

# Job Satisfaction among Doctors during COVID-19 Pandemic; a Study in a tertiary care Hospital of Lahore, Pakistan

Shamaila Zamir,<sup>1</sup> Rabbiya Sarwar,<sup>2</sup> Wajiha Naz,<sup>1</sup> Fatima Sajid,<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Suffyan,<sup>1</sup> Mohammad Jawwad Rashid,<sup>1</sup> Munir Saleemi<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

**Background:** Hospital staff during a pandemic like Covid-19, are prone to stress and it may affect their job satisfaction.

**Objective:** To determine job satisfaction in doctors amidst COVID-19 pandemic at the University of Lahore Teaching Hospital (ULTH), Lahore, and to identify factors that influence job satisfaction the most.

**Methodology:** Descriptive cross-sectional study was done from April 30 to October 30, 2021, at ULTH, Lahore. A total number of 135 doctors (House officers, Medical officers & Consultants) working for a duration of 3 months in COVID-19 unit at ULTH were included. Pre validated online questionnaire was used. The data collected were analyzed by descriptive statistics using SPSS, 25th version. A 6-point Likert scale for satisfaction was used to assess the job satisfaction level of doctors. For quantitative variables, percentage scores and cumulative percentages were calculated.

**Results:** More than half of the doctors were male and less than 30 years. Majority (67%) were working during COVID-19 pandemic for more than 6 months. About 90% of doctors willingly performed their duty in this pandemic. About half (40%) of doctors were assessed for stress, anxiety, and depression. About 78% did not get free health care services when infected. About 32 % of them experienced physical abuse and 67.4% verbal abuse by the patients. Meanwhile, 31.1% of doctors were somewhat satisfied with the distribution of workload and about 30 % were satisfied with the availability of PPE.

**Conclusion:** Most of the doctors performed their duties willingly during COVID-19 pandemic in ULTH, Lahore, and were somewhat to completely satisfied with their jobs.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Job Satisfaction, Pandemic

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## Introduction

Job satisfaction refers to how people feel, pleasant or unpleasant about their employment.<sup>1,2</sup> People who are willing workers practice new initiatives and show more creative skills at their workplace.<sup>3</sup> In December 2019, a COVID-19 outbreak was reported for the first time in Wuhan, China then spreading globally including America, Australia, Europe, and Asia, including Pakistan.<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a severe acute respiratory syndrome caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.<sup>5</sup> According to several studies physicians were experiencing bereavement, isolation, and loss of income triggering sadness and anxiety as a result of the coronavirus epidemic, which could lead to burnout. Burnout is work-related stress and

exhaustion caused by prolonged exposure to a demanding working condition.<sup>3</sup> Immense panic, depression, insomnia, and anxiety had been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic amongst doctors. In comparison with general people healthcare workers (HCWs) including doctors and nurses were at greater risk of developing mental health issues due to their direct contact with the patients.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it necessitates helping HCWs deal with their mental health issues and providing them with emotional and psychological support.<sup>7</sup>

In Pakistan, there was a huge impact of the coronavirus pandemic on frontline healthcare workers. Studies showed that they have been under great psychological stress and emotional trauma as a result of COVID-19. They experienced panic, insomnia, and anxiety due to fear of contracting infection, exhaustion, insufficient resources, isolation, and the risk of transmitting the infection to their family. Moreover, while specifying the reasons

1. University of Lahore, Pakistan

2. Department of Public Health, The University of Health Sciences, Lahore.

**Correspondence:** Dr. Rabbiya Sarwar, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Health, The University of Health Sciences, Lahore.

