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Declarations

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Job Satisfaction Among Physiotherapists

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ABSTRACT

Background: Job satisfaction among physiotherapists influences workforce retention, productivity, and service quality, particularly in early career stages when professionals are adapting to workplace demands and professional accountability. **Objective:** To determine overall job satisfaction and domain-level satisfaction patterns among early-career physiotherapists working as clinicians and lecturers in Lahore using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). **Methods:** This observational cross-sectional study recruited early-career physiotherapists from universities, clinics, and hospitals in Lahore using purposive sampling. Demographic and occupational characteristics were recorded, and job satisfaction was assessed using the MSQ. Data were analyzed in SPSS version 25 using descriptive statistics and presented as frequencies, percentages, and mean \pm standard deviation. **Results:** A total of 183 physiotherapists participated (51.9% female). The mean age was 26.57 ± 2.10 years and mean experience was 1.89 ± 0.99 years. Overall MSQ scores ranged from 44 to 100, with a mean of 71.40 ± 10.53 . Based on MSQ scoring categories, 70 (38.3%) participants were highly satisfied and 113 (61.7%) were moderately satisfied. Satisfaction was strongest for autonomy-related domains and workplace environment indicators, while comparatively lower satisfaction was observed for pay relative to workload and praise/recognition. **Conclusion:** Early-career physiotherapists in Lahore reported moderate to high job satisfaction, with improvement opportunities centered on compensation and professional recognition.

Keywords

Job satisfaction, Physiotherapists, Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, Early career, Workplace factors

INTRODUCTION

Physiotherapists play a central role in modern multidisciplinary healthcare systems through direct involvement in acute care, rehabilitation, community health, disability management, primary care, and preventive health services (1). The quality and efficiency of physiotherapy services are closely linked to workforce wellbeing, because a satisfied workforce tends to demonstrate improved productivity, greater professional commitment, and stronger retention, while dissatisfaction contributes to higher turnover intentions, reduced efficiency, and compromised service delivery (2). Job satisfaction is classically defined as the extent to which individuals experience positive affect and fulfillment related to their occupational role and work environment, reflecting an interaction between personal expectations and workplace realities (3).

Job satisfaction among healthcare professionals is influenced by both intrinsic factors (autonomy, professional identity, sense of accomplishment) and extrinsic factors (salary, recognition, promotion opportunities, supervision quality, and workplace policies) (4). In early career phases, these determinants can become particularly important because newly employed clinicians and academics often navigate rapid transitions into independent practice, professional accountability, and organizational expectations, while simultaneously adapting to workplace culture and workload constraints (5). Evidence from physiotherapy-related settings suggests that autonomy, mentorship access, supportive leadership, and structured career pathways are major facilitators of job satisfaction and career progression, whereas inadequate compensation, limited professional development opportunities, heavy workloads, and organizational emphasis on revenue generation can contribute to dissatisfaction (6,7).

International literature indicates that physiotherapists in multiple settings report moderate-to-high job satisfaction, but dissatisfaction is often concentrated in domains related to pay, recognition, and workload balance (8). In musculoskeletal physiotherapy practice, high satisfaction has been associated with practice ownership, income satisfaction, career development opportunities, and mentorship access (9). Conversely, research involving early-career physiotherapists has identified lower satisfaction when workplaces provide limited recognition, reduced professional autonomy, and high administrative or financial pressures (10). Moreover, early career stress, burnout risk, and mental health symptoms such as anxiety and depression have been reported among physiotherapists in Pakistan, where financial challenges, job insecurity, and limited structured career development may further intensify dissatisfaction (11,12).

Despite growing physiotherapy workforce numbers and increasing clinical demand, there remains limited city-level evidence describing job satisfaction patterns among physiotherapists in the early stage of employment in Pakistan, particularly in Lahore where clinical and academic physiotherapy roles have expanded rapidly. Understanding satisfaction levels and identifying domains with lower satisfaction is necessary to inform leadership strategies, workplace policies, and professional development structures to support workforce wellbeing and retention. Therefore, the objective of this study was to determine the level of job satisfaction among early-career physiotherapists working as clinicians and lecturers in Lahore using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire and to describe domain-level satisfaction patterns across key workplace factors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This observational cross-sectional study was conducted in Lahore, Pakistan, across physiotherapy-related workplaces including universities, clinics, and hospitals. Early-career physiotherapists working either as lecturers in academic institutions or as clinicians in clinical settings were recruited using a purposive sampling approach to ensure representation of physiotherapists employed across both academic and clinical practice environments. Eligible participants included physiotherapists currently working in Lahore who were in the early stage of their professional employment, irrespective of gender. Individuals who did not provide complete questionnaire responses were excluded from final analysis.

