

Job Satisfaction of Dietetic Practitioners in Fars Province, Southern Iran, 2012

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Abstract

Background: Job satisfaction is an emotional and positive feeling which results from job assessment or experiences. It is always considered as a problem in some organizations. Despite the important role of nutrition therapy in patients care, dietitians' job satisfaction is less taken into account. The aim of the present study was to determine the amount of job satisfaction among dietitians in Fars province, Iran.

Methods: In this study, job satisfaction of 95 dietitians was evaluated through demographic and job satisfaction questionnaires. They were sent by e-mail or face-to-face referral for participants. Job satisfaction level was classified into 6 different categories including very satisfied, fairly satisfied, slightly satisfied, slightly dissatisfied, fairly dissatisfied and very dissatisfied. The data were analyzed by SPSS software using independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation test. Statistical differences were considered significant at $P < 0.05$.

Results: The results showed that 72.6% of the participants were satisfied with their job condition but 27.4% were dissatisfied. The mean score of job satisfaction of dietitians was $57\% \pm 10.54$ (from the maximum score of 100), indicating the participants' slight satisfaction. Moreover, the highest and lowest scores were related to the nature of work and salary, respectively.

Conclusion: Since the level of job satisfaction affects other institutional variables such as efficiency, motivation, performance, absenteeism or burning out, it is suggested that authorities of Health Ministry provide a condition in which job satisfaction is increased by applying appropriate techniques.

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Introduction

Job satisfaction is an emotional and positive feeling which results from job assessment or experiences and it is considered as a problem in many organizations.¹ Davis and Newstrom describe job satisfaction as a group of adaptable emotions to a job. When demands, wishes and experiences of an employed person are guaranteed through job, this emotion is formed. In this manner, a balance is established between the employed person's demands and their provision. So, an employee finds

a positive outlook toward job which causes his or her satisfaction. It is obvious that job satisfaction is influenced by elements such as salary and fringe benefits, nature of job, promotion motivation, cooperation, environment, and job condition.² Neglecting job satisfaction issue disturbs the organization in the long run and causes rebellion, reduction of sense of responsibility, and finally leaving the job.³

Job satisfaction is an important index for the personnel of health centers for their job security and the increase of quantitative and qualitative level of

delivery of services to clients. Work nature, team work and sense of cooperation and competition among employees are considered as important parameters which can affect job satisfaction; on the other hand, the authorities' attention to work condition and personnel's salary cause an increase in the employee's satisfaction about their job.⁴

Nutrition, as one of the fields of study in medical sciences, can play an important role in health of the community by using environmental-analytical research. So, the importance of dietitians' role in the medical team becomes clear properly.⁵ Despite this important role, the problem of job satisfaction of this group has been less under study and attention. The goal of the present research was to identify the amount of job satisfaction of Fars province dietitians as to educational field, job and other aspects of this profession.

Materials and Methods

This cross-sectional study was conducted on Fars province employed dietitians in 2012. Ninety-five subjects participated in the study. The sample size was calculated from a similar study.⁶ The employees who were graduated in one of Bachelor, Master of Science or PhD degrees in nutritional science and worked as dietitian in health centers, hospitals, nutrition consulting clinics and academic centers participated in the present study. The samples were gathered randomly from hospitals, health centers or nutrition consulting clinics from all of the cities of the province which have dietitians. The total number of dietitians in Fars province is 155. About 49% of them work in health centers, 39% in hospitals, and 12% in private clinics. In this study, the participants were from different clinics of the province based on this ratio. To collect the data, we used a questionnaire consisting of demographic information (such as age, sex, marriage, educational certificate, etc.) and some data about measuring job satisfaction (e.g. salary, promotion of knowledge and skill, dietetic co-workers, other co-workers, rewards of the job, rules and work

environment, work nature and communications). JSS questionnaire was used in this study⁶ (Table 1).

