

PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION IN DENTISTRY - SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF DENTISTS IN BULGARIA

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Abstract

Aim: To investigate the influence of some socio-demographic determinants – age, gender, location and ownership of dental practice – on professional satisfaction among dentists in Bulgaria.

Method and Materials: A self-administrated questionnaire consisting of 37 items about socio-demographic characteristics, motivation, work environment and economic factors was mailed to a random sample of 1427 dentists from 107 settlements in Bulgaria (response rate=30.5%, n=436).

Results: Dentists aged 36-45 were found to be completely satisfied – 104(35.9%), $p < 0.05$. It was not found statistically significant association between professional satisfaction and gender of the respondents ($p = 0.265$). There was also statistically significant association between dentist's job satisfaction and location and ownership of dental practice ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Socio-demographic profile of the most satisfied dentist in Bulgaria was associated to 36-45 aged practitioner, regardless of gender, working in big city and owning his/her dental office.

Key words: dentistry, job satisfaction, socio-demographic determinants

1. Introduction

Issues concerning professional satisfaction are subject of numerous studies and thorough discussions. The actuality of the problem is necessitated by the fact that in modern society, professional satisfaction occupies a key place for the creation of an appropriate working environment, improving working conditions and results of daily activities (Avramova & Yaneva, 2011).

Basic point in discussing dental professional satisfaction is to determine the main determinants (factors) that influence it. Undoubtedly, these factors, singly or in combination, do affect job satisfaction. The main question here is not if, but to what extent these factors could influence professional satisfaction.

The most frequently discussed determinants related to socio-demographic profile of dentists are age, gender, years in practice, location of dental practice. With respect to these factors we found significant variations in the level of professional satisfaction. The results of a cross-sectional study (Sur et al, 2004) among dentists in nine provinces in Turkey (n = 855), indicated that the age of dental practitioners, work with auxiliary staff, the level of income and social security and the number of patients examined per day are the most common and statistically significant factors regarding overall professional satisfaction.

Essential for professional satisfaction are qualitative variables such as gender (Avramova & Yaneva, 2011). A questionnaire survey was conducted in Britain (Matthews & Scully, 1994) in order to establish whether there were differences between male and female dentists with respect to certain socio-demographic factors such as location of the practice, presence or absence of children of school age or smaller etc., and the peculiarities of the working conditions - working time, type of practice - general or specialized, etc. The findings showed that women

generally were satisfied with dentistry as compared with men, among whom 4% were very dissatisfied with their profession, showing clear signs of acute psychological stress.

In New Zealand a national postal survey was conducted aiming to clarify the differences in the working hours, the type of daily activities, opportunities for postgraduate education and career breaks between male and female dentists and if there was an association between these factors and dentists' overall professional satisfaction (Ayers et al., 2008). The findings indicated that men demonstrated higher levels of satisfaction than women, since the latter had more frequent career breaks, worked part-time (mainly due to childbirth and childcare) and were salaried or partners in a practice, rather than having their own.

A survey was conducted in Australia (Luzzi & Spencer, 2011) including 2202 dentists, stratified by age, sex and geographical area. Analysis of the data showed significant differences in the levels of dentists' satisfaction concerning the variables above. The authors of the study indicated that the reason was the influence of other determinants such as doctors' relationships with colleagues, patients and auxiliary staff, public and administrative responsibilities, the amount of the salary, etc.

Kelsey et al. (USA) investigated career satisfaction of dentists, certified in the period 1985-2005, in relation to socio-demographic and work environment factors. Results showed that there were not statistically significant differences between men and women in terms of their job satisfaction, both with their academic preparation and current dental practice (Kelsey et al., 2009).

Although patients' satisfaction has always been the focus of studies performed in dentistry, analysis of available literature showed a great variety of studies concerning dentists' job satisfaction. However, the studies about dentists' professional satisfaction in Bulgaria were insufficient. The aim of the current study was to investigate the influence of some socio-

demographic determinants – age, gender, location and ownership of dental practice – on professional satisfaction among dentists in Bulgaria.

2. Method and Materials

2.1. Design of the study

A self-administrated questionnaire consisting of 37 items about socio-demographic characteristics, motivation, work environment and economic factors was mailed to a random sample of 1427 dentists from 107 cities and villages in Bulgaria (response rate=30.5%, n=436). Completing the questionnaire was considered as a form of dentists' individual informed consent to participate in the survey.

