

Job Satisfaction Survey of Healthcare Workers in the Psychiatric Hospital

Haitham Jahrami, PhD* Zahra AlShuwaikh, MD** Gnanavelu Panchasharam, MSc***
Zahraa Saif, BSc****

Objective and Background: Various studies on job satisfaction have been performed on healthcare workers in mental health setting; however, no previous research have investigated the topic in the Bahraini mental health services. The aim of this study is to identify the level of job satisfaction of healthcare workers in the psychiatric hospital.

Design: Survey.

Setting: Psychiatric Hospital.

Method: Census of all clinical mental health staffs (N=261) working in the psychiatric hospital were invited to complete Spector's Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS).

Result: One hundred and fifty-three provided usable responses, indicating an average level of satisfaction of 130, which is between satisfaction and indifference. 'Nature of work', 'supervision', 'co-workers' and 'communication' showed high levels of satisfaction compared to 'operating conditions' (pay, promotion, rewards and benefits), which showed an ambivalent or indifferent levels of satisfactions.

Conclusion: This study revealed that the staff of psychiatric hospital are generally satisfied. The staff were highly satisfied with nature of work and dissatisfied with benefits.

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Job satisfaction is one of the most frequently studied topics in organizational behavior. Researchers have borrowed notions from psychology and other disciplines to define, measure and interpret the significance of job satisfaction in their own fields¹.

Healthcare workers are somewhat reluctant than other professionals to turn their research upon themselves and study what makes them satisfied in their jobs. The majority of the previous

* Head Occupational Therapist

** Chief Resident

***Occupational Therapists

Psychiatric Hospital, Ministry of Health

Kingdom of Bahrain

Email: hjahrami@gmail.com; hjahrami@health.gov.bh

studies were on the patients rather on healthcare workers. What is sometimes forgotten is that healthcare workers are humans too and their satisfaction is important.

Job satisfaction of mental healthcare workers has been generally under-researched^{2,3}. Aronson et al identified only 20 research articles of job satisfaction published between 1985 and 2000⁴. Research in this field is very critical for a number of reasons. There is a documented relationship between job satisfaction of staff and patient^{5,6}. Stress and emotional burnout are common among healthcare staff, especially mental health workers⁷⁻⁹. Psychiatric facilities have been identified as difficult places to work in and have high rates of turnover³. Staff working in psychiatric facilities typically takes a significant amount of time before deciding to leave their employment¹⁰.

The definition of job satisfaction of mental health healthcare workers was copied from business and industry, which are not exactly the same³. Measurement indices of job satisfaction such as the Job Descriptive Index or Job Satisfaction Surveys rarely have been modified for mental health healthcare workers^{3,4}. No doubt, surveys which are content-specific to psychiatric facilities might accurately capture their unique culture.

Our current understanding of the job satisfaction of mental health workers is based on studies published in the west. There is a substantial pool of knowledge about the topic from North America, Western Europe, Australia and other developed countries, but the understanding of job satisfaction in other culture and countries is quite limited. English language research studies published since 1980 revealed nil research on job satisfaction for mental healthcare workers in Arab countries; it does not mean non-existence of such studies because many of the Arab journals are not available on the net.

The lack of rigorous research on job satisfaction in other cultures poses the question of its ‘universality’ and ‘to what extent is the Western research knowledge on job satisfaction could be applied to other cultures and countries?’

The aim of this study is to fill such a gap in the literature about job satisfaction among Arab mental health healthcare workers using Bahrain psychiatric setting.

METHOD

The Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) was employed in this study. The JSS is a 36 item, nine facets scale designed to assess employees’ attitudes about their job and aspects of the job. Each facet is assessed using four items, and a total score is computed from the sum of all items. Although the JSS was originally developed for use in human service organizations, it is applicable to all organizations. According to the developer of JSS, 36 to 108 indicate dissatisfaction, 144 to 216 is satisfaction and scores from 108 to 144 is ambivalent¹¹. For the four items facets scores of 4 to 12 are dissatisfied, 16 to 24 are satisfied and between 12 and 16 are so-called indifferent or ambivalent. Previous research has indicated that the JSS has high psychometric properties for example providing assurance that the data would be valid and reliable¹².

