

RESEARCH ARTICLE (ORIGINAL) 

## Job satisfaction of rehabilitation nurses

*Satisfação dos enfermeiros de reabilitação com o trabalho*

*Satisfacción laboral de los enfermeros de rehabilitación*

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### Abstract

**Background:** The job satisfaction of rehabilitation nurses contributes to individual performance, patient care quality and safety, and organizational success. Thus, its assessment is vital.

**Objective:** To analyze the job satisfaction of rehabilitation nurses in the Health Service of the Autonomous Region of Madeira (SESARAM - *Serviço de Saúde da Região Autónoma da Madeira*), Public Corporation (EPE - *Entidade Pública Empresarial*).

**Methodology:** This is a quantitative, cross-sectional, exploratory-descriptive, and analytical study. The Nurse Job Satisfaction Scale was used to collect the data. The statistical analysis included simple descriptive statistics. This study was approved by the Health Ethics Committee (Opinion no. 25/2019).

**Results:** Overall, 97.35% of nurses are moderately satisfied with their work. Concerning the dimensions, 43.36% of the participants express their “Satisfaction with Professional Recognition,” while 51.33% are dissatisfied with “Recognition and Remuneration.”

**Conclusion:** Most participants are moderately satisfied. It is necessary to pay closer attention to global satisfaction and its dimensions, particularly “Satisfaction with leadership,” “Satisfaction with organizations and resources,” “Satisfaction with recognition and remuneration,” and “Satisfaction with staffing,” to improve Job Satisfaction.

**Keywords:** job satisfaction; nursing; rehabilitation nursing

### Resumo

**Enquadramento:** A satisfação dos enfermeiros de reabilitação com o trabalho contribui para o desempenho individual, a qualidade e segurança dos cuidados prestados aos clientes e para o sucesso organizacional, sendo crucial a sua avaliação.

**Objetivo:** Analisar a satisfação dos enfermeiros de reabilitação com o trabalho, no Serviço de Saúde da Região Autónoma da Madeira, EPE.

**Metodologia:** Estudo quantitativo, transversal, exploratório-descritivo e analítico. Utilizamos a Escala de Satisfação dos Enfermeiros para a colheita de dados. A análise estatística incluiu estatística descritiva simples. Obteve-se parecer favorável da comissão de ética para a saúde (Parecer n.º 25/2019).

**Resultados:** Globalmente 97,35% dos enfermeiros estão moderadamente satisfeitos com o trabalho. Relativamente às dimensões 43,36% dos participantes referem estar satisfeitos com a “valorização profissional” e 51,33% encontram-se insatisfeitos com a “valorização e remuneração salarial”.

**Conclusão:** A maioria dos participantes estão moderadamente satisfeitos. Deve-se atender à satisfação global e às suas dimensões, principalmente, à satisfação com as “chefias”, “organizações e recursos”, “valorização e remuneração” e “dotações”, para potenciar a satisfação com o trabalho.

**Palavras-chave:** satisfação no emprego; enfermagem; enfermagem em reabilitação

### Resumen

**Marco contextual:** La satisfacción laboral de los enfermeros de rehabilitación contribuye al rendimiento individual, a la calidad y seguridad de los cuidados prestados a los pacientes y al éxito de la organización, por lo que evaluarla es crucial.

**Objetivo:** Analizar la satisfacción laboral de los enfermeros de rehabilitación en el Servicio de Salud de la Región Autónoma de Madeira, EPE.

**Metodología:** Estudio cuantitativo, transversal, exploratorio-descriptivo y analítico. Se utilizó la Escala de Satisfacción Laboral de los Enfermeros para la recogida de datos. El análisis estadístico incluyó estadísticas descriptivas simples. Se obtuvo el dictamen favorable del Comité de Ética de la Salud (Dictamen n.º 25/2019).

**Resultados:** En general, el 97,35% de los enfermeros están moderadamente satisfechos con su trabajo. En cuanto a las dimensiones, el 43,36% de los participantes mencionan que están satisfechos con el “desarrollo profesional” y el 51,33% está insatisfecho con la “valoración y la remuneración salarial”.

**Conclusión:** La mayoría de los participantes están moderadamente satisfechos. Se debe considerar la satisfacción global y sus dimensiones, especialmente la satisfacción con los “gerentes”, “organizaciones y recursos”, “apreciación y remuneración” y “asignaciones”, para mejorar la satisfacción con el trabajo.