After translating the questionnaire into Persian, its accuracy was affirmed by one of the language professors of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. After localization and making necessary changes in the questions, they were assessed in a pilot study. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient obtained was 0.92. The final questionnaire was written after reviewing by professors in nutrition department of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. It contained 36 questions and assessed the satisfaction of dietitians in 9 sub-groups, each containing 4 questions.

The questionnaires were sent to the participants via e-mail twice in 15-day intervals. They were asked to fill out the questionnaire at the appointed time. As we introduced the study, we also ensured them about the confidentiality of their personal information. In order to check the participants' answers, they were pursued continually by phone. A number of questionnaires were completed face-to-face at their work. The scores of the questions were ordered from 1 to 6. They were classified into very dissatisfied, fairly dissatisfied, slightly dissatisfied, slightly satisfied, fairly satisfied and very satisfied. Their scores were arranged from 1 to 6. In the final evaluation, job satisfaction, total satisfaction and all the elements were calculated in percentage. The description of the results of the questionnaire was as follows: 0-17% very dissatisfied, 17.1-33% fairly dissatisfied, 33.1-50% slightly dissatisfied, 50.1-66% slightly satisfied, 66.1-83% fairly satisfied and 83.1-100% very satisfied.⁶ They were also divided into two satisfied (>50) and dissatisfied (<50) groups to investigate the frequency of their job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

The statistical analysis of the collected data was done by SPSS, version 16. Data were analyzed using descriptive analysis such as mean, standard deviation and frequency distribution. In order to investigate the

Table 1: Items of job satisfaction questionnaire

Items	Description
Salary	The fair receipt of salary, the opportunities of increasing salary
Promotion	The existence of opportunities of promotion in job and satisfaction about it
Knowledge and skill	The complementary in-service training, the increase of knowledge and skill during the years of in-service training
Co-workers who are dietitians	The way of communication with dietetic co-workers, sense of security from them, the existence of competition among them
Other co-workers (Members of treatment team)	Satisfaction about working with treatment team members, their capability, sense of appreciation on their behalf
Fringe benefits (Appreciation of job)	Job appreciation, being granted all the wishes, being afraid of going to work
Work environment and rule	The comfort of work environment, rule of work, the amount of work, bureaucratic formalities
Work nature	Taking a great deal of pleasure in work, its sense of pride and its significance
Communications	Having a good communication with co-workers, the sense of isolation of work, getting enough information from job events because of relations among co-workers

normality of data distribution, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was done. The findings of the examination confirmed the normality of data distribution. We used inferential analysis, i.e. independent sample t-test for those demographic variables consisting of two poses with total satisfaction score and all of its elements. One-way ANOVA was used to investigate the relationship of qualitative demographic variables which had more than two poses with satisfaction score, and Pearson correlation coefficient index was applied to investigate the relationship of quantitative variables with satisfaction score and its elements. $P < 0.05$ was considered as significant.

Results

The participants' mean age and the duration of employment were 32.52 ± 7.53 and 7.03 ± 6.1 years, respectively. The frequency distribution of demographic variables for participants is displayed in Table 2. Since some of the participants did not answer all the questions, the total number of some of data in this table is less than 95. 66.3% of the participants had employment contract but 18.9% of them did not have any.

Clinical consulting at hospitals was the most position that dietitians had taken (30.3%) and working at research centers and academic agents of medical companies were the least ones (each 1.1%). Nutritional consultation at private consulting clinics (20.7%), working at health centers (19.5%), management of nutrition ward in public hospitals (10.2%), faculty members of higher education centers (6.9%), working

in educational centers (5.7%), and the management of nutrition ward in private hospitals (4.5%) were the other various fields of activity.

The greatest reason for holding the current position was first much enthusiasm to the work and second just having a job. The other factors such as good salary, short distance between house and workplace, the easiness of the job and secondary advantages had little role in their decision to perform the current job.

