

General profile and job satisfaction of Turkish dietitians

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Summary. *Objective:* The satisfaction is a complex concept involving individual's experiences and expectations, individual and social values, and job-related attitudes such as motivation and commitment. In this study, it was aimed to evaluate job satisfaction level of dietitians and to determine whether job satisfaction level differs with variables such as working year or work environment. *Subject and methods:* A questionnaire on demographic characteristics and occupational data, and Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) were used to determine job satisfaction level. The questionnaire and JSS were sent to 815 dietitians who were member of Turkish Dietetic Association (TDA). The study sample consisted to 227 dietitians. Higher scores in JSS were considered as greater job satisfaction. Data were analyzed by using SPSS for Windows version 16.0. *Results:* Mean age was 35.3 ± 9.96 years. Of the respondents, 90.3% (n=205) were female; 35.72% had experience of 0-5 years; 18.9% had postgraduate degree; and 5.3% had doctor of philosophy degree. In JSS, mean score was found to be 76.2 ± 10.93 among respondents. When working year and JSS score were compared, highest mean JSS score was found in dietitians with working year ≥ 30 years; followed by those with 21-30 years and those with 0-5 years. The difference between study groups were found to be significant ($p < 0.05$). It was found that JSS cores were comparable between dietitians working or not working in outpatient clinic; however, daily number of patients was associated to job satisfaction level as being lower JSS score by higher patient volume ($p < 0.05$). It was found that there were significant correlations between JSS score and attendance to occupational conference, congress, seminar or training ($p < 0.05$). Higher satisfaction in work environment resulted in higher JSS scores. *Conclusions:* It was concluded that current problems should be identified and corrected to improve job satisfaction and that are comprehensive studies are needed in this field.

Key words: dietitian, job satisfaction, job satisfaction scale

Introduction

Individuals are in need of having a job, doing a work and being active in social life since career is the strongest attachment between human and life. Although occupation is defined as all activities aiming financial gain, it is associated to satisfaction of social and psychological needs in addition to fulfillment of physiological needs. Professional life is an indispensable part of our family and social life. The chronic stress and discomfort in professional life will have impact on other areas of life. In individuals, life satisfaction can be affected by many

variables including working environment, interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction. Moreover, job satisfaction may also alter depending on these variables. The concept of life satisfaction describes condition or consequence resulted from comparison between expectations and gains of an individual. It is defined as positive consideration of whole life based on self-defined criteria of an individual. Many factors such as income or additional benefits, nature of job, motivation by promotion, cooperation, working environment and job condition can affect job satisfaction (1). As a research field in medical sciences, the nutrition has potential to play an

essential role in public health by environmental-analytic research. Thus, integral role of dietitians can be clarified as required. There are several reasons that management dietitians may or may not be satisfied with their jobs. (2,3). In this study, it was aimed to evaluate job satisfaction level of dietitians and to determine whether job satisfaction level differs with variables such as working year or work environment.

Material and Methods

It was aimed to conduct this study on 815 dietitians who were members of Turkish Dietetics Association (TDA); however, only 227 dietitians responded to survey, comprising study sample. Demographic and occupational data sheet was used to determine demographic and occupational characteristics. In addition, the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) was used to determine level of job satisfaction. Higher scores in JSS were considered as greater job satisfaction. Data were analyzed by using SPSS for Windows version 16.0.

Results

Table 1 summarized demographic characteristics of study population. The study included 227 subjects. Of

Table 1: Distribution of participants according to general characteristics

	Participants (n:227)	
	n	%
Gender		
Male	22	9.7
Female	205	90.3
Graduation		
Graduate	172	75.8
Postgraduate	43	18.9
Doctorate	12	5.3
Professional experience		
0-5 years	81	35.7
6-10 years	42	18.5
11-20 years	49	21.6
21-30 years	44	19.4
>30 years	11	4.8

them 90.3% were female while 9.7 were male. Majority of subjects (75.8%) had graduate degree while 24.2% had postgraduate degree. When working years were assessed, it was found that majority of subjects (35.7%) had experience of 0-5 years while 21.6% had experience of 11-20 years and 19.4% had experience 25-30 years.

Table 2 summarizes characteristics of work environment in study population. It was found that 82.9%

Table 2: Distribution of participants according to facilities worked

Facility	Participants (n:227)	
	n	%
Community hospital	188	82.9
Private hospital		
Public university hospital		
Private university hospital		
Self-employment in nutritional counseling facility	9	4.0
Administrative organizations, food factory	12	5.3
Public health agency	12	5.3
Community health center		
Food industry	1	0.4
Nursing home	1	0.4
Sport center	1	0.4
Beauty center	2	0.9
Automotive industry	1	0.4
Number of dietitians (X±SS)	5.9±5.01	
Number of patients undergoing daily diet therapy		
10-20	84	48.3
21-40	56	32.2
41-60	17	9.8
>60	17	9.8
Number of clinics responsible		
1	7	5.1
2-3	56	40.9
4-5	25	18.2
>5	49	35.8
Inpatient workload (number of patients)		
≤20	34	24.8
21-50	63	46.0
51-100	31	22.6
101-150	4	2.9
>150	5	3.6

of subjects were working in community hospitals, academic hospitals, and private hospitals; that 4% had his/her own nutritional counseling facility; that 5.3% were working in public health centers; and that 5.3% were working in catering industry. It was also found that 48.3% of dietitians provided outpatient care to 10-20 patients per day while 32.2% provided outpatient care to 21-40 patients per day. In addition, it was found that 40.9% of dietitians were responsible from 2-3 wards while 35.8% from ≥5 wards and majority of dietitians (46.0%) provided inpatient care to 21-50 patients per day.

