

Job Satisfaction of School Speech-Language Pathologists

Satisfaction professionnelle des orthophonistes en milieu scolaire

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Abstract

This preliminary study sought to assess job satisfaction and job setting characteristics of school speech-language pathologists (S-LPs) in three regions of Canada. A 44-item questionnaire was completed by school S-LPs working in an Ontario city, an Alberta city, and in rural Alberta areas. Job characteristics and factors contributing to job satisfaction were described differently in each area. A composite score of job satisfaction was computed from questions relating to job satisfaction. The composite scores were significantly correlated with the respondents' ratings of overall job satisfaction. A variety of job characteristics were identified by respondents as negative or positive through a content analysis, and these may influence their feelings of job satisfaction. It appears that in spite of the majority of respondents being satisfied with their job, there is a preponderance of burnout, heavy caseloads, and negative changes to the workplace.

Key words: job satisfaction, school speech-language pathologists, speech-language pathology, professional issues

Abrégé

Ce projet-pilote avait pour but de jeter un premier regard sur la satisfaction professionnelle et les caractéristiques du travail des orthophonistes oeuvrant en milieu scolaire dans trois régions du Canada. Un questionnaire de 44 questions a été rempli par des orthophonistes oeuvrant en milieu scolaire dans une ville ontarienne, une ville albertaine et dans des secteurs ruraux de l'Alberta. Les caractéristiques des emplois et les facteurs contribuant à la satisfaction professionnelle étaient décrits différemment dans chaque région. Un score composé de satisfaction professionnelle a été calculé à partir des questions portant sur la satisfaction professionnelle. Les scores composés avaient une forte corrélation avec l'évaluation de la satisfaction professionnelle générale des répondants. Diverses caractéristiques d'emploi ont été désignées par les répondants comme étant négatives ou positives par le biais d'une analyse de contenu et celles-ci peuvent avoir une influence sur leurs sentiments de satisfaction professionnelle. Il semble que malgré que la majorité des répondants éprouvent une certaine satisfaction face à leur emploi, il existe un très grand nombre de cas d'épuisement professionnel, de charges de travail trop lourdes et de changements négatifs se produisant en milieu de travail.

With a growing recognition of the need for speech and language services, and numerous ongoing changes in the work environments of speech-language pathologists (S-LPs) in the school system, the issue of job satisfaction is one that deserves some attention. Job satisfaction has been defined as consisting of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Pezzei & Oratio, 1991). Pezzei and Oratio stated that, "Intrinsic factors such as an individual's personal growth, achievement, autonomy, responsibility and interest in their jobs have been shown to be most important to workers' satisfaction

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across a variety of occupations" (Armstrong, 1971; Dunnette et al., 1967 as cited in Pezzei & Oratio, 1991). Despite much research into job satisfaction in such professions as nursing (Gillies, Franklin, & Child 1990; Snarr & Krochalk, 1996; Wills 1986), physical therapy, and occupational therapy (Wills & Case-Smith, 1996), few of the existing studies have focused on the profession of speech-language pathology. The few studies in existence have come out of the United States, and have consistently reported high levels of stress and burnout in school S-LPs. Goldberg (1993) found that factors contributing to burnout included an increase in the number of children identified with disabilities, funding cutbacks to schools, excessive caseload sizes, significant administrative responsibilities, increasing paperwork, and a lack of resources to do the job. Pezzei and Oratio identified variables related to job satisfaction of public school S-LPs. They found that supervision, workload, and coworker characteristics were the most potent predictors of job satisfaction. Miller and Potter (1982) reported that S-LPs working in the school system in the United States are susceptible to professional burnout due to large caseload sizes and large amounts of paperwork. In a study of Canadian S-LPs working in a variety of settings, Potter and Lagacé (1995) reported that 76% of those surveyed were suffering from mild to moderate levels of burnout. The authors defined burnout as a state of physical and mental exhaustion that involves the development of negative job attitudes and a loss of concern for clients. They reported that professional burnout was significantly related to job satisfaction.

