A profile of Australian occupational therapy academic workforce job satisfaction

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(i) A Profile of the Australian Occupational Therapy Workforce Job Satisfaction

(ii) Authors

Carol McKinstry, PhD., B.App.Sc. (O.T.), M.Hlth.Sc., Grad Cert in H.E. La Trobe Rural Health School, La Trobe University PO Box 199 Bendigo, 3552. ORCID Number: 0000-0001-6383-6313

Louise Gustafsson, PhD., B.OccThy(Hons), FOTARA.
School of Allied Health Sciences, Griffith University Nathan Campus, Brisbane, Queensland, 4122, Australia. ORCID Number: 0000-0001-5232-098

Ted Brown, PhD., BScOT (Hons), MPA, MSc, GCHPE, OTR, MRCOT, FOTARA, FAOTA, OT(C).
Department of Occupational Therapy, School of Primary and Allied Health Care, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, Monash University, Frankston, Victoria, 3199, Australia. ORCID Number: 0000-0001-9403-5877

Anne A. Poulsen, PhD., B. Occ. Thy (Hons).
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, 4067 Australia. Mater Medical Research Institute, South Brisbane, 4101, Queensland, Australia. ORCID Number: 0000-0003-4365-8016

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(xi) Corresponding author

Associate Professor Carol McKinstry, La Trobe Rural Health School, La Trobe University, PO Box 199, Bendigo VIC, Australia, 3552. T +613 5449-9111. E c.mckinstry@latrobe.edu.au

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Abstract

Introduction: There has been an increase in the number of Australian occupational therapy education programs and student enrolment numbers in existing programs, while there is a perceived current and predicted future workforce shortage of qualified university academics. The aim of the study was to map the current Australian occupational therapy academic workforce and investigate the group's job satisfaction.

Methods: The research was a cross-sectional online survey of Australian occupational therapy academics employed part-time or full-time in fixed or ongoing positions. The survey included the *Job Satisfaction Survey.* Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Spearman rho correlations and linear and multi-linear regressions.

Results: Responses were received from 120 participants who met inclusion criteria, with 89% of the sample being female, 83% employed in ongoing positions and 61% employed full-time. Over half had a PhD or professional doctorate and similarly, over half were employed in lecturer or level B positions. One quarter of respondents were in teaching only positions and 58% were in combined teaching and research positions. Nearly half were over 46 years of age. Respondents reported that they were satisfied with supervision, the nature of the work and co-workers; however, were dissatisfied with operating conditions and were ambivalent about pay, contingent rewards, opportunities for promotion, communication and fringe benefits. Most participants were motivated by teaching students but reported unrealistic workload requirements as their greatest challenge.

Conclusion: The Australian occupational therapy academic workforce is relatively stable with most in ongoing positions; however, there are fewer in senior positions. The majority of respondents were in lecturer or level B positions, with lowest levels of satisfaction, particularly those who had been at this level longer. Workload expectations and lack of opportunities for promotion contributed to marked job dissatisfaction. Workforce planning, including recruitment and retention strategies are needed to address predicted increased demands.

Introduction

The Australian higher education sector has undergone major changes with an increased demand for higher education as well as deregulation with uncapped student enrolments in most tertiary courses resulting in rapid expansion in the sector (Chan, 2018). The subsequent increase in the number of Australian universities establishing occupational therapy courses and increasing student enrolments, has raised demands and expectations on the Australian occupational therapy academic workforce. Recommendations by the Bradley Report (2008) that universities should teach in the areas where they are research active, has also resulted in an expectation that all teaching and research academic staff must have a higher degree in research (such as a masters or doctorate). In this context, it has been recognised that the Australian academic workforce is ageing, with 56% of the university staff being baby boomers who are soon to retire (Bexley, Arkoudis & James, 2011; Chan, 2018). In addition, Australian academics have high intentions to change jobs and have one of the lowest job satisfaction ratings due to high workloads, thus highlighting that retention of experienced staff as a possible issue (Bentley, Coates, Dobson, Goedegebuure, & Meek, 2013; Coates, 2009).