Table 3 summarizes information regarding professional development of dietitians. It was found that frequency of attendance to congress and conference was every 2 or 3 years. In addition, it was found that 63.9% of dietitians occasionally followed current literature for professional development.

When administrative satisfaction was assessed in facilities where dietitians were employed, it was found that 76.2% of them were satisfied and 44.9% of them were appreciated in their facility (Table 4).

No significant difference was detected in mean JSS scores of dietitians according to gender ($p>0.05$); however, a significant association was found between JSS score and working years ($p<0.05$). It was found that job satisfaction was improved by advancing experience. It was also found that lower number of daily patients was associated to higher JSS score (Table 5 and 6).

Discussion

This study was conducted on 227 dietitians in order to assess factors affecting job satisfaction. Majority of participants (90.3%) were female. Of subjects, 75.8% had graduate degree while 24.2% had postgraduate degree. It was found that 82.0% of subjects were working in community hospitals, academic hospitals, and private hospitals; that 4% had his/her own nutritional counseling facility; that 5.3% were working in public health centers; and that 5.3% were working in catering industry.

In a survey on 851 dietitians, it was reported that 96% of subjects were female and 55% had graduate degree. Authors reported that 51% of registered dieti-

Table 3: Distribution of participants according to professional development characteristics

	Participants (n:227)	
	n	%
Frequency of attendance to professional meetings such as congress, seminar, conference or training		
Always	9	4.0
Often (≥3 annually)	66	29.1
Sometimes (every 2-3 years)	103	45.4
Rare	45	19.8
Never	4	1.7
National/International publications		
I follow regularly	34	15.0
I follow occasionally	145	63.9
I do not follow	48	21.1

Table 4: Distribution of dietitians according to satisfaction in their facility

	Participants (n:227)	
	n	%
Do you think whether your director is fair in work distribution?		
Yes	173	76.2
No	54	23.8
Do you think whether your director appreciate your work?		
Yes	102	44.9
No	37	16.3
Partially	88	38.8
Do you think whether your work is respected properly by your coworkers?		
Yes	100	44.1
No	34	15.0
Partially	93	41.0
Are you informed about news or changes in your facility by administrative office?		
Yes	113	49.8
No	20	8.8
Sometimes	94	41.4

Table 5: The mean Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) scores according to gender

	Participant				
	Male		Female		p
Mean JSS score	X	SD	X	SD	
	77.3	11.05	76.1	10.93	0.61
Mean JSS Score	X±SS				
	76.2±10.93				

Table 6: The Job Satisfaction Scale scores according to working condition, personal and professional characteristics of participant

	Mean JSS Score		
	X	SD	P
Professional experience			
0-5 years	77.1	10.57	0.04*
6-10 years	73.0	10.93	
11-20 years	74.7	11.60	
21-30 years	77.8	10.30	
>30 years	82.3	10.54	
Graduation			
Graduate	75.5	75.57	0.10
Postgraduate	77.2	77.25	
Doctorate	82.1	82.16	
Outpatient work load (number of patients per day)			
10-20	77.9	10.31	0.04*
21-40	74.6	11.51	
41-60	72.3	8.31	
>60	72.2	9.13	
Number of wards in charge			
1	78.0	9.01	0.69
2-3	76.5	9.55	
4-5	74.0	12.05	
>5	75.6	9.32	
Inpatient workload (number of patients per day)			
≤20	74.7	10.53	0.42
21-50	76.5	10.42	
51-100	75.2	7.90	
101-150	70.0	14.76	
>150	81.6	5.85	
Frequency of attendance to professional meetings such as congress, seminar, conference or training			
Always	88.1	6.37	0.00*
Often (≥3 per year)	80.8	7.65	
Sometimes (every 2-3 years)	74.1	10.74	
Rarely	73.2	12.70	
Never	61.3	10.40	
Fair directors regarding work distribution			
Yes	76.5	10.59	0.80
No	73.4	10.61	
Appreciation by director			
Yes	79.9	9.11	0.00*
No	73.9	9.38	
Partially	72.0	11.16	
Respect to work by coworkers			
Yes	80.3	8.63	0.00*
No	73.1	12.19	
Partially	72.4	10.51	

*p<0.05

tians (RDs) were ≥50 years old while 43% had professional experience of ≥25 years but majority had professional experience of <10 years. In that study, there were 318 (32%) clinical nutrition manager or chief clinical dietitians, 287 (29%) directors, 61 (7%) assistant directors, 106(11%) managers and 33 (4%) supervisors (3). In another study, 37.5% of participants (n=36) reported that they consider themselves as inpatient clinical dietitians including general, pediatrics or neonatal, nutrition support, long-term care or others while 15.6% (n=15) reported that they consider themselves as outpatient clinical dietitian (4).

