

JOB SATISFACTION AMONG NURSING TECHNICIANS IN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS IN MINAS GERAIS – BRAZIL

SATISFAÇÃO NO TRABALHO ENTRE TÉCNICOS DE ENFERMAGEM EM HOSPITAIS PSIQUIÁTRICOS DE MINAS GERAIS – BRASIL

SATISFACCIÓN EN EL TRABAJO ENTRE TÉCNICOS DE ENFERMERÍA EN HOSPITALES PSIQUIÁTRICOS DE MINAS GERAIS – BRASIL

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Submitted on: 2015/02/05

Approved on: 2015/03/17

ABSTRACT

A quantitative, cross sectional study with 93 nursing technicians from two psychiatric hospitals was carried out in order to identify levels of satisfaction at work and associated factors. All data was collected using a questionnaire on professional experience and sociodemographic details. SATIS-BR was the instrument chosen to assess satisfaction. The nursing technicians showed a mean score of 3.06 of overall satisfaction, indicating a moderate level of satisfaction. The subscales with highest values were those that evaluated the level of satisfaction with the quality of service and relationships in the workplace. Conversely, these professionals showed low levels of satisfaction with the working conditions and opportunities for taking part of the service. In general, male nurses, those who work during the day, those who said they feel able to care for patients and feel safe in the workplace displayed higher levels of satisfaction. The results reinforce the importance of investigating satisfaction among nursing professionals in order to improve the service with regard to working conditions, organizational climate, human resource management and consequently the quality of service provided.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction; Mental Health; Psychiatric Nursing; Occupational Health; Working Conditions.

RESUMO

Estudo transversal, de abordagem quantitativa, realizado com 93 técnicos de enfermagem de dois hospitais psiquiátricos, com o objetivo de identificar os níveis de satisfação no trabalho e seus fatores associados. Para a coleta de dados foi aplicado o questionário com questões relativas à experiência profissional e dados sociodemográficos. Para avaliar a satisfação foi aplicado o instrumento SATIS-BR. Os técnicos de enfermagem apresentaram um escore médio de satisfação global de 3,06, indicando nível intermediário de satisfação. As subescalas com valores mais altos foram aquelas que avaliaram o nível de satisfação em relação à qualidade dos serviços prestados e aos relacionamentos no ambiente de trabalho. Em contraste, esses profissionais demonstraram baixos níveis de satisfação em relação às condições de trabalho e à oportunidade de participação no serviço. De forma geral, os profissionais do sexo masculino, aqueles que trabalham no período diurno, os que afirmaram sentir-se capacitados para prestar assistência aos pacientes e seguros no ambiente de trabalho manifestaram elevados níveis de satisfação. Os resultados encontrados reforçam a importância de investigar a satisfação entre os profissionais de enfermagem, a fim de promover a melhoria dos serviços no que diz respeito a: condições de trabalho, clima organizacional, gerenciamento de recursos humanos e, conseqüentemente, qualidade dos serviços prestados.

Palavras-chave: Satisfação no Emprego; Saúde Mental; Enfermagem Psiquiátrica; Saúde do Trabalhador; Condições de Trabalho.

RESUMEN

Estudio transversal de enfoque cuantitativo realizado con 93 técnicos de enfermería de dos hospitales psiquiátricos con el fin de identificar los niveles de satisfacción en el trabajo y los factores asociados. Para la recogida de datos se aplicó un cuestionario con preguntas sobre experiencia profesional y datos sociodemográficos. Para evaluar la satisfacción se aplicó la herramienta SATIS-BR. Los técnicos de enfermería mostraron una puntuación media de satisfacción global de 3,06, lo cual indica un nivel moderado de satisfacción. Las subescalas con valores más altos fueron aquellas que evaluaron el grado de satisfacción con la calidad de los servicios brindados y las relaciones en el lugar de trabajo. Por otro lado, estos profesionales mostraron bajos niveles de satisfacción con las condiciones de trabajo y oportunidades de participación en el servicio. En general, los enfermeros varones, los que trabajaban de día, los que dijeron sentirse capaces de ayudar a los pacientes y seguros en el ambiente laboral tenían niveles altos de satisfacción. Los resultados refuerzan la importancia de investigar la satisfacción entre los profesionales de enfermería con miras a promover la mejora de los servicios en lo que respecta a las condiciones de trabajo, clima organizacional, gestión de recursos humanos y, como consecuencia, la calidad de los servicios prestados.