In September 2009, 261 healthcare workers of the psychiatric hospital were surveyed using the JSS; personal characteristics (age, sex, professional background, education level and years of experience) were documented.

The study was approved by the hospital and the Ministry of Health. Informed consent was obtained from the participants because they agreed to return the surveys.

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 16.0 for Windows was used; the researchers performed several quantitative analyses.

The term 'healthcare workers' in this study refers to all healthcare providers including medical doctors, nurses, clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, occupational and physical therapists and others involved in the direct care of patients.

RESULT

One hundred fifty-three completed the survey, a response rate of 59%. The results demonstrated that the many healthcare workers were in 26 to 37 years age groups. Males were 73 (48%) compared to 80 (52%) were females; the majority of females were in the nursing services. Bahraini nationals were 90 (59%). The non-Bahraini healthcare workers were mainly nurses from India and Philippines. One hundred twenty (78.4%) were nurses, 14 (9.2%) were physicians and 19 (12.4%) were other healthcare professionals, which include occupational and physiotherapists, social workers and clinical psychologists.

Means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the nine jobs satisfaction facets presented in the JSS. The JSS mean scores for the respondents as a whole unit of analysis (n=153) were 130 (SD 22.6, Range 69-189). The JSS mean scores for nurses (n=120) were 131 (SD 23, Range 69-189), for medical doctors (n=14) were 120.6 (SD 25.6, Range 78-165), for other health care professionals (n=19) were 129.6 (SD 15.67, Range 107-178).

Table 1 shows job satisfaction mean scores for the nine JSS facets and total satisfaction for the healthcare workers. For comparative purposes, the table includes normative scores for over 2000 mental health respondents used in Spector's development and validation efforts of the JSS¹³. Spector's sample was mainly consisted of nurses.

The nine facets of JSS mean scores were as follow: pay 13.5 (SD 4.3, range=4~22), promotion 13.1 (SD 3.9, range=4~24), supervision 18.7 (SD 4.6, range=4~24), benefits 12.6 (SD 4.4, range=4~24), rewards 12.9 (SD 4.4, range=4~23), operating conditions 13.7 (SD 4.1, range=5~24), co-workers 17.7 (SD 3.4, range=10~24), nature of work 19.3 (SD 3.3, range=11~24) and communication 16.6 (SD 4.8, range=4~24).

Table 1: Job Satisfaction of Healthcare Workers in Psychiatric Hospital and Spector's Mental Health Respondents

Job Dimensions	Psychiatric Hospital, Bahrain (N=153)		Spector, USA (N=2010)		Independent Samples t-test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t-test	P value
Pay	13.5	4.3	10.9	1.8	14.92	0.0001
Promotion	13.1	3.9	11.9	1.5	8.04	0.0001
Supervision	18.7	4.6	19.5	0.9	6.37	0.0001
Benefits	12.6	4.4	14.0	1.6	8.63	0.0001
Rewards	12.9	4.4	13.9	1.4	6.68	0.0001
Operating Conditions	13.7	4.1	13.5	1.3	1.43	0.10
Co-workers	17.7	3.4	18.5	0.8	8.03	0.0001
Nature of Work	19.3	3.3	18.7	2.2	3.12	0.001
Communication	16.6	4.8	14.1	1.4	16.06	0.0001
Total Satisfaction	130.0	22.6	133.7	8.3	4.41	0.0001

DISCUSSION

Employee satisfaction is an important because it could reflect on the organizational performance¹⁴. Poor job satisfaction could be a major cause of burnout and withdrawal syndromes, exhibited as absence, lateness, sickness and accidents¹⁵. The satisfied employee tends to be more committed¹⁶⁻¹⁸. Essential medical outcome has been linked to healthcare workers' satisfaction, including prescribing behavior, patient adherence to treatment, patient satisfaction and quality of care^{16,19}.

The results of this study have shown that healthcare workers in the psychiatric hospital were moderately satisfied with their jobs (mean=130, SD 22.6). Scores of 'Nature of Work', 'Supervision', 'Co-workers' and 'Communication' showed high levels of satisfaction compared to 'Operating Conditions', 'Pay', 'Promotion', 'Rewards' and 'Benefits' which showed an ambivalent or a mild levels of dissatisfactions. These findings are consistent with other studies^{11-13,20}.