Limited data exists relating to profession or discipline specific academics especially in the health sciences (Hugo & Morriss, 2010; Naccarella, 2015). While most attention in the health sector has been on the professional practising workforce (Department of Health, Australian Government, 2016), there has been a call for research into the occupational therapy academic workforce to facilitate and inform future planning (Cusick et al., 2014). According to the Australian Government Department of Health (2018), there were 434 Australian occupational therapists in 2016 that reported that their principal role was a teacher or educator compared with 324 in 2013. That being said, there are likely a much larger number of occupational therapy academic staff who work on a casual or sessional basis

particularly since universities have moved to having a heavy reliance on the delivery of education activities to students using casually employed staff.

Broome and Gray (2017) identified 197 Australian occupational therapy academics in their study, using university faculty websites to gather data relating to research track record. They reported that 50.3% were at lecturer level, while 5.1% were associate lecturers, 20.3% were senior lecturers, 9.1% were associate professors, 8.1% were professors and 6.1% were clinical lecturers while 1% were unknown. Nearly half held a doctorate qualification or the academic title of associate professor or professor. The majority of Australian occupational therapists were employed at metropolitan university campuses with 21.8% working at a regional university. Broome and Gray (2017) suggested that in Australia, most occupational therapy academics were appointed to a lecturer level in recognition of clinical experience and pay parity rather than education or research experience. Having a doctorate qualification was strongly associated with having a research track record, indicating that a research-focused doctorate was still the entry point to a teaching and research pathway.

High workloads and lower comparative incomes make academia less attractive as a career option for many doctoral graduates (Hugo & Morriss, 2010). The expectations have dramatically changed with teaching and research academics expected to finely balance the tension between education delivery to growing numbers of domestic and international students and meeting increasing research key performance expectations (Chan, 2018). The global shortage of academics has highlighted a number of deficiencies in the current strategies to develop a high-quality academic workforce (Australian Higher Education Industrial Association & PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2018). The Business Council of Australia (2018) has recommended an urgent need for succession planning to attract and retain the next generation of Australian academics; however, little action has occurred on this front to date. Suggested strategies to address the Australian occupational therapy academic workforce

shortages have included ‘grow your own’ pathways from bachelor honours to doctorate studies, taking a minimum of seven years (Cusick et al., 2014) or offering teaching fellowships for doctoral students or honorary and adjunct positions (Pereira et al., 2015). Developing clinical academic careers has been proposed as a strategy to increase the research capacity of the occupational therapy profession, however, a lack of confidence, infrastructure and job security are major issues for these occupational therapists (Di Bona et al., 2019).

The transition from clinician to academic for occupational therapists has been identified as challenging with many weighing up whether academia was personally a good fit (Murray, Stanley, & Wright, 2014a). Many were surprised by the significant workload, the requirement to learn new skills and the university workplace cultures. The competitiveness of the university setting, and hierarchical structure was a challenge while the focus on success, particularly in research, and sometimes at the expense of teaching quality, created conflict for occupational therapy academics (Hurst, 2010; Schluter, 2014). Identity confusion has been reported by occupational therapy academics with some describing teaching as a comfortable and predictable space, while research was deemed riskier and challenging to their identities (Ennals et al., 2016). Not feeling like a ‘real’ academic if they were not doing research and experiencing difficulties achieving a balance between teaching and research commitments were reported concerns of occupational therapy academics (Ennals, et al., 2016).

Currently, there is a paucity of research about the current Australian occupational therapy academic workforce. In recognition of the challenges outlined above it is timely to understand the current workforce as a foundation to planning for the future. Therefore, the aim of this study was to map the Australian occupational therapy academic workforce, gaining insights into the demographics of the workforce, qualifications, job satisfaction and perceptions regarding the role. The research questions posed for this study were:

1. What are the characteristics of the Australian occupational therapy academic workforce and their reported job satisfaction?
2. Are there any associations between the demographics and job satisfaction of the Australian occupational therapy academic?
3. What are the reported motivations, benefits and challenges for occupational therapy academics in Australia?

Method

Design

A cross sectional survey design with convenience sampling was used. Ethics approval was granted by La Trobe University Human Research Ethics Committee (No: S17-010).

Participants

Inclusion criteria for participants were: all academic staff employed on a part-time or full time basis in ongoing or fixed term positions at an accredited occupational therapy university courses in Australia in 2018. Participants did not include visiting international faculty, sessional staff paid on an hourly basis or research assistants. Postgraduate students were also not included in the sample. Only those participants who identified as an academic were included and no professional staff participated.