Palabras clave: Satisfacción en el Trabajo; Salud Mental; Enfermería Psiquiátrica; Salud Laboral; Condiciones de Trabajo.

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that professionals, as well as patients and their families, continually evaluate mental health services. One of the indicators used to assess quality is the level of satisfaction among professionals.¹ This assessment can also reveal the quality of human resources management.² Studies have shown that the professionals' level of satisfaction is closely linked to the level of quality of service.^{3,4}

Job satisfaction can be understood as the discrepancy between the professionals' expectations and their reality, being thus dependent on what the professionals expect of the institutions they work in.⁵ Therefore, levels of satisfaction experienced by an individual can vary as time passes.⁶

Several studies have assessed nurses' satisfaction within mental institutions. The topic has become relevant again due to the recent changes in the attention model proposed for psychiatric care, as well as changes in professional profile and scarcity of caregivers working in the field.^{5,7,8}

Nursing professionals, especially those working in mental health, are exposed to a heavy workload, stressful conditions, physical and emotional strain, which can even lead to impaired health. It is known that nursing professionals are the ones who have the most direct contact with patients. Studies have shown that health services are poorly equipped to meet these professionals' needs, which can impact the level of satisfaction.^{10,11} A Brazilian study found a significant correlation between job satisfaction and stress among psychiatry professionals.⁸

Studies carried out among nursing professionals in mental institutions show that the factors that most influenced satisfaction were the level of opportunity to participate in the decision-making, pay, relationships, and work conditions. It is hard to compare results, however, due to the existence of different scales and methods.^{6,7}

Knowing which aspects of life in the workplace impact job satisfaction can contribute to planning better work conditions for nursing professionals, and consequently, better services. The present study aimed to identify job satisfaction and associated factors among nursing professionals in two psychiatric hospitals in Minas Gerais.

METHODOLOGY

This is a quantitative descriptive study carried out in two psychiatric hospitals in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil between October and December 2013. The two hospitals have, in total, 253 beds and 255 nurse technicians with secondary education. All the nursing professionals in direct contact with patients were invited to the study, and 93 of them accepted. Those who declined showed no difference regarding the variables sex, age, or length of affiliation, and alleged being on leave,

vacation, and unavailable as reasons for not participating. Ethical considerations followed Resolution 466/2012, and the study was approved by the Ethics Committee, report 237.265. Subjects signed a free informed consent form.

To investigate the professionals, we used a questionnaire to collect the following data: age, marital status, sex, income, length of affiliation, experience in psychiatry, professional experience, weekly working hours and shifts, previous occupations, perception of ability to assist psychiatric patients, perception of safety in the workplace, and experience of physical aggression in the workplace. SATIS-BR was then applied, as devised by the WHO mental health division and validated in Brazil by Bandeira et al.¹² The questionnaire has 32 questions designed to assess the professionals' level of satisfaction. These items are grouped in four subscales that assess: a) satisfaction with the quality of the services (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83); b) satisfaction with their own team (Cronbach's alpha = 0.72); satisfaction with overall work conditions (Cronbach's alpha = 0.77); and satisfaction with interpersonal relationship with colleagues and superiors (Cronbach's alpha = 0.63). The overall scale aims to assess the team's general satisfaction with the mental health service. Each of the 32 questions has answers distributed in a Likert type scale with five points, namely: 1, very unsatisfied; 2, unsatisfied; 3, indifferent; 4, satisfied; and 5, very satisfied. The arithmetic mean is then calculated for the overall scale and for each subscale. The mean result ranges from 1 to 5, and the closest it is to five, the higher the level of satisfaction.

Data were then imported into a spreadsheet and analyzed using STATA version 10.0. Descriptive analysis consisted of calculating rates and percentages for each categorical variable, mean, and standard deviation for the quantitative variables. The normal distribution of each variable was evaluated by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Comparison between the mean scores of overall satisfaction, work conditions, opportunity, and quality with the variables work shift, income, qualification, safety, and sex was done using Student's T test. For variables without a normal distribution, Mann-Whitney's and Spearman's correlation test were used. A significance level of 5% was set.