Healthcare workers in the psychiatric hospital scored higher than normative data reported by Spector's respondents in five facets out of possible nine: pay, promotion, operating conditions, nature of work and communication. The main difference is in communication in which healthcare workers in the psychiatric hospital are more satisfied (approx. 17) than Spector's respondents (approx. 14).

In this study, the healthcare workers were less satisfied than Spector's respondents in supervision, benefits, rewards, co-workers and the mean scores of total satisfaction.

The 'nature of work' (minimum 11.0, maximum 24.0) and 'co-workers' (minimum 10.0, maximum 24.0) were the smallest among the nine dimensions of the JSS.

Statistically significant differences between Bahraini healthcare workers and Spector's norms were obtained for the overall job satisfaction scores and for eight out of the nine dimensions; the only exception was the dimension of 'operating conditions'.

Several studies found that the most important for healthcare workers' job satisfaction is 'nature of work'^{14,16,19}. Respondents to our survey saw that the tasks and duties of helping others is the major source of their satisfaction.

Jelena et al found that supervision plays an important role in mental health quality of service to the needy people who are cognitively impaired and functionally disabled²⁰. Supervision was a source of satisfaction for the healthcare workers in our study. Satisfaction with supervision was found to be critical²¹. Lack of feedback and insufficient clarity of demands from supervisors are associated with low levels of job satisfaction²¹⁻²³. Supervision is also critical to coping with demands, job clarity and stress^{24,25}.

Team empowers people and helps to develop autonomy, which is a source of profound job satisfaction and reduces stress²⁶. There is also evidence that the care of psychiatric patients is negatively impacted by poor teamwork²⁶. In our study, we found high level of teamwork satisfaction.

Our survey showed that positive relationship with co-workers contributes to overall job satisfaction. Previous studies found that satisfaction with colleagues' plays essential role in work motivation and in reducing and stress²⁵.

This study also support the proposition that facets associated with working conditions seem the most worrying especially regarding to salary dissatisfaction⁴.

Our findings indicate that there was a significant contribution between healthcare workers' overall job satisfaction and their received salary, benefits and working conditions, which is consistent with the findings of other studies^{4,5,7}.

Our study reveals that healthcare workers in psychiatry hospital had been dissatisfied with pay, promotion and rewards. It shows that they are satisfied with what they do and the place of work, but not satisfied with what they get. The loss of external rewards reduces the chances that an expert will be dedicated to his work²⁷. Job rewards (e.g. pay, job security and promotion) are positively correlated with job satisfaction²⁸. Our study clearly suggest that our healthcare workers are interested in their job, service minded, comfortable with multi-disciplinary teamwork, leadership skills and the general environment in which they work in; nevertheless they seem to be not satisfied with their present financial situation at work.

It seems that the management of healthcare organizations might be able to influence the level of staff motivation by increasing satisfaction with some pillars of job satisfaction, such as, monetary incentives and work conditions. These simple changes can significantly increase staff job satisfaction.

To the authors' best knowledge, this is the first study, which had evaluated the job satisfaction of the mental healthcare workers in the Kingdom of Bahrain and possibly other Arabian countries.

The limitations of this study are the following:

1. The small sample size, the mediocre response rate (albeit typical for healthcare workers surveys) and the absence of multiple sites.
2. The design was limited to participants working in a single hospital; therefore, the results cannot yet be regarded as generalizable to any population of healthcare workers beyond those in the study.
3. The use of an English-language questionnaire (JSS) in a non-English speaking country may raise the issue of language and interpretation.
4. It is cross-sectional study, which limits our ability to generalize our results.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that the staff of psychiatry hospital are generally satisfied. The staff were highly satisfied with nature of work and dissatisfied with benefits.

This study revealed important issues in the job satisfaction profile of mental health healthcare workers in the Arab world. The job satisfaction mean scores on the nine JSS dimensions of the Bahrain mental health care healthcare workers are similar with those of previous studies.

Future research is required to confirm the findings, to assess the applicability of these findings to the general mental health clinical population of Arab countries, and to determine why the results are different from those of studies conducted in Western countries?

It would be more meaningful to measure employees' perceptions of job attributes and relate them to job satisfaction. In addition, a survey of private-sector healthcare workers as well as public-sector might be needed.

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