**Palabras clave:** satisfacción en el trabajo; enfermería; enfermería rehabilitación

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## Introduction

Job satisfaction (JS) refers to how people feel about their professional life (Cunha et al., 2016).

In the area of health, it promotes the improvement of the quality of work life, namely of rehabilitation nurses, and the quality of patient care delivery (Sartoreto & Kurcgant, 2017). It is an essential indicator of the organizational climate and a key aspect in the assessment of organizational quality (João, Moura, et al., 2017), being an important focus of management attention.

The issue of JS has become more relevant. Since 2010, the global economic and financial crisis has led to the contraction of the Portuguese health system, including regional health services. Since then, Portuguese nurses have been affected by: (1) salary changes due to the freezing of career advancements and the reduction of salaries and overtime payments; (2) the lack of recognition of educational qualifications leading to discrimination; and (3) the hiring freeze of new nurses and the working schedule change from 36 hours to 42 hours per week resulting in work overload (Ministério das Finanças e da Administração Pública, 2011; Silva & Potra, 2019). The evidence shows that most nurses are dissatisfied with their work, particularly their remuneration and professional career (Bernardino, 2018; Ferreira et al., 2017; Ramos, 2018; Silva et al., 2017; Silva & Potra, 2019; Teixeira et al., 2017).

Therefore, understanding the JS levels and determinants of rehabilitation nurses can help define organizational policies promoting their JS. Moreover, it can improve individual performance and patient care quality and safety and contribute to organizational success.

In this sense, this study aims to analyse the JS of rehabilitation nurses at the Health Service of the Autonomous Region of Madeira (SESARAM - *Serviço de Saúde da Região Autónoma da Madeira*), Public Corporation (EPE - *Entidade Pública Empresarial*). Its specific objectives are: (1) to describe the sociodemographic and professional characteristics of nurse specialists in rehabilitation nursing (EEERs) of the SESARAM, EPE, and (2) to describe their levels of satisfaction.

## Background

JS is a complex, subjective, multifactorial, dynamic phenomenon (Ramos, 2018). It is associated with positive feelings and determined by personal perceptions and needs, with variable and differentiated levels of importance for each individual (Sartoreto & Kurcgant, 2017). It is based on employees' assessment of how their jobs are beneficial or detrimental to their well-being. The state of satisfaction can change depending on the overall working conditions provided (Melo et al., 2011). JS is influenced by sociodemographic factors (gender, age, and education), individual characteristics, and organizational characteristics (salary, career advancement opportunities, leadership style, co-workers, and physical conditions; Cunha et al., 2016).

JS is understood as the opposite feeling of dissatisfaction. It represents two sides of the same phenomenon, with variable levels of importance between them, which depend on each individual (Carvalho & Lopes, 2006; Chaves et al., 2011; Del Cura & Rodrigues, 1999; Ferreira et al., 2006; Jeong & Kurcgant, 2010; Nunes et al., 2010; Romanzini & Bock, 2010; Paiva et al., 2011 cited by Sartoreto & Kurcgant, 2017).

According to scientific evidence, nurses are satisfied with their work (Carvalho, 2014; Ramos, 2018; Silva & Potra, 2019). The JS of these professionals is directly proportional to the interpersonal relationships established within the work team, with co-workers and leaders (Ferreira et al., 2017; João, Moura, et al., 2017; Ribeiro, 2014; Silva et al., 2017), and to autonomy (Silva et al., 2017). However, some studies have also observed nurses' lack of satisfaction with their work (Bernardino, 2018) and revealed that the longer the time of professional practice, the lower the nurses' overall satisfaction (Ferreira et al., 2017). These health professionals express less satisfaction in the dimensions "Satisfaction with the benefits and rewards" and "Satisfaction with the promotion" (Ferreira et al., 2017) and suggest that management bodies should improve professional recognition (Silva & Potra, 2019). Ribeiro (2014) showed that the dimensions "Work pressure and demand" and "Reward for work" revealed nurses' lower satisfaction with their work, and Bernardino (2018) added that Portuguese nurses are not satisfied with their professional careers (90.9%), the labor unions representing them (80.6%), and nurse management (53.9%).