The school setting was of interest to the authors in the present study, as it had not previously been investigated in Canada, and yet it is the most common work setting for S-LPs in Canada (CASLPA Standing Committee on Demographics, 1990). As well, changes to educational services have been taking place all across Canada over a number of years, which would be expected to impact on how S-LPs do their jobs. Thus, the authors were interested in sampling information from more than one area in Canada. The authors of the present study were based in Alberta and Ontario. Due to limited resources in time and finances, these two provinces were the only two selected for study.

The work situations of school S-LPs in Alberta and Ontario have recently undergone significant changes to their organisation. In Alberta, many school S-LPs are employed by health regions, but work in schools. Regionalisation of health services in Alberta is an ongoing process, which geographically merges smaller health units (Alberta Labour Relations Board, 1997). In addition, Alberta Health recently began a Student Health Initiative Partnership (SHIP), through which students

with special needs receive enhanced services within their school programs (Government of Alberta, 1999). This change was expected to impact S-LPs' jobs in a number of ways, including changes to caseload sizes, new caseload assignments, division of labour among S-LPs, changes in the time spent in schools, and job creation.

In the Ontario city presently studied, school S-LPs are employed by the regional school board and work in the schools of the board. Similar to the regionalisation of health units in Alberta, this region has gone through an amalgamation of two school boards to form one larger board. Along with this amalgamation has come the loss of S-LP positions, a cutback in provision of services to exclude students above grade three, and a change in the service delivery model from a direct model, where the S-LP carried out the speech-language therapy directly with the child or children, to an indirect model of service delivery (collaborative/consultative), whereby the S-LPs assess students and recommend goals for another service provider to carry out. When such drastic changes occur to the way one delivers service, an increase in stress in managing new roles, sharing responsibility for service with other professionals, and in learning new sets of skills might be expected.

A review of the literature in other fields revealed that clinical practice is experienced differently by rural therapists as compared to urban therapists (Dunkin, Juhl, & Stratton 1996; Wills & Case-Smith, 1996). Specifically, Wills and Case-Smith noted that geographic barriers, limited access to external resources, and lack of personnel with specialist training influence the practice of occupational therapy in the rural school setting. Therefore, S-LPs in rural and urban centres were surveyed in the present study to determine whether these differences also existed in the field of speech-language pathology.

None of the studies to date have looked at the situation for school S-LPs in Canada. Given the changes in the health care and education systems in a number of provinces, it is important to examine whether the accounts of job stress and burnout of school S-LPs in the United States also describe the working situation of school S-LPs in Canada. Secondly, at the time of this survey, there were opposing trends in the Ontario city and Alberta in terms of provisions of service. While the age range of students being serviced in Alberta school was being expanded, the age range of clients was being reduced in the Ontario city. Thus, the authors felt it important to ask whether the two provinces differed in their descriptions of their jobs, descriptions of the impact of changes on their jobs, and their ratings of job satisfaction. Thirdly, given the findings in the literature on differences in experience between urban and rural

practice, the authors wanted to know if reports of job descriptions and job satisfaction would differ significantly between the urban and rural sites.

Method

Design of Survey

A 44-item job satisfaction survey was created for the purpose of the present study (see Appendix). The questions were designed to elicit descriptions of work situations and job satisfaction of school S-LPs. The questions in the survey were of three types: categorical, rating scale, and short answer. The authors developed the questions in section B that aimed to obtain a comprehensive description of the S-LP's job. The questions were based on the authors' considerations of the various responsibilities or activities in which the school S-LP might be engaged, and the variety of ways that one might carry out the job. Demographic questions in section A, as well the rating scale questions relating to job satisfaction (section C) were adapted from Pezzeri and Oratio (1991) who conducted their study on school S-LPs in the United States. The present survey was piloted several times over a period of four months in collaboration with a school S-LP in a city in Alberta. Revisions based on consultation with community S-LPs and a research design expert were made to improve the relevance and clarity of the survey questions.

Data Collection

In the summer of 1999, the investigators faxed letters to supervisors of speech and language services across Alberta and in Ontario requesting their cooperation in distributing the survey to S-LPs working within the school systems. The surveys were mailed to cooperating facilities in the fall of 1999 along with a cover letter that explained the purpose of the study and encouraged participation. Participants were given four weeks to respond.

