The results of a satisfaction survey based on optometric mode of practice

Jason W. Porritt
Pacific University

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Abstract
1,500 optometrists throughout the U.S. were surveyed after random demographical selection. 571 O.D.’s (38%) responded, representing thirteen different modes of self-employed and employed optometrists. The questionnaire explored practitioner satisfaction as well as variables which could affect this satisfaction. Of those responding 53.3% of the self-employed optometrists were very satisfied as compared to only 33.7% of those employed. The highest satisfaction level was reported by optometrists practicing as a partner or sharing expenses with an ophthalmologist. The lowest level of satisfaction was reported by individuals in government or military settings. Of the variables explored, which included income, benefits, days practiced, practice control, and TPA use, practice control and income were the most predictive of satisfaction level.

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THE RESULTS OF A SATISFACTION SURVEY
BASED ON
OPTOMETRIC MODE OF PRACTICE

By

JASON W. PORRITT

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the
College of Optometry
Pacific University
Forest Grove, Oregon
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Advisers:

Nada J. Lingel, O.D.
Lee Ann Remington, O.D.
THE RESULTS OF A SATISFACTION SURVEY

BASED ON

OPTOMETRIC MODE OF PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

1,500 optometrists throughout the U.S. were surveyed after random demographical selection. 571 O.D.'s (38%) responded, representing thirteen different modes of self-employed and employed optometrists. The questionnaire explored practitioner satisfaction as well as variables which could affect this satisfaction. Of those responding 53.3% of the self-employed optometrists were very satisfied as compared to only 33.7% of those employed. The highest satisfaction level was reported by optometrists practicing as a partner or sharing expenses with an ophthalmologist. The lowest level of satisfaction was reported by individuals in government or military settings. Of the variables explored, which included income, benefits, days practiced, practice control, and TPA use, practice control and income were the most predictive of satisfaction level.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people to thank for their valuable input into this thesis. Without the help of Drs. Nada Lingel and Lee Ann Remington it could not have been accomplished. Their hours of advise and council greatly aided me in the design of the survey itself as well as the analysis of the data.

Pacific University College of Optometry provided the funding, supplies, and postage, making it possible to distribute the questionnaire to 1,500 optometrists nationally.

Drs. Willard Bleything, Bradley Coffey, Dave Gorsky, and Ron Harrison gave valuable statistical and technical advice which greatly simplified the task of compiling and making sense of the stacks of data.

My patient and loving wife Nancy put up with a great deal and gave me the support needed to complete this project.

I have also to thank the nearly 600 optometrists who gave of their time in responding to the questionnaire, ultimately making it a success.

REFERENCES

ASKING QUESTIONS
Donald W. Fiske, 1983, Jossey- Bass Publishers

DESIGNING SENSIBLE SURVEYS
Donald C. Ulrich, 1978, Redgrave Publishers

SURVEY RESEARCH METHODS
INTRODUCTION

It would be advantageous and highly educational to be aware of the influences or factors which could improve satisfaction with one's occupation. With this knowledge a practicing optometrist, as well as a student entering the field, could make decisions and select a mode of practice which could better suit him or her and result in a higher level of satisfaction as well as career success.

In an attempt to better understand these factors, a questionnaire was designed in which the various modes of practice could be evaluated. The following modes were selected in an attempt to best represent all practicing optometrists:

SELF EMPLOYED MODES
1. SOLO PRACTICE - In which there is a sole optometrist
2. SHARED-EXPENSE ARRANGEMENT WITH ONE OR MORE OPTOMETRISTS - In which two or more optometrists share overhead but maintain separate practices
3. SHARED-EXPENSE ARRANGEMENT WITH ONE OR MORE OPHTHALMOLOGISTS - In which two or more doctors share overhead but maintain separate practices
4. PARTNERSHIP WITH ONE OR MORE OPTOMETRISTS - In which there is joint ownership by two or more optometrists
5. PARTNERSHIP WITH ONE OR MORE OPHTHALMOLOGISTS - In which there is joint ownership by two or more doctors
6. FRANCHISE OWNER - In which an optometrist purchased franchise rights
7. OTHER - Other forms of self-employed practice

EMPLOYED MODES
8. ASSOCIATESHIP - In which one optometrist is employed by another
9. OPHTHALMOLOGIST/MEDICAL CLINIC - In which an optometrist is employed by, or under the direction of, an ophthalmologist in a medical clinic
10. HMO - In which an optometrist is employed by a Health Maintenance Organization
11. GOVERNMENT/MILITARY - In which an optometrist is employed by the federal government or is a member of the armed forces
12. CHAIN OR CORPORATE - In which an optometrist is employed or in association with a corporate firm
13. OTHER - Other forms of employment such as education or research
METHODS

1,500 questionnaires were sent nationally to practicing optometrists based on demographics. In an attempt to keep the respondent unbiased, the questionnaire was entitled Practice Mode Survey and an emphasis on satisfaction was avoided. Questions regarding satisfaction were asked both directly and indirectly. Questions involving six variables which could affect satisfaction were also explored in an attempt to discover a relationship between them and the satisfaction of the responding optometrists. The responses were compared both graphically and in table form to evaluate variables significant to satisfaction in the various practice modes.

RESULTS

571 responses (38%) were received, representing approximately 2.3% of all practicing optometrists in the United States. Surveys were received from 49 of the 50 states.