Instrumentation

An online survey tool composed of a demographic section and the *Job Satisfaction Survey* (JSS) (Spector, 1994), was used to collect the data. The demographic section was composed of closed and some open-ended questions encouraging further comments from participants. Information regarding age, gender, number of years working in an academic position, level of academic appointment, highest academic qualification, and reasons why

participants selected an academic position were asked. Participants were also asked to identify their key motivations for becoming an academic, the benefits, and challenges from a pre-set list of options.

The JSS (Spector, 1994) consists of 36 items that fall under nine subscales (pay, promotion, supervision support, fringe benefits, rewards, conditions, co-workers, nature of work, communication). It was designed to measure job satisfaction in organisations in human services as well as the public and non-profit sectors. Each of the subscales consists of four items with the overall job satisfaction score being calculated by summing all 36 JSS items. Respondents answer the scale items using a Likert-rating scale consisting of: 1 = very much disagree, 2 = disagree moderately, 3 = disagree slightly, 4 = agree slightly, 5 = agree moderately, and 6= agree very much. The Cronbach alpha correlations ranged between 0.62-0.82 for the nine subscales and 0.91 for the overall scale (Spector, 1985). Test-retest correlations for an 18-month period ranged between 0.37-0.74 for the nine subscales and 0.74 for the whole scale (Spector, 1985).

Evidence of the JSS's convergent validity was established by correlating it with the subscales from the Job Descriptive Index (JDI). Correlation coefficients between equivalent subscales of the JSS and JDI ranged from 0.61-0.80 (Spector, 1985). Evidence of the JSS's discriminant validity with distinct facets of job satisfaction exhibiting low to moderate correlation coefficients ranging from 0.11 to 0.59 (Spector, 1985). Content validity of the JDI was established via the inclusion of work factors with its subscales covering nine out of 11 standard work factors as identified by van Saane, Sluiter, Verbeek, and Frings-Dresen (2003). Construct validity of the JSS was established by factor analysing its items using principal components analysis with varimax rotation. Nine distinct factors reflecting the JSS subscales emerged (Spector, 1985). According to a recent systematic review of job satisfaction measures by Hora, Júnior and de Souza (2018), the JSS is the most widely utilised job

satisfaction instrument in the empirical literature with 17 studies covering 10 countries that included over 11,000 participants.

Data analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20 for Windows (IBM Corp., 2011), was used for data entry, storage and analysis. The JSS total and subscale scores were correlated with demographic factors using Spearman rho correlations. Linear and multi-linear regression analyses were completed to determine the significant predictors of the JSS total and sub-scale scores. An independent variable was included in the regression analysis if it was significantly correlated with the dependent variable. Preliminary analyses were completed to ensure that there were no violations of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. Data were transformed to meet normality assumptions and plots of standardised residuals against standardised predicted values further confirmed that there were no violations of assumptions.

Procedures

An online survey tool was developed following an extensive review of the literature to identify potential and appropriate standardised workforce scales to collect data to answer the research questions posed. Relevant electronic databases were searched using the search terms ‘occupational therapy’, ‘academia’ and ‘academic’. The survey was piloted using cognitive interviewing (Collins, 2015) to pre-test questions and improve the face and content validity to ensure questions were worded to provide the intended information. Three academics from allied health disciplines other than occupational therapy, were recruited to take part in the cognitive interviewing process. These participants were asked to read aloud the questions and verbalise their responses to the interview schedule. All interviews were audio-recorded. Informed written consent was obtained before each interview commenced.

Audio recordings were analysed by replaying the recordings and survey amendments that respondents proposed were included in the survey. The final survey tool with incorporated amendments was then submitted to the ethics committee for consideration and review. After ethics committee approval was received, the survey instrument was uploaded to the Qualtrics program.

Invitational emails were sent to the head or lead of occupational therapy courses or programs and directly to all Australian occupational therapy academics listed on public domain university websites, having the role of an academic educator and/or researcher. Snowballing recruitment was also used with the email asking academic staff to forward the invitational email to their colleagues. The electronic survey had the Participant Information Statement at the front of the online survey which the participant read before commencing the survey. Social media was also used to invite Australian occupational therapy academics to participate via the Twitter accounts of researchers.