Participants

A total of 128 surveys were sent to supervisors who had agreed to distribute the survey. Of these surveys, 25 were sent to S-LPs working for a board of education in an Ontario city, 35 were sent to S-LPs working for a regional health authority in an Alberta city and 68 were sent to school S-LPs working for regional health authorities in rural Alberta. Note that surveys were sent to only one facility in each of the cities because these facilities serviced the entire urban area in both Alberta and Ontario cases. Rural was defined as an area containing fewer than 10,000 residents. Each urban district contained at least 500,000 residents. Participant anonymity was ensured

by having respondents return the surveys without their names on them and by placing them in preaddressed envelopes.

Fifty-six surveys were returned, yielding an overall response rate of 44%. From rural Alberta, 29 surveys were returned, representing a response rate of 42.6% for this region. From urban Alberta, 18 were returned, representing a response rate of 51% for this region. Nine of the 25 surveys sent to the Ontario city were returned, for a return rate of 36%. This response rate is on the low end of typical. The response rates of surveys in the literature review ranged from 40.7% (Dunkin et al., 1996) to 72% (Potter & Lagacé, 1995). The one exception being the survey conducted by Speakman, Pleasant, & Sutton (1996), whose survey yielded a response rate of 90%.

Data Analysis

The results are presented descriptively in tables. In addition, tests of significance were conducted on selected questions of interest where appropriate. A univariate analysis of variance was used to analyse the results for each variable. Post hoc comparisons were made using Least Squares Difference tests with Bonferroni correction. In order to quantify job satisfaction, the authors took a composite score of the questions on the job satisfaction rating scale in Section C of the survey. This composite score was obtained by taking a sum of the rating of each question. The questions were not individually weighted for importance, as there were no obvious principles for weighting some questions more heavily than others. Correlational analyses were conducted between composite job satisfaction scores and various job characteristics to determine the significance of a relationship between job satisfaction and job setting characteristics. Pearson's r statistic was used in these analyses, as it is robust, and appropriate for a wide range of data. A content analysis was performed on the responses to short answer questions to identify any trends or common responses.

Results

Demographic and Job Characteristics

Table 1 reports the background demographic characteristics of the 56 respondents. Overall, there was a main effect for the number of years worked ($F(2, 54) = 8.7; p < 0.001$). Post hoc tests revealed that the difference was between the urban Ontario group and the two Alberta groups, which did not differ from each other. This demonstrates a difference in the background characteristics of S-LPs in the two provinces, whereby the sample in Ontario likely represents a special group of

Table 1
Mean Responses to Background Questions

Background Characteristic	Rural Alberta	Urban Alberta	Ontario
Number of participants	29	18	9
Average years as an S-LP	6.58 (0.08-21.00)	5.12 (0.25-17.00)	15.00 (3.00-30.00)
Average years in present position	3.16 (0.08-10.00)	3.06 (0.08-12.00)	8.50 (2.50-16.00)

Note: range of years worked is reported in parentheses

S-LPs rather than a random sample. In order to control for this as a confounding variable when making statistical comparisons between provinces, the number of years worked was used as a covariate in statistical analyses where appropriate. This was done to eliminate the factor of years worked in determining significance of trends in each area.

Comparisons of job setting characteristics across all three regions revealed main effects for the number of schools serviced ($F(2, 54) = 4.3; p = 0.018$) and wait list sizes ($F(2, 54) = 3.8; p = 0.03$). Significant main effects were not found for caseload sizes ($F(2, 54) = 2.7; p = 0.08$) or number of paid hours per week ($F(2, 54) = 0.4; p = 0.69$). Rural and urban Alberta respondents reported very similar job setting characteristics. Post hoc tests revealed they did not differ significantly in the number of schools they service, the average number of clients on their caseloads, nor in the number of clients on their waiting lists. Differences did appear in post hoc tests between the Ontario respondents and respondents from each of the Alberta regions. The respondents from urban Ontario reported servicing significantly fewer schools and having smaller waiting lists than the respondents from both urban and rural Alberta. The respondents from the Ontario city reported smaller caseloads than the rural Alberta and urban Alberta respondents, but these differences did not reach statistical significance.