Data were collected using a structured performa that included demographic and occupational characteristics and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), a widely used standardized instrument for measuring job satisfaction across intrinsic and extrinsic domains (13). The questionnaire was administered to participants in person at relevant institutions, and responses were recorded anonymously. The MSQ yields a satisfaction score that reflects overall job satisfaction based on respondents' ratings of multiple workplace dimensions, including autonomy, working conditions, supervision, pay, recognition, coworker relationships, and advancement opportunities. A higher total score indicates greater job satisfaction.

The primary outcome measure was overall job satisfaction as assessed through MSQ scoring. For reporting clarity, overall satisfaction was described in two categories based on the scoring approach used in this study: highly satisfied and moderately satisfied. Secondary outcomes included domain-level satisfaction distributions for individual MSQ workplace dimensions such as pay, praise/recognition, working conditions, coworker relationships, and autonomy-related items.

Data were analyzed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Quantitative variables such as age, experience, and MSQ total score were summarized as mean and standard deviation, alongside minimum and maximum values. Categorical variables were summarized using frequencies and percentages. Results are presented in consolidated tables to provide clear domain-level satisfaction distributions and overall satisfaction patterns. Data integrity checks were performed prior to analysis to ensure consistency of totals and valid response ranges.

RESULTS

A total of 183 physiotherapists participated, with a slightly higher proportion of females (95, 51.9%) compared to males (88, 48.1%). Participants were young early-career professionals with a mean age of 26.57 ± 2.10 years (range 23–30 years). Professional experience ranged from 2 months to 3 years, with a mean of 1.89 ± 0.99 years. Nearly equal representation was observed across job roles, with 94 (51.4%) working as PT consultants and 89 (48.6%) working as lecturers. Most participants (163, 89.1%) reported having freedom to use their own judgment during diagnosis, indicating a high level of perceived clinical autonomy.

Table 1. Demographic and Occupational Characteristics of Participants (n = 183)

Variable	Category / Summary	Result
Gender	Male	88 (48.1%)
	Female	95 (51.9%)
Age (years)	Mean \pm SD	26.57 ± 2.10
	Range	23–30
Experience (years)	Mean \pm SD	1.89 ± 0.99
	Range	0.17–3.00
Job Type	PT Consultant (Clinician)	94 (51.4%)
	Lecturer	89 (48.6%)
Freedom to use own judgment during diagnosis	Yes	163 (89.1%)
	No	20 (10.9%)

Table 2. Overall Job Satisfaction Based on MSQ Scoring (n = 183)

Overall Satisfaction Category	Frequency	Percentage
Highly satisfied	70	38.3%
Moderately satisfied	113	61.7%
Total	183	100.0%

Using the MSQ scoring categorization applied in this study, 70 physiotherapists (38.3%) were classified as highly satisfied, whereas 113 (61.7%) were classified as moderately satisfied. This indicates that the majority of early-career physiotherapists in Lahore reported a generally acceptable level of satisfaction, with a substantial proportion also demonstrating strong job satisfaction.

Table 3. MSQ Total Score Summary (n = 183)

Statistic	Value
Minimum score	44
Maximum score	100
Mean score	71.40
Standard deviation	10.53

Table 4. Satisfaction Distribution for Autonomy and Growth Domains (n = 183)

Domain Item	Very dissatisfied n (%)	Dissatisfied n (%)	Normal n (%)	Satisfied n (%)	Very satisfied n (%)
Chance for advancement on job	4 (2.2)	16 (8.7)	60 (32.8)	81 (44.3)	22 (12.0)
Freedom to use own judgment	6 (3.3)	13 (7.1)	59 (32.2)	78 (42.6)	27 (14.8)
Chance to try own methods	5 (2.7)	16 (8.7)	50 (27.3)	88 (48.1)	24 (13.1)

The MSQ total score ranged from 44 to 100, with a mean score of 71.40 ± 10.53 , reflecting moderate-to-high overall job satisfaction across this early-career cohort. The dispersion (SD 10.53) indicates meaningful variability in satisfaction levels across individuals, supporting the relevance of domain-level satisfaction analysis.