Results

Participants

There were 133 responses to the survey; however, 12 responses were removed because they were incomplete and/or participants did not provide sufficient demographic details. One response identified as being from a professional staff member was also removed, leaving a final participant number of 120. Most participants were working in a continuing appointment (n = 99, 83%), full-time (n= 73, 61%), and were female (n = 107, 89%). Additional demographic details are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant demographic and Job Satisfaction Scale descriptive results.

Demographics	n (%)
Age	
26 – 35	24 (20%)
36 – 45	40 (33%)
46 – 55	39 (32.5%)
56 – 65	15 (12.5%)
>65	2 (2%)
Highest Degree	
Undergraduate	18 (15%)
Graduate-Entry Masters	6 (5%)
Graduate Certificate	7 (6%)
Postgraduate Diploma	10 (8%)
Masters by Research	15 (13%)
Professional Doctorate	5 (4%)
Doctor of Philosophy	59 (49%)
Years as an Occupational Therapist	
6-10	13 (11%)
11-15	22 (18.5%)
16 – 20	21 (17.5%)
21 – 25	17 (14%)
>25	47 (39%)
Role	
Teaching and research	69 (58%)
Teaching only	30 (25%)
Teaching, research and administration	19 (16%)
Research only	1 (1%)
Practice education	1 (1%)
Academic Level	
Associate Lecturer	17 (14 %)
Lecturer	66 (55%)
Senior Lecturer	20 (17%)
Associate Professor	9 (7%)
Professor	6 (5%)
Missing / Not reported	2 (2%)
Years in Tertiary Education	
0-5	43 (36%)
6-10	35 (29%)
11-15	18 (15%)
16 – 20	9 (7%)
21 – 25	8 (7%)
>25	7 (6%)
Years in Current Position	

0-5	76 (63%)		
6-10	27 (23 %)		
11-15	13 (11%)		
16-20	4 (3%)		
Hours of work per week			
<20	14 (11.5%)		
21-30	20 (16.5%)		
31-40	24 (20%)		
41-50	41 (34%)		
51-60	14 (12%)		
>60	7 (6%)		
Number of Universities Worked In			
1	69 (58%)		
2	29 (24%)		
3	15 (12%)		
4	6 (5%)		
5	1 (1%)		
Job Satisfaction Scale	**Mean (SD)**	**Median (IQR)**	**Min- Max**
Pay	14.9 (4.7)	15.5 (7.0)	4.0 – 24.0
Promotion	13.1 (4.6)	13.5 (7.0)	4.0 – 24.0
Supervision	20.2 (4.4)	22.0 (6.0)	5.0 – 24.0
Fringe Benefits	16.0 (4.0)	16.0 (6.0)	9.0 – 24.0
Contingent Rewards	15.7 (4.3)	15.0 (6.0)	4.0 – 24.0
Operating Procedures	11.3 (4.0)	11.0 (4.0)	4.0 – 21.0
Co-workers	20.0 (3.3)	20.0 (5.0)	10.0 – 24.0
Nature of Work	20.8 (3.0)	21.0 (3.0)	12.0 – 24.0
Communication	16.0 (3.8)	16.0 (5.0)	4.0 – 24.0
Total	148.1 (25.5)	148.0 (35)	72 -206

Nearly half (47%) of the respondents were over 46 years of age and 33% were between the ages of 36 and 45 years. Over half of the academics were in a teaching and research position however a quarter were in teaching only positions. Twelve percent of respondents were in associate professor or professor positions (Level D and E, respectively), with 55% in lecturer positions (Level B) and 17% in senior lecturer positions (Level C). Further exploration of the data related to participant age found all professors, eight of the nine associate professors, and 13 of the 20 senior lecturers were aged over 46 years. The highest representation of lecturer staff was in the under 45 year age group (41 of 66 participants).

With regard to qualifications, 66% had either a doctorate (doctor of philosophy or professional doctorate) or masters of philosophy qualification and 53% had either a PhD or professional doctorate. Just over half (53%) report having over 20 years' experience as an occupational therapist and 65% had been in higher education for 10 or more years. Over half the respondents (58%) had worked in one university while 24% had worked in two universities indicating a low level of workforce mobility.

Job satisfaction scores

The descriptive results of the JSS are reported in Table 1. Participants were satisfied with supervision, co-workers, and the nature of the work. They were ambivalent about pay, promotion, contingent rewards, fringe benefits, and communication. Participants reported that they were dissatisfied with operating conditions.