The clinicians were asked about the distribution of their work time in various activities over the course of a week. The total number of weekly work hours reported did not appear to differ across the three groups. Treatment and assessment hours averaged 14.6 per week across the three groups, which is the equivalent of only 29.5% of the S-LPs' total work time, in which they are in direct contact with clients. The remainder of their time is spent in such activities as preparation for intervention, administrative duties, report writing, consultation with families/other professionals, and travel. The average total of paid hours across the three groups was 30.3 per

week; the average total of actual hours worked across the three groups was 49.4 per week.

Job Satisfaction

The next set of questions on the survey addressed issues relating to job satisfaction (see Table 2). In response to a question rating overall job satisfaction, 66% ($n = 19$) of rural Alberta respondents reported being satisfied with their jobs, while 28% ($n = 8$) were dissatisfied with their jobs. Of the urban Alberta respondents, 72% ($n = 13$) were satisfied with their jobs and one clinician (6%) was not satisfied. Of the Ontario respondents, only 12% reported being satisfied with their jobs; of the remaining respondents (88%), half were neutral, and the other half were dissatisfied with their jobs. Despite apparent regional differences in ratings of overall job satisfaction, a statistically significant difference among the three regions was not found when the variable, "number of years worked", was used as a covariate in the analyses.

The investigators asked respondents about having enough authority to do their job, as it was a significant factor relating to job satisfaction in the Pezzeri and Oratio (1991) study. The large majority of respondents in both Alberta regions reported that they had enough authority to do their job, whereas, of the Ontario respondents, only approximately half reported sufficient authority. Respondents were also asked to rate the helpfulness of their supervisors and the families they work with. Over half of the Alberta respondents felt their supervisors were helpful; however, only a third of the Ontario respondents felt the same way.

The rating scale also included questions about burnout, adequacy of financial compensation, and opportunities for promotion. A similar trend appeared in responses across the three regions, with half of the respondents in all areas reporting burnout. Of the respondents from rural Alberta, roughly half felt that they suffer from burnout, and this represents twice the number of respondents who felt that they did not suffer from burnout (24%). However in the urban centres,

Table 2
Percentage and Mean Ratings of Questions Relating to Job Satisfaction

Questions	Rural Alberta	Urban Alberta	Ontario
Overall, I am satisfied with my job	66% (3.34)	72% (3.78)	12% (2.56)
The people I work with are friendly	>=85% (4.34)	>=85% (4.56)	78% (3.78)
The people I work with take an interest in what I do	76% (3.83)	>=85% (4.17)	56% (3.56)
I have access to other professionals for consultation purposes	69% (3.62)	>=85% (4.17)	56% (3.56)
I have access to enough materials to complete my job	62% (3.55)	50% (2.83)	78% (4.00)
I have enough authority to do my job	76% (3.83)	83% (3.78)	56% (3.56)
My supervisor is helpful	62% (4.24)	65% (3.76)	33% (3.00)
I feel connected to the school(s) I work in	59% (3.41)	61% (3.67)	75% (3.75)
The families of the clients I work with are usually helpful	62% (3.55)	33% (3.44)	44% (3.33)
In my present position, I have opportunities for professional development (i.e., conferences, continuing education, seminars)	76% (4.00)	78% (3.72)	78% (3.78)
There are opportunities for promotion in my career	21% (2.34)	18% (2.53)	0% (1.00)
I suffer from burnout	52% (3.38)	44% (3.06)	56%(3.22)
I receive an adequate amount of financial compensation for the work I do	28% (2.79)	28% (2.67)	22% (2.44)
Changes to the system within which I work (i.e., in the last 5 to 10 years) have negatively affected my ability to do my job	44% (3.44)	50% (3.50)	>=85% (4.67)
I feel that there are clients in need of speech-language services, who do not get service	>=85% (4.48)	>=85% (4.39)	>=85% (4.78)
I feel that there are clients receiving speech and language services which do not meet their needs	83% (4.17)	78% (4.06)	>=85% (4.33)

Notes. Mean ratings are reported in parentheses, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Percentages represent the proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements.

there was a more even split between those who do and do not suffer from burnout. Similarities across the regions were found when respondents were asked to rate how adequately they are financially compensated. Less than a third of respondents from all regions felt that they are adequately compensated for the work they do. Respondents rated opportunities for promotion in their career. The majority of respondents from all three regions felt that opportunities did not exist for promotion.

