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Job satisfaction among school nurses

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Abstract**Introduction**

Job satisfaction among Polish nurses is a significant predictor of the quality of health care provided. A school nurse is a specialist who improves student well-being, promotes health behaviours, advances academic and life success, thus, high levels of motivation and job satisfaction are indispensable to manage this role.

Aim

The aim of the research was to assess the factors affecting job satisfaction among school nurses.

Material and methods

The study was conducted among 125 nurses working in Polish schools. Sociodemographic data were obtained using an original questionnaire developed by the authors. The level of job satisfaction was assessed on the basis of the Satisfaction with Work Questionnaire (SPP).

Results

The mean age of the group studied was 52.7 ± 7.2 years. 93.6% of the respondents had a work experience exceeding 15 years, 42.3% were medical vocational college graduates. Analysis of the SPP questionnaire showed that the group surveyed obtained an average of 5.0 ± 1.0 points (min.2.8, max.7.0). Higher SPP scores were observed in the group of nurses with shorter job seniority ($p < 0.001$), provided with computer equipment ($p \leq 0.001$), involved in the implementation of educational programs ($p = 0.007$), and in those who exchanged information about the health needs of a given student with his/her tutor ($p = 0.002$). A statistically significant relationship was shown between the SPP and the number of disabled students being looked after a nurse ($R = 0.255$, $p = 0.006$).

Conclusion

School nurses are characterized by a high level of job satisfaction. The vast majority of school nurses studied are women getting close to retirement age. There is a need for further research that will include larger study groups from across the country.

Key words: job satisfaction, school nurses, Satisfaction with Work Scale

Introduction

Job satisfaction and engagement constitute an important pillar of every organisation, including entities providing health care services. Employees with a high level of job satisfaction very often look for creative solutions to problems, are loyal towards their employer, and present a low level of absence from work. Also, a positive correlation has been reported between job satisfaction and the level of engagement in one's work, employment stability, and the quality of services provided [1]. Factors affecting job satisfaction include: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback (obtaining information on the work done) [2].

Job satisfaction among Polish nurses has been widely discussed in the literature as a significant predictor of the quality of health care provided. Nursing as a social function is

associated with high exposure to stress factors related to protecting human health and saving human life. Repeated difficult and stressful situations, or mental and physical exhaustion often experienced by nurses, may lead to lack of motivation, indifference or even disease.

What also affects levels of job satisfaction among nurses is the increasing social demands towards members of this occupational group. A school nurse is an employee who has to delegate and perform different tasks on his/her own. Thus, high levels of motivation and job satisfaction are indispensable to serve this role [3].

According to the definition by the National Association of School Nurses, school nursing is a specialized practice of nursing, which improves student well-being, advances academic success and success in life, but first and foremost – protects and promotes student health. School nurses are the leaders who conduct activities related to health care in the school setting [4].

Objective

The aim of the study was to assess factors affecting job satisfaction in a group of school nurses in selected provinces in Poland.

Material and methods

Participants

The study was conducted from November 2017 to April 2018 among 125 school nurses in the following provinces: dolnośląskie, opolskie, pomorskie and podlaskie. The study was approved by the Bioethics Committee at Wrocław Medical University. The inclusion criteria were as follows: nursing license, professional activity (employment as a school nurse) and written informed consent to participate in the study. The exclusion criteria were: lack of professional activity and lack of consent to participate in the study.

Measurements

The study used an original questionnaire developed by the author, which allowed for obtaining basic sociodemographic data from the respondents, and a standardized tool for job satisfaction assessment – Satisfaction with Work (SPP) questionnaire – adapted to the Polish setting by Zalewska [5]. The final SPP score comprises the total number of points obtained in each of the five questions (range: 5-35 points). High scores denote high job satisfaction. There are no standards for the SPP questionnaire that would allow saying whether a given score is high or low. Thus, mean scores > 3.5 pts were treated as an indication of job satisfaction [5].

Statistical analysis

The calculations were performed using the Statistica 10 software (StatSoft, USA). Normality of distribution of the measurable variables was verified with the Shapiro–Wilk test. Statistical characteristics of the continuous variables were presented as mean, standard deviation (SD) and range (Min and Max). Statistical characteristics of the discrete variables were presented as number and percentage distribution. Student's t-test or ANOVA in conjunction with the post-hoc Tukey's test were used for intergroup comparison of characteristics of the measurable variables with normal distribution. The significance level for all the tests was $p \leq 0.05$.