RESULTS

There were 93 participants, 55 from one hospital and 38 from another. There were no significant differences in their sociodemographic characteristics. Most of them were female (63.4%), with an average age of 39 ± 8.9 years and income of up to two minimum wages (65.6%). Sixty-percent lived with a partner. Experience in psychiatry ranged from two months to 35 years, and 50% had less than two years of experience. As for professional experience, 50% had less than 11 years, with an average of 13 years of experience. Mean length of affiliation to the

hospital was 6.36 ± 5.25 years, close to the mean of experience with psychiatry, which indicates that a large part of the professionals had no previous experience before started working in that institution. A significant part of the nursing technicians had been physically aggressed by patients in the workplace (70.4%). As for previous jobs, 25% of the subjects had more than two jobs. Seventy-five percent worked 40 hours per week.

There was a previous analysis, carried out separately, to assess the sociodemographic characteristics related to satisfaction, and there were no significant statistical differences. Thus, a combined analysis was carried out. In relation to the mean scores of satisfaction, the subscale with lowest values was working conditions, and the items related to safety, comfort, and wages received the lowest score. The subscale assessing opportunity to participate was also low, especially “acceptance of the professionals’ suggestions”. Scores relating to relationships and the quality of services indicated moderate satisfaction, with values within indifference (3) and satisfaction (4) (Table 1). Likewise, the overall level of satisfaction fell between indifference and satisfaction.

Table 1 - Mean scores for overall scale and subscales of job satisfaction among nursing technicians of two psychiatric institutions in Minas Gerais. 2013 (n=93)

	Mean (SD)
Overall scale: Job satisfaction	3.06 ± 0.54
Satisfaction with working conditions	2.74 ± 0.68
Safety	1.83 ± 1.21
Wages	2.02 ± 1.09
Comfort and appearance	2.28 ± 1.23
Installations	2.36 ± 1.09
Respect to confidentiality	3.02 ± 1.07
Privacy for patients	3.02 ± 1.10
Would recommend the service to family and friends	3.22 ± 1.15
Working atmosphere	3.43 ± 1.03
Working environment	3.45 ± 0.98
Satisfaction with relationships	3.44 ± 0.76
Autonomy	3.05 ± 1.09
Relationship with superiors	3.33 ± 1.06
Relationship with colleagues	3.95 ± 1.03
Satisfaction with opportunity to participate	2.81 ± 0.74
Acceptance of the professional's suggestions	2.60 ± 1.17
Participation in implementing programs and routines	2.62 ± 1.12
Participation in evaluating activities	2.63 ± 1.01
Participation in decision-making	2.63 ± 1.10
Prospect of promotion	2.85 ± 1.29
Level of responsibility	3.15 ± 1.20

Continues...

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Table 1 - Mean scores for overall scale and subscales of job satisfaction among nursing technicians of two psychiatric institutions in Minas Gerais. 2013 (n=93)

	Média (DP)
Discussion of topics related to the profession in meetings	3.18 ± 0.96
Satisfaction with the quality of the service	3.24 ± 0.62
Patient care	3.00 ± 1.12
Information given to patients about their condition	3.06 ± 0.97
Meeting patients' needs	3.13 ± 0.84
Information given to patients about their treatment	3.13 ± 1.01
Professionals' understanding of patients' needs	3.31 ± 0.87
Quality of assistance given to patients	3.34 ± 0.85
Professionals' understanding of patients' conditions	3.36 ± 0.81
Team competence	3.38 ± 0.98
Way patients are treated	3.47 ± 0.96

Overall, the highest levels of satisfaction were found among professionals working during the day shift, who felt qualified and safe in the workplace. For the variable work shift, however, there was only a significant relation between satisfaction and opportunity to participate (Table 2) and relationships (Table 3). The perception of safety was significantly associated with the overall scale and all satisfaction subscales. There was a high level of satisfaction among male participants, with a statistical significance for the variable overall satisfaction and satisfaction with the quality of the services (Table 2).