Scientific studies focused on the JS of EEERs showed that most of these health professionals are satisfied with their work (Martinho, 2015; Teixeira et al., 2017). They reveal higher levels of JS with the relationship within the team (Martinho, 2015; Teixeira et al., 2017) and lower levels of JS with the benefits and rewards, the promotions (Martinho, 2015; Santos, 2016; Teixeira et al., 2017), the lack of material resources available for delivering rehabilitation nursing care, and the lack of recognition of EEERs (Teixeira et al., 2017).

## Research question

What is the JS level of EEERs working in the SESARAM, EPE?

## Methodology

This is a quantitative, cross-sectional, exploratory-descriptive, and analytical study framed within the positivist paradigm.

The target population corresponded to all EEERs working in the SESARAM, EPE. The inclusion criteria were (1) to be an EEER and (2) to work in the SESARAM, EPE. The exclusion criteria were: (1) to be absent from work during the recruitment period (due to parental leave, illness, or vacation); and (2) to be part of the research team of the project "*Enfermagem de Reabilitação na Região Autónoma*

da Madeira: Um estudo de caracterização” (ER–RAM - Rehabilitation Nursing in the Autonomous Region of Madeira: A characterization study), seeking to assess the entire population. Based on the defined criteria, 113 participants were selected to be part of this scientific study. Bearing in mind this study’s purpose and seeking to achieve its specific objectives, the sociodemographic and professional context variables (age, gender, marital status, education level, type of health unit, type of working schedule, time elapsed since completing the bachelor’s degree in Nursing, time elapsed since completing the specialization in Rehabilitation Nursing, and length of professional experience providing autonomous rehabilitation nursing care) were considered as independent variables. The JS of the EEERs of the SESARAM, EPE, was regarded as the dependent variable.

The Nurse Job Satisfaction Scale (*Escala de Satisfação dos Enfermeiros com o Trabalho* - ESET), developed by João, Alves, et al. (2017), was used to assess nurses’ satisfaction with aspects related to work dynamics. This scale consists of 37 descriptive items grouped into six dimensions: Satisfaction with the leadership, Satisfaction with the organization and resources, Satisfaction with professional recognition, Satisfaction with the co-workers, Satisfaction with recognition and remuneration, and Satisfaction with

staffing. The level of satisfaction regarding each item is expressed using a Likert-type scale with five options: (1) *not at all*, (2) *slightly*, (3) *moderately*, (4) *very*, and (5) *extremely*. Mean scores were calculated by adding the values attributed by the study participants in each item of every dimension and then dividing the result by the number of items of the dimension. Then, the mean score for each dimension was considered.

When interpreting the results, it is worth noting that the higher the mean score, the higher the level of JS. This study used the cut-off points defined by João, Alves, et al. (2017) to assess the participants’ JS levels. For this scale, values less than or equal to 1.9 indicate dissatisfaction in the workplace, values between 2 and 3.9 show moderate satisfaction in the workplace, and values between 4 and 5 reveal satisfaction in the workplace.

Regarding psychometric properties, the instrument’s internal consistency is high, with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.96 for all scale items (Table 1). The authors assessed construct validity by applying the factor analysis method, namely the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO), obtaining a value of 0.94. Bartlett’s test indicated a  $\chi^2(666) = 11259.487$  ( $p < 0.000$ ), revealing a significant correlation between the considered variables (João, Alves, et al., 2017).

**Table 1**

*Cronbach’s alphas obtained by the ESET authors*

	ESET JS Dimensions					
	SC	SOR	SVP	SCT	SVR	SD
<b>Cronbach’s alpha</b>	0.94	0.89	0.92	0.89	0.85	0.95

*Note.* ESET = Escala de satisfação dos enfermeiros com o trabalho (Nurse Job Satisfaction Scale); JS = Job Satisfaction; SC= Satisfação com as chefias (satisfaction with leadership); SOR = Satisfação com a organização e recursos (satisfaction with organization and resources); SVP = Satisfação com a valorização profissional (satisfaction with professional recognition); SCT = Satisfação com os colegas de trabalho (satisfaction with co-workers); SVR = Satisfação com a valorização e remuneração (satisfaction with recognition and remuneration); SD = Satisfação com as dotações (satisfaction with staffing).

