



# JOB RESPONSIBILITIES AND SATISFACTION OF AMERICAN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

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## Introduction

Occupational stress among healthcare professionals is high due to the nature of the work (5). Previous research in China and Australia of occupational therapists (OT) have examined job responsibilities and circumstances (1,7). To date, no research has evaluated work-related stress and job responsibilities in the United States, nor the daily tasks of the profession. The purpose of this study was to evaluate job responsibilities as well as job satisfaction to identify enjoyable parts of the occupation as well as common stressors and issues.

## Methods

- One-hundred OT (Age = 43.87 ± 13.57 years) participated. Surveys were sent via conventional mail to 493 OT in the United States whose information was obtained from the AOTA. Subjects included 96 women and 5 men, from 31 states. A qualitative, cross-sectional conventional mail survey was used to characterize AOTA OT background and position profile.
- The survey instrument, National Role Delineation of Occupational Therapists, was adopted from a previous published research study of physical therapists (2). The survey contained 30 open-ended and fixed-response questions, resulting in 404 pages of data.
- Subjects provided written informed consent prior to participating and the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board.
- Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to determine the relationship between subject variables and measures of job satisfaction.
- Descriptive data were analyzed, using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS 24.0).
- Answers to open-ended questions were content-analyzed according to previously published recommendations (6).
- Job satisfaction was correlated with career satisfaction ( $r=.50$ ,  $p \leq .001$ ) and looking for other jobs ( $r=-.45$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ).

## Results

- Career satisfaction was negatively correlated with looking for other jobs ( $r=-.63$ ,  $p \leq 0.001$ ) and positively correlated with salary ( $r=.27$ ,  $p=.016$ ).
- Current job satisfaction was correlated with annual salary ( $r=.25$ ,  $p=0.030$ ).
- There were no correlations ( $p > 0.05$ ) between hours worked per week, time of day start, time of day end and job satisfaction.
- Table 1 shows the daily job responsibilities of OT. Table 2 shows the top five most enjoyable job responsibilities of OT. Table 3 indicates the top 5 least enjoyable job responsibilities of OT. Table 4 contains the most time-consuming job responsibilities of OT. Table 5 includes reasons why subjects chose OT as a career.

Table 1: Job Responsibilities

Higher Order Themes	Number
Treatment of medical conditions/ Disabilities	72
Conditioning and rehab exercises	55
Orthopedic/ Clinical assessment	51
Document management	49
Psychosocial intervention and referral	44
Professional development	42
Therapeutic modalities	42
Ordering materials	30
Acute care of injuries and illness	29
Supervision of staff	26
Risk management/ Injury prevention	26
Budget management	17
Other	18
Nutritional aspect of injury and illness	12

Table 2: Top 5 Most Enjoyable Job Responsibilities

Higher Order Themes	Number
Treatment/ Direct patient care	52
Patient relationships	34
Helping	30
Parent/ Patient education	25
Staff collaboration	21

Table 3: Top 5 Least Enjoyable Job Responsibilities

Higher Order Themes	Number
Documentation	86
Miscellaneous	30
None Identified	27
Billing/ Insurance	26
Productivity standards	18

Table 4: Most Time-Consuming Job Responsibilities

Higher Order Themes	Number
Documentation	96
Treatment/ Direct patient care	84
Evaluations/ Assessments	40
Miscellaneous	32
Meetings	27
IEP/ Program development	25
Scheduling	16
Cleaning/ Session prep/ Maintenance	16
Educator duties	15
Staff collaboration	14
Staff supervision	14
Non-OT collaboration	12
Chart/ Annual review	12
Non-OT collaboration	12
Administration	12
Managerial duties	11
Billing/ Insurance	10
Travel (commute, home-health visits)	10
Inventory	10

Table 5: Why Participants Chose OT

Higher Order Theme	Number
Desire to help people	24
Population/ Demographic/ Environment variety	16
Opportunity to be creative	14
Increasing independence	12
Holistic/ Functional approach	11
Ability to make a difference	10
Direct patient care	9
Medical/ Healthcare profession	8
Improve quality of life	8
Work with children/ Disabled individuals	8
Influenced by personal/ Family experience	7
Miscellaneous	7
Meet/ Connect with people	6
Matched interests/ Took survey	6
Personally/ Professionally satisfying	5

## Discussion

This study was the first in the United States to assess job specific job responsibilities and satisfaction of OT. The study demonstrated that job satisfaction correlates to factors other than mental health such as salary and looking for other jobs. In other studies, satisfaction is correlated to annual salary and looking for other jobs (1,7). Treating conditions/disabilities, rehabilitation exercises, and orthopedic/clinical assessment were the most reported job responsibilities. Similarly, direct patient care was the most enjoyed responsibility and was among the most time-consuming. These data are consistent with those of other allied health professions (3,4). These data show a desire to help, treat, and assess patients as reasons for choosing OT as a career, which was also seen in studies of other countries (1,7). Documentation was the least enjoyable and most time-consuming job responsibility consistent with other allied health professions (3,4). Productivity standards were one of the least enjoyable tasks, which was found in a study in Canada (2).

## Conclusion

Occupational therapists in the United States have many job responsibilities, with documentation, treatment, and assessment/evaluations being the most time-consuming. Some of these time-consuming responsibilities were very enjoyable, while others were not. Helping others, having variety in job responsibilities, and the opportunity to be creative were the main reasons for choosing OT. The most enjoyable and time-consuming responsibilities were direct patient care. Prospective and current OT can use these data to further understand the current status of the profession in the United States.

## References

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