Correlation analysis

Table 2 presents the results of all correlational analyses. Preliminary exploration found that the number of years in their current position demonstrated a significant inverse/negative correlation with all JSS domains except communication. Academic level was significantly and positively correlated with satisfaction with pay, promotion opportunities, and benefits. Current academic level of appointment held (e.g., Levels A to E) was inversely correlated with satisfaction relating to conditions. Years working in tertiary education demonstrated a significant, inverse/negative correlation with satisfaction relating to co-workers and supervision. All correlations were weak to nearing moderate association.

Table 2: Correlations of key Demographics with Job Satisfaction Scale Scores.

	Demographics	Spearman's rho	*p*-value
Pay	Age	.137	.135
	Years in Tertiary Education	.078	.398
	Academic Level	.379	.001**
	Years in Current Position	-.248	.006**
Promotion	Age	-.038	.676
	Years in Tertiary Education	.037	.685
	Academic Level	.260	.004**
	Years in Current Position	-.308	.001**
Supervision	Age	-.156	.088
	Years in Tertiary Education	-.277	.002**
	Academic Level	-.115	.216
	Years in Current Position	-.346	.001**
Fringe Benefits	Age	.185	.044*
	Years in Tertiary Education	.081	.378
	Academic Level	.241	.009**
	Years in Current Position	-.205	.025*
Contingent Rewards	Age	.016	.862
	Years in Tertiary Education	-.032	.728
	Academic Level	.138	.136
	Years in Current Position	-.337	.001**
Operating	Age	-.020	.832
Procedures	Years in Tertiary Education	-.140	.127
	Academic Level	-.193	.036*
	Years in Current Position	-.217	.017*
Co-Workers	Age	-.090	.330
	Years in Tertiary Education	-.182	.047*
	Academic Level	-.040	.664
	Years in Current Position	-.269	.003**
Nature of Work	Age	-.086	.353
	Years in Tertiary Education	-.083	.365
	Academic Level	-.131	.159
	Years in Current Position	-.254	.005**
Communication	Age	.018	.841
	Years in Tertiary Education	.027	.767
	Academic Level	.115	.216
	Years in Current Position	-.152	.097
Total	Age	.021	.824
	Years in Tertiary Education	-.072	.436
	Academic Level	.136	.145
	Years in Current Position	-.388	.001**

** Correlation significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Regression analysis

Regression analyses were completed for total JSS score and all sub-scales except communication (see Table 3 for the results). The more years that a participant had been in their current position, the less satisfied they were for all JSS scores. Higher academic level was associated with higher satisfaction in pay, promotion and benefits.

Table 3 Linear Regression Analysis Results

Scale	Variable	Model			Coefficients			
		R^2	*F*	*df*	β	*p* value	CI lower	CI upper
Pay	Years in Current Position	.25 **	18.8	2, 115	-1.85	<.001	-2.79	-.90
	Academic Level				2.17	<.001	1.39	2.95
Promotion	Years in Current Position	.16 **	11.28	2, 115	-1.74	.001	-2.7	-.78
	Academic Level				1.55	<.001	.75	2.35
Supervision	Years in Current Position	.13 **	17.96	1,118	.56	<.001	.30	.82
Fringe Benefits	Years in Current Position	.14 **	9.4	2, 114	-1.19	.006	-2.04	-.35
	Academic Level				1.37	<.001	.67	2.1
Contingent Rewards	Years in Current Position	.09 **	11.99	1, 118	-1.61	.001	-2.53	-.69
Operating Procedures	Years in Current Position	.04 *	5.10	1,118	-.98	.03	-1.84	-.12
Co-Workers	Years in Current Position	.06 *	8.05	1.118	.301	.005	.09	.51
Nature of Work	Years in Current Position	.07 *	9.0	1, 118	.30	.003	.10	.50
Total	Years in Current Position	.13 **	17.1	1, 117	-11.1	.001	-16.42	-5.8

** Model significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed)

* Model significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Motivations, Benefits and Challenges

More than 80% of participants were motivated by enjoyment from teaching and educating students and the feeling that they were making a meaningful contribution to the profession. Correspondingly, the highest ranked benefits were related to the opportunity of educating students to become a future occupational therapist and the ability to work with / collaborate with other like-minded colleagues. Other reported benefits of academia were fostering an interest in research and the flexibility of working in a university. The greatest challenges were linked to the implementation of unrealistic workload models followed by the competing demands of research versus teaching for productivity and outcomes (see Table 4 for full results).