47.7% of the participants predicted they would stay at the current job for the next 5 years; 36.4% of them said that they would work at another field as nutritionist and 8% of them predicted that they would do other jobs than a nutritionist in the next 5 years. Other cases (7.9%) were working at foreign countries and retirement.

The findings of this study showed that the total satisfaction score of the employed dietitians of Fars province was $57\% \pm 10.54$, which is considered as slight satisfaction.

The total satisfaction score and the nine mentioned elements are shown in Figure 1. As shown, the most amount of job satisfaction was about the nature of work ($67.67\% \pm 20.84$) and the least amount belonged to satisfaction about salary ($42.04\% \pm 15.84$).

The result of the study of the amount of satisfaction in the two satisfied and dissatisfied groups showed that 72.6% of the participants were satisfied with their job and 27.4% were dissatisfied. Based on evaluating the score of job satisfaction in the dissatisfied group,

Table 2: Frequency distribution of the participants based on demographic variables

	Index	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	13	13.83
	Female	81	86.17
Marital status	Single	40	43.01
	Married	53	56.99
Home ownership	Proprietary	55	65.48
	Rental	25	29.76
	Governmental	4	4.76
Academic degree	Junior college diploma	1	1.05
	Bachelor's degree	73	76.84
	Master's degree	17	17.89
	PhD	4	4.21
Grade point average of the last academic diploma	More than 17	54	58.06
	14-17	36	38.71
	Less than 14	3	3.23
Employment status	Full-time	63	67.02
	Half-time	17	18.09
	Not employed now	9	9.57
	Not employed as a dietitian	5	5.32
Area of work	City-Countryside	89	97.80
	Rural area	2	2.20
Salary	Less than 170 \$	46	50.55
	170-340 \$	36	39.56
	340-1000 \$	9	9.89

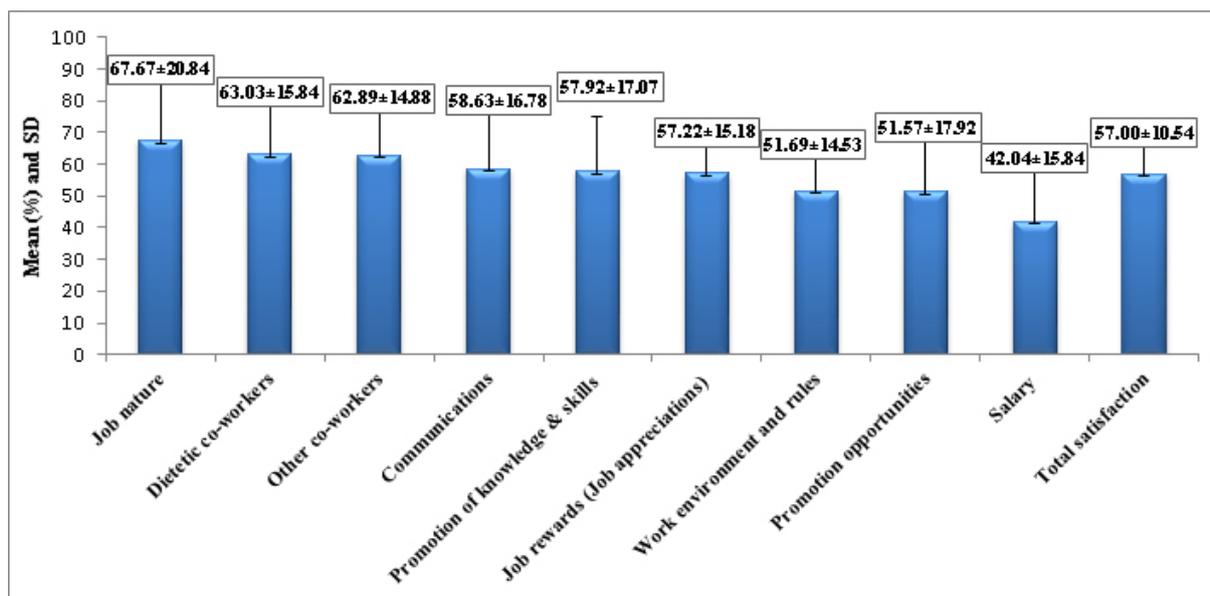


Figure 1: This figure indicates the means and standard deviations of total satisfaction score and its items.