The investigators surveyed the respondents about the negative impact of recent changes to the system. Specifically, clinicians were asked to rate how changes

within the last 5 to 10 years have affected their ability to do their job. Thirteen respondents from rural Alberta and four respondents from urban Alberta felt that this question did not apply to their current work situation. Of the 16 respondents from rural Alberta who answered this question, less than half felt that they were adversely affected by these changes. In contrast, more than 85% of the Ontario respondents felt that changes to the system negatively affected their ability to do their work.

The respondents were surveyed regarding their ability to meet clients' needs within the constraints of their job. The majority of respondents from all three regions felt that there are clients receiving inadequate

service. Respondents from all three regions frequently selected lack of time and funding as explanations for inadequate services. Other factors listed by rural Alberta respondents were lack of S-LPs and support staff, extensive caseloads and waiting lists, and lack of specialized S-LP services due to remoteness of the area.

When the authors calculated the composite score of job satisfaction from these questions, there did not appear to be a substantial difference among the three regions. The composite score of job satisfaction for all participants in the study was significantly correlated with their rating of overall job satisfaction (Pearson $r = 0.358$, $p < .01$). Therefore, it appears that the survey questions relating to job satisfaction have some degree of face validity. The composite score was found to be significantly negatively correlated with the number of clients on the respondents' active caseload (Pearson $r = -0.313$, $p < .05$), suggesting that the larger the caseload, the less satisfied the S-LP was likely to be. The number of years worked by all respondents in the study was found to be significantly negatively correlated with overall job satisfaction ratings (Pearson $r = -0.294$, $p < .05$), suggesting that the longer respondents have worked, the less satisfied they were likely to be with their jobs.

Responses to Short Answer Questions

Respondents were asked if they had any suggestions for optimising service delivery in their work environment. They were asked to comment on the impact of any recent changes to their job situation and what they liked most and least about their job.

Among S-LPs surveyed, the following suggestions were reported most frequently. The majority of respondents felt that increased funding and increased staffing would optimise their service delivery. Four common suggestions to improve services emerged from the rural Alberta respondents: using aides more effectively, decreasing caseload sizes, providing more time with each client and increasing early intervention services. Participants in urban Alberta felt that having smaller caseloads, fewer schools, and less administrative responsibilities would also improve quality of service.

In Alberta, comments regarding the impact of recent changes to the profession were mainly focused on the Student Health Initiative Partnership (SHIP). In rural Alberta, respondents reported that the potential exists to decrease caseloads if all of the new positions created by SHIP are filled, but many S-LPs reported difficulty recruiting new staff. Rural S-LPs also reported that they are losing staff who move to urban areas to fill these new positions that have opened up due to the SHIP. At the time of this survey, instead of reducing caseloads, the respondents from rural Alberta had larger caseloads due

to the increased funding. Rural Alberta S-LPs also reported that due to the regionalisation of health authorities, they are now required to do extra travelling and deal with new standardised policies.

In urban Alberta, responses to the impact of recent changes on the job were mainly positive. It was reported that increased government funding from the SHIP has increased the number of S-LPs and decreased the number of schools each person services, but has also increased the age range and number of clients eligible for service. Respondents felt optimistic about the future, but they felt that during this period of transition, productivity and quality of services are negatively impacted.

In urban Ontario, responses to the impact of recent changes to their jobs were mostly negative. Respondents reported that overall services were reduced and a number of positions were lost due to funding cutbacks. Ontario respondents felt a decrease in their ability to perform their jobs and that this was taking away from the quality of service they could provide.

Respondents were asked which part of their job they liked the most. The most common answers were working with the children, parents, and other staff. They enjoyed seeing progress in their clients and the variety in their caseloads made the job interesting. They also enjoyed the flexibility and independence of the profession.

Lastly, respondents were asked which part of their job they liked the least. The most common responses from all three regions, were lack of time to perform the job adequately, large caseloads, and large amounts of paperwork. Many also expressed frustration with management and administrative conflicts; they felt administrators were making important decisions without knowledge of "front line situation and clients." Respondents from rural Alberta felt there was a lack of appropriate supervision and mentoring. In urban Ontario, fighting to retain services, positions, and funding each year was reported most frequently as the least liked part of the job.