Results

Sociodemographic characteristics

The study included 125 school nurses from four provinces: dolnośląskie, opolskie, pomorskie and podlaskie (mean age 52.7 ± 7.2 years). The analysis of the sociodemographic

data demonstrated that work experience in the study group most often exceeded 15 years (93.6% vs. 2.4% from 11 to 15 years vs. 4% from 1 to 5 years). As for education, 32.5% of the participants were secondary medical school graduates, 42.3% - medical vocational school graduates, and 12.2% and 13% - nurses with a bachelor's and master's degree, respectively. Only 9.6% of the respondents held the title of a specialist in school nursing, whereas 90.4% completed a qualification course in this particular field. With regard to residence, nurses in the study group lived mostly in cities with population > 100 thousand people (49.6%) and towns with population < 100 thousand people (40%). Village inhabitants comprised only 10.4% of the study group.

Job satisfaction assessment

Analysis of the SPP questionnaire showed that the group surveyed obtained an average of 5.0 points (min.28, max.7.0). The data are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1. Statistical characteristics related to job satisfaction and occupational burnout among the study participants.

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
SPP (pts)	5.0	1.0	2.8	7.0

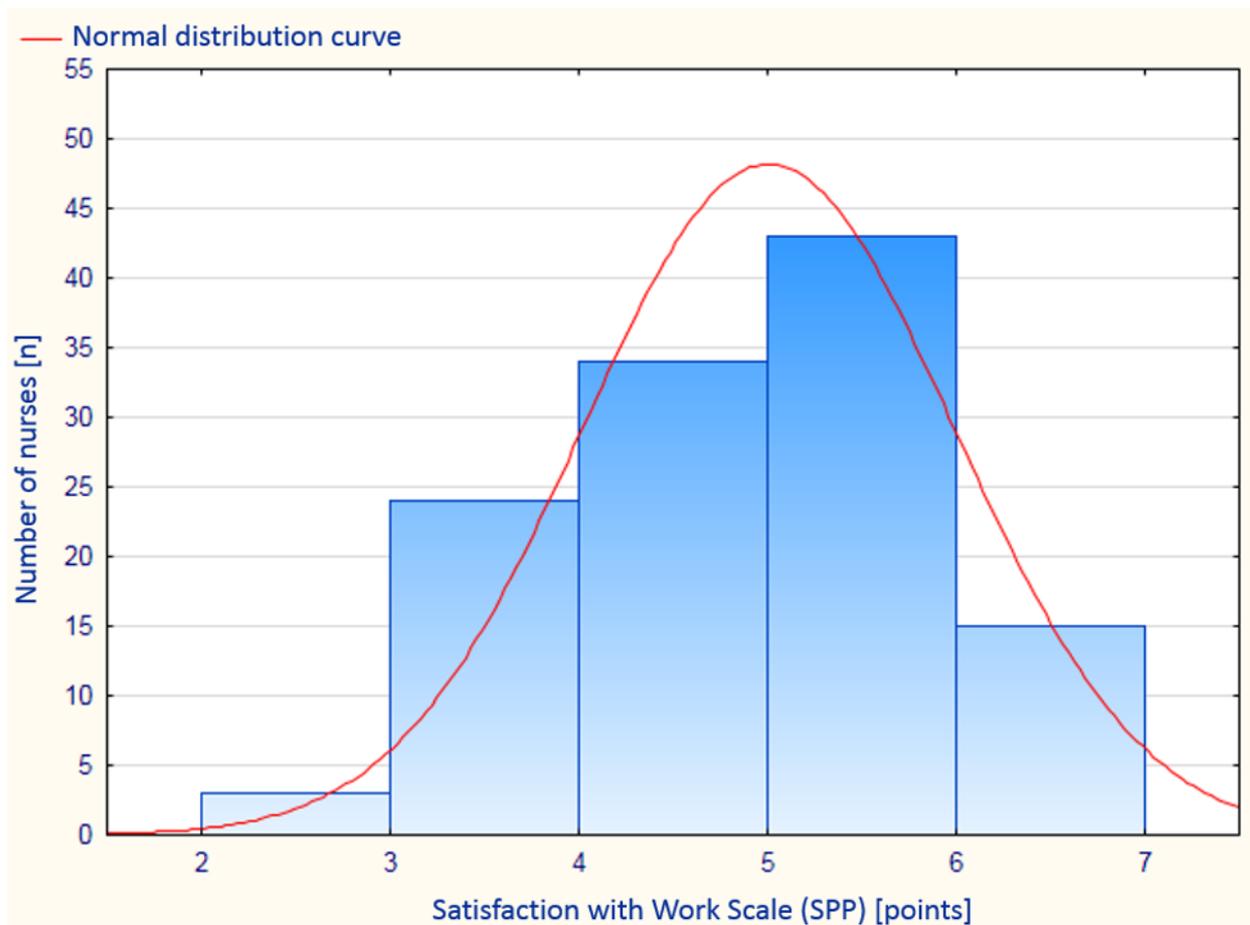


Fig. 1. SPP score distribution in the study group.