dissatisfaction was reported as “slightly dissatisfied” and in the satisfied group, nobody was completely satisfied with his/her job situation and their satisfaction was reported as “fairly satisfied” and “slightly satisfied”. Table 3 shows the mean score of 9 elements of the questionnaire and their difference in satisfied and dissatisfied groups. As you see, the score of all of the elements in the satisfied individuals is more than that of the dissatisfied ones significantly.

In this study, the relationship between demographic variations and job satisfaction elements showed that there was a significant relationship between the amount of salary and the total satisfaction (P=0.027). With the increase of the amount of salary, satisfaction increased. In this manner, the amount of satisfaction about the job’s nature in the individuals with higher salary was higher than those with lower salary (P=0.015). Also, the degree of total satisfaction and its 9 sub-groups were more in married individuals than single ones. The men were more satisfied than the women (P=0.030). Furthermore, the findings of the

study showed that with increase in age, the amount of job satisfaction increased but this relationship was not strong enough (r=0.229). The degree of total satisfaction among the faculty members of higher education centers was significantly more in comparison to the dietitians in other fields of work (P=0.016).

Discussion

Despite the important role of nutrition in the increase of health and promotion of life quality, dietitians’ job satisfaction is under-investigated. Some research has been done on this subject in America or South Africa⁶ while no study has been done in this field of study in Iran. Therefore, the job satisfaction of employed dietitians of Fars province was investigated in this study.

In the present study, most of the participants were satisfied with their job condition but none of them were satisfied with their job completely. The mean of total score in this study was 57%±10.54; it shows that

Table 3: Comparison of items of job satisfaction mean scores in satisfied and dissatisfied individuals

Job satisfaction items	Satisfied (mean±SD) (n=69)	Dissatisfied (mean±SD) (n=26)	P value [‡]
Salary	45.12±16.02	33.85±12.56	0.002*
Promotion	57.36±16.49	36.21±11.41	0.001*
Knowledge and skill	62.31±14.65	46.26±17.81	0.001*
Dietetic co-workers	67.46±14.35	51.28±13.63	0.001*
(Other co-workers (Treatment team members	66.78±13.57	52.55±12.86	0.001*
(Rewards of the job (Work appreciation	61.87±13.84	44.87±11.31	0.001*
Work environment	56.07±12.92	40.06±12.08	0.001*
Work nature	74.27±17.60	50.15±18.76	0.001*
Communications	64.73±14.30	42.46±11.31	0.001*

‡Independent sample t-test; *P<0.05

dietitians of Fars province have slight satisfaction with their job and this satisfaction is less in comparison to other similar studies. Based on Mackenzie's research on job satisfaction of South African dietitians, the mean of total satisfaction score was reported 67.5%.⁶ Moreover, two studies in America^{7, 8} have reported 79.6% and 76.4% for the mean of satisfaction score, respectively.

Among elements under this study, the level of income had the least amount of satisfaction; based on this aspect, there was not any significant difference between various levels of education and different fields of job. So, it is obvious that the income level has been an important factor in reduction of satisfaction among Fars province dietitians. They felt that in comparison to their individual capabilities (for example GPA of >17 in more than half of them) and skills which they acquired during their education, their salaries were not fair.