According to Rogers (2008), 55% of RDs work as clinicians while 12% are employed in the management of food service organizations, 11% are in the field of community nutrition and 12% continue their careers as trainer, consultant or entrepreneur. In total, only 39% of RDs are working in healthcare facility. In addition, vast majority of dietetic practitioners are female and mean age is 46 years with 16 years of professional experience. Rogers (2008) also reported that 41% of all practitioners have professional experience of ≥20 years whereas 14% had <20 years (5).

In a survey on 203 dietitians, it was reported that 90% of respondents were women whereas 5% were men. Of participants, 42% were 35-44 years old. It was found that 166 subjects were RD while all subjects were licensed dietitians. Authors reported that 48% of subjects had graduate degree whereas 35% also had postgraduate degree. It was reported that 73% of dietitians worked in traditional setting while 17% in non-traditional settings (6).

In our study, it was found that 35.7% of respondents had professional experience of 0-5 years while 24.2% had professional experience of ≥30 years. For dietitians, the knowledge and skills gained in the school may be effective to maintain desired behavior during work life for longer periods (7) However, these are enhanced during professional career. Currently, organizations are implementing effective human development strategies to improve organizational performance. It has been emphasized that job satisfaction, strategic planning and various other parameters are effective for this purpose (8).

Stone et al. investigated association between job satisfaction and motivation factors among dietitians

during early periods of career. In the study, it was found that RDs had a high level of professional identification defined by defending their profession among others. In addition, it was found that professional challenges and opportunity to serve other were most satisfactory factors while financial reward was least satisfactory factor (9)

In our study, it was reported that the frequency of attendance to professional meetings such as congress, symposium was every 2-3 years. The proportion of dietitians who regularly follow literature was only 15% while the proportion of those who occasionally follow literature was 63.9%.

It is thought that job satisfaction can be influenced by many important parameters such as work nature, team work, cooperation and competition among employees. However, job satisfaction has been increased by authorities focusing on work condition and salary (10).

The mean JSS score was found to be 76.2 ± 10.93 in the study population and no significant difference was found between male and female participants ($p > 0.05$). when JSS scores were compared between dietitians with graduate and postgraduate degree, it was found that mean JSS score was higher among dietitians with postgraduate degree but the difference was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

In a survey on 550 RDNs from 7 dietetic practice groups, Byham-Gray et al.(11) investigated research involvement. Authors found that there was a strong correlation between research score and factors including education level, attendance to research training and frequency of professional reading. It was found that RDNs with doctorates scored highest points while those with bachelor's degree scored lowest point among all groups. In that study, it was shown that entry-level RDs with master's degree reported significantly higher level of job satisfaction. Although there are many studies focusing of job satisfaction in RDNs, there is no study comparing job satisfaction among entry-level RDNs with or without master's degree.

In our study, the JSS score was increased by advancing years of work and a significant correlation was found between JSS score and working year. In addition, JSS score was decreased by increasing daily patient volume, indicating a significant association ($p < 0.05$). In the literature, many studies have shown

discomfort and lack of confidence in research skills in majority of dietitians (12,13).

In our study, it was found that frequent attendance to professional meetings such as congress, conference or seminars increased mean JSS score. This increase was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). In addition, it was also found that appreciation of work by directors and respect by other employees significantly increased JSS score ($p < 0.05$). In addition, appreciation of their work by directors and other employees significantly increased JSS score ($p < 0.05$).

The studies on job satisfaction among RDs are scarce worldwide very poorly researched (14). Ganzach et al. suggested that positive effect of education on job satisfaction may be associated to securing more rewarding jobs by highly educated individuals, resulting in more satisfaction from job. On the other hand, negative effect may be associated to expectations from job rewards which may contribute to increase education level (5).

In a study, it was reported that overall satisfaction scores were significantly lower in clinical nutrition managers when compared to district managers or directors (3). In South Africa, job satisfaction level from their current employment was only mild (65.7%). This was due to poor salaries, lack of promotion and poor perception of professional image. It was found that there were significant positive correlations between age, experience, specialty, working hours and work location (15).

In a study on job satisfaction in South Carolina, no significant difference was detected regarding job satisfaction between dietitians working fulltime or part time. Strategies to improve financial rewards and promotions may be primary concern to improve job satisfaction (16).

In conclusion, satisfaction from work, coworkers and directors makes significant contribution to overall satisfaction. It has been shown that various factors including personal, interpersonal and organizational factors are associated to job satisfaction.

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