Data were collected from 5 to 21 June 2019 in the services of the SESARAM, EPE. The questionnaires were anonymous. The team researchers reviewed and coded the questionnaires and processed the data into a database. To ensure data quality, the database was reviewed through random record checking and a preliminary results analysis to identify and eliminate input errors. During this period, all potential participants were given a participant information sheet signed by the researcher and asked to clarify any doubts to validate their understanding of the information provided. Next, all participants were asked to sign the free and informed consent forms attesting to their willingness to participate in the study. The participants were informed that they would not receive any benefit for their participation and could withdraw at any moment without penalty. The study also guaranteed the participants’ rights to self-determination, full disclosure of information regarding the study, and respect for human dignity. Anonymity was ensured throughout the data collection process by

assigning an identification number to each participant according to the registration order. These identification numbers appeared alone on the record sheets. The data collected were treated confidentially and used only for research purposes.

Between 22 July and 14 August 2019, statistical data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS software, version 24.0. It included simple descriptive statistics (relative and absolute frequencies, mean, median, mode, and standard deviation). This study was implemented after the research project was approved by the Nursing Management and the Board of Directors of the SESARAM, EPE, through Opinion no. 25/2019 from the institution’s Ethics Committee.

## Results

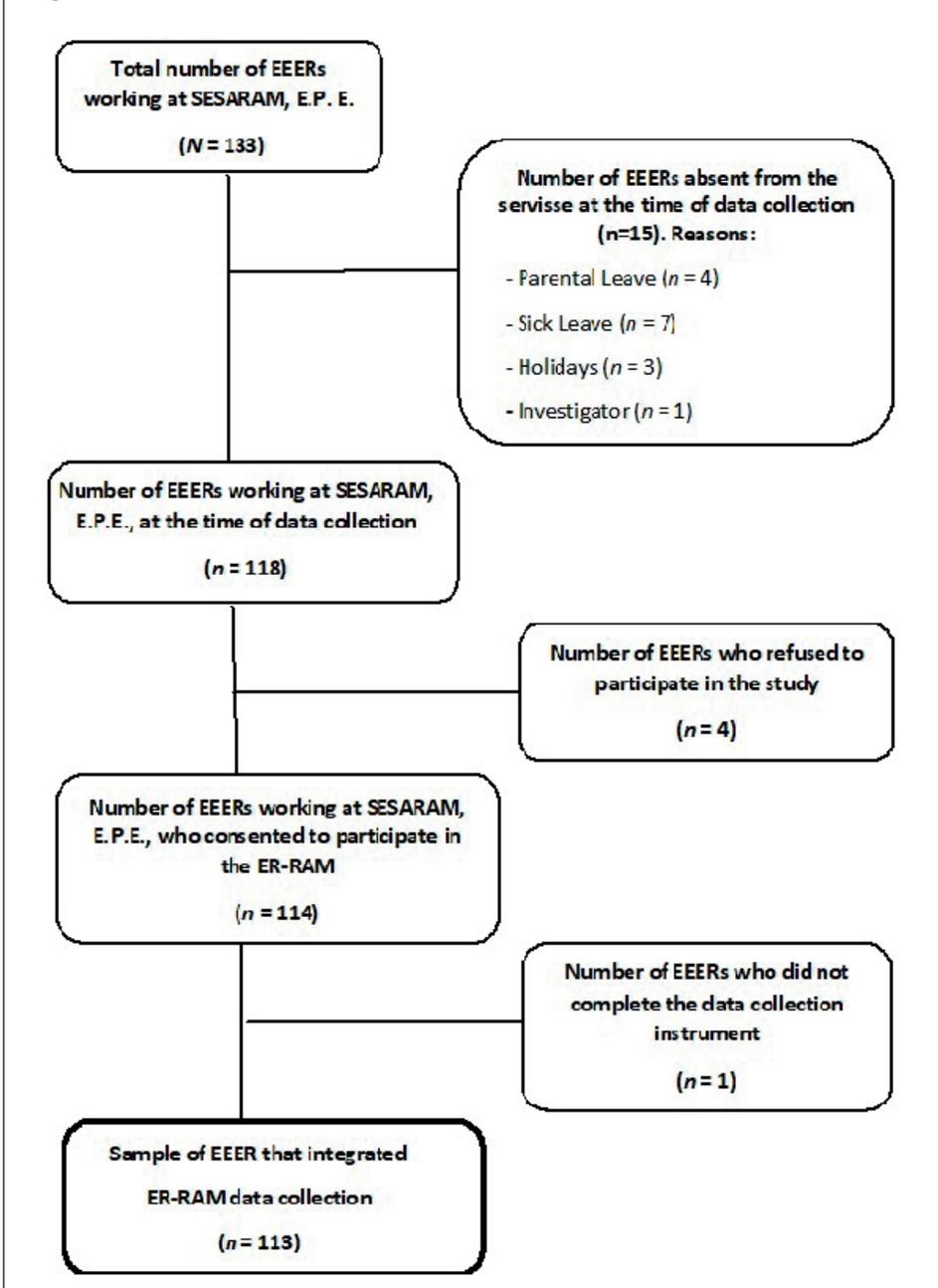
The ER-RAM study sample consisted of 113 EEERs of the SESARAM, EPE (Figure 1), 61.95% female ( $n$