Job satisfaction - a comparative analysis

It was demonstrated that nurses with short work experience obtained higher SPP scores compared to nurses with ≥ 11 years of seniority ($p < 0.001$). The data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The influence of years of experience in the school nurse profession on the SPP score.

Answer	Mean	SD	P
1-5 years (n=13)	5.51	0.89	<0.001
6-10 years (n=12)	5.52	0.79	
11-15 years (n=15)	4.10	0.48	
>15 years (n=85)	5.01	0.99	

As for access to computer hardware and the Internet in the workplace, it was observed that nurses who did have such access obtained significantly higher SPP scores compared to the rest of the study group ($p \leq 0.001$). The data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The influence of access to computer hardware and the Internet in the workplace on the SPP score.

Answer	Mean	SD	P
yes (n=71)	5.29	0.95	<0.001
no (n=54)	4.65	0.92	

A higher level of job satisfaction was observed among nurses involved in the implementation of educational programs recommended by the district sanitary and epidemiological station ($p = 0.007$) and among nurses who had the possibility of regular information exchange on the health needs of a given student with his/her tutor ($p = 0.002$). The data are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4. The influence of involvement in the implementation of educational programs recommended by the district sanitary and epidemiological station on the SPP score.

Answer	mean	SD	p
yes (n=106)	5.11	0.97	0.007
no (n=19)	4.45	0.87	

Table 5. The influence of exchange of information about the health needs of a given student with his/her tutor on the SPP score.

Answer	mean	SD	p
regular (n=38)	5.43	1.12	0.002
if necessary (n=86)	4.83	0.88	

The comparative analysis revealed differences in terms of the influence of salary and exhaustion of nurses on their job satisfaction level. A lower job satisfaction level was observed among those nurses who considered their salary too low ($p < 0.001$) and those who thought their job was too exhausting ($p = 0.040$). The data are presented in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6. The influence of low salary on the SPP score.

Answer	Mean	SD	P
yes (n=63)	4.60	0.88	<0.001
no (n=62)	5.40	0.92	

Table 7. The influence of exceedingly exhausting job on the SPP score.

Answer	Mean	SD	P
yes (n=15)	4.48	1.04	0.040
no (n=110)	5.07	0.96	

Job satisfaction - linear correlations

The linear correlation indicated a statistically significant relationship between the SPP score and the number of disabled students being looked after by the nurse. The former increased proportionally to the number of disabled students under the care of a given nurse (R=0.255, p=0.006; Fig. 2).