2.2. Respondents

Dentists were divided into four age groups as follows: up to 35 years (n=144), 36-45 (n=136), 46-55 (n=88), 56+ (n=68) – fig.1. Two hundred and forty six of them were females (n=246, 56.4%) and 190 (43.6%) were males – fig.2. A total of 436 (30.5%) dentists responded to the survey. The major proportion of them worked in big cities of the country – 190 (43.58%). The remainder practiced dentistry in towns – 92 (21.10%), capital city Sofia (center) – 80 (18.35%), capital city Sofia (residential area) – 52 (11.93%) and villages – 22 (5.05%) – table 1. Almost 2/3 of the dentists – 290 (66.5%) – worked in their own offices, 132 (30.3%) – in rented dental offices and only 14 (3.2%) practiced dentistry both in own and rented dental offices – fig 3.

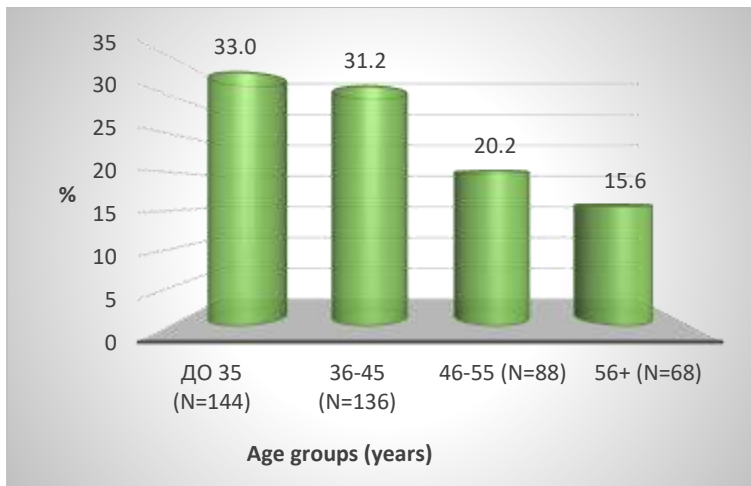


Fig.1. Frequency distribution (n, %) of dentists according to age groups.

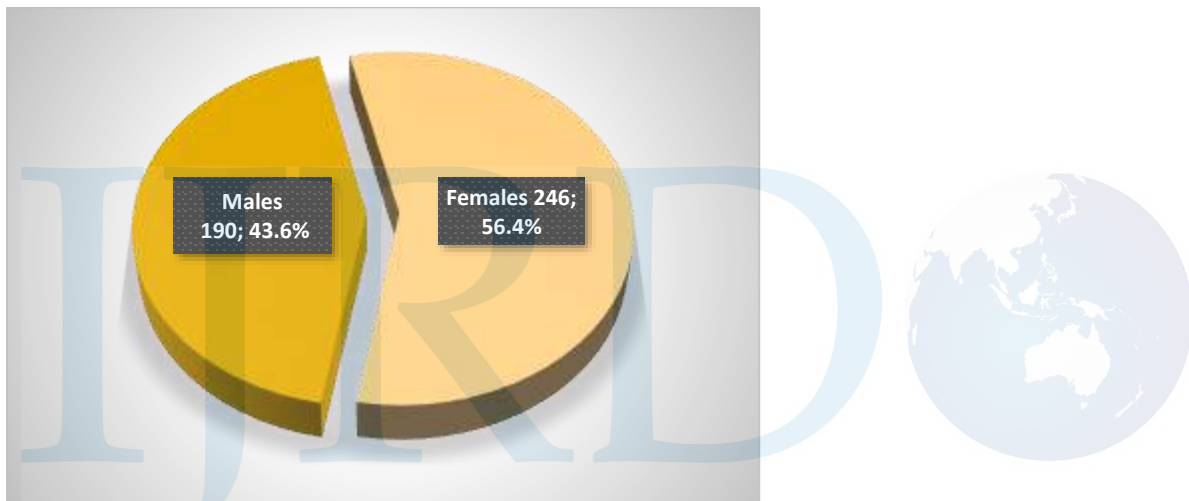


Fig.2. Frequency distribution (n, %) of dentists according to gender.