= 70) and 38.05% male ( $n = 43$ ). The mean age of the EEERs was 45.8 ( $SD = 8.97$ ), with a median of 45.8. Considering marital status, 71.68% of the EEERs of the SESARAM, EPE, were married or in a *de facto* union ( $n = 81$ ), 14.16% were single ( $n = 16$ ), 10.62%

were divorced or separated ( $n = 12$ ), and 3.54% were widowed ( $n = 4$ ). In terms of education, 95.58% had a bachelor's degree ( $n = 108$ ), 3.54% had a master's degree ( $n = 4$ ) and 0.88% had a doctoral degree ( $n = 1$ ; Table 2).

**Figure 1**

*Number of Nurse Specialists in Rehabilitation Nursing of the SESARAM, EPE in the scientific study: Enfermagem de Reabilitação na Região Autónoma da Madeira: Um estudo de caracterização (ER-RAM - Rehabilitation Nursing in the Autonomous Region of Madeira: A characterization study)*



Note. N = Population; n = Absolute frequency.

**Table 2**

*Distribution of the Nurse Specialists in Rehabilitation Nursing of the SESARAM, EPE, according to age, gender, marital status, and education level*

Sociodemographic variables	<i>n</i>	%
Age		
≤ 45 years	39	45.90
> 45 years	46	54.10
No answer	28	24.78
Gender		
Female	70	61.95
Male	43	38.05
Marital status		
Married / <i>de facto</i> union	81	71.68
Single	16	14.16
Divorced / Separated	12	10.62
Widow(er)	4	3.54
Education level		
Bachelor's Degree	108	95.58
Master's Degree	4	3.54
Doctoral Degree	1	0.88

*Note.* *n* = Absolute frequency; % = Relative frequency.

The characterization of the professional context showed that, of the 113 EERs participating in the scientific study, 54.87% worked in a hospital institution of the SESARAM, EPE (*n* = 62), 63.72% had a public em-

ployment contract with their employer (*n* = 72), 92.04% had a fixed schedule (*n* = 104), and 97.35% worked 35 hours per week (*n* = 110; Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Distribution of the Nurse Specialists in Rehabilitation Nursing of the SESARAM, EPE, according to the health unit, employment relationship, type of work schedule, and weekly schedule*

<b>Professional variables</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Health Unit		
Nélio Mendonça Hospital	48	42.48
Medical Inpatient Hospital - Marmeleiros	14	12.39
Health Care Center	30	26.55
Long Term Inpatient Unit	11	9.73
Regional Integrated Continued Care Network	10	8.85
Employment Relationship		
Public employment contract	72	63.72
Indefinite-term individual employment contract	36	31.86
Another type of employment relationship	2	1.77
No answer	3	2.65
Type of work schedule		
Fixed	104	92.04
Rotating	8	7.08
No answer	1	0.88
Weekly schedule		
35 hours	110	97.35
Another type of schedule	3	2.65

*Note.* n = Absolute frequency; % = Relative frequency.

