

# Job Satisfaction in the Healthcare Sector

BSOUL-KOPOWSKA Magdalena

Czestochowa University of Technology, Al. Armii Krajowej 19b, 42-218 Czestochowa, Poland

m.bsoul\_kopowska@pcz.pl ORCID: 0000-0002-6167-6827

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**Abstract.** The objective of this article is to present research regarding the level of job satisfaction of physicians employed in healthcare institutions in the Silesian Voivodeship. The basis for the analysis is a survey carried out between August and October 2022, with a sample of 184 medical workers. The study was carried out by means of a diagnostic survey, using a questionnaire technique. Random purposive sampling was used. Regular surveys will make it possible to improve the stability of employment in the healthcare sector and can provide a basis for corrective measures to be taken by managers of healthcare facilities in order to increase the sense of job satisfaction among doctors.

## Introduction

Among all the professions that a person can perform, there is a group of professions that serve others in a special way. Professions with a social mission are those in which the desire to help others and to care for others should appear as the primary motivation (in their current state and their development as well as future well-being). This is often associated with a significant level of responsibility for the people to whom the professional activity is directed. Medical professions can be included in the group of professions defined above.

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly underlined the significant shortage of medical personnel in Poland. It has been pointed out for years that we have the lowest rate of doctors per 1000 inhabitants in the European Union, and one of the lowest among OECD countries – 2415. The above result is far from the average level of this indicator for the European Union, i.e. 3.8. It is therefore necessary to act proactively to increase the supply of health professionals and optimise the use of human resources in the healthcare sector. In order for this to be possible, it is necessary to monitor the physician's sense of job satisfaction. Systematic research will make it possible to improve the stability of employment in the healthcare sector. This article attempts to explore the level of job satisfaction in the medical community. For this purpose, an empirical study was carried out, described in the next section of this paper.

## Job Satisfaction in Theoretical Terms

Work is an essential part of everyone's life, it provides the opportunity for growth, provides necessary financial resources and can contribute to better health and well-being, but at the same time it can be a source of frustration and even illness. It is also an important factor that needs to be monitored in research on the quality of life. The interest regarding employee satisfaction has been around in management sciences for several decades, while undergoing a significant evolution. Starting in the 1940s, it has been one of the most intensively studied phenomena in management and organisational psychology [1].

However, in order to properly understand the term satisfaction, it seems necessary to define the concept. This definition, or rather the lack of it, has caused many problems for the theorists of organisation and management sciences in the past. As the issue has been understood in varied ways by different researchers, this has led to confusion when trying to compare the results of the various studies conducted on the subject over several decades. Job satisfaction is most often defined as a

person's positive attitudes and feelings towards the work environment and their job duties [2]. Job satisfaction also means a subjective feeling of satisfaction with one's job, working conditions and salary. It is usually identified with the quality of work, while its assessment takes into account elements such as the employee's career and individual status, health and well-being at work, personal growth, work-life relationships, physical and mental effort, and interpersonal relationships in the work environment [3]. M. Juchnowicz defines job satisfaction as: "a higher level of satisfaction, requiring that work provides intellectual challenges, a sense of success, enjoyment of professional growth and self-fulfilment, as well as full identification with the job and/or organisation. Achieving a sense of job satisfaction additionally requires the impact of internal factors such as learning opportunities, assigned responsibility, recognition from superiors" [4]. In turn, A. Czerw and A. Borkowska state that job satisfaction "is understood as general satisfaction with one's job or activity chosen as a future occupation" [5].

Job satisfaction depends on the balance between what a person invests in the work (e.g. time, commitment) and what he or she receives in return (promotion, salary, development opportunities, colleague relationships). A lack of satisfaction can therefore be said to exist when a large investment on the part of the employee is accompanied by a small profit [6]. Satisfaction also depends on the extent to which the work meets the employee's needs and expectations.