Table 4: Motivations, Benefits, Disadvantages and Challenges

	n (%)
Motivations	
1. Enjoy teaching / educating students	103 (87%)
2. Like the feeling that you are making a meaningful contribution to the profession	98 (82%)
3. Had an interest in research	75 (63%)
4. The flexibility of working in a university environment	73 (61%)
5. Wanted a change from working as a clinician	47 (39%)
6. The research-teaching nexus that university environments provide	44 (37%)
7. The prestige of working in a university environment	19 (16%)
8. Opportunities to apply for research funding	19 (16%)
9. Infrastructure and resource support provided by universities for education	15 (13%)
10. The salary level of academic positions	13 (11%)
11. Opportunities for academic promotion	10 (8%)
12. Infrastructure support provided by universities to support research	8 (7%)
Benefits	
1. Opportunity to educate students through the process of becoming a future occupational therapist	100 (84%)
2. Ability to work with / collaborate with other like-minded colleagues	100 (84%)
3. Flexibility of workload and work hours	88 (74%)
4. Enjoy working in an environment that fosters research and generating new knowledge	86 (72%)
5. Autonomy and control over working life	69 (58%)
6. Opportunities to research, write and publish	64 (54%)
7. Opportunities for productive community engagement	63 (53%)
8. Allows you the opportunity to mentor / supervise honours, masters and doctoral students	61 (51%)
9. Opportunity to develop linkages with academic colleagues nationally and internationally	56 (47%)
10. Good or satisfactory income	53 (45%)
11. Chance to work in a supportive and collegial environment	48 (40%)
12. Opportunity for professional development opportunities in training for university teaching and other academic work roles	41 (35%)

13. University provides support and infrastructure to support research activities	37 (31%)
14. Job security	37 (31%)
15. University provides support and infrastructure to support teaching and learning activities	33 (28%)
16. Opportunity to travel	29 (24%)
17. Status of the academic profession by the public or society	14 (12%)
Disadvantages/challenges	
1. Implementation of workload models that do not reflect the reality of working in a university environment	91 (76%)
2. Perception that university only values research-related outputs (grant funding and peer-reviewed publications in journals with impact factors, etc) and does not value the delivery of quality education for students	79 (67%)
3. Competing demands of research and teaching; productivity and effectiveness in one area impacts on the other	74 (62%)
4. Implementation of unrealistic research output performance metrics for research in relation to grant funding brought awarded on a yearly basis, number of refereed publications in high impact journals per year, number of HDR student completions per year, etc	65 (55%)
5. Ongoing increases in undergraduate / graduate entry masters class sizes	59 (50%)
6. Under resourcing of educational activities related to the delivery of units to students	59 (50%)
7. Challenges of applying for and getting an internal promotion versus the irony of usually being easier to get a promotion by moving to another university	57 (48%)
8. Implementation of unrealistic education performance metrics related to students' evaluations of units for academic staff	57 (48%)
9. Increasing competition for shrinking pots of research funding	53 (45%)
10. Level of casualisation within the academic workforce / prevalence of casual and short-term contracts for academic staff	42 (35%)
11. The challenge in recruiting qualified and experience staff to fill vacancies	41 (35%)
12. Over reliance on sessional staff to deliver front line education to students	37 (31%)
13. The challenge to convince/lobby the university administration to staff positions and the time lag between some leaving and their position being filled	24 (20%)

Discussion

This study sought to describe the demographic profile of the Australian occupational therapy workforce, including reported job satisfaction. Before discussing the results, it is important to outline some limitations of this study and provide context for the discussion. Firstly, we are unable to calculate a response rate to the survey and it is highly likely that not all Australian occupational therapy academics responded. The decision to exclude sessional or casual staff was based on an understanding that the issues and concerns for this group may be different from those for whom academia is their primary role. However, this exclusion reduced the representation of the results from all who contributed to the education of occupational therapy students. With respect to the survey, the length of the online survey may have reduced completion rates and hence the data available from completed surveys for analysis. Finally, the participants were asked to select motivations, benefits, and challenges from a pre-identified list generated based on the research team experience and the literature. An open response section was provided to allow for any additional information to be added however this pre-identified list may have limited the responses.