Satisfaction related to professional autonomy and growth opportunities was generally favorable. For advancement opportunities, 103 participants (56.3%) reported being satisfied or very satisfied, while 20 (10.9%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Freedom to use professional judgment showed similarly strong satisfaction patterns, with 105 (57.4%) reporting satisfaction or high satisfaction. The ability to try one's own methods

demonstrated the strongest positive distribution, with 112 (61.2%) reporting satisfaction or very high satisfaction, indicating that early-career physiotherapists perceived meaningful autonomy in performing their work.

Table 5. Satisfaction Distribution for Workplace Environment and Recognition Domains (n = 183)

Domain Item	Very dissatisfied n (%)	Dissatisfied n (%)	Normal n (%)	Satisfied n (%)	Very satisfied n (%)
Working conditions	1 (0.5)	16 (8.7)	57 (31.1)	90 (49.2)	19 (10.4)
Coworkers get along	5 (2.7)	14 (7.7)	58 (31.7)	87 (47.5)	19 (10.4)
Praise/recognition for doing job	7 (3.8)	27 (14.8)	67 (36.6)	67 (36.6)	15 (8.2)
Feeling of accomplishment	4 (2.2)	15 (8.2)	75 (41.0)	68 (37.2)	21 (11.5)

Workplace environment indicators showed broadly positive satisfaction patterns. For working conditions, 109 (59.6%) were satisfied or very satisfied, whereas only 17 (9.2%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Coworker relationships were similarly favorable, with 106 (57.9%) reporting satisfaction or very high satisfaction. However, praise and recognition exhibited comparatively weaker satisfaction, as 34 participants (18.6%) reported dissatisfaction, while only 82 (44.8%) reported satisfaction or high satisfaction. The feeling of accomplishment was largely stable with 89 (48.7%) satisfied or very satisfied, but a relatively large proportion remained in the neutral category (75, 41.0%), suggesting scope for strengthening intrinsic reinforcement through professional feedback, mentorship, and career development frameworks.

Table 6. Satisfaction Distribution for “Chance to Work Alone” and Pay-Workload Domain (n = 183)

Domain Item	Very dissatisfied n (%)	Dissatisfied n (%)	Normal n (%)	Satisfied n (%)	Very satisfied n (%)
Chance to work alone	0 (0.0)	10 (5.5)	73 (39.9)	85 (46.4)	15 (8.2)
Pay relative to amount of work	3 (1.6)	29 (15.9)	58 (31.7)	70 (38.3)	23 (12.6)

A majority of participants reported favorable satisfaction with their ability to work independently, with 100 physiotherapists (54.6%) satisfied or very satisfied and only 10 (5.5%) dissatisfied. In contrast, pay relative to workload was among the weakest domains: 32 participants (17.5%) reported dissatisfaction or very dissatisfaction, while 93 (50.9%) were satisfied or very satisfied. Although satisfaction exceeded dissatisfaction, the higher dissatisfaction proportion compared with other domains supports the interpretation that compensation remains a key area for improvement in early-career physiotherapists.

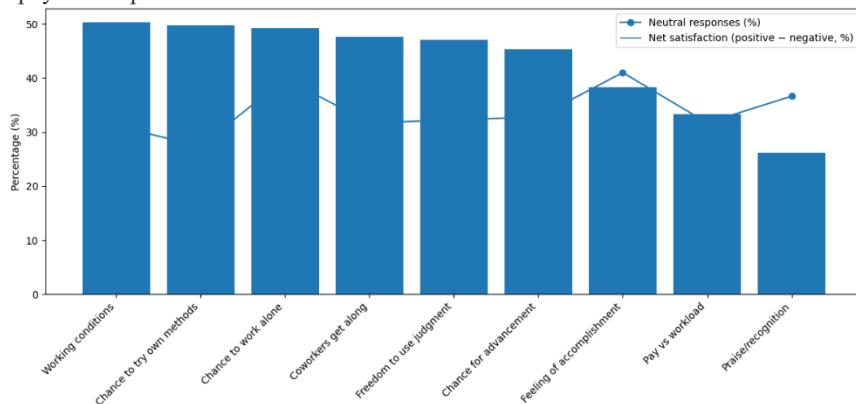


Figure 1 Domain-Level Net Satisfaction and Neutral Response Burden Among Early-Career Physiotherapists (n = 183)