Satisfaction research shows that a lack of job satisfaction results in higher absence rates [7], higher employee turnover, reduced loyalty towards the organisation [8], reduced quality of services provided by the company [9], etc. Employees who are dissatisfied with their jobs are much more likely to display anti-social behaviour, such as a tendency to steal, for instance. Those feeling a high level of satisfaction, on the other hand, are sociable, willing to help their clients [9]. They also show more commitment and identify more with the organisation's activities [10]. Job satisfaction directly contributes to the quality of the work and its results. High job satisfaction makes employees more committed to their tasks and even identify more strongly with the organisation where they are employed and are less likely to leave it. This makes them more productive while increasing the level of services they provide [11]. Therefore, satisfaction research has begun to draw the attention to intrinsic personality traits or cognitive judgements as factors responsible for the emergence of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction [12] [13] especially when it comes to developing and adjusting motivation systems in organisations [14]. Research is also conducted into internal and external factors affecting employee satisfaction and job satisfaction. According to research conducted, the following factors most often impact the level of satisfaction achieved: salary, opportunities for promotion, career development prospects, the value of the tasks performed, job security, stress, work standards, fair treatment of all employees in terms of salary, interpersonal relations [15]. Thanks to numerous studies, researchers are now in possession of broad data on the basis of which they try to provide reliable information on the importance and strength of the influence of individual variables on people's perceived level of life satisfaction. For the purposes of this article, job satisfaction will be understood as the difference between what a person expects and what they experience at work [16].

### **Research Methodology**

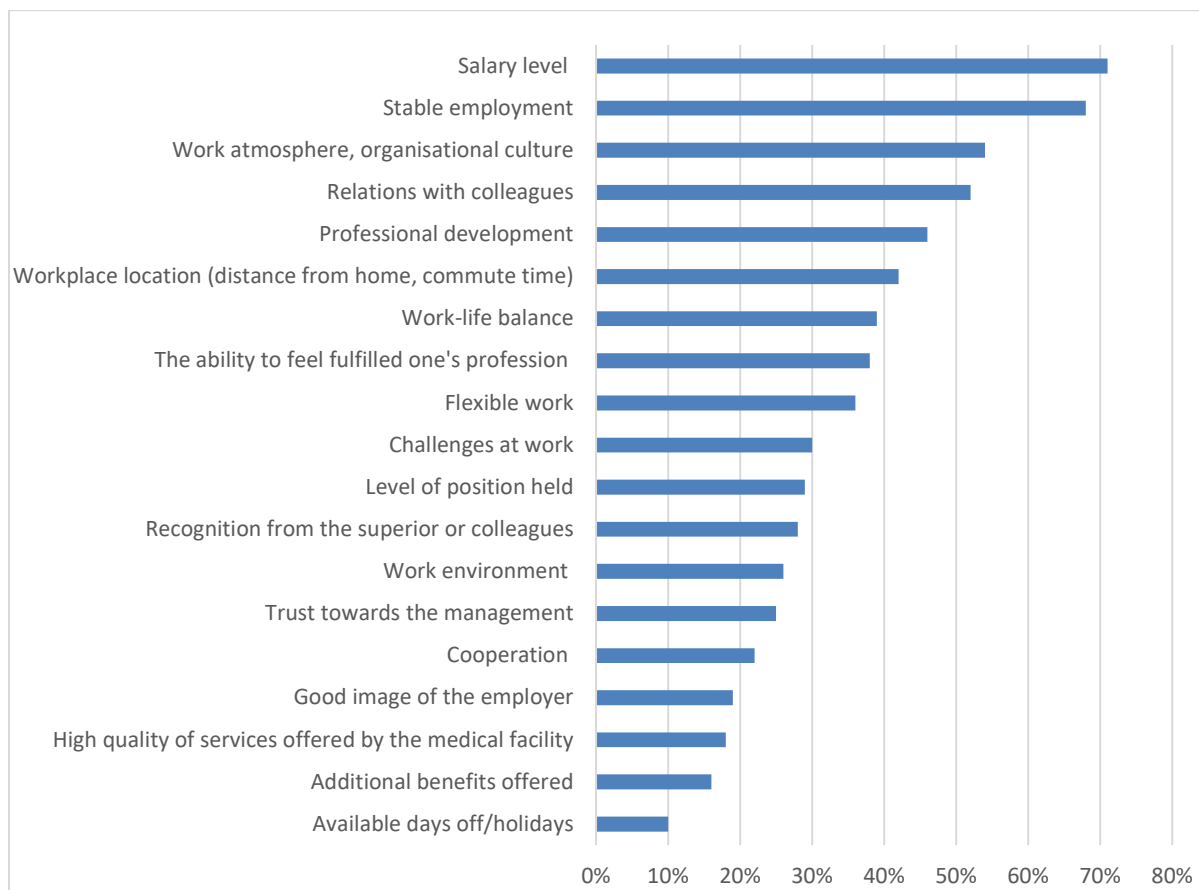
The objective of the study was to determine the factors shaping job satisfaction among physicians employed in healthcare institutions in the Silesian Voivodeship and to find out their level of job satisfaction. The study was carried out by means of a diagnostic survey, using a questionnaire technique. Random purposive sampling was used. The questionnaire consisted of 18 closed-ended single- or multiple-choice questions regarding the issues of job satisfaction and motivation assessment. The assessment was made by awarding points on a Likert scale where 1 means 'strongly disagree' and 5 means 'strongly agree'. Using an odd scale allows the respondent to maintain a neutral position. The survey was conducted over a three-month period (August - October) in 2022. After eliminating the incorrectly completed questionnaires, 184 respondents

