



Original Research

# Key determinants of hospital pharmacy staff's job satisfaction

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## Abstract

**Background:** The level of job satisfaction among pharmacy personnel is of importance because it may affect performance and retention.

**Objectives:** The objectives of this study were to (1) examine the level of job satisfaction among pharmacists and pharmacy support personnel practicing in Australian hospitals, (2) compare the level of job satisfaction with career satisfaction, (3) investigate the key factors determining hospital pharmacy staff's job satisfaction and their relative importance, and (4) identify the influential factors on their perceptions related to the ideal job.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional survey was sent to 350 pharmacy staff in Australia. Participants had the option of returning the completed survey by means of mail or online. Previously validated 5-point scales measured each of the study variables. Data analyses included descriptive statistics, analysis of variance, factor analysis, and multiple linear regression.

**Results:** Responses were received from 188 subjects (53.7%). Job satisfaction was  $3.62 \pm 0.77$ , which was significantly higher than career satisfaction  $3.38 \pm 0.85$ . Different job satisfaction mean scores were seen among age groups ( $F = 2.718$ ,  $P < .05$ ). Percentage of time spent in dispensing was negatively correlated to job satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.202$ ,  $P < .01$ ). Sex, job positions, education levels, size and location of the hospitals, and work experience were not significant factors in determining job satisfaction. Job-related predictors of job satisfaction were ability utilization and recognition. Ability utilization was the most important factor in their perception of the ideal job.

**Conclusion:** The primary determinants of job satisfaction were intrinsic aspects of the job; that is, what makes people satisfied is the work that they do or the way they are used. Hospital pharmacy staff need to feel certain about their future, so managers should strive to secure the pharmacist's role in the provision of health care. It is suggested that pharmacy managers focus on altering the job to provide greater use of skills and abilities and to provide increased challenge in the work. Further research should focus on other predictors of job satisfaction and possible ways to enhance satisfaction level.

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**Keywords:** Job satisfaction; Hospital pharmacy; Pharmacy staff; Workforce issues

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## Introduction

The extent and determinants of job satisfaction in hospital pharmacy have been the topics of considerable interest to the profession over the last 3 decades. Investigators concur that increased job satisfaction enhances job performance,<sup>1-4</sup> and in addition, a decreased level of job satisfaction may result in difficulties in attracting and retaining experienced staff in the hospital pharmacy labor force.<sup>5,6</sup> Hospital settings are particularly susceptible to these issues because a pattern of lower satisfaction was found to exist among hospital pharmacists than in the community sector.<sup>7</sup> In Australia, the demand for hospital pharmacists has been driven by turnover of existing staff rather than an overall growth in the number of positions.<sup>8,9</sup> Pharmacist job turnover rates in the United States ranged from 7.5% to 17% during 1998 to 2005,<sup>6</sup> which cost health care institutions an estimated 5% of the total annual pharmacy operating budget,<sup>10</sup> and in Australia, most of the young pharmacists only remain in the hospital sector for 1-2 years before moving into the more highly paid retail sector.<sup>11</sup> Training is not cost-effective if employees become dissatisfied and seek other opportunities outside hospital pharmacy before they have a chance to contribute productively<sup>12</sup>; therefore, it is important to understand the key factors that contribute to job satisfaction in hospital pharmacy in order that strategies may be put in place to improve job satisfaction levels.

Job satisfaction has been defined as “the match between an individual’s expectations and the perceived reality of the job as a whole.”<sup>13</sup> The most influential theory to explain job satisfaction is the two-factor theory of job satisfaction, which states that job satisfaction comprises 2 components: intrinsic job factors (characteristics of the worker personally) that include desire for achievement, recognition, responsibility, and advancement and extrinsic job factors (characteristics of the organization) that are related to features of the job, such as supervision, salary, company policy and administration, and working conditions.<sup>2,14,15</sup>

Previous research has studied the effects on job satisfaction of demographic factors and various work-related factors, such as work activities, hours worked, income, and job positions. Although demographic factors, such as age, sex, and education levels, have been found to be statistically significant determinants of job satisfaction, results from various studies were somewhat contradictory.<sup>2</sup> Both

Salameh and Hamdan<sup>16</sup> and Hassell, Seston and Shann<sup>17</sup> found female pharmacists hold high levels of job satisfaction compared with their male counterparts. Job position was consistently found to be the significant predictor of job satisfaction. A study of 354 hospital pharmacists in 1 state in the United States<sup>18</sup> found that clinical pharmacists reported the highest mean satisfaction scores, but whether manager pharmacists were more satisfied with their job than staff pharmacists was still controversial.<sup>19</sup> A 2002 survey of 96 pharmacists and pharmacy technicians revealed that pharmacy technicians were less satisfied with their job than pharmacists because of inadequate pay, few opportunities for job advancement, limited skills used, routine and laborious tasks, and staffing shortages.<sup>20</sup> Clinical involvement was shown to have a positive association with job satisfaction in Cox and Fitzpatrick’s<sup>19</sup> study of 161 randomized pharmacy in Arizona. Studies have found the direct influence of supervisor and coworkers’ support on job satisfaction,<sup>21-24</sup> and a 2003 study of 85 pharmacists demonstrated that quality of work and opportunity for self actualization were of primary importance to hospital pharmacists.<sup>25</sup> It has also been well established that job stress and excessive workload negatively affect job satisfaction.<sup>1,6,19-24,26</sup> Mott’s<sup>21</sup> study in 541 randomized pharmacists in 4 American states found that between 1983 and 1997, the number of pharmacists citing stress as an important reason for leaving a position increased, whereas those citing salary as a reason for leaving decreased. In interpreting the job satisfaction findings for pharmacists, few studies have made a clear distinction between whether they are measuring satisfaction with the current job or with pharmacy as a career. Murawski et al’s<sup>27</sup> study with 108 community pharmacists has found that job satisfaction predicts career satisfaction. The results from these studies have been useful in identifying the pharmacy staff who are likely to have a high level of job dissatisfaction.

However, most of the studies included only a few hypothesized predictors or they included only members of a specific organization. As a result, it is difficult to reach a definite conclusion on the relative importance of various factors to job satisfaction from the existing literature. One study investigated the influence of various characteristics on job satisfaction and intention to leave and found that more enriched jobs in terms of factors such as task variety, identity, significance, and autonomy resulted in greater job satisfaction and

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