One previous survey sought to describe the demographics of an occupational therapy academic workforce and this was a study from the United States (US) (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2010). The demographic profile of the Australian occupational therapy academic participants in the current study demonstrated differences to those who responded to the US workforce study (AOTA, 2010). The US workforce appeared to be older than the Australian workforce with 81% of the US workers aged over 40 years compared to a smaller percentage (47%) who were aged over 46 years in Australia. In comparison to the wider Australian occupational therapy workforce in 2018/2019, 24.3% of therapists were over 44 years (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, 2019). Differences were also evident in the level of qualifications attained. More US

academics held a doctorate qualification (60%) compared to 53% in Australia, and more US academics had master's qualification (44%) compared to 13% in Australia. This may be related to the phasing out of entry-to-practice bachelor degrees in the US, and the requirement to have masters or clinical doctorate entry-to-practice degree programs from 2007 onwards.

Another feature of the Australian occupational therapy academic workforce was the small number of academic leaders in level D (associate professor; 7%) or level E (professor; 5%) positions. The total of 12% was well below the 36% reported for the US faculty workforce (AOTA, 2010). The results of our study were slightly below that reported by Broome and Gray (2017) who found 17% of Australian academics were in these positions (9.1% level D and 8.1% level E), suggesting either a reduced response rate by academics at these higher levels or changes within the workforce. Regardless, this result highlighted challenges for the Australian occupational therapy profession with respect to academic leadership and capacity into the future. There is a subsequently highlighted need for investment into support for the occupational therapy academics to progress from level C.

The Australian occupational therapy academic workforce included a large number of level B lecturers (55%). It has been estimated that it takes between seven to nine years to reach the first step in the academic career ladder with health graduates generally acquiring industry experience before commencing postgraduate research degrees and academic careers in their 40's (Hugo & Morriss, 2010). Typically, in Australia, occupational therapists transitioning from clinical practice into academia commence their academic careers as level B lecturers and then undertake masters or doctoral studies whilst working as academic staff. Nursing and allied health professionals are in a similar situation, as noted by Murray, Stanley and Wright (2014b) and Clark, Alcala-Van Houten, and Perea-Ryan (2010) who described the transition from clinical practice to academia. This is indicative of the 'grow your own'

approach. The disadvantage of taking up to six to 10 years to complete a higher degree part-time whilst working are considerable, supporting why many remain at level B for long periods of time. This appears to be a particularly vulnerable group for job satisfaction and retention issues. One quarter of the Australian occupational therapy academics were in teaching-only or focused positions. This finding, together with the responses that a major motivator and benefit of academia was the enjoyment of, and opportunity to teach occupational therapy students, supported the premise that some Australian occupational therapy academics prefer to teach rather than pursue a research career. Notably, Lockhart-Keene and Potvin (2018) found that although new occupational therapy academics felt ready to teach students content knowledge, they were less likely to "fully understand their academic role and have limited access to pedagogical content provided by their academic institutions" (p. 1). Fisher and colleagues (2017) have reported that there is a shortage of qualified educators within the US and challenges recruiting qualified and experienced academic staff. This was not explored within our study, and it may be beneficial to investigate in future research.

In this study, approximately half of occupational therapy university staff (58%) reported they were in teaching and research positions with heavy teaching loads. Australian academics often report that they constantly juggle the ever-shifting requirements of the research, service and education demands of their profession. American occupational therapy academics have also reported concerns relating to workload, breadth of responsibilities, and lack of time (Fisher et al., 2017). Coates et al. (2009) in an analysis of the challenges facing the Australian academic workforce, remarked that with "the increasing need to juggle teaching, research and administrative duties…the desirability of the academic profession is waning at a time when the need to attract young people to this work has never been more acute" (p. 15). Although 10 years old, this statement appears to be equally relevant today,

with the apparent juggle supported by high response rates regarding unrealistic workload models, and the competing demands of research and teaching.