were statistically analysed. The impact factors were determined based on an analysis of the available literature. In the questionnaire used for the research, motivating factors were listed, taking into account the following division: factors defining basic arrangements (goals, competences, working conditions and financial benefits), team relations, relationships with the direct supervisor (appreciation, communication) and individual motivators (growth, achievements, impact). Due to the number of respondents, the presented results cannot be considered to be representative for the general group of physicians the Silesian Voivodeship, but despite the above, they constitute an interesting empirical material. The research has a pilot character.

### Research Results

A total of 184 physicians working in the profession took part in the questionnaire. Of the study group, 107 were women and 77 were men. 74 are employees of hospital wards and clinics. The remaining respondents are employees of both public and non-public open healthcare facilities.

The questionnaire asked physicians about the factors impacting job satisfaction. Respondents were asked to tick 19 factors that influence their sense of job satisfaction, ranking them from most important to least important. Figure 1 shows the job satisfaction indicators in order from the highest values indicating the level of satisfaction to the lowest values.



**Fig. 1.** Factors shaping the most perceived level of job satisfaction [own work].

According to the physicians taking part in the questionnaire, the most important factor influencing job satisfaction is the level of remuneration (71%). Perhaps this is due to the fact that most of them are employed on a medical contract basis which makes the livelihood of the physicians and their families entirely dependent on the size of the contract and their actual ability to provide work and also whether they will be guaranteed renewal of the contract and its terms,

especially pay, in subsequent periods. The next most important determinants shaping the sense of satisfaction were employment stability (68%), work atmosphere and organisational culture (54%), relations with colleagues 52% and professional growth opportunities (46%).

On the other hand, factors such as the location of the workplace (42%), work-life balance (39%), opportunity for fulfilment (36%), challenges at work (30%), position held (29%), and recognition from supervisor or colleagues (28%) came next.

After verifying the previously obtained results with the data on factors that impact job satisfaction, and which are related to the rules in terms of cooperation with the supervisor and colleagues, it turned out for the surveyed physicians that the possibility of freedom of action has a significant impact on their sense of job satisfaction: indications (38%) and the possibility of mutual decision-making (29%). This is probably due to the high level of confidence of supervisors in the professional competence of physicians. Another question related to the impact of recognition from colleagues on the sense of job satisfaction. This factor was considered important by 28% of the physicians surveyed.

