INTRODUCTION

Dental profession has emerged as the most noble and rewarding in health sciences. Dentistry as an occupation is often stressful with the concurrent existence of increased occurrence of ill health, alcoholism and burnout when compared to other professions. Various occupational factors contribute towards successful practice such as knowledge of dentists, equipments and materials, working conditions, opportunities for personal development, customer satisfaction and characteristics related to the health care system. Career satisfaction of the dentist is directly or indirectly influenced by these factors.

Career satisfaction is defined as the pleasurable or positive emotional state arising due to the experience or appraisal of one’s vocation. The perception of an individual’s job fulfilling or allowing to fulfill his/her own significant job values and which provides those values congruent with an individual’s needs results in job satisfaction. Understanding Career satisfaction and factors affecting it helps to enrich job motivation and improve patient care. This ensures the benefit of dental care systems. High turnover of dental graduates is linked to low job satisfaction which in turn results in poor productivity and decreased quality of care.

Though extensive literature on career satisfaction reported, little is researched on job satisfaction amongst health service providers, particularly dentists. Measuring dental practitioners career satisfaction helps to ameliorate factors influencing recruitment and retention of dentists in clinical practice as career sentiment significantly predicts movements within the profession and the intention to switch jobs. The present study results will highlight factors affecting career satisfaction of dentists which in turn can help improve all performance of dentists.

METHODOLOGY

A cross sectional, descriptive survey was done to evaluate predictors of career satisfaction among dental practitioners of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The study recruited 500 dentists randomly to whom, a custom made questionnaire was sent electronically. Stratified random sampling of 500 dentists was drawn from Riyadh Dental Register, stratified by gender and by location of practice.

Recruitment emails mentioned about the purpose of the study and ensuring confidentiality. The mails were attached with a web link to the survey. The questionnaire used was an...
adaptation of Dentists Satisfaction Survey inventory\(^2\), which was slightly modified. Literature evidence warranted the consistency and internal validity of this instrument. The questionnaire was pilot tested on 20 dentists practicing in the neighbouring areas to check for its feasibility in the target group.

A 33 variable questionnaire, made of 8 sections were circulated. The first section evaluated demographic characteristics, while further sections enumerated on questions related to personal time, professional time, income value, staff co-operation, delivery of care, patient relationship and overall satisfaction. The degree of agreement was indicated on a five point Likert scale by the respondents. The overall career satisfaction was measured by the sum scores of all replies. The data was transferred to spread sheets and evaluated using SPSS 20.0 version. Descriptive statistics was computed to reflect overview of the respondents. Chi square test was computed to compare the responses of respondents, with significance level set at \(p<0.05\).

**RESULTS**

A total of 403 dentists responded to the survey, making a response rate of 80.6%. Section 1 summarises the demographic characteristics of the respondents which is presented in Table 1. Majority of the participants were males (65.8%) and had 5 to 8 years of clinical practice (28.3%). The mean score of the respondents for overall career satisfaction was \(2.82 \pm 0.27\), which represented moderate satisfaction among dental professionals.

In the different sections evaluated, the highest satisfaction quotient was obtained in personal time section \((3.04 \pm 0.49)\) while the lowest in the quality of oral health care delivered section with mean score of \(2.66 \pm 0.54\). The satisfaction score of all sections is presented in Table 2. \(t\) test was applied to find if there were any differences between the mean satisfaction of all sections is presented in Table 1. 

**DISCUSSION**

Career satisfaction indicates an individual’s attitude towards his / her job. The present study was done with the aim to assess career satisfaction among dental professionals of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia adapting a modified version of DSS questionnaire which is comprehensive and varied. Sections pertaining to personal and professional space availability, income, patient relationship, perception of delivery of dental care and overall satisfaction were assessed. Dental profession is often associated with stress, which can lead to burn out and untimely end to career resulting considerable loss of money and time.65.8% of the respondents were males which are noted in other studies as well such as Kaipa S\(^et al\) and Pandita V \(et al\). It is a general agreement that males are usually satisfied with their career when compared to their female counterparts.

The overall satisfaction score among dental practitioners was moderately satisfied with a mean of \(2.82 \pm 0.27\), which was similar to the study conducted by Kaipa S \(et al\)\(^4\) with a mean of \(3.08 \pm 0.28\). But the scores were lesser when compared to the score of Jeong SH\(^10\) who reported a satisfaction score of \(3.2 \pm 0.03\) and Puriene \(et al\)\(^11\) with a mean score of \(4.60 \pm 0.10\). Satisfaction in the age strata of > 40 years was found to be lesser in several studies such as Luzzi \(et al\)\(^13\) and Shugars \(et al\)\(^15\), owing to family responsibility and professional attainment zeal.

Career satisfaction was not influenced by the clinical experience years, as no significant difference was noted for satisfaction with years of clinical practice, which was similar to the study of Kaipa S \(et al\)\(^4\).

The response rate in our study was 80.6% which was higher when compared to study of Katja Goetz \(et al\)\(^14\). An element of selection bias must not be overlooked as responses are given by well motivated dentists. Also accuracy and completeness of data must be interpreted with caution owing to the subjective nature of assessment employed in the study.

Literature on happiness and psychology has reflected the impact of positive psychological predictors for personal and professional attainment and also increases functioning. Studies recommend that enhanced happiness has a multitude of benefits, including better performance at work, further reflected in reimbursements and improved health\(^15\).

Health organisations must conduct surveys related to career satisfaction regularly and the results must be scrutinised to identify those sections which are to be improved.

**CONCLUSION**

The profession of dentistry offers tremendous scope for growth and development. The overall satisfaction score was moderate in the present study, with no significant difference noted between the type of practice. Career dissatisfaction was seen as work pressure mounted and expectations rose. Better remuneration and oral health care given were items which needed to be addressed for long term satisfaction and retention of dental practitioners.
References


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