Discussion

This study sought to preliminarily assess the job satisfaction and job setting characteristics of school S-LPs in three regions of Canada. Findings in the present study about the prevalence of burnout were in line, albeit less marked, than findings from Potter and Lagacé (1995) who reported burnout in 76% of their sample of Canadian S-LPs. Demographic information in the present study indicates that the average S-LP surveyed works almost 20 hours per week in excess of what they are paid for. Given this discrepancy, it is surprising that there weren't higher reports of burnout. Findings in the

present study of a significant inverse relationship between caseload size and job satisfaction agreed with results from the Pezzeri and Oratio (1991) study that found caseload size to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction. It is possible that large caseloads and professional burnout are endemic to the profession as a whole, being that it is a relatively young field with a small number of practitioners as compared to other health professions. Other findings seem to be unique to the Canadian setting, reflecting changes to the health system within different regions of Canada. As S-LPs are employed by different agencies and services are delivered differently in each of the three regions, job setting characteristics and factors contributing to job satisfaction were described differently by respondents from each area. These characteristics and factors contributed to provincial as well as urban-rural differences.

Characteristics Across Provinces

Overall, the majority of Alberta respondents reported being satisfied with their jobs, while a minority of respondents in the Ontario sample reported the same. Other commonalities in the reports of the respondents across the regions surveyed were prevalence of burnout, feelings that few opportunities exist for promotion, and reports of inadequate financial compensation. Suggestions provided by the respondents were for future legislation to lead to speech-language pathology being a mandated service with consistent guidelines and adequate funding across provinces. Adequate recognition and financial compensation may be important factors in job retention and reducing turnover rates, improving the quality of service.

Though changes to the system in which S-LPs work seem to impact satisfaction across all three regions of Canada, the S-LPs reported they still enjoy the service they deliver on a day-to-day basis. In their suggestions for optimising service delivery, respondents from all regions felt that increased funding and staffing were key components to optimal service delivery. However, it is interesting to note that while Ontario respondents reported funding cutbacks as limiting factors to the quality of service provision, the rural Alberta respondents' reported the same effect from funding increases, through loss of employees to jobs in urban areas.

Ontario Findings

It appears that local changes to the education system have had a strong impact on the respondents from the Ontario city the authors surveyed. Overall, the Ontario clinicians that responded to the survey were neutral or dissatisfied with their jobs. Nonetheless, there were

some aspects of their jobs that were rated positively, such as friendliness of coworkers, access to adequate materials, helpfulness of families, and connectedness to schools. However, owing to the small number and demographic homogeneity of the Ontario sample, the findings from this group are not generalisable beyond this sample. Furthermore, it is not possible to compare their responses to those from the Alberta samples. Given that the Ontario respondents have had a longer career span, and that job satisfaction was found to be negatively correlated with number of years worked, it is not possible to determine whether their lower reports of satisfaction are because they have been working longer than the Alberta respondents, or whether their reports are in response to the recent changes to their jobs. Their report of lack of stability and administrative support in this period of dramatic change may account for their reports of stress and dissatisfaction, rather than something inherently inadequate with a consultative model of service delivery. It may be worthwhile to conduct another survey later in time to examine whether attitudes change towards the consultative role. A more varied sample of respondents may also yield different results.

Alberta Findings

Alberta has undergone several changes to its health care system over the past ten years as well, and S-LPs perceived the more recent changes somewhat more positively than previous changes and cutbacks. They felt they have friendly coworkers who take an interest in their profession, and they have adequate access to other professionals for consultation. Supervisors were considered helpful and respondents felt they have enough authority to do their jobs. Finally, respondents felt they have adequate opportunities for professional development. Respondents from both urban and rural Alberta noted some negative aspects of their jobs, including large caseloads and a reduced feeling of connectedness to the schools they service. Overall rating of job satisfaction, and responses to questions relating to job satisfaction, were quite similar among both rural and urban Alberta respondents. This is in line with findings from Dunkin et al. (1996), that differences in job satisfaction of nurses were not found between rural and urban practitioners. Responses to short answer questions from the rural Alberta respondents did reveal some issues of geographical barriers as contributing to lack of adequate service. These same issues were not reported by the respondents from either urban site. These findings are similar to findings from Wills and Case-Smith (1996), and suggest some differences in the experience of urban versus rural practice.