In this study, the mean time elapsed since completing the bachelor's degree in Nursing was approximately 21 years ( $\bar{x}$ = 20.84), and the median was 19 years, with a maximum of 40 years and a minimum of 7 years. The mean time elapsed since completing the specialization in Rehabilitation Nursing

was about 11 years ( $\bar{x}$ = 10.98), with a median of 9 years and a maximum of 33 years. The mean time of the length of professional experience providing autonomous rehabilitation nursing care was about 11 years ( $\bar{x}$ = 10.67), with a median of 9 years and a maximum of 33 years (Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Distribution of the Nurse Specialists in Rehabilitation Nursing of the SESARAM, EPE, according to the time elapsed since completing the bachelor's degree in Nursing, the time elapsed since completing the specialization in Rehabilitation Nursing, and the length of professional experience providing autonomous rehabilitation nursing care.*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	$\bar{x}$	<b>Mdn</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mode</b>
TCLE	111	7	40	20.84	19.00	8.11	13
TCEER	113	0	33	10.98	9.00	6.76	8
TPACERCL	112	0	33	10.67	9.00	6.78	8

*Note.* n = Absolute frequency; Min. = Minimum; Max.= Maximum;  $\bar{x}$  = Mean; *Mdn* = Median; *SD* = Standard deviation; TCLE = Tempo desde a conclusão da licenciatura em enfermagem (time elapsed since completing the bachelor's degree in Nursing); TCEER = Tempo desde a conclusão da especialidade em ER (time elapsed since completing the specialization in Rehabilitation Nursing); TPACERCL = Tempo de prestação autónoma de cuidados de ER no contexto laboral (length of professional experience providing autonomous rehabilitation nursing care).

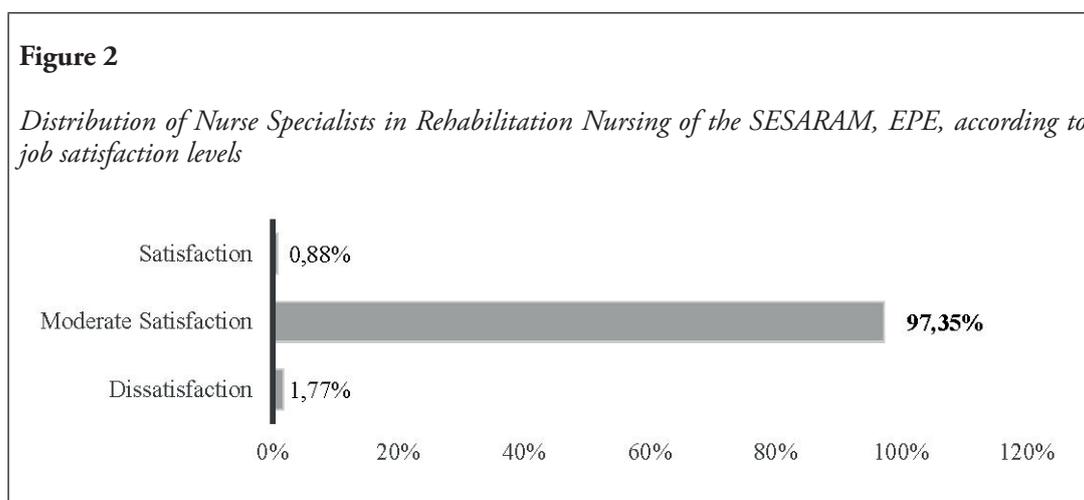
Considering JS in general, 97.35% ( $n = 110$ ) of the EEs of the SESARAM, EPE, were moderately satisfied (Table 5; Figure 2).

**Table 5**

*Distribution of the Nurse Specialists in Rehabilitation Nursing of the SESARAM, EPE, according to the satisfaction levels and dimensions*

JS Dimensions	Job Satisfaction Levels					
	Dissatisfaction		Moderate Satisfaction		Satisfaction	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
SC	2	1.77	98	86.73	13	11.50
SOR	3	2.65	106	93.81	4	3.54
SVP	0	0	64	56.64	49	43.36
SCT	2	1.77	90	79.65	21	18.58
SVR	58	51.33	55	48.67	0	0
SD	20	17.70	84	74.34	9	7.96
Total JS	2	1.77	110	97.35	1	0.88