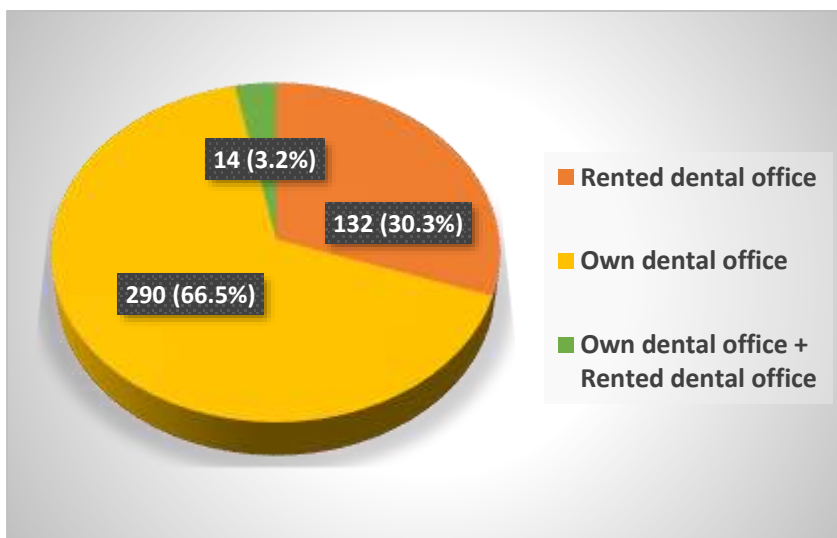


Fig.3. Frequency distribution (n, %) of dentists according to the ownerships of the dental practice.

Table 1. Frequency distribution (n, %) of respondents according to the location of the dental practice

Location of dental practice	N	(%)	Sp
Village	2	5,05	1,05
Town	9	21,10	1,95
City	10	43,58	2,37
Capital (center)	6	18,35	1,85
Capital (residential area)	5	11,93	1,55
Total	45	100,00	

2.3. Registration documentation & Instruments

An anonymous questionnaire consisting 37 questions was used to implement the objectives of the study. The questions were about socio-demographic characteristics, motivation for choosing dentistry as a career, work environment and economic factors, opportunities for professional development and carrier brakes, free time and hobbies, professional planning and intention for retirement. The final group of questions characterized the level of dental job satisfaction. Professional satisfaction was assessed by using a three-point scale – completely satisfied, partly satisfied and dissatisfied.

2.4. Collection of primary data

The study was piloted on a group of 200 dentists from five big cities in Bulgaria – Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas and Kurdjali. To collect and analyze primary data Microsoft Windows Server 2008 R2, Microsoft SQL Server 2008, Internet Information Server 7.5 and Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 were used.

2.5. Statistical analyses

To search for statistically significant associations statistical package IBM SPSS Statistics 19.0. was used ($p < 0.05$). The following methods were applied: description analysis, graphical analysis, alternative analysis, chi-square test and Fisher's exact test.

3. Results

There was statistically significant association between job satisfaction and age of the dental practitioners. For the age group up to 35 years partly satisfaction was the most frequently indicated type of job satisfaction – 66(50.8%), $p < 0.05$. Dentists aged 36-45 demonstrated the highest level of complete satisfaction – 104(35.9%), $p < 0.05$ – table 2.

Table 2. Frequency distribution (n, %) of dentists according to Job satisfaction and age

Job satisfaction Age groups	Dissatisfied N,%	Partly satisfied N,%	Satisfied N,%	Total N,%
Up to 35	2(12,5) ^a	66(50,8) ^b	76(26,2) ^a	144(33,0)
36 – 45	10(62,5) ^a	22(16,9) ^b	104(35,9) ^c	136(31,2)
46 – 55	2(12,5) ^a	24(18,5) ^a	62(21,4) ^a	88(20,2)
56+	2(12,5) ^a	18(13,8) ^a	48(16,6) ^a	68(15,6)
Total N,%	16(100,0)	130(100,0)	290(100,0)	436(100,0)

*identical letters indicate lack of statistically significant difference and different letters indicate the presence of such ($p < 0.05$)

The results of the study indicated that **there was not** statistically significant association between job satisfaction and gender of the dentists ($p = 0.265$) – table 3.

It was found that the dentists practicing in the big cities of the country demonstrated the highest levels of partly and complete satisfaction - 58(44.6%) and 130(44.8%), $p < 0.05$ - table 4.

