchange (Brewster&Sparrow, 2007). This is because appropriate exchange of information and thought processes, on both sides, lays the foundation for a positive workplace (Stringer 2006). This is especially true in the hospital setting, where critical exchange between physicians and nurses can save patients' lives (Al-Almeri, 2000). Ultimately, both physicians and nurses find their jobs to be gratifying, when the job is meaningful to them (Senge 2006). This is achievable if the nurses and physicians work as a team towards a common goal.

Any organization's success primarily depends on its staff. Staff retention is best improved when the leaders actively focus on improving co-workers job satisfaction (Clark &Gottfredson 2008). Current research ranks job satisfaction as the most important factor that determines employee retention (Chang,Chou, Cheng, 2007; Sellgren, Ekvall&Tomson, 2007). Job satisfaction comes before remuneration and growth prospects. Similarly, a satisfied physician/nurse is less likely to seek employment elsewhere. Schmalenberg and Kramer (2007) observed that mutual respect and cooperation between the nurses and physicians directly influences the success of all health institutions. Such a relationship also benefits the patients and increase flexibility and sharing of medical expertise.

Although this study fairly evaluated job satisfaction levels among physicians and nurses, it had some limitations. The credibility of the study's findings depended most on the participant's responses. Participants in this study interacted freely during the time they were al-

lowed to complete the survey; the effect of peer pressure may have biased their responses. Although the academic community seeks to understand the satisfaction levels of nurses and physicians in hospitals, as well as the underlying factors affecting them, the scope for in-depth research is limited by many factors, even in this study. Moreover, since the study was only conducted on physicians and nurses working in Oman, the population size is very limited and thus the results may not have extensive external validity. This study could have included a more diverse population, and consider other dimensions pertaining to job satisfaction levels. Nonetheless, the study evaluated many other factors that significantly affect job satisfaction among nurses and doctors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To maintain acceptable levels of job satisfaction among doctors, as well as nurses, and to maximize organizational outcomes, hospital management teams need to consider the needs of individual workers (MatejaLorber&Savič, 2012). Furthermore, its leaders should develop strategies that consider each worker's unique circumstances, assign meaningful work and challenging tasks, invest in every worker, and show organizational support for each worker's contributions. The hospital management should also create a work environment that fosters teamwork between different classifications of workers including doctors and nurses. Facilitating open communication between physicians and nurses will also lead to positive exchange of knowledge (Cummins et al., 2010).

Further research on this topic needs to be conducted across the public and private health sector domains in Oman. Since both hospitals considered in this study are public sector institutions, the participant physicians and nurses do not have a worker's union. Therefore, it would be useful to examine job satisfaction among nurses and physicians working in the private hospitals, because they are allowed to form workers unions. This would help in identifying the motivational factors that affect job satisfaction among physicians and nurses belonging to a wider demographic area. Research into the impact of employee job satisfaction on organizational outcomes may also help to inform decision making among the leaders of many organizations, including institutions in the health sector. This study found a highly significant correlation between the quality of supervision and all factors of job satisfaction ($p < .001$). Therefore, sectioning this factor based on various leadership behaviors could lead to significant findings.

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