Number of respondents by type of practice

Table 1 illustrates the number of respondents by type of practice. It is necessary to note the relative number of responses per practice setting, as some have a greater representation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice Mode</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solo Practice</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared expense w/OD</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared expense w/MD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership w/OD</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership w/ MD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franchise owner</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Employed Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SELF EMPLOYED</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associateship</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophthalmologist/Med. Clinic</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMO</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government or Military</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain/Corporate</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL EMPLOYED</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Gender**

505 males and 60 females responded. Figure 1 gives a graphical representation of the mode breakdown by gender.

![Gender distribution throughout modes.](image)

**Satisfaction**

The responses from the question:

How satisfied are you with your current practice setting?

A. VERY SATISFIED, NO DESIRE TO CHANGE
B. SATISFIED, CHANGE IS ALWAYS A POSSIBILITY
C. UNSATISFIED, CONSIDERING CHANGING MODE OF PRACTICE

are shown below in table 2 and figure 2. 47.2% of the respondents reported they were satisfied, while 44.2% were very satisfied. The remaining 8.6% reported that they were unsatisfied with their modes of practice. The responses indicated that 53.2% of the self-employed practitioners, compared to only 33.7% of the employed doctors were very satisfied. 38.9% of the self-employed and 56.9% of the employed reported they were satisfied. The unsatisfied responses from self-employed and employed were a fairly even 7.9% and 9.4% respectively.
The question of satisfaction was also asked indirectly in the form of a recommendation based on experience. This assumed that a practitioner satisfied with a specific mode of practice would recommend it.

The questions were worded as follows:

How would you recommend your current practice modes to other Optometrists?

and-

How would you recommend your previous practice modes (if applicable) to other Optometrists?

A. STRONGLY RECOMMEND
B. RECOMMEND
C. DISCOURAGE
D. STRONGLY DISCOURAGE

As can be seen from table 3, 73% of the optometrists either recommended or strongly recommended their previous modes of practice with 23.8% strongly recommending their practice modes. The self-employed and employed settings, when compared as groups, are similar with 79% and 66% respectively recommending or strongly recommending their previous modes. Individual differences are noted from mode to mode.

In regard to the current practice modes (table 4), 48.8% of the practitioners indicated that they would recommend their present situation while 41.4% would strongly recommend it. Less than 10% of the respondents would discourage or strongly discourage their current mode of practice. Nearly 60% of self-employed optometrists strongly recommended their modes compared to only 21% of the employed optometrists. As can be seen from table 4, most of the self-employed optometrists strongly recommend their modes of practice and most of the employed optometrists only recommend their modes.

The statistical mode in all of the following tables are presented in bold faced type. The graphs are presented with the most satisfied group to the left and the least satisfied on the right. Employed practice settings are underlined.
Table 2  Satisfaction of current mode

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>VERY SATISFIED</th>
<th>SATISFIED</th>
<th>UNSATISFIED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solo Practice</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared expense w/OD</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared expense w/MD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner w/ OD</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner w/ MD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franchise owner</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Emp. Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Self Emp.</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>38.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associateship</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophthal./Clinic</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMO</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov. or Military</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain/Corporate</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Employed</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Overall</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2

Practitioner satisfaction of current mode

- Very Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Unsatisfied
Table 3  Practitioner recommendation based on previous practice experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Strongly Recommend</th>
<th>Recommend</th>
<th>Discourage</th>
<th>Strongly Discourage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solo Practice</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared expense w/OD</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared expense w/MD</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner w/ OD</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner w/ MD</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franchise owner</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Self Emp.</td>
<td>(165)</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associateship</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophthal./Clinic</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMO</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov. or Military</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain/Corporate</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Employed</td>
<td>(295)</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Overall</td>
<td>(460)</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4  Practitioner recommendations of current mode

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Strongly Recommend</th>
<th>Recommend</th>
<th>Discourage</th>
<th>Strongly Discourage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solo Practice</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>62.4</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared expense w/OD</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared expense w/MD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner w/ OD</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner w/ MD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franchise owner</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Emp. Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Self Emp.</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associateship</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophthal./Clinic</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMO</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov. or Military</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain/Corporate</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Employed</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Overall</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variables Influencing Satisfaction:

Practice Control

The results of the practice control question shown in table 5, illustrate a distinct separation between the self-employed and employed modes of optometry with 70% and 13% respectively reporting very good practice control. This plainly indicates that the employed respondents had a lesser degree of practice control in their modes than the self-employed.
Table 5  Practice control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>VERY GOOD</th>
<th>FAIR</th>
<th>POOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solo Practice</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared expense w/OD</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared expense w/MD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner w/ OD</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner w/ MD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franchise owner</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Emp. Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Self Emp.</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associateship</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophthal./Clinic</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMO</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov. or Military</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain/Corporate</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Employed</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Overall</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Income

In regard to practitioner income, there are notable differences between the self-employed and employed modes of optometry; this is shown in table 6 and figure 3. 41% of the self-employed modes had a net annual income range of $75,000 to $150,000 while less than 22% of the employed optometrists were in that same range. Only 6.9% of the employed optometrists compared to 20% of the self-employed optometrists reported income greater than $150,000.

Table 6  Practitioner net annual income (in thousands of dollars.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Avg. Yrs in Mode</th>
<th>&lt; 20</th>
<th>20-30</th>
<th>30-40</th>
<th>40-50</th>
<th>50-75</th>
<th>75-100</th>
<th>100-150</th>
<th>&gt; 150</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solo Practice</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared expense w/OD</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared