

Job satisfaction of nurses working in Brazil**Satisfação profissional de enfermeiros do Trabalho no Brasil**Satisfacción profesional de enfermeros del Trabajo en el Brasil***Lilian Doris Chaves¹, Laís Helena Ramos², Elisabeth Niglio de Figueiredo³****ABSTRACT**

Objective: To know if nurses working in Brazil are satisfied with the exercise of their practice and what factors are associated with it. **Methods:** Exploratory cross-sectional study of 130 nursing professionals from the five Brazilian regions. We collected demographic data and administered the Job Satisfaction Scale of Occupational Stress Indicator (OSI), at three times during the period of August 2006 to March 2007. **Results:** The five aspects of the OSI associated with job satisfaction were: relationship with others in the organization in which one works, the type (content) of the work performed, degree of motivation felt about one's work, degree of job security and current level of flexibility and freedom one believes s/he has at work. **Conclusion:** Professional satisfaction presents in a significantly different manner between genders, referring to the fact that professionals have different perceptions of their work. In the women, the importance and degree of concern about job security was evident. In the men, the predominant motivation was participation in important decisions, and the flexibility and freedom at work. **Keywords:** Occupational health nursing; Job satisfaction; Personal satisfaction; Occupational health

RESUMO

Objetivo: Conhecer se enfermeiros do Trabalho somam a satisfação ao exercício da sua prática e quais são os fatores que a ela se associam. **Métodos:** Estudo exploratório de corte transversal abrangendo 130 profissionais de empresas das cinco regiões brasileiras. Foram coletados dados sociodemográficos e foi aplicada a Escala de Satisfação no Trabalho do *Occupational Stress Indicator* (OSI), em três momentos do período de agosto de 2006 a março de 2007. **Resultados:** Os cinco aspectos do OSI, associados à satisfação profissional foram: relacionamento com outras pessoas da empresa onde trabalha; conteúdo do trabalho que faz; grau de motivação sentido por seu trabalho; grau de segurança no emprego atual e grau de flexibilidade e liberdade que julga ter no trabalho. **Conclusão:** A satisfação profissional apresenta diferenciação significativa entre os sexos, remetendo ao fato de que os profissionais possuem percepções diferentes de seu trabalho. Nas enfermeiras, foi evidente a importância e a preocupação com o grau de segurança no emprego. No grupo masculino, predominou a motivação, a participação em decisões importantes, a flexibilidade e liberdade no trabalho. **Descritores:** Enfermagem do trabalho; Satisfação no emprego; Satisfação pessoal; Saúde do trabalhador

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Conocer si los enfermeros del Trabajo suman la satisfacción al ejercicio de su práctica y cuáles son los factores que se asocian a ella. **Métodos:** Estudio exploratorio de corte transversal que abarcó a 130 profesionales de empresas de las cinco regiones brasileñas. Fueron recolectados datos sociodemográficos siendo aplicada la Escala de Satisfacción en el Trabajo del *Occupational Stress Indicator* (OSI), en tres momentos del período de agosto del 2006 a marzo del 2007. **Resultados:** Los cinco aspectos del OSI, asociados a la satisfacción profesional fueron: relaciones con otras personas de la empresa donde trabaja; contenido del trabajo que hace; grado de motivación que siente por su trabajo; grado de seguridad en el empleo actual y grado de flexibilidad y libertad que juzga tener en el trabajo. **Conclusión:** La satisfacción profesional presenta diferenciación significativa entre los sexos, remitiendo al hecho de que los profesionales poseen diferentes percepciones de su trabajo. En las enfermeras, fue evidente la importancia y la preocupación con el grado de seguridad en el empleo. En el grupo masculino, predominó la motivación, la participación en decisiones importantes, la flexibilidad y libertad en el trabajo. **Descriptor:** Enfermería; Enfermería del trabajo; Satisfacción en el empleo; Satisfacción personal; Salud del trabajador

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INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction at work is defined as a pleasant or positive emotional state, resulting from somebody's assessment of his or her own occupation or work experience. It is the result of achieving values that are compatible with somebody's own values. Among such important values or conditions that lead to satisfaction are: work that presents a mental challenge, that is interesting and stimulating, whose rewards for good performance are fair, with conditions that are compatible with the individual's physical needs, that promotes self-esteem, and whose facilitating agents at work help the employee achieve his/her values⁽¹⁾.

The contemporary scenario reveals a growing interest in identifying work attributes that will reduce frustration and increase involvement with it⁽¹⁾.

Literature has shown⁽²⁾ that people, their competences and talent, have never been so valued as nowadays. In fact, there is little opposition to the fact that companies need more and more talented and competent people to face the current business world transformations. It is important to highlight that, within this business management approach, there are several factors that contribute to leveraging the employees' satisfaction level, such as: infrastructure conditions, benefits provided by the company; the relationship between productivity and remuneration; manager-employee relationship, technical qualification, interpersonal relationships among employees, growth and security opportunities, and personal fulfilment appreciation. Therefore, the employee's satisfaction issue has become essential to perform activities in an organization⁽³⁾.

Therefore, the study object was the professional satisfaction of Occupational Health Nurses in Brazil. In the contemporary company context, the objective was to verify whether Occupational Health Nurses are satisfied performing their activities and what factors are associated to it.

METHODS

The present is a quantitative study of exploratory character, and a cross-sectional structure, which is an appropriate method to describe populations' characteristics and the associations among variables⁽⁴⁾. The study subjects were 130 active Occupational Health Nurses, working in Brazil. The inclusion criteria were: to be working in the profession for 12 months or more; to have concluded a *lato sensu* Post-Graduation course in Occupational Health Nursing; to be a member of the Associação Nacional de Enfermagem do Trabalho (National Association for Occupational Health Nursing) – ANENT – and to have not participated in the pre-

test. Two self-applied instruments were used in the data collection process. The first was elaborated with open questions about the professionals' academic and work backgrounds, as well as sociodemographic data. The second was related to the *Occupational Stress Indicator – OSI – Work Satisfaction Scale*.

The OSI was translated and validated into Portuguese⁽⁵⁾, and is comprised of six independent scales that measure stress sources, A-type behaviour, *locus* of control, coping strategies, (mental and physical) health, and work satisfaction⁽⁶⁾. It measures satisfaction through 22 psychosocial aspects at work, connected to the 6-point Likert's scales, ranging from immensely dissatisfied to immensely satisfied. The sum of these measures provides a global work satisfaction indicator, with scores that can range from 22 to 132 points⁽⁷⁾. In the "Results" part, data found by the present study regarding the professional satisfaction assessment will be presented, according to each OSI work psychosocial aspect. Data were categorized in three groups, namely: dissatisfaction (immensely dissatisfied and very dissatisfied), intermediate satisfaction (some dissatisfaction and some satisfaction), and satisfaction (very satisfied and immensely satisfied) (Image 1)⁽⁸⁾.

The questionnaires internal consistency was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. In order to characterize the study population, a descriptive analysis using means, standard deviations, continuous variable scores minimum and maximum values, and proportions for the qualitative variables were utilized. The OSI Work Satisfaction Scale presented good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.95, whose internal consistency analysis demonstrated satisfactory reliability. On average, satisfaction was of 96.8 points (sd=17.0), ranging from 52.0 to 127.0 points, with a median of 97.0 points. Kolmogorov-Smirnov's test was performed in order to verify the adherence of the work capacity index score in normal distribution. The work satisfaction score adhered to the normal distribution ($p > 0.005$ in the Kolmogorov – Smirnov test), determining the use of parametric tests in order to perform the statistic tests. The correlations related to qualitative variables and satisfaction at work were analysed through Anova's linear correlation coefficients. The correlation between the quantitative variables and satisfaction at work was analysed through Spearman's linear correlation coefficient. In all analyses, a significance level of 5% was used. The answers to each item in the OSI instrument were calculated in percentage values, in simple and relative frequencies.

