

Psychometric properties of a job satisfaction survey in Slovakia in helping professionals: Preliminary results

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Abstract

Problem statement. Job satisfaction is associated with positive outcomes at work and it also influences other aspects of life. Job satisfaction is regarded as an important sign of professional success and accomplishment. In the past decades, job satisfaction on the part of professional workers as a means of helping their professional development has received little attention in Slovakia. The purpose of the study. The purpose of this study was to adapt the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) to the Slovak language so that it can be employed in Slovakia, especially in terms of helping staff involved in social care. The aim of this study was to analyse psychometric properties such as the convergent and discriminant validity and the internal consistency of the JSS. Methods. Participants completed a 36-item Job Satisfaction Survey developed by Spector (1997). This scale was translated into Slovakian using forward and backward translation by native English speakers. For the improvement and assessment of these translations, we employed a meeting with professionals in the form of psychologists. External social work students, social workers, and other professionals from the helping professions associated with social care participated in the research and completed additional questionnaires, namely the Professional Quality of Life Scale, the Life Orientation Test – Revised, and the Well-Being Scale. Findings and Results. It was revealed that higher levels of job satisfaction were linked with optimism, higher occurrence of experiencing positive emotions and lower frequency of experiencing negative emotions. Confirmatory factor analysis failed to confirm nine original factors of the JSS. The coefficients of validity and reliability demonstrated satisfactory values. Conclusions. The preliminary results did not confirm the factor structure of JSS. Discriminant and convergent validity was deemed to be satisfactory, and therefore this scale could be used in the process of assessing the job satisfaction of workers in social institutions in a Slovakian context.

Keywords: job satisfaction, helping professions, validity, reliability.

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1. Introduction

There have been many studies of job satisfaction in many work settings. It is an issue which has attracted a lot of attention in the psychology of work and organisations. Despite the fact that many findings relating to job satisfaction were accumulated in an industrial context, information about job satisfaction in the helping professions was not available until the creation of the Job Satisfaction Survey. Spector (1985) constructed the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) as a tool for the assessment of the job satisfaction of people working in a non-industrial environment, mainly human resources and social services in public and non-profit sector organisations. In addition to the English original version of Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1985), versions of JSS in several languages were created and adapted. The Job Satisfaction Survey was constructed to gauge nine dimensions of job satisfaction which were based on the job satisfaction research. The objective of the Job Satisfaction Survey was to assess the above-mentioned job satisfaction facets for human services in public and non-profit sector organisations. The theoretical background of JSS is the assumption that job satisfaction represents an affective or attitudinal reaction to the job. As Spector claimed (1985), the attitudinal nature of satisfaction implies that a person would be attracted by a satisfying job and would avoid a dissatisfying job. Spector (ibid.) considered job satisfaction as the set of feelings about a job. Furthermore, he assumed that the overall attitude about a job is a combination of specific aspect attitudes. As a measure of overall satisfaction, he suggested a summarisation of satisfaction aspects.

This paper discusses the development of a Slovak version of JSS. It also provides evidence of its reliability and validity in the social services' context. The author presents the means and standard deviations in terms of a sample of helping professionals in the social services (social workers, special educators, and psychologists who are mainly involved in practicing with children, clients of foster homes and of shelters for abused people). She also summarizes the correlation of job satisfaction with other variables such as compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, emotional well-being, and optimism. The presented study is part of a research project focused on the examination of the role of self-care in coping with the negative consequences of working in the helping professions.

The issue of self-care among helping professions in a global context has gained an important position in the past two decades, as reflected in publications highlighting the importance of providing adequate care to clients, particularly regarding the ability to help them achieve an adequate job performance. Self-care in helping professions and on the part of health professionals is considered an important precondition for the efficiency in assisting clients, because it is associated with amended performance, heightened self-confidence, and greater job satisfaction. The self-care activities are very important in preventing professional stress, burnout, the formation of secondary stress, depression, and other negative psychological effects of helping. A lack of self-care in the helping professions contributes to professional stress, burnout, secondary stress, or vicarious trauma.

1.1 Job satisfaction

The construct of job satisfaction has been intensively explored in the scientific research literature in several fields of study. The main reason is that empirical experience and research results indicate that job satisfaction can affect work productivity, employee turnover, and employee retention. Weiss et al. (1967) categorised job satisfaction into three types: intrinsic, extrinsic, and total. Job satisfaction has been defined as a positive emotional state that is experienced by a worker. Job satisfaction significantly influences a set of positive and negative consequences associated with work such as absenteeism, turnover, job performance, and psychological distress, as was emphasized, for example, by Chen, Yang, Shiau & Wang, (2006) or Spector (1997).