Regarding age, there was no significant relation between overall satisfaction and the subscales related to quality of services and working conditions. Length of affiliation showed a negative correlation between level of satisfaction and opportunity to participate. As for weekly working hours, there was a moderate correlation. There was no relation between levels of satisfaction and experience in psychiatry (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

The nursing technicians that took part in this study showed a mean score of satisfaction of 3.06, which can be considered an intermediate level of satisfaction. The subscales with the highest values were related to the quality of services and workplace relationships. Considering the standard deviation, the subscale that assesses workplace relationships was the only one indicating satisfaction. On the other hand, these professionals showed low levels of satisfaction in relation to working conditions and opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

Table 2 - Bivariate analysis* according to the mean scores of overall job satisfaction and the respective subscales among nursing technicians of two psychiatric institutions in Minas Gerais, 2013 (n=93)

	Overall job satisfaction		Satisfaction with the quality of the services		Satisfaction with working conditions		Satisfaction with opportunity to participate	
	Mean (SD)	p value	Mean (SD)	p value	Mean (SD)	p value	Mean (SD)	p value
Work shift								
Day	3.10 (0.43)	0.26	3.24 (0.08)	0.60	2.80 (0.09)	0.39	3.58 (0.77)	0.01
Night	2.97 (0.58)		3.31 (0.10)		2.67 (0.10)		3.24 (0.66)	
Feels qualified								
Yes	3.11 (0.54)	0.03	3.37 (0.62)	0.00	2.83 (0.11)	0.01	2.81 (0.08)	0.75
No	2.87 (0.47)		2.90 (0.45)		2.46 (0.08)		2.75 (0.17)	
Feels safe								
Yes	3.36 (0.66)	0.01	3.49 (0.63)	0.01	3.16 (0.60)	0.00	3.09 (0.22)	0.05
No	3.01 (0.49)		3.23 (0.61)		2.67 (0.68)		2.74 (0.08)	
Sex								
Female	2.99 (0.51)	0.03	3.15 (0.63)	0.02	2.71 (0.09)	0.50	3.36 (0.74)	0.06
Male	3.19 (0.58)		3.41 (0.56)		2.81 (0.12)		3.60 (0.79)	
Income (minimum wages)								
1-2	3.02 (0.09)	0.66	3.31 (0.12)	0.72	2.77 (0.12)	0.85	2.63 (0.13)	0.23
> 2	3.08 (0.06)		3.26 (0.07)		2.74 (0.08)		2.85 (0.09)	

*Student's t test.

Table 3 - Bivariate analysis* of the mean scores of level of satisfaction with workplace relationships among nursing technicians in two psychiatric institutions in Minas Gerais, 2013. (n=93)

	N (%)	P value
Work shift		
Day	57 (61)	0.03
Night	34 (39)	
Feels qualified		
Yes	72 (77)	0.34
No	21 (23)	
Feels safe		
Yes	14 (85)	0.08
No	79 (15)	
Sex		
Female	59 (63)	0.06
Male	34 (37)	
Income (minimum wages) (n=93)		
1-2	61 (65)	0.64
> 2	32 (35)	

* Mann-Whitney's test.

Since satisfaction can be an indicator to evaluate quality of service, the intermediary levels of satisfaction for the subscales “quality of services” and “workplace relationships” and the dis-

satisfaction shown for “working conditions” and “opportunity to participate” suggest room for improvement in the two institutions studied.

Similarly, the levels of satisfaction found in this research were very close to those found among professionals working in the same field in the rest of Brazil.^{8,13} In a study carried out by Ishara,⁸ nursing professionals with secondary education showed the lowest levels of satisfaction in other professional categories, especially in terms of working conditions and opportunity to participate in decision-making.

Issues related to opportunity to participate aim to assess responsibility, prospects for promotion, acceptance of opinions, and role in the decision-making process. In this sense, Herzberg's theory divides the determining factors of job satisfaction as either extrinsic or intrinsic. Extrinsic factors include wages, benefits, infrastructure, and workplace environment. According to Herzberg, these can determine the level of job satisfaction, but not of motivation, which are related to intrinsic factors such as autonomy, opportunity to participate, professional standing, and responsibility.¹⁴

Historically, nursing has been limited to developing secondary activities, usually manual, and most of the time removed from the decision-making process.¹⁵ Nowadays, studies indicate the subordination of nursing activities to even more peripheral levels.^{8,15} A study with mental health professionals has shown that professionals with secondary edu-

cation had very few opportunities to participate.⁸ Likewise, Peduzzi¹⁶ has reported the perception of a hierarchy within workplace relations among professionals. Hierarchical relations like these can be a hindrance for interdisciplinary teams, as they curb the exchange of knowledge and information vital to the decision-making process of therapies, and could negatively impact patient care.⁸