Data were collected between August 2006 and March 2007, in three stages. The first stage was performed in the Occupational Health Nursing Congress, in 2006, in São Paulo. In the second stage, instruments were sent via mail, and the third stage occurred in the 1st ANENT

Scientific Meeting, in March 2007, in São Paulo.

The present study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of UNIFESP (Process n.º 1165/06). All participants of this study signed the Informed Consent Term before being assessed through the instruments.

RESULTS

The distribution per Brazilian macro-region and the sociodemographic data of the 130 Occupational Health Nurses that participated in this study were: 72.3% were from the Southeast (94); 13.8% were from the South (18); 6.2% were from the Northeast (8); 3.8%, from the Centre-West Region (5); 3.1%, from the North

Region (4); and 1 (0.8%) worked at a consultancy company that was located in more than one state.

Among these professionals 87.7% were females, and with regard to the qualitative variables (Table 1), quantitative variables (Table 2), and professional satisfaction, the following data were collected:

In the group of qualitative sociodemographic characteristics (Table 1), the gender variable was the only one presenting a statistically significant association with work satisfaction. Men demonstrated having more work satisfaction than women, with 105.4 (SD = 11.3) points, and 95.6 (SD = 17.3) points, respectively. This difference was statistically significant (p = 0030). As to the quantitative variables (Table 2), and work satisfaction, no significant data were found.

Table 1 – Occupational Health Nurses’ work satisfaction score according to qualitative variables, São Paulo – 2007

Variables	Average	Median	SD	SE	Min	Q1	Q3	Max	n.º	p*
Sócio - demográfico										
Gender										
Female	95.64	96	17.3	1.6	52	84	109	127	114	0.030
Male	105.44	108	11.3	2.8	81	96	116	120	16	
Company Characteristics										
Institution										
Public	96.54	98	16.9	2.4	52	83	112	124	48	0.874
Private	96.04	96	17.3	2	58	85	109	127	76	
Risk Degree										
1 or 2	97.04	99	16.9	3.3	68	80	112	125	27	0.259
3	96.89	97	16.2	1.9	58	85	109	127	73	
4	103.82	109	12.7	3.1	79	93	115	123	17	
Healthcare characteristics (activities)										
Healthcare and Occupational Healthcare	96.37	97	17.1	1.9	52	85	110	125	82	0.531
Only Occ. Healthcare	98.39	99	16.3	2.5	62	85	111	127	41	
Region of practice										
South	94.78	94	13.7	3.2	73	85	103	127	18	0.540
Southeast	97.94	99	16.8	1.8	58	85	112	126	90	
Other	94.05	96.5	20.1	4.3	52	77	109	124	22	

*Anova Association Test; Source: The author, (2009).

Table 2 – Correlation coefficients between quantitative variables and work satisfaction among Occupational Health Nurses - São Paulo, 2007

Variables	n.º	R*	p Value
Company characteristics			
Number of employees in the company	129	0.157	0.081
Academic background characteristics			
Graduation time and time working in the area			
Time since graduation (years)	129	0.017	0.852
Specialization time (years)	129	-0.081	0.364
Time working as a nurse (years)	129	0.003	0.971
Time working as an Occupational Health Nurse (years)	130	0.073	0.411
Work organization characteristics			
Number of hours worked per day (hours)	129	0.056	0.528

*Sperman’s Correlation Coefficient; Source: the author, (2009).

In Table 2, it is possible to verify that none of the quantitative variables presented statistically significant differences with regard to the work satisfaction level: graduation time ($p = 0.852$), specialization time ($p = 0.364$), time working as a Nurse ($p = 0.971$), and time working as an Occupational Health Nurse ($p = 0.411$).

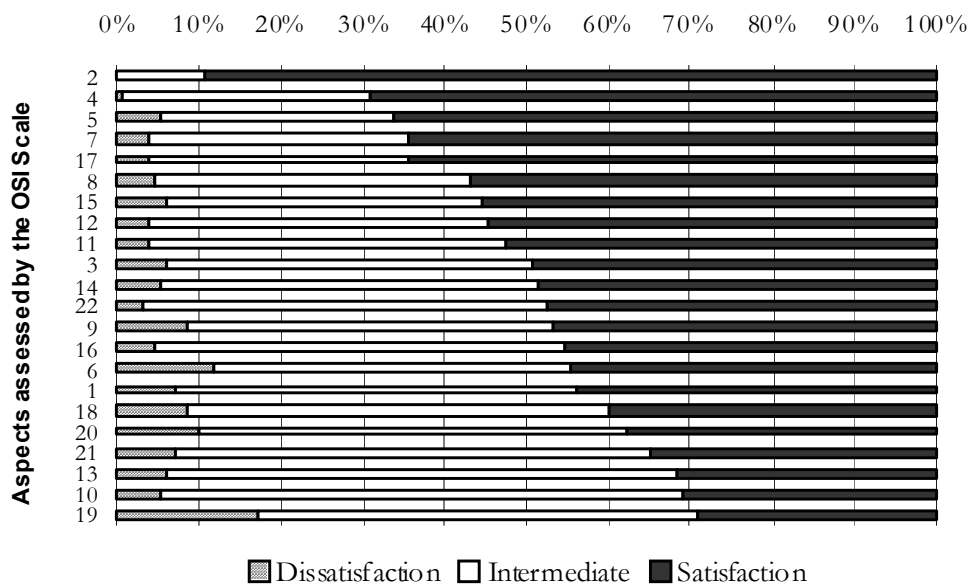
With regard to the psychosocial factors from the OSI scale which presented higher frequencies in the female professional group: 65.8% of the Occupational Health Nurses mentioned the degree of security at work (75). In the male professional group, 87.5% of the Occupational Health Nurses mentioned a feeling of motivation at work (14); 81.3% mentioned the participation in important decisions (13) and 81.3%, the level of flexibility and freedom at work (13). With regard to professional satisfaction, it was possible to observe in both groups how important the relationship among people in the company is, which leads to the conclusion that work relationships are essential, making the daily routine more pleasant and facilitating the solution of certain human conflict situations.

As to the psychosocial variables group from the OSI Work Satisfaction Scale, categorized in the “Methods” part and presented on Image 1, the following results were found: In the “dissatisfaction” category, participants

highlighted the salary, which obtained the lowest satisfaction level, with 29.2% of the points; the way changes and innovations are implemented, with 30.7% of the points, and the way conflicts are handled, with 31.5% of the points, that is, such aspects presented a relatively low professional satisfaction level. In the “intermediate satisfaction” category, the following data were relevant: opportunities to accomplish aspirations and ambitions, with 48.46% of the points; potential development, with 47.7% of the points, and how efforts are assessed, with 49.2% of the points related to satisfied professionals. In the “satisfaction” category, the most important aspects were the relationship with other people in the company, represented by almost 89.2% of the points given by satisfied professionals; work contents, with 69.2% of the points, and work motivation level, with 66.5% of the satisfaction points.

DISCUSSION

Edwin A. Locke’s studies were the basis to understand the context where the present study object was inserted. It is important to emphasize the agents and events that provided professional satisfaction. The following are categories for satisfaction events (which make employees



1 Communication and information flow in the company; 2 Rel. with others in the company; 3 How are your efforts assessed?; 4 Work contents; 5 Motivation degree; 6 Personal opportunities in your current career; 7 Security; 8 External image identification or company accomplishments; 9 Supervision style practiced by supervisors; 10 The way changes and innovations are implemented; 11 Type of tasks and work demanded; 12 Growth and professional development degrees; 13 The way conflicts are solved; 14 Opportunities offered by your work (aspirations and ambitions); 15 Participation in important decisions; 16 Degree with which the organization takes advantage of potentials; 17 Flexibility and freedom; 18 The psychological environment in the company; 19 Wage in relation to experience and responsibility; 20 Company organizational structure; 21 Work volume; 22 Development of potentials at the company

Image 1 – Occupational Health Nurses’ satisfaction categories, according to dissatisfaction, intermediate satisfaction, and satisfaction levels – São Paulo, 2007

satisfied or dissatisfied): work activities; work load; tranquillity; success; promotions; responsibility; compliments; salary; interpersonal atmosphere; and non-explainable factors. As satisfaction agents (people, the organization or thing that generate events), the following were mentioned: employees; supervisors; work colleagues; subordinates; the organization; and clients⁽¹⁾.

Data from Image 1 show Occupational Health Nurses' professional satisfaction in Brazil, with the three categories (dissatisfaction, intermediate satisfaction, and satisfaction), associated to the professional satisfaction and the five aspects with higher OSI frequency for Occupational Health Nurses, among others. The five OSI aspects are detailed below. The present study findings were confirmed by some authors who reported that: satisfaction at work is the emotional state that results from the interaction among professionals, their personal characteristics, their values and expectations in relation to the environment, and work organization⁽⁹⁾.

For Occupational Health Nurses, professional satisfaction is highly associated to interpersonal relationships⁽⁸⁾. Such finding was confirmed by the literature, based on Hackman, Oldham, Emery and Trist's models and researches, which described the principles presenting concrete indications to organize work. Work with meaning is a source of satisfactory human relationship experiences, whose work characteristics provide affiliation and bonding (team work), and services others (client-supplier relationships)⁽¹⁰⁾. According to another author, employees will be satisfied at work as long as they are seen as facilitators for goal achievements and obtain rewards, besides sharing common values⁽¹⁾.

Satisfaction with the performed work contents leads us to Emery and Trist research findings, which mention that work should present six properties: variety and challenge; continuous learning; space for manoeuvres and autonomy; recognition and support; a meaningful social contribution, and a desirable future⁽¹⁰⁾. Another author reinforces that the values or conditions that lead to professional satisfaction are: work that presents a mental challenge that can be successfully faced by the individual; work that is interesting; that is not too stimulating from the physical point of view; that offers fair, and informative rewards, leading towards the individual's personal aspirations; with conditions that are compatible with the individual's physical needs and facilitate goal achievement; that enables high self-esteem; that has facilitating agents which help the employee reach his/her values (interesting work, payment and promotions, related to basic values that are similar to his/her own, and minimize role conflicts and ambiguity). Work is not an entity⁽¹⁾, but an inter-relation of tasks, goals, responsibilities, complex interactions, incentives, and rewards. Therefore, a complete understanding of the

attitudes at work requires an analysis of every element of work⁽¹⁾.

As to the work motivation level, according to the literature, when an individual is engaged in an activity that means something to him/her, they expect to be rewarded for doing justice to a positive reputation. This is related to recognition, independence, and access to a better world. Directly connected to the creative potential, this type of need has a life of its own. The desire to work then represents an affective need that is continuously fed by the imperative of those values, represented by the desired object⁽¹¹⁾. There is a certain level of consensus regarding the feeling nurses have towards their work. Thus, nurses seem to be more satisfied with the intrinsic aspects of their activity, such as: recognition, responsibility, and autonomy⁽¹²⁾. Complementing these finding, work satisfaction by itself or combined with the conditions (both individual and related to the work environment) brings several consequences to individuals. Work satisfaction can affect the individual's attitude towards life, family and themselves. It may affect physical health, and possibly, one's life expectancy. It may be (indirectly) related to mental health, and adaptation processes, having an important causal role over the absenteeism and turnover. Under certain conditions, it might affect other types of behaviours at work⁽¹⁾.

Satisfaction related to the security level at work was the main aspect mentioned by the female professional group. This makes us think about the new management models, which demand more qualification and involvement from workers, requiring autonomy, initiative, responsibility and communication. Bonds with work become more and more precarious and flexible, leading to instability for a large number of employees⁽¹³⁾.

Data from the Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada – Ipea (Institute for Applied Economics Research) evidenced that the proportion of families whose women are the main source of income went from 24.9%, in 1997, to 33%, in 2007, representing a total of 19.5 million Brazilian families whose main source of income is the woman⁽¹⁴⁾. Important phenomena and social movements, such as women's entry into the market place, and a higher participation in the family economic system resulted in the new family profile⁽¹⁵⁾. A strong involvement in productive activities out of the family house, as well as the dedication and active participation in the house administration and family care are part of a contemporary woman's life. The so-called "double journey", which refers to the accumulation of tasks—both in public and in private lives, was the origin of conflicts, problems, and frustration⁽¹⁶⁾.