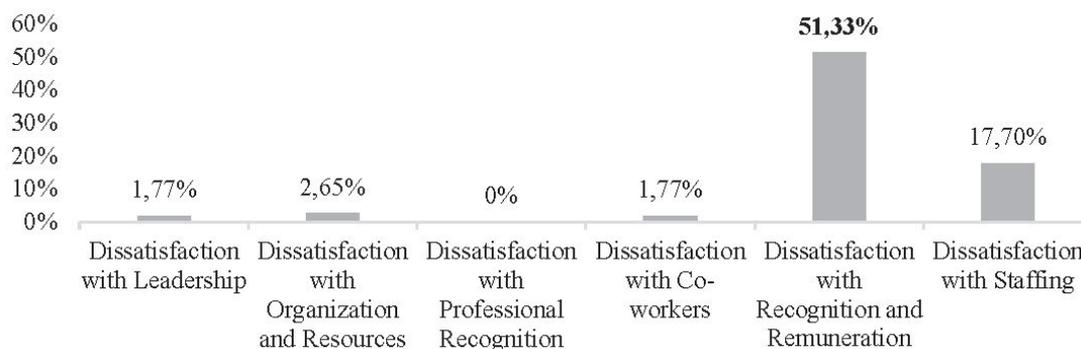
*Note.* *n* = Absolute frequency; % = Relative frequency; JS = Job Satisfaction; SC= Satisfação com as chefias (Satisfaction with Leadership); SOR = Satisfação com a organização e recursos (Satisfaction with Organization and Resources); SVP = Satisfação com a valorização profissional (Satisfaction with Professional Recognition); SCT = Satisfação com os colegas de trabalho (Satisfaction with Co-workers); SVR = Satisfação com a valorização e remuneração (Satisfaction with Recognition and Remuneration); SD = Satisfação com as dotações (Satisfaction with Staffing).



However, 51.33% of these health professionals were dissatisfied with their “recognition and remuneration” ( $n = 58$ ; Table 5; Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

*Job dissatisfaction of Nurse Specialists in Rehabilitation Nursing of the SESARAM, EPE, according to each dimension*

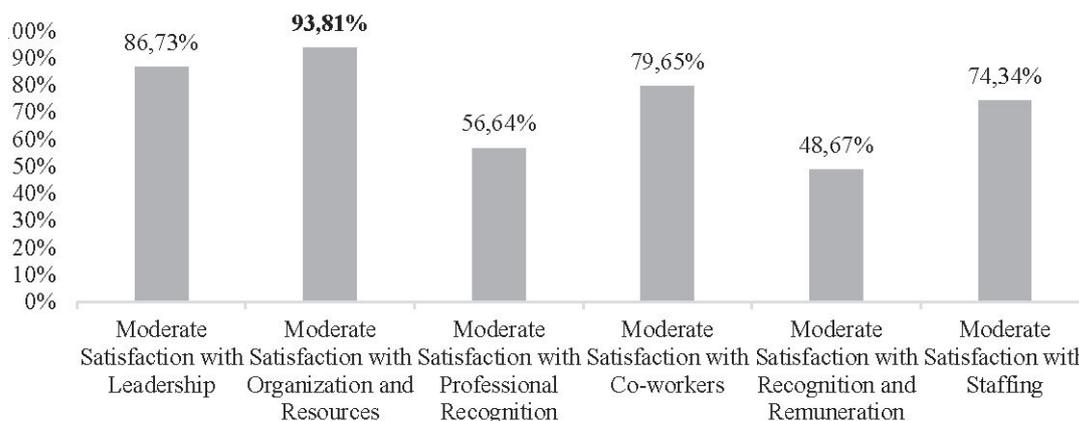


Regarding the JS dimensions, 93.81% ( $n = 106$ ) of the EEEERs were moderately satisfied “with organization and resources,” 86.73% ( $n = 98$ ) were moderately satisfied “with leadership,” 79.65% ( $n = 90$ ) were moderately

satisfied “with co-workers,” 74.34% ( $n = 84$ ) were moderately satisfied “with staffing,” and 56.64% ( $n = 64$ ) were moderately satisfied “with professional recognition” (Table 5; Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*Moderate job satisfaction of Nurse Specialists in Rehabilitation Nursing of the SESARAM, EPE, according to each dimension*