Nursing technicians taking part of this study showed low levels of satisfaction with working conditions, with items safety and wages being the lowest. Dissatisfaction with wages concurs with other studies.^{6,10,11,17} Subjects working in Centros de Atenção Psicossocial (CAPs) had higher levels of satisfaction than those taking part in this study, which can be ascribed to characteristics of service.¹⁸ Generally, patients in these psychiatric hospitals have more severe conditions. Besides, in the two institutions observed, many hospitalizations are compulsory, which can affect the relation between professionals and patients. The literature shows that the work in psychiatric hospitals is considered demanding, and there are cases of emotional exhaustion, burnout, and stress among professionals.^{5,9}

Safety inside psychiatric hospitals has been subject of intense discussion internationally, but less so in Brazil. In the present study, safety had a low score, with 83% of participants claiming they do not feel safe in the workplace, and with approximately 70% reporting having been assaulted during work. In a study with nursing professionals working in psychiatric hospitals, 47% reported physical aggression in the workplace, a figure much lower than of our study.⁵ Another study has shown that the working conditions are unsatisfactory in terms of safety and even fail to meet their physiological needs.¹¹

The relation found between satisfaction and the analyzed covariables (age, sex, qualification, safety, weekly working hours, and shift) allows the verification of a set of individual factors, intrinsic and extrinsic, that affect satisfaction. Seventy-seven percent of subjects claimed they felt qualified. Perception of

qualification may be a proxy of work performance, a variable related in other studies to satisfaction.^{19,20}

The literature shows a relation between weekly working hours and dissatisfaction.²¹ Most subjects had no more than two jobs, but the activities they performed in the psychiatric hospitals are notoriously taxing, both physically and emotionally.⁵ Besides, most of them were women, working double shifts if we consider their workload outside the workplace. One of the reasons they do not remain in the institutions is precisely the restriction it imposes on their free time.²²

Male professionals have high levels of satisfaction, both in the overall scale and for all subscales. Statistically significant differences between level of satisfaction and sex have been found elsewhere in the literature.²³ There is no consensus on the influence of sex on job satisfaction, and this deserves further study.^{7,23}

Finally, there was a high level of satisfaction for subscales assessing quality of the services and workplace relationships. As for quality of the service, greatest satisfaction was related to patient care and team competence. Ishara⁸ reinforces the importance of satisfaction in patient care as a source of motivation, and this has been corroborated by another study.²⁴

Satisfaction in the relationships with superiors and peers is cited in the literature as one of the sources of commitment and motivation for carrying out activities. Interaction between collaborators in an institution brings both individual and team benefits as long as the relationship leads to the sharing of information and resources and to mutual commitment to carry out the activities.²⁵

The present study has limitations related to its transversal nature, which precludes identification of already existing causal relations. Furthermore, the SATIS-BR scale is based on self-reporting, and thus subject to the reliability of answers given by the participants. Comparisons with other studies should also be done cautiously, since many use different instruments.

Table 4 - Spearman's correlation coefficient of the mean scores of the levels of satisfaction of nursing technicians in two psychiatric institutions in Minas Gerais. 2013. (n=93)

	Overall job satisfaction	Satisfaction with quality of the services	Satisfaction with working conditions	Satisfaction with opportunity to participate	Satisfaction with workplace relationships
Age	0.30***	0.29***	0.38***	0.16	0.14
Working Experience Experience with psychiatry	- 0.04	0.08	0.06	- 0.18	- 0.14
Weekly working hours	0.39**	- 0.00	0.33	0.44***	0.41**
Length of affiliation	- 0.07	0.05	0.03	- 0.21**	- 0.08

** Confidence level 95%
 *** Confidence level 99%

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We were able to identify that the studied nursing technicians had moderate levels of satisfaction with the quality of service and workplace relationships. However, they reported low levels of satisfaction with working conditions and opportunity to participate in decision-making.

Studies in this field are important as they can contribute to improvements of the working conditions, organizational environment, and human resources management in these institutions, and consequently lead to better service. Additional studies could investigate the consequences and existing relations between satisfaction with the quality of service and the professionals' health. Nevertheless, our study has shown a few of the factors that influence job satisfaction among nurses in psychiatric hospitals.

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