Across MSQ domains, the strongest net satisfaction was observed for working conditions with 109/183 (59.6%) satisfied or very satisfied versus 17/183 (9.3%) dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, yielding a net satisfaction of +50.3%, despite a neutral burden of 31.1%. Similarly high net satisfaction was seen for chance to try own methods (112/183, 61.2% positive vs 21/183, 11.5% negative; net +49.7%) and chance to work alone (100/183, 54.6% positive vs 10/183, 5.5% negative; net +49.2%), with a comparatively high neutral load for working alone (39.9%). In contrast, praise/recognition demonstrated the weakest satisfaction gradient, with only 82/183 (44.8%) satisfied or very satisfied against 34/183 (18.6%) dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, producing the lowest net satisfaction (+26.2%) and a large neutral proportion (36.6%). The pay relative to workload domain also showed a reduced net satisfaction (+33.3%) due to a higher dissatisfaction proportion (32/183, 17.5%) compared with most other domains, indicating that compensation and recognition remain the principal satisfaction vulnerabilities despite generally favorable autonomy and workplace-environment ratings.

DISCUSSION

This study evaluated job satisfaction among early-career physiotherapists working as clinicians and lecturers in Lahore and found that most participants were either moderately satisfied (61.7%) or highly satisfied (38.3%), with an overall MSQ score averaging 71.40 ± 10.53 . These findings indicate a generally positive job satisfaction profile among early-career physiotherapists, consistent with evidence from multiple healthcare settings suggesting that professional autonomy, supportive environments, and meaningful clinical roles can promote positive occupational attitudes (2,3). The early-career period is recognized as a critical stage for professional socialization and retention, where workplace conditions strongly influence long-term career commitment and workforce stability (5).

Domain-level analysis demonstrated that autonomy-related dimensions were among the strongest satisfaction domains. More than half of participants reported being satisfied or very satisfied with freedom to use their judgment and the opportunity to try their own methods. Similar patterns have been reported in physiotherapy research showing that professional independence, clinical decision-making authority, and autonomy are strongly associated with satisfaction and career progression, particularly when supported through organizational trust and flexible clinical

structures (6,9). These findings are favorable for workforce retention, as autonomy is closely linked to professional identity and intrinsic motivation, especially among young clinicians transitioning into independent practice (5).

The present results also identified relatively strong satisfaction in workplace environment factors such as working conditions and coworker relationships. Almost 58% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with coworker relationships, and nearly 60% reported satisfaction with working conditions. Workplace social support and positive interpersonal relationships are widely recognized as protective factors for job satisfaction and work engagement, contributing to reduced occupational stress and improved team-based service delivery (14). Evidence from healthcare settings supports that social capital and team cohesion enhance job satisfaction through improved collaboration and psychological safety (14). For physiotherapy work, which is frequently collaborative and interdisciplinary, team function is particularly relevant to perceived work quality and professional fulfillment (1,4).

Despite overall positive satisfaction levels, the weakest satisfaction domains were pay and workplace recognition (praise). Nearly one-fifth of participants reported dissatisfaction with pay relative to workload, and 18.6% were dissatisfied with praise and recognition. These patterns align with prior findings that compensation and perceived undervaluation are common dissatisfaction drivers among early-career physiotherapists, particularly in resource-limited contexts where salary structures may not match workload demands or professional expectations (10,12). In Pakistan, previous reports indicate that financial strain and workplace dissatisfaction contribute to psychological distress among physiotherapists, including depression, stress, and anxiety symptoms (11). While the present study did not measure mental health outcomes directly, the observed dissatisfaction concentration in pay and praise domains highlights important areas for organizational intervention, including structured salary progression models, performance recognition frameworks, and mentorship-led feedback systems.

Importantly, the results should be interpreted within the limitations of a cross-sectional, purposively sampled design. The study provides descriptive evidence of satisfaction levels and domain distributions but does not establish causality or identify independent predictors. Additionally, the sampling approach limits generalizability beyond the included institutions and workplaces in Lahore. Nevertheless, this study contributes important early-career workforce evidence, emphasizing that job satisfaction among physiotherapists is generally favorable but may be strengthened through improved compensation structures, formal recognition systems, and leadership strategies that support professional growth and workforce wellbeing (4,8,15).

CONCLUSION

In this cross-sectional study of 183 early-career physiotherapists working in Lahore, most participants reported moderate to high job satisfaction, with 61.7% moderately satisfied and 38.3% highly satisfied and an overall MSQ score of 71.40 ± 10.53 ; satisfaction was strongest in autonomy-related domains such as freedom to use judgment and trying one's own methods, as well as workplace environment indicators including coworker relationships and working conditions, while comparatively lower satisfaction was observed for pay relative to workload and praise/recognition, highlighting the need for workplace policies that improve compensation progression, strengthen professional feedback systems, and promote supportive leadership and collaborative work cultures to enhance retention and workforce wellbeing.

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