Satisfaction about salary has been studied in previous studies on job satisfaction of South African dietitians⁶ and other health-related professions such as nursing,⁹ medicine,¹⁰ occupational therapy,¹¹ and technicians of operating room.¹² Normally, employees are sensitive about their salary; this problem accounts for the effect of income on life standards and job security. So, low level of satisfaction about salary is a common problem among all of the employed individuals. It can be explained based on social comparison theory. Therefore, the main concern at the time of analyzing the satisfaction of this aspect of job is knowledge about referent used in individual comparisons and effort for removing inequalities.¹³ It should be considered that the importance of equivalence in payment is more than the payment level.¹⁴

The opportunity for job promotion was another variable in this study with which the participants were slightly satisfied. In the above-mentioned South African study, the participants were slightly satisfied with this parameter as well. The reduction in satisfaction from job promotion opportunities is enhanced by most of the factors which lead to reduction of these opportunities and job promotion.⁶ The lack of job promotion opportunities in this study about job satisfaction is also seen in Australia¹⁵ and America's¹⁶ occupational therapists and it has been reported that lack of job promotion opportunities is the important reasons of leaving the job.

Salary dissatisfaction and also lack of job promotion opportunities were considered as the most important parameters as the reasons of quitting the job in similar studies.⁶

Based on "Maslow's Hierarchy of Need" theory, promotion is considered as a tool for being recognized officially and appreciated.⁶ When a person cannot promote his or her job situation, this problem negatively affects his/her satisfaction; this

confirms the findings of previous studies in which participants believed that job promotion was achieved when they left clinical activities and started managing professions. This condition shows that clinical jobs usually do not provide job promotion opportunities for dietitians; thus, they may be inclined to change their job into high level positions like management.⁶

This study also shows that dietitians of Fars province are not satisfied with the condition of complementary in-service training after their graduation. This situation was also observed in those who had graduated recently. It seems that despite good knowledge of dietitians who graduated from this field of study, probably they feel they lack clinical skills to perform effectively. It seems this is due to the fact that most of the dietitians tend to work as a specialist in specific clinical activities rather than as a public expert.

It has been shown in this study that dietitians do not receive enough respect from other members of treatment team (such as doctors, nurses, etc.). This condition might have resulted from the lack of enough understanding of the members of treatment team regarding the importance of dietitians' job or lack of self-confidence in the nutritionists.

One of the other factors with the lowest degree of satisfaction in dietitians of the study was work environment satisfaction. Work condition must provide the personnel with their needs, such as light, temperature, and noise since unsuitable job condition leads to mental and physiological stress.¹³

On the other hand, the highest score belonged to the nature of work. It shows dietitians' high amount of enjoyment in their work. So, efforts should be made to increase the total satisfaction in their job in order to increase the quality of the delivered services in this class.

Faculty members had more satisfaction of their job in comparison to other activities in this field. The reasons of this satisfaction can be higher income, more social prestige and more extensive communication with the other members of the treatment team; as a result, they are more officially recognized.

Based on the results of this research, increase in the amount of satisfaction has a direct relationship with increase in age. This fact can result from an inappropriate socio-economic condition which causes a reduction in satisfaction and future expectancy among the employed youths. Furthermore, we can attribute higher satisfaction in men, as compared to women, to their more positive view of life and realistic expectation. Single individuals' lower satisfaction compared to married ones may result from the fact that they mostly limit their expectations in their job and inasmuch as holding a job cannot satisfy all the needs of an individual, this problem leads to reduction

of their satisfaction.

One of the limitations of the current study was lack of measurement of other indices of job satisfaction like the impact of job satisfaction on dietitian's productivity or on the health outcome, nutritional status, and satisfaction of dietetic service in patients under dietetic supervision.

Conclusion

Based on the conclusions of this research, it seems that the authorities must consider providing better job conditions and facilities to increase knowledge and skill of the employed dietitians through holding in-service training, introduce this kind of job to the society, and change the public and physicians' view about dietitians, leading to a change in the perspectives about this kind of job and increase in job motivation among dietitians.

In general, it is suggested that based on positive and negative results of job satisfaction on other systematic variables, such as profitability, motivation, performance, absenteeism, burning out, etc., policy makers and authorities in the Ministry of Health should provide an opportunity for increasing job satisfaction in this field.

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Conflict of Interest: None declared.

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