The influence of the women's role in social reproduction is so high, that choosing and keeping a job, extending journeys and picking shifts include criteria

such as reconciling work with taking care of the house and children. Studies performed in different parts of the world, including in our reality, reveal that the proximity between a woman's house and her work location is one of the essential criteria when choosing a job; this factor comes before wage and professional satisfaction. A lot of women choose, when possible, to have partial journeys, even if that means having a lower wage and not evolving at work, so that they can dedicate more time to their children⁽¹⁷⁾.

Finally, the satisfaction brought by the flexibility and freedom they can have at work makes us think about the meaning of autonomy when performing their professional activities. The meaning of a given object to an individual or group has a complex, multisided structure, full of meanings that are connected with one's life context⁽¹⁸⁾. The representations built are based on connections and combinations of different questions, objects and ideas, according to a unique logic, within a globalizing implications structure, for which group information and judgement are important, as well as its behavioural model, and personal/group experiences⁽¹⁸⁾. In this context, corroborating with another authors' point of view, "the company is the environment where people work and live most of their lives". In this context, people give part of themselves and expect to receive something in return, either in the short or long-term⁽¹⁹⁾. Quality of life at work is determined by psychological factors, such as the level of creativity, autonomy, and flexibility workers are able to enjoy⁽²⁰⁾.

As to the OSI aspects and the differentiation found in this gender, extense parts of the literature relate work satisfaction, normally measured by subjective assessment indicators of the work conditions, with socioeconomic characteristics of the individuals⁽²¹⁻²²⁾. With regard specifically to gender, articles show that women have higher work satisfaction levels than men. According to the literature, an aspect that possibly reveals the difference between men and women is related to the mental suffering related to work; therefore the "...*asymmetry found in masculine and feminine work relations is manifested not only through the tasks divisions, but also through the criteria that define tasks qualification, wages, and work discipline [...]*"⁽¹⁷⁾:

Another aspect to think about is the relation between professional satisfaction and the organizations. Similarly to the way some individuals value some things instead of others, organizations are entities that also have values, therefore, individual values are strongly influenced by the environment that surrounds individuals. The organizational environment may reinforce some values and disregard others, and even repress them. It is likely that people tend to search for similarities between their values and the organization values, so that his/her adaptation in it is not compromised⁽²³⁾.

Therefore, professionals' satisfaction with the work they perform has been studied as one important aspect in the organizational behaviour area⁽¹⁾. Human activity has three important aspects: material, psychological, and social. In order for work to be a pleasant and compensating activity, a much more intense and important psychological representation is required, and not only mere remuneration⁽²⁴⁾.

CONCLUSION

It is relevant highlighting the five psychosocial aspects from the OSI Work Satisfaction Scale that presented the highest work satisfaction frequencies among Occupational Health Nurses, namely: their relationship with other people in the company they work, the contents of the work performed, the degree of motivation provided by work; The security provided by the current work, and the flexibility and freedom one judges having at work.

These findings only reinforce data verified by the present study with regard to Brazilian Occupational Health Nurses' work satisfaction, highlighting that the psychosocial aspect of work, or the most important work satisfaction agent for such professionals are interpersonal relationships at work.

In this research, differently from the literature, men presented a higher work satisfaction level than women.

The evidence has demonstrated that Occupational Health Nurses' professional satisfaction presented a significant differentiation between genders, leading to the fact that both professional groups have very different perceptions of their work.

In the female professionals' group, professional satisfaction was connected to security at work, which is compatible with Brazil's social reality, where a large number of women are responsible for their families.

In the male professionals' group, the OSI psychosocial aspects with the highest frequency were: motivation at work; participation in important decisions, and flexibility and freedom at work.

The present article is a source of information and contributions to the professionals who work in the Occupational Health area, and is also an instrument to improve such subjects' work conditions.

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