With respect to job satisfaction, the Australian occupational therapy academic staff were content with their supervision and support, co-workers, and the nature of the work (e.g., job tasks themselves). They were unsure about their pay levels, opportunities for promotion, contingent rewards (e.g., appreciation, recognition, and rewards for good work), work-related benefits (e.g., monetary and nonmonetary fringe benefits), and organisational communication; and were least satisfied with operating policies and procedures. Romig, O'Sullivan-Maillet and Denmark (2011) completed a literature review of key determinants of allied health university academics' job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. They reported that key factors affecting the job satisfaction of allied health faculty were salary, job security, autonomy, pursuit of learning, research opportunities, position permanency (e.g., tenure), social and collegial supports, and student relationships (Romig et al., 2011). Consistent with the descriptive results of the JSS, the top motivators for entering the higher education sector were linked to the education of students and making a meaningful contribution in education and research. Equally, benefits were linked to the education of students, working with like-minded colleagues, and working in an environment that fostered research and knowledge generation.

In our study, length of time in an academic position was inversely and significantly associated with job satisfaction. In other words, the longer a person had been in the current level of academic appointment, the lower the level of job satisfaction in relation to pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, rewards, operating procedures, co-workers and nature of the work. It appeared that this may be linked to the perceived lack of opportunities for promotion to a higher level of appointment and a feeling of being "stuck", most often experienced by participants employed in level B positions. In a study of 122 occupational

therapy faculty from the US by Cosgrove (2006), 57% reported that they were dissatisfied with their opportunities for promotion while 91% reported they were satisfied with the work of the present job. It was reported that 87% reported they were satisfied with the people they worked with, and 68% were satisfied with the supervision they received. There is an apparent tension for academic staff in both Australia and the US who are motivated by the nature of the work and their co-workers but experienced challenges related to the demands of an academic career with respect to promotion. Workloads and the tension between research and teaching demands were highlighted as key disadvantages and challenges by respondents in this study.

Establishing a teaching and research track record and possessing a higher degree qualification is usually required to obtain a tenured academic position in the Australian university system. Many occupational therapy academics commence their first academic position while concurrently completing masters or doctoral level studies. This group, who have worked for a number of years in a clinical position upon completion of their entry-to-practice qualification, are learning about the educational nuances of the university environment while trying to establish a research track record. The focus of the university, whether being highly research intensive, moderately research intensive or more education focused, will determine the "height of the academic promotion bar" for occupational therapy staff. Some health professionals, having earned their postgraduate qualifications decide to return to work in industry as a clinician researcher or in knowledge translation positions instead of pursuing an academic career (Williams et al., 2015). For those who remain, our results suggested that applying for internal promotion is considered challenging and significantly contributes to faculty members' job satisfaction level. Our study found that level A and B occupational therapy academics experienced the most job dissatisfaction of all participants. Conversely, level D and E occupational therapy academics were most job

satisfied. Coates et al. (2009) commented that in Australia "academics in lower and middle ranks (assistant lecturers, lecturers and senior lecturer) had lower satisfaction than those in the upper ranks (associate and full professors)" (p. 15). In a study that examined the job satisfaction of political science academics in the US, Hesli and Lee (2013) found that "those in higher academic ranks report higher satisfaction than those in lower ranks" (p. 348). Kalensky and Hande (2017) described the challenging transitional journey from nurse clinician to academic which is consistent with the findings of the current study.

Conclusion

The current and future Australian occupational therapy academic workforce requires appropriately qualified teachers and researchers, along with academics with leadership capabilities to meet the Accreditation Standards for Australian Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Education Programs (Occupational Therapy Council of Australia, 2018). The Australian occupational therapy academic workforce is motivated by professional values surrounding education of the next generation and the collegiality of an academic environment. However, academics in the lower academic levels are remaining there for a longer period and are the most dissatisfied, identifying a key pressure point for the future of academic programs. A workforce with limited numbers in senior academic positions and approximately half with doctoral qualifications has implications for future leadership of education programs. Ultimately, respondents identified workload expectations and the tension between research and teaching as potential contributors to the reduced satisfaction in areas such as opportunities for promotion. While the current study was a snapshot of the workforce it does provide insights into the characteristics of this workforce. Future research

involving more qualitative data collection would increase understanding of the issues impacting on current and future challenges.

Key points for Occupational Therapy

1. Current and future increased demand for Australian occupational therapy academics requires workforce planning.
2. Strategies are needed for level B academics to increase job satisfaction.
3. Academic leadership programs are needed to increase the number of occupational therapy academics in senior positions.

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