**Email:** [rabbianaem@gmail.com](mailto:rabbianaem@gmail.com)

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for mental health issues of HCWs working in corona wards, ICU, or isolation units, particular needs of HCWs were also identified that should be met to reduce the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and uncertainty about the current situation in them.<sup>4</sup> There were far more chances for infection to spread among HCWs or those working at the frontline looking after the patients with coronavirus disease (COVID-19). In order to prevent transmission of infection amongst HCWs and patients, there was a need for effective and efficient use of personal protective equipment (PPE), masks, gowns, gloves, face shields, and respirators.<sup>8</sup> However, inappropriate use of PPEs by the general public and the projected shortage of PPEs in places of high demand had led to the lack of PPEs for HCWs who were in serious need of PPEs for their safety. This was a matter of grave concern requiring a large increase in PPE manufacturing given the rapid demand amidst the rise of COVID-19 patients.<sup>9</sup>

So far, most studies have focused mainly on the job satisfaction of doctors in general. More research needs to be done on the topic that directly addresses the job satisfaction level of doctors while working during the pandemic. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to measure the job satisfaction amongst doctors of the University of Lahore Teaching Hospital (ULTH) Lahore during the COVID-19 pandemic and to identify the associated influencing factors. Hence, this study is of great reference value for the concerned authorities while making future strategies to enhance doctors' job satisfaction during public health emergencies.

## Methodology

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted from April 30 to October 30, 2021, at the University of Lahore Teaching Hospital (ULTH), Lahore, Pakistan. A total number of 135 doctors (House officers, Medical officers & Consultants) working for a duration of 3 months in the COVID-19 unit at ULTH, Lahore were included. Non-probability purposive sampling technique was used. Pre validated online questionnaire was used and delivered to the doctors by email who were requested to return after filling it. Contact details and emails of doctors were taken from the HR of

the hospital. SPSS 25th version was used to analyze the data collected. Data were analyzed by descriptive statistics. A 6-point Likert scale with a score range of 1 to 6: 1. Strongly Dissatisfied; 2. Dissatisfied; 3. Somewhat Dissatisfied; 4. Somewhat Satisfied; 5. Satisfied; 6. Strongly Satisfied respectively, was used to assess the job satisfaction level of doctors. For quantitative variables, percentage scores and cumulative percentages were calculated. Ethical approval was taken from the ethical committee of UOL Lahore.

## Results

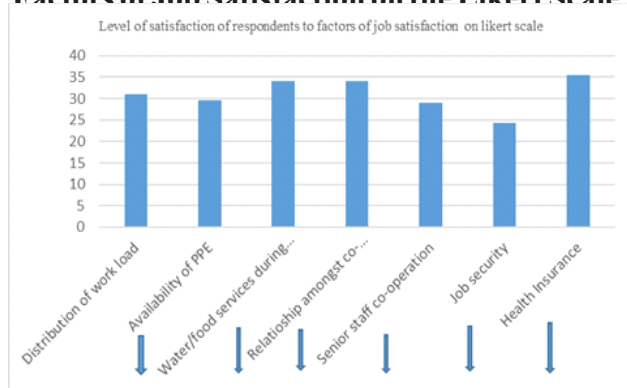
This study showed that a total of 135 doctors were included, all working in ULTH Hospital. The majority of doctors were of less than 30 years (56.6%) and the majority of them were males (57.8%) and married (54.8%).

**Table I: Sociodemographic characteristics of doctors in the study**

Sociodemographic characteristics	N=135	Percentage
<b>Age in years</b>		
<30	75	55.6
30 – 40	44	32.6
>40	16	11.9
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	78	57.8
Female	57	42.2
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	74	54.8
Unmarried	61	45.2
<b>Place of posting in Hospital</b>		
Non-COVID duty	49	36.6
COVID isolation unit	11	8.1
ICU	11	8.1
Combined	64	47.4
<b>Designation</b>		
House Officer	27	20.0
Medical officer	64	47.7
Consultant	44	32.6
<b>Working Experience in Hospital</b>		
Less than 1 year	44	32.6
1-5 year	67	49.6
More than 5 year	24	17.8
<b>Working Duration in COVID-19</b>		
< 4 months	38	28.1
4 months to 6 months	30	22.2
> 6 months	67	49.6

Doctors' work profiles showed that most of them were designated as medical officers (47.4%), others included consultants (32.6%) and house officers (20%). The majority (49.6%) had working experience of 1-5 years in a hospital and most of them (67%) were working during the COVID-19 pandemic for more than 6 months. (Table-I)

**Figure I: Level of Satisfaction of respondents to Factors of Job Satisfaction on the Likert Scale**



SS=31.1%, S=29.6%, D=34.1, SS=34.1%, S=28.9%, SS=24.4%, DS=35.6%

- SS=Somewhat satisfied
- S=Satisfied
- D=Dissatisfied

Figure-I shows that about a quarter (29.6%) of the participants were satisfied with the availability of PPE and (28.9%) with senior staff cooperation. However, participants were somewhat satisfied with the distribution of workload (31.1%), relationship with coworkers (34.1%), and with job security (24.4%). Meanwhile, (34.1%) of participants were dissatisfied with water and food services provided during ward duties and (35.6%) with health insurance.