According to Locke (1969), job dissatisfaction refers to the negative emotional state which is connected with the appraisal of the job as being frustrating. In defining job satisfaction, Spector (1997) emphasized two aspects – positive (satisfaction) and negative (dissatisfaction) (Spector, 1997). This definition suggests that job satisfaction represents a general affective response that individuals experience with regard to their occupation or career. Similarly, Locke (1976) characterised job satisfaction as a positive emotional feeling, resulting from an evaluation and comparison of the expectations and benefits of the job. Research has suggested that a person's job satisfaction is associated more with experienced feelings than with the fulfilment the individual needs (Locke, 1976). Additional research has verified important determinants of job satisfaction, such as organizational reward systems, power distribution, individual differences, self-esteem, and locus of control.

1.2 Professional quality of life

The professional quality of life is a relatively new concept which was established in the scientific literature by Stamm (2008). It consists of two subscales representing key concepts, namely compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction. The positive concept is labelled Compassion Satisfaction, and the negative aspect is called Compassion Fatigue, as suggested by Stamm (2008). Compassion fatigue comprises two parts. The first part refers to phenomena such as exhaustion, frustration, anger, and depression typical of burnout. The second part, called secondary traumatic stress, is a negative emotional outcome evoked by fear and trauma resulting from work with traumatised clients. Work-related trauma which is resulting from counselling and psychotherapeutic practice with traumatised clients can be understood as a combination of primary and secondary trauma (Stamm, 2010).

2. Methods

2.1 Participants

Students of social work and workers who practice in the helping professions in social services, namely social workers, special educators, and psychologists who are working with children at risk of maltreatment (N = 238, 92.33% female), participated in the research. Participants were contacted personally by the author of the study during regular meetings and lectures with their supervisors. They were employed in social institutions in two districts of Slovakia. Their average age was 40.1 years; the average length of practice was 11.2 years. The education level of the participants was as follows: 31.82 % were high school graduates, 11.36 % had attained a bachelor degree, and 27.92 % a master degree, and 28.90 % did not provide any information.

2.2 Measures

The 36-item Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS, Spector, 1985) was used to measure job satisfaction. In the original English version of the Job Satisfaction Survey nine scales are included. Each scale is comprised of four items. The subscales are labelled as follows: Pay, Promotion, Supervision, Fringe Benefits, Contingent Rewards, Operating Conditions, Co-workers, Nature of Work, and Communication. The JSS uses a summated rating scale response format, which is equipped with six agree-disagree response choices (disagree very much, disagree moderately, disagree slightly, agree slightly, agree moderately, and agree very much). These response choice intervals are scored from 1 to 6. Total satisfaction is also calculated as the sum of all item values. The JSS contains self-descriptive positive and negative statements. The negatively worded items are reverse scored. This scale was translated into the Slovak language using method of forward and backward translation by English native speakers. For the improvement and assessment of these translations, we employed discussions with professionals, namely psychologists.

The Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) was constructed by Stamm (2010). This scale is frequently used in research intended to assess the positive and negative consequences for professionals who are working with people who have experienced extremely stressful events. It is a 30-item scale that indicates how often the respondent experienced negative consequences of helping such people. The ProQOL, originally developed in English, has been translated into several languages. It contains three subscales: the first is compassion satisfaction, which is characterized as satisfaction from providing compassion and help, as well as the pleasure of the work that one performs. The second scale is aimed at measuring burnout and feelings of hopelessness and problems at work. The third subscale measures compassion fatigue. Cronbach's alpha values are 0.78 for the compassion satisfaction subscale and for the compassion fatigue subscale from 0.80 to 0.72 per compassion and burnout subscales (Stamm, 2008). Similarly, to above-mentioned scale, this self-report method was also translated assessment of trait optimism versus pessimism. Of the ten items, three items measure optimism, three items gauge pessimism, and four items serve as fillers. Respondents rate each statement on a five-point bipolar scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The same procedures of translation as was used with regard to the other techniques were employed in adapting the English version of the LOT-R for Slovak respondents.

The Scale of Emotional Habitual Subjective Well-Being (SEHP) was developed by Dzuka & Dalbert (2002). It represents a simple, time-saving tool for measuring emotional subjective well-being. The SEHP contains four nouns (joy, happiness, enjoyment, and physical freshness) to describe a positive state of mind, and six nouns (fear, shame, sadness, guilt, anger and pain) to characterise negative

mood. Respondents report the frequency of their feelings on a six-point scale from "almost always to almost never." The SEHP was originally created in the Slovak language by its authors, and therefore it did not require any additional adaptation for the application.

into the Slovak language using forward and backward translation by English native speakers and checked for correctness by psychologists.

The Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) was developed by Scheier, Carver & Bridges (1994). LOT-R is an adapted version of the original Life Orientation Test. LOT-R comprises ten items focused on

3. Results

3.1 Reliability

The internal consistency (Cronbach's coefficients alpha) was estimated for each subscale of the Job Satisfaction Survey as well as for the total scale for a sample of 236 helping professionals in social services. Each Cronbach's α was above the .50 minimum, ranging from .530 to .868, and the total scale Cronbach's α was .905 (Table 2.). The mean interitem correlation was .216 for the whole JSS. Most of the part-whole correlations were acceptable (ranging from .05 to .74) as is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among JSS subscales

Variables	AM	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Pay	11.59	4.02	-								
2 Promotion	12.16	3.29	0.37	-							
3 Supervision	18.02	3.60	0.26	0.24	-						
4 Benefits	12.92	3.42	0.50	0.58	0.38	-					
5 Rewards	12.68	3.91	0.72	0.39	0.31	0.49	-				
6 Conditions	11.99	3.35	0.35	0.28	0.17	0.35	0.42	-			
7 Co-workers	17.86	2.88	0.05	0.08	0.41	0.22	0.10	0.14	-		
8 Nature of work	18.63	2.98	0.33	0.29	0.38	0.27	0.35	0.22	0.27	-	
9 Communications	16.55	3.35	0.20	0.17	0.53	0.29	0.24	0.18	0.54	0.29	-
10 Total JSS	132.4	19.4 7	0.70	0.60	0.65	0.73	0.74	0.56	0.47	0.59	0.60

The split-half reliability was .830. The Cronbach's alpha for the first half of the scale was estimated as .830, while for the second half it was .858. The correlation between the first and second half of the scale was acceptable ($r = .847$). The Guttman coefficient after splitting was estimated as .822. All these coefficients had satisfactory values (see Table 2). Comparison with values reported in Spector (1997) shows the similarity between our results and the internal consistency coefficients in Spector's original study.

Table 2. Description of the Job Satisfaction Survey scales and internal consistency of items

Subscale	Item number	Cronbach's alpha ^a	Cronbach's alpha ^b
Pay	1, 10, 19, 28	.868	.75
Promotion	2, 11, 20, 33	.680	.73
Supervision	3, 12, 21, 30	.763	.82
Fringe benefits	4, 13, 22, 29	.656	.73
Contingent rewards	5, 14, 23, 32	.580	.76
Operating conditions	6, 15, 24, 31	.530	.62
Co-workers	7, 16, 25, 34	.616	.60
Nature of work	8, 17, 27, 35	.852	.78
Communication	9, 18, 26, 36	.625	.71
Total satisfaction	1-36	.905	.91

a: n = 238 – Slovak sample; b: n = 2.870; Spector (1997, p. 10)

3.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was made with all the items of the JSS. The frequently recommended indexes were estimated: root mean square error of approximation, RMSEA = 0.115 [90% CI = (0.110, 0.120)], GFI = 0.664; comparative fit index CFI = 0.47; non-normed fit index, NNFI = 0.43. Standardized root mean square residual, SRMR = 0.179. All these indices are higher than the recommended threshold values. Similarly, the value of $\chi^2 = 1542.12$; $df = 464$; $p < .0001$ was unacceptable. These results do not confirm the factorial validity of JSS for our sample of Slovak helping professionals working in the social sphere. It does mean that the theoretical constructs did not achieve an acceptable fit. In spite of this finding, in the further analysis, we will proceed with the original subscales of Spector's JSS.

3.3 Convergent and discriminant validity

The evidence for the convergent and discriminant validities was estimated by an analysis of the JSS, ProQOL, LOT-R, and SEHP. For this analysis, we have used the original subscales of JSS in concordance with Spector (1997). Table 3 shows the intercorrelations of the JSS and the subscales of above-mentioned techniques. The correlations between similar or equivalent subscales from all instruments represent coefficients of validity that were significantly larger than zero. These correlations are of a reasonable size for positively-oriented correlations, such as compassion satisfaction, positive emotions, and optimism (correlations ranged from .22 to .45). Negatively oriented correlations with variables such as burnout, secondary stress, and negative emotions also support the validity of the JSS. The validity correlations were mostly higher than the relationships between each subscale of the JSS, with the exception of correlations between pay and contingent rewards.

Table 3. Arithmetic means, standard deviations and correlations among total job satisfaction, dimensions of compassion fatigue, emotional well-being, and optimism

Variables	AM	SD	BU	SS	OP	PE	NE	JS
Compassion Satisfaction	35.8	5.03	-.288	.053	.253	.252	-.113	.218
Burnout	23.8	3.72	---	.528	-.231	-.028	.097	-.258
Secondary Stress	20.8	4.86		--	-.325	.136	.052	-.130
Optimism	14.7	3.11			---	.179	-.117	.370
Positive Emotions	14.2	3.52				---	.196	.452
Negative Emotions	12.1	3.82					---	-.165
Job Satisfaction	132.40	19.47						---

AM – arithmetic mean, SD – standard deviation, BU – burnout, SS- secondary stress, OP – optimism, PE – positive emotions, NE – negative emotions, JS – job satisfaction

3.4 Comparison of Slovak helping professionals' responses with JSS normative data

In comparison with Spector (1997), there are similar findings concerning the means of the total JSS scores, but significant differences were found between our sample of Slovak helping professionals and norms based on 8,113 individuals (Spector, 1997). Table 3 contains the means and standard deviations from the 238 social services employees who completed all techniques and scales.