Limitations

A major limitation of this study was the 44% response rate from surveys sent out to clinicians in the targeted regions. Although fairly typical, this reduced rate of return may indicate that only those who felt they had something significant to report about their particular work situation completed a survey. That is, they may have been particularly satisfied or dissatisfied, rendering the results difficult to generalize to the school setting in general, the provincial setting, or the urban versus rural setting. Another significant limitation of this study was the small number of Ontario respondents and the fact that they have been working significantly longer than the Alberta respondents. This latter demographic difference between the provincial samples meant that they were not comparable, as the number of years worked could have accounted for any differences in responses relating to job satisfaction.

Finally, the nature of the data collected reflects the perceptions of the respondents. For instance, a respondent may feel that there are no opportunities for promotion in their present position. Furthermore, the topic of job satisfaction may evoke responses coloured by emotion, rather than based on objective facts.

Directions for Future Research

Further research into the changing workplace and identification of specific factors that may contribute to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of S-LPs need to be explored. Data need to be collected from other areas of Canada in order to validate present conclusions, as well as to reflect the larger population of S-LPs across all provinces and clinical settings. The comments coming from short answer questions lend content validity to particular questions on the rating scale. Further research into issues such as job satisfaction in the face of burnout and unpaid overtime may increase the accuracy of the current measure of job satisfaction. In the present study, a relationship between job satisfaction and differences in service delivery models or changes in funding policies was not assessed. Future studies may want to investigate these relationships as well.

The respondents were asked to comment about any unaddressed aspects of job satisfaction in the survey. Some common reports were that there should have been questions about availability of appropriate space to carry out assessments and intervention, amount and complexity of administration and paperwork, attitudes about increased use of paraprofessionals in the profession, and issues of unpaid overtime.

Summary

This study provides an initial look at job setting characteristics and the satisfaction of Canadian S-LPs in their jobs in the schools. The majority of respondents reported being burnt out, having heavy caseloads, and being negatively affected by changes to the workplace. Why, then, are the majority of S-LPs still reporting overall satisfaction with their jobs? Perhaps it is more pertinent to ask which aspects of one's job are adequate, which aspects need changing, and furthermore, whether the former are sufficient to warrant remaining in one's current job. The reports of lack of work place stability, inadequate pay, heavy workloads and lack of appropriate funding are difficult to ignore. All of these factors should be taken into consideration when examining the efficacy of the current working situation of the school speech-language pathologist, and should also be considered when funding and service delivery issues are being deliberated.

Author Notes

The contributions of Jason Greene are greatly appreciated for graciously volunteering his programming expertise in developing our database. Our appreciation also goes to Carla Hannock for her input in the creation of our survey questions. Finally, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the speech-language pathologists who took the time to complete this survey, and for the insight they offered in doing so. Please address all correspondence to Sofie Kaegi, 85 Crescent Street, Peterborough, ON K9J 2G2, sofiekaegi@hotmail.com.

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Manuscript received: May 13, 2001

Accepted: January 22, 2002



Appendix

Job Satisfaction Survey of School Speech-Language Pathologists

A. Background Questions

1. In which province do you work? Alberta _____ Ontario _____

2. How long have you been working as a Speech-Language Pathologist?
____ Years OR ____ Months (if less than one year)

3. How long have you been employed in your present position?
____ Years OR ____ Months (if less than one year)

4. What is your highest degree earned?
Bachelor's _____ Master's _____ PhD _____

A. Job Setting Characteristics

1. In which environment do you primarily work?
Rural/Town (less than 10,000 people) _____ City _____

2. Who are you employed by?
Board of Education _____ Regional Health Authority _____
Other (please specify) _____

3. How many hours of work are you paid for each week? _____

4. How many schools do you service? _____

5. What is/are the student population(s) you serve?

Preschool _____ Elementary school _____ Junior High School _____
 High School _____ Other _____

6. How many clients are on your active caseload? (i.e., Those you see at least once a month) _____

7. How many clients are on your waiting list for:

First time assessment _____ Repeat assessment _____ First time treatment _____
 Repeat treatment _____ Other _____

8. How many clients did you see on your last workday? _____

Using the following scale, please answer questions #9 and #10 on how frequently you implement the various types of intervention

Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Always
 1 2 3 4 5

9. Service delivery models.

N R S F A

Pull-out model (i.e., You provide treatment outside of the classroom) 1 2 3 4 5

Consultative/Indirect model (i.e., with a teacher, parent, or speech assistant) 1 2 3 4 5

Classroom/Collaborative model 1 2 3 4 5
 (i.e., S-LP and teacher provide intervention together in classroom)

Other (Please specify the service delivery model _____) 1 2 3 4 5

10. Individual-Group therapy

One-on-One Intervention 1 2 3 4 5

One Clinician with Two clients 1 2 3 4 5

Small Groups (three to five clients) 1 2 3 4 5

Larger Groups (more than five clients) 1 2 3 4 5

11. Of your total caseload, what is the percentage of clients who are...

(Please ensure the numbers add up to 100%)

Mildly impaired _____ Moderately impaired _____

Severely impaired _____ Profoundly impaired _____

12. Please check the statement that applies **most** to you regarding the range of impairments you handle in your schools.
 I treat a full range of speech and language impairments _____
 I specialise in treating a particular area of speech and language impairment _____

13. What is the approximate number of hours you spent engaged in each of the following activities last week? (please specify N/A for the activities that do not apply)

Preassessment _____	Other (please specify) _____	Treatment and Assessment _____
Research related activities _____	Treatment Planning _____	Administration and Meetings _____
Report writing _____	Travel (i.e., between schools) _____	
Consultation with clients/family members _____	Consultation with other professionals _____	
Supervising or teaching other clinical facilitator _____		

14. In your work situation, are there guidelines set out to decide the types of disorders you treat?
 Yes _____ No _____

If you answered "no", please proceed to question #15.

14a) These guidelines are strictly enforced.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

14b) I am satisfied with these guidelines

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

15. In your work situation, are there guidelines set out regarding the distribution of your time (e.g., for activities in #13)? Yes _____ No _____

If you answered "no", please proceed to question #16.

15a) These guidelines are strictly enforced.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

15b) I am satisfied with these guidelines

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

16. In your work situation, are there guidelines set out regarding discharge criteria? Yes _____ No _____

If you answered "no", please proceed to section C.

16a) These guidelines are strictly enforced.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

16b) I am satisfied with these guidelines

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

C. Questions Relating to Job Satisfaction

Using the following scale, please rate the following statements

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my job	1	2	3	4	5
2. The people I work with are friendly	1	2	3	4	5
3. The people I work with take an interest in what I do	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have access to other professionals for consultation purposes	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have access to enough materials to complete my job	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have enough authority to do my job	1	2	3	4	5
7. My supervisor is helpful	1	2	3	4	5
8. I feel connected to the school(s) I work in	1	2	3	4	5
9. The families of the clients I work with are usually helpful	1	2	3	4	5
10. In my present position, I have opportunities for professional development (i.e., conferences, continuing education, seminars)	1	2	3	4	5
11. There are opportunities for promotion in my career	1	2	3	4	5
12. I suffer from "burn-out"	1	2	3	4	5
13. I receive an adequate amount of financial compensation for the work I do	1	2	3	4	5
14. Changes to the system within which I work (i.e., in the last five to ten years) have negatively affected my ability to do my job				N/A	
15. I feel that there are clients in need of speech-language services, who do not get service	1	2	3	4	5
16. I feel that there are clients receiving speech and language services which do not meet their needs.	1	2	3	4	5
17. If you agreed or strongly agreed with questions #15 and/or #16, check off the criteria, which are the bases for inadequate service					
Time constraint _____ Priorities of the health system _____ Legislation _____					
Lack of expertise in a specialised area _____ Funding _____ Other (please specify) _____					
18. Do you have any suggestions for optimising service delivery in your work environment? If so, please comment.					
19. If you had more time, what would you do with it?					
20. Please comment on the impact of any recent changes to your job situation (e.g., distribution of government funds, recent hiring or cut-backs, etc.)					
21. What do you like most about your job?					
22. What do you like least about your job?					
23. Are there any aspects of job satisfaction that were not addressed in this survey? Please comment.					

We welcome any additional comments you may have, including your view on the future of this profession, and where would you like to see it go.