As depicted in Table-II, more than 87% willingly performed their duty during this Pandemic and more than 50% of them found no change in their duty hours and salary during the Covid-19 period. Infectivity rate among them while working in Covid-19 Isolation Ward was 40%. The majority of them (93%) knew how to protect themselves and their patients during the pandemic. Almost all doctors (95.6%) were concerned about their families while going home after performing their duties in covid-19 ward, 40% were assessed for

stress, anxiety, and depression and 80% were emotionally drained. About two-quarters of doctors (78.5%) were of the view that they did not get free healthcare services if they get infected. The majority of them (85.2%) were not counseled regarding mental health. More than half of doctors (53%) had not thought of quitting their job at any moment during Covid-19 duties. About 32 % of participants experienced physical abuse and 67.4% verbal abuse by the patients. About 90 % of doctors didn't receive any reward or appreciation for working during the pandemic.

**Table II: Factors related to Doctors' Job Satisfaction during COVID-19**

Factors	Response	Number	Percentage
Did you perform your duty in this pandemic willingly	Yes	118	87.4
Was there any change in your duty hours during COVID-19?	No	70	51.9
Was there any change in your salary during your duty in COVID-19?	No	68	50.4
Did you know how to protect yourself and your patients during an epidemic	Yes	126	93.3
Did you get free health services if you had been infected?	No	106	78.5
Were you concerned about your family while going home after performing your duty in - COVID-19 ward?	Yes	129	95.6
Did you ever feel while performing duties during COVID-19 duties?	Tired Emotionally drained Burnt out	26 11 1	19.3 80.0 0.7
Had you been assessed for stress, anxiety, and depression during your COVID-19 duties?	Yes	54	40.0
Had you experienced any sort of abuse by patients/ attendants during COVID-19?	Verbal Physical	91 44	67.4 32.6
Did you have any thought of quitting your job at any moment during COVID-19 duties?	No	72	53.3
Any reward or appreciation by the organization for working in Pandemic	No	119	88.1

## Discussion

In our study, we instituted diverse factors which are governing the job satisfaction of doctors during COVID-19. In our research a total of 135 doctors were included, the majority of them (55.6%) were under the age of 30 years; male (57.8%), and married (54.8%) in which many were medical officers (47.4%). Our study's demographic profile was in accordance with the study conducted in Jordan to measure job satisfaction among doctors during the COVID-19 outbreak; the mean age of doctors was

34.6±9.9, about two third of them 24–34 years old, majority of doctors (69.8%) were males and married (60.1%).<sup>10</sup>

People rushing to hospitals required urgent treatment. Doctors not only had to suffer from rush hours but also had to stress about many aspects. According to our research, 40% of the concerned doctors were under stress, anxiety, and depression while performing their duties in Covid-19 Ward. These results can be due to the 95.6 % of the majority of doctors were not only afraid for themselves but also showed a huge concern while going home after performing their duties in the Covid-19 ward as it may threaten the lives of their families, majority of the concerned ones were married. Similar results were seen among armed forces doctors for anxiety and depression (35%) and (28%) respectively during the COVID-19 pandemic in India.<sup>6</sup> Another study supported our results in which it was found that the main concerns of HCWs during the pandemic are chances of infection of colleagues and their own family and more than 50% experienced psychological distress.<sup>11</sup> A research that was held in Pakistan in 2020 had different findings from our study, in which around 64% had anxiety and 62% had depression was found to be due to poor handling of the whole pandemic situation and the increased number of deaths among doctors.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, a study conducted in China showed the prevalence of stress (73.4%), anxiety (44.7%), and depression (50.7%) amongst HCWs during the COVID-19 pandemic. These mental health issues were found more in young female HCWs belonging to non-clinical specialties having a doctoral degree.<sup>13</sup> To add fuel to it, in our study 32.6% of the patients were physically abusive to their doctors and 67.4% were verbally abusive. Most of them (88.1%) had no appreciation as well, which led to (80%) of them an emotionally drained situation. This is in contrast to a cross-sectional survey conducted in 24 healthcare facilities in three cities of Pakistan, on HCWs during COVID-19. About 42% of HCWs reported experiencing some violence in the previous two months, amongst others physical violence by (6.5%) and verbal abuse reported by (33.1%). The majority (85.2%) of doctors were not counseled or looked out for their mental health. It was found