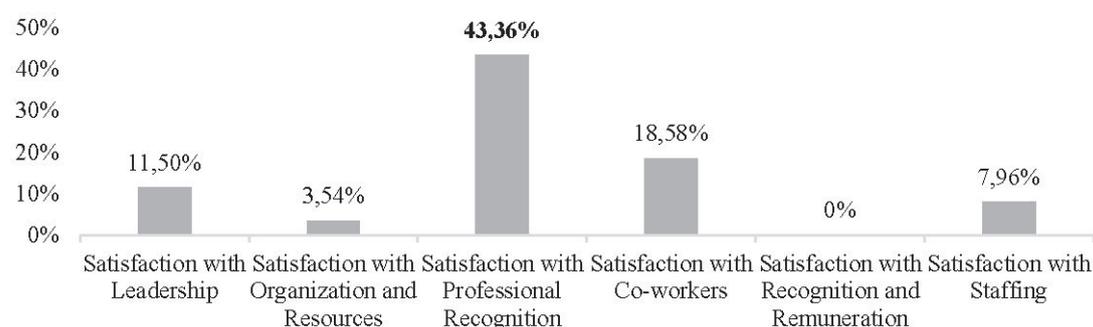


It was observed that the participants reported “Satisfaction with professional recognition” (43.36%;  $n = 49$ ) and “Satisfaction with co-workers” (18.58%;  $n = 21$ ) as the

primary sources of satisfaction in the workplace (Table 5; Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

*Job satisfaction of Nurse Specialists in Rehabilitation Nursing of the SESARAM, EPE, according to each dimension*



## Discussion

Considering the global JS score, several scientific studies demonstrate that most nurses are satisfied with their work (Carvalho, 2014; Martinho, 2015; Ramos, 2018; Silva & Potra, 2019; Teixeira et al., 2017). However, this study reveals that most EEERs of the SESARAM, EPE, are moderately satisfied at a professional level (97.35%). Health professionals who are more satisfied with their work have better professional performances (Cunha et al., 2016). The excellence of Rehabilitation Nursing brings health gains in several contexts of health organizations, being translated into the prevention of disabilities and the recovery of individuals' remaining capacities (Regulamento n.º 350/2015 da Ordem dos Enfermeiros, 2015). Regarding JS dimensions, 43.36% of the participants reported "Satisfaction with professional recognition" ( $n = 49$ ) and 18.58% mentioned "Satisfaction with co-workers" ( $n = 21$ ) as the primary sources of JS. These results align with the studies of Martinho (2015) and Teixeira et al. (2017) and demonstrate that the EEERs of the SESARAM, EPE, feel professionally recognized by patients/family members and other health professionals and are satisfied with their relationship with the work team. These aspects contribute to care safety and quality. The participants are dissatisfied with the "recognition and remuneration" (51.33%), which corroborates other scientific studies (Bernardino, 2018; Carvalho, 2014; Ribeiro, 2014). The dissatisfaction with "recognition and remuneration" can result from an idea of fairness perceived through the comparison with other employees (Spector, 2012) and the constant freezing of career advancements in the public employment sector (Administração Pública Regional - Relações Coletivas de Trabalho, 2015). Nurses consider that their salaries must align with their academic training, professional experience and performance, and the responsibilities they assume in their professional practice (Silva & Potra, 2019).

This study has limitation due to the length of the data collection instrument, which led to the non-completion of data relevant to the study.

## Conclusion

This study determined that most EEERs working in the SESARAM, EPE, are female, aged over 45 years, married or living in a *de facto* union, and have a bachelor's degree. They work in a hospital institution, have a public employment contract, and have a weekly fixed schedule of 35 hours.

The participants report "Satisfaction with professional recognition" and "Satisfaction with co-workers" as their primary sources of JS. On the other hand, they are dissatisfied with "recognition and remuneration."

To promote the JS of EEERs, and bearing in mind this study's results, politicians and managers of the SESARAM, EPE, should pay attention to JS and its dimensions, particularly the "Satisfaction with leadership," "Satisfaction with organizations and resources," "Satisfaction with recognition and remuneration," and "Satisfaction with staffing."

This study allows knowing the sociodemographic characteristics and the professional context of EEERs of the SESARAM, EPE. Moreover, it allows understanding these professionals' JS levels, which is essential for developing health management and health policies that promote quality of work life, individual performance, patient care quality and safety, and organizational success.

This study recommends that further scientific studies with high methodological quality, preferably longitudinal, should be conducted to systematically identify the causes that primarily influence the JS of EEERs throughout their professional career.

### Author contributions

Conceptualization: Freitas, S. M., Gouveia, B. R.

Data curation: Freitas, S. M., Gouveia, B. R.

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Supervision: Gouveia, B. R.

Writing – original draft: Freitas, S. M.

Writing – review & editing: Gouveia, B. R.

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