The total JSS scores were calculated on 238 fully completed surveys provided by Slovak helping professionals. The mean total JSS score for our participants was 132.40 (SD = 19.47) which was lower than those found in Spector's (1997) normative data. The mean total JSS score and the mean score for each subscale from our completed surveys were compared to Spector's (1997) normative data by means of single sample t- test (Table 4).

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, t-test among JSS subscales in Slovak sample and normative data (Spector, 1997)

Variables	Slovak sample ^a		Norms ^b (Spector, 1997)		Simple t-test	
	AM	SD	AM	SD	t	p
Pay	11.59	4.02	11.8	2.6	1.20	.2284
Promotion	12.16	3.29	12.0	1.9	1.27	.2019
Supervision	18.02	3.60	19.2	1.5	11.25	.0001
Benefits	12.92	3.42	14.2	2.2	8.67	.0001
Contingent rewards	12.68	3.91	13.7	2.0	7.46	.0001
Operating conditions	11.99	3.35	13.5	2.2	10.25	.0001
Co-workers	17.86	2.88	18.3	1.1	5.63	.0001
Nature of work	18.63	2.98	19.2	1.3	6.29	.0001
Communications	16.55	3.35	14.4	1.8	17.56	.0001
Total JSS	132.40	19.47	136.5	12.1	5.04	.0001

a: n = 238; b: n = 8113; Spector (1997, p. 12)

The single sample t-test revealed that the mean total JSS scores for the helping professionals in this study were significantly lower than the normative mean for the American survey (Spector, 1997). In terms of the job satisfaction subscale categories, the mean ratings for the participants in our study were significantly different for the subscale facets of contingent rewards, supervision, co-workers, fringe benefits, nature of work, and communications. A thorough inspection of the results (Table 4) shows that our participants perceived their satisfaction in almost all these aspects of job satisfaction as being lower in comparison with Spector's (1997) normative sample. Only satisfaction in the area of communications was rated as being higher.

3.5 Relationships between job satisfaction dimensions of compassion fatigue, emotional well-being, and optimism and employee characteristics

Age was found to relate positively to the level of communication ($r = .29$). A significant negative relationship was manifested between age and total job satisfaction ($r = -.32$). The level of secondary stress and burnout are heightened significantly with age ($r > .29, .34$ respectively). The length of practice was significantly negatively associated with secondary stress ($r = -0.23$) and positively linked to the nature of work ($r = .21$). Year of study on the part of workers who are also external students showed a significant positive relationship with optimism ($r = -.30$), but negatively with benefits ($r = -.19$). On the basis of our findings, we can say that total job satisfaction is only weakly linked to the length of practice and years of study ($r = .04, .09$ respectively).

4. Discussion and conclusion

Our preliminary research showed some interesting tendencies and associations. The reliability data partly confirmed that the internal consistency of the subscales of the JSS and the whole scale is reasonable. We have provided evidence for its convergent and discriminant validity. The analyses concerning the relationship of JSS to employee variables suggested only weak correlations. This was probably caused by the characteristics and size of the sample. The acceptable correlations were confirmed between total satisfaction and the aspects of Professional Quality of Life, as well as personal dispositions such as optimism and positive subjective well-being.

Our findings concerning the confirmatory factor analysis of the JSS, which yielded unsatisfactory fit with the original subscales of Spector's JSS in the case of the Slovak sample of helping professionals, needs further examination. Our results are partly in concordance with a study by Liu, Borg & Spector (2004) who tested cultural differences and cultural distance in a German job satisfaction survey (GJSS) and found that there is a closer correspondence to English-speaking and Latin American countries

than to the Far East respondents. However, they revealed that the GJSS has satisfactory psychometric properties. Similarly, Spector, Cooper, Sanchez, O'Driscoll, Sparks & Bernin (2002) showed that the construct of job satisfaction has very good equivalence in multicultural comparisons. However, Spector (1997) acknowledged that there are different results of facet satisfaction across countries.

Our research findings support the usefulness of the JSS in the assessment of job satisfaction in helping professionals. Further research will be done to verify the psychometric properties of the Job Satisfaction Survey for its use with regard to targeted populations in Slovakia.

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