that the main reason for the violence was misinformation in the mainstream media about COVID-19 being a conspiracy and the false belief that people were being investigated and treated unnecessarily.<sup>14</sup>

In our study, the burnout percentage of doctors was only 0.7%. The reason for this could be that according to more than 50% of our participants the duty hours did not change for them during the pandemic situation and they (87.4 %) were performing their duties willingly during the pandemic. This is in contrast to a survey study in which it was found that 54.4% of US physicians reported at least one symptom of burnout due to burnout contributors like excessive workloads, working hours, personal characteristics, and organizational factors.<sup>15</sup> Moreover in another study (57.7%) of doctors had burnout associated with long working hours, increased workload, night duty, and female gender. Job satisfaction had a positive association with increasing age.<sup>16</sup>

In another study, 51% of HCWs reported burnout present at higher rates during the COVID-19 pandemic as compared to the previous rates. The contributing factors were stress, workload, and little institutional support.<sup>17</sup> In our study 89.6% of doctors reported the availability of their PPE. Our research was in a private hospital, as they have more privileges than others, so our PPEs were in comparatively better availability which led them to have more satisfied concerned ones. This is in contrast to a study done in Iran to measure the job satisfaction of HCWs during the peak of the COVID-19 crisis; their access to PPE was negative (69.7%).<sup>18</sup> In a study conducted in Wuhan, it was found that out of the total sample of HCWs access to PPE was negatively related to job satisfaction.<sup>19</sup>

As a result, in our study, 87% of doctors were the ones who performed their duties willingly and 56% of the doctors were not willing to leave their jobs as they were satisfied with where they worked. These results are in contrast with the study conducted in Jordan in 2021, doctors' prevalence of burnout was 57.7% due to increased duty hours, low salaries, and PPE access. PPEs were doctors' concern for their well-being.<sup>20</sup> Although the COVID-19 pandemic has caused panic and stress worldwide more significantly in the HCWs. It was documented that fear and anxiety due to COVID-19 negatively

affected their job satisfaction. Moreover, unmanaged anxiety due to the COVID-19 crisis gave rise to increased absenteeism job turnovers, and job rotations.<sup>21-25</sup>

Given the unpredictable conditions and heavy workload associated with the pandemic of COVID-19, HCWs were exposed to the highest levels of risk of infection, and physical and mental stress which is a challenge for their job satisfaction. It was found that the stronger the perceived stress and the greater the fear, the lower the job satisfaction.<sup>26,27</sup>

## Conclusion

This study showed that most of the doctors were somewhat satisfied or satisfied with their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic in ULTH, Lahore. Most of the doctors performed their duties willingly and did not want to leave their jobs during the strenuous time of the pandemic. Doctors should be provided with an emotional and psychological support system so that they can combat stress, anxiety, and depression. There should be legislation against abusive patients so that doctors work securely in the hospital environment. Doctors are the frontline healthcare workers in their fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, investment in the doctors' overall wellness including mental and physical health, and their safety is the need of the hour to avoid their shortage and rapid turnover due to burnout. The necessary strategies should be implemented by the concerned authorities in identifying and managing doctor burnout and ensuring job satisfaction during the current public health emergency.

**Authors Contribution:** **SZ:** Design of work and Conception of work. **RS:** Design of work, Acquisition, and analysis of data and Drafting. **WN:** Interpretation of data and Revising. **FS:** Interpretation of data and drafting. **MS:** Data entry and drafting. **MJR:** Data entry and drafting. All authors critically revised and approved its final version.

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