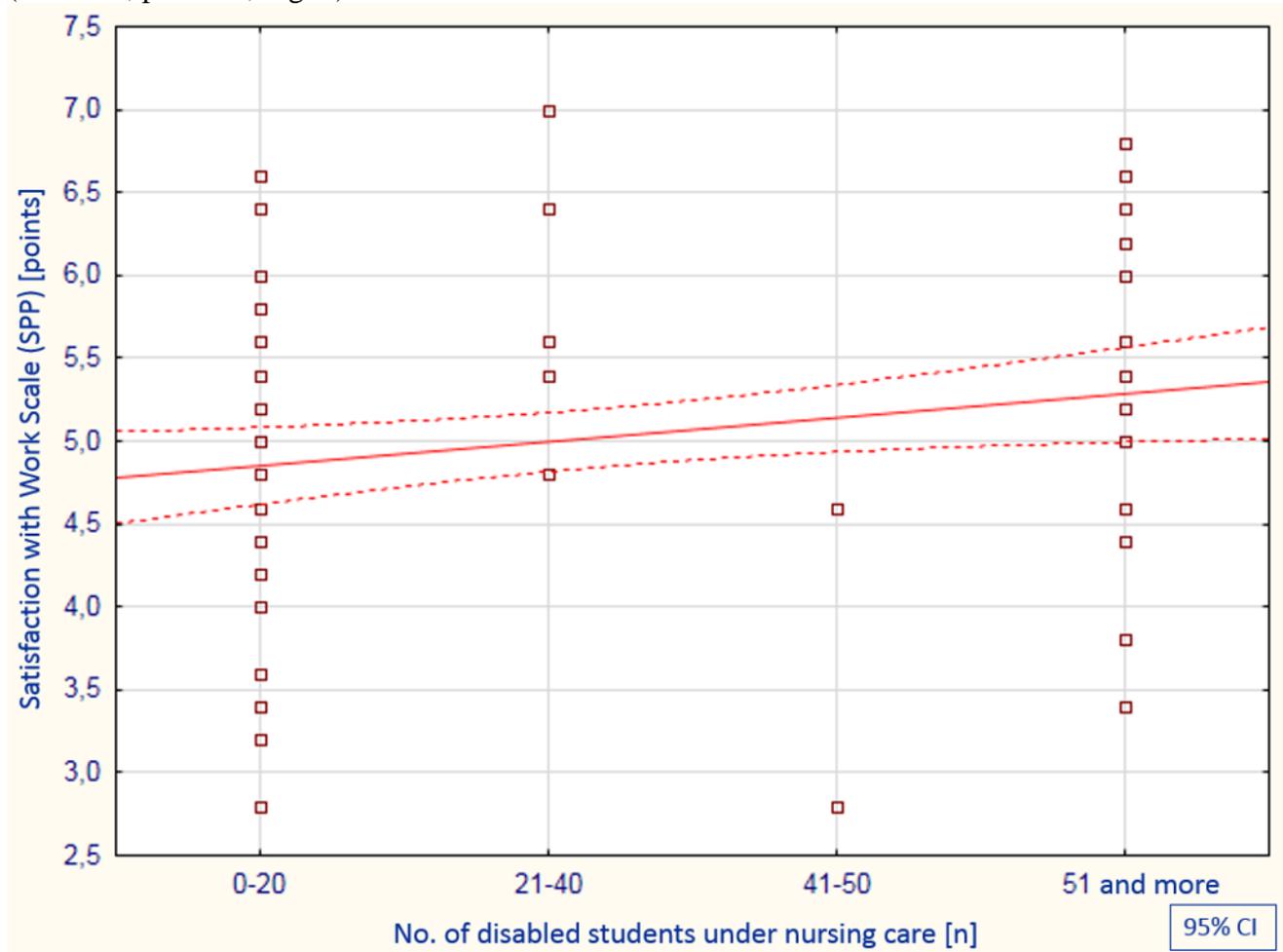


Fig. 2. Correlation between the number of disabled students being looked after by a given nurse and the SPP score.

Discussion

In the subject literature, the term "job satisfaction" is used interchangeably with "employees' contentedness with their job". However, these two should be used as separate notions because "satisfaction" constitutes a higher level of "contentedness" with one's job.

Factors affecting the level of job satisfaction and contentedness among nurses include: employment stability, the scope of responsibility, amount of salary, incentive system,

managerial position or type of workplace [6]. An increase in job satisfaction may result in greater involvement and improved efficiency of an employee, whereas its decrease heightens the risk of such adverse phenomena as high absenteeism or staff turnover. Lowered job satisfaction may also be the reason for changing one's job [7].

There are numerous works on job satisfaction among nurses. However, they mainly focus on nurses working in hospitals, and outpatient or private clinics. There are not many publications, especially in the Polish literature, addressing this subject in the group of school nurses.

Studies performed to date have clearly demonstrated that school nurses who have to provide care to too many students and deal with too many responsibilities have a lower job satisfaction level [8]. In the present study, the SPP questionnaire score obtained by the school nurses surveyed was high (an average of 5.0 pts).

The amount of salary is of great importance for satisfaction and contentedness with one's job. It also affects the quality of life in all occupational groups. This was corroborated in the present study – nurses who considered their salary too low also displayed a decreased job satisfaction level. Similar results were obtained by Foley et al., who demonstrated that insufficient salary is a factor decreasing the level of job satisfaction [9].

Another correlation reported to date is that between job satisfaction and educational activity of nurses via direct contact with students (e.g. an implementation of health programs). Nurses who had the sense of responsibility for the health and health behaviours of students under nursing care were more satisfied with their job [10]. The present study yielded similar results.

In the present study, nurses who had the possibility of exchanging information about the health needs of students under nursing care with their tutors obtained higher SPP scores compared to the other nurses in the group studied. The possibility of contact with teachers and the perception of nurses as partners constitute important aspects to the school nurse's work. Organizational support is associated with job satisfaction [11]. Thus, it may be presumed that nurses who have a sense of organizational support and the effectiveness of their actions will experience higher levels of job satisfaction.

Work organization and conditions, contact with students who have different health problems, and the overwhelming number of tasks and procedures may lead to a complete lack or lowered levels of job satisfaction among school nurses.

Lack of job satisfaction is a risk factor for burnout syndrome. In the literature available, the former is described as a negative factor for occupational burnout [12]. Despite the fact that nurses included in the present study obtained high SPP scores, job satisfaction should be regularly assessed in this occupational group.

Conclusions

School nurses are characterized by a high level of job satisfaction. The vast majority of school nurses are women getting close to retirement age. The level of job satisfaction is determined by such factors as work experience, workplace equipment, engagement in health education programs and cooperation with teachers. There is a need for further research that will include larger study groups from across the country.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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