On the other hand, the least important factors for the surveyed group of respondents are the working environment (26%), trust in management 25%, cooperation (22%), good image of the employer (19%), high quality of services offered by the organisation (18%), the offer of additional benefits (16%) or the availability of days off/holidays (10%).

Grouping the surveyed factors into individual categories: factors related to the economic aspect of work and interpersonal relationships are of greatest importance.

In a further part of the study, physicians were asked how they rated their sense of job satisfaction. Table 1 presents the responses.

**Table 1.** *Assessing one's own job satisfaction [own study]*

Assessment	N=184	%
Very high	18	10%
High	72	39%
Average	71	39%
Low	20	11%
Very low	3	1%

Fully positive job satisfaction is rated highly by almost half of the respondents - 90 physicians (49%) of all respondents. Almost as many – 71 (39%) - describe their level of satisfaction as average. The remaining group of physicians surveyed – 23 (12%) – indicate a low or even very low level of satisfaction.

These results differ when compared to a study conducted by the Centre for Studies, Analysis and Information of the Supreme Medical Council in 2022. According to the aforementioned report regarding a study on the medical community, 63% of physicians have a positive opinion on their professional work (22%) – an average of one in seven (14%) – have a bad opinion. Physicians who were significantly more satisfied with their work and rated it higher, in all the dimensions covered by the survey, were those who work outside Poland [17]. The discrepancy between the author's results and the data in the Report is probably due to the large difference in the size of the sample and the participation in the survey of people living outside Poland.

In the group of physicians taking part in the study, the lowest level of satisfaction was related to the impact of work on private and professional life. Interestingly, the survey found that low and average levels of the sense of job satisfaction were more common among younger physicians, aged up to 45 years, than among older physicians, aged over 45 years. The greatest differences in the group of physicians when it comes to their age were noted for satisfaction with their income. Here,

too, there was more dissatisfaction among doctors aged up to 45 years. Similarly, in all the other issues examined, the level of job satisfaction was lower than in the group of physicians under 45, in the senior physicians group.

A physician is a profession in which the desire to help, to care for others, should occur as an essential motivation. In the study conducted, 36% of respondents identified the opportunity for fulfilment in their profession as an important factor shaping their sense of job satisfaction. Salary, professional stability, relationships with colleagues or professional growth are more important to the physicians covered by the study. It is likely that ensuring a sense of satisfaction in terms of salary, a sense of professional stability, good workplace relations and suitable conditions for professional growth all contribute to fulfilment in the medical profession and the physician's attitude towards their profession.

## Conclusions

For every human being, work is a process closely linked to their existence. As work is part of an individual's life, it can affect the other areas of their life. This impact can be positive or become a source of psychological discomfort and frustration. Such feelings can have a significant impact on one's private life [18]. This aspect is particularly important when it comes to professions that are exposed to stress due to their specific nature. A physician is such a profession. This is why a sense of satisfaction with work performance and opportunities for growth are so important in a physician's work. This is because it has an impact on the quality of the service provided, as well as on the direct contact between the physician and the patient [19].

It is now widely accepted that work should always be a source of satisfaction. In relation to the medical community, this issue is particularly important nowadays, as the level of professional satisfaction achieved by medics can have a significant impact not only on the results and effectiveness of the physician-employee's work, but above all on the role it can play in shaping the level of care provided to patients. Thus becoming an important component in the process of building patient satisfaction.

The results of the study indicate that:

- satisfaction of the surveyed physicians in the Silesian region is moderate (49%);
- salary was identified as the satisfaction factor with the highest rating;
- the least important factors in terms of satisfaction were considered to be the employer's image (19%), the quality of services offered by the organisation (18%), the offer of additional benefits (16%) or the available days off/holidays (10%);
- almost half of the respondents said they were satisfied with their job, but only 10% rated the level of satisfaction as high;
- physicians with more seniority rated their job satisfaction higher.

The results of the study can provide a basis for corrective measures to be taken by managers of healthcare facilities in order to raise the level of job satisfaction among physicians and thus ensure greater stability of employment in the healthcare sector.

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