Table 3. Frequency distribution (n, %) of dentists according to Job satisfaction and gender (p=0,265)

Job satisfaction Gender	Dissatisfied N,%	Partly satisfied N,%	Satisfied N,%	Total N,%
Males	10(62,5)	58(44,6)	122(42,1)	190(43,6)
Females	6(37,5)	72(55,4)	168(57,9)	246(56,4)
Total N,%	16(100,0)	130(100,0)	290(100,0)	436(100,0)

Table 4. Frequency distribution (n, %) of dentists according to Job satisfaction and Location of dental practice

Job satisfaction Location of dental practice	Dissatisfied N,%	Partly satisfied N,%	Satisfied N,%	Total N,%
Village	2(12,5) ^a	4(3,1) ^a	16(5,5) ^a	22(5,0)
Town	6(37,5) ^a	24(18,5) ^a	62(21,4) ^a	92(21,1)
City	2(12,5) ^a	58(44,6) ^b	130(44,8) ^b	190(43,6)
Capital (center)	4(25,0) ^a	30(23,1) ^a	46(15,9) ^a	80(18,3)
Capital (residential area)	2(12,5) ^a	14(10,8) ^a	36(12,4) ^a	52(11,9)
Total N,%	16(100,0)	130(100,0)	290(100,0)	436(100,0)

*identical letters indicate lack of statistically significant difference and different letters indicate the presence of such ($p < 0.05$)

As shown in table 5 below, practitioners owning dental practice were completely satisfied – 218(75.2%), $p < 0.05$ compared to dentists working in rented dental offices and being mainly dissatisfied – 10(62.5%), $p < 0.05$.

Table 5. Frequency distribution (n, %) of dentists according to Job satisfaction and ownership of dental practice

Job satisfaction Ownership of dental practice	Dissatisfied N,%	Partly satisfied N,%	Satisfied N,%	Total N,%
Rented dental office	10(62,5) ^a	58(44,6) ^a	64(22,1) ^b	132(30,3)
Own dental office	6(37,5) ^a	66(50,8) ^a	218(75,2) ^b	290(66,5)
Own dental office + Rented dental office	0(0) ^a	6(4,6) ^a	8(2,8) ^a	14(3,2)
Total N,%	16(100,0)	130(100,0)	290(100,0)	436(100,0)

*identical letters indicate lack of statistically significant difference and different letters indicate the presence of such ($p < 0.05$)

4. Discussion

The findings of the conducted survey showed that there was statistically significant association between the age of the dentists and their professional satisfaction. We found that in individuals

under 35, the most often stated type of satisfaction was partial satisfaction. Complete professional satisfaction was associated with persons in the age group of 36 to 45 years.

Regarding the other main indicator that characterizes dental practitioners' socio-demographic profile - their gender affiliation - there was sufficient literature to indicate the presence or the lack of association between the indicator mentioned above and professional satisfaction of the dentists (Ayers et al., 2008; Kelsey et al., 2009; Matthews & Scully, 1994). According to the results of our survey we did not find statistically significant association between job satisfaction and gender of the dental practitioners in our country.

By examining the relationship between professional satisfaction and the localization of the dental practices, we found that there was statistically significant association only between dentists practicing in big cities where the highest levels of partial and total satisfaction were demonstrated, compared to job satisfaction of the dentists in the capital city, smaller towns and villages. Both uneven distribution of the population in our country and uneven distribution of the number of dental practices contribute to this fact. According to information of the Register of the Bulgarian Dental Association about the number of practices on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria (BDA, 2012), in the bigger regional cities (Veliko Tarnovo, Blagoevgrad, Pleven, Rousse, Stara Zagora, etc.) where the population is approximately 200-350 thousand residents, the number of the dentists rarely exceeds 200-250 people (excluding Plovdiv and Varna). This means that a dental practitioner has on average more than 1,000 patients of the respective population. Contrary to this is the situation in the capital, where, according to the National Statistical Institute data from the last census, the number of the population is 1 291 591 (NSI, 2013), and the dentists are about 2400 or one dental practitioner has approximately 525 patients. All this sets serious prerequisites for increasing the level of professional satisfaction among dental practitioners in larger cities. Similarly, the conclusion would be the same for all settlements where the number of the dentists is smaller and the

number of the population is higher or vice versa - the level of professional satisfaction will decrease in cases of smaller number of the population and more dental practitioners.

5. Conclusion

Job Satisfaction of dentists is considered to be an essential part of quality dental practice. Along with patients' satisfaction and clinical technical aspects of the dental treatment it is major construct of overall satisfaction of the dental practitioners.

As a result of the study conducted it could be drawn the conclusion that *socio-demographic profile of the most satisfied dentist in Bulgaria was associated to 36-45 aged practitioner, regardless of gender, working in big city and owning his/her dental office.*

However, further investigation on work environment factors, economic factors, motivation for choosing dentistry as a career, psychological aspects of dentistry, etc. is needed to establish overall level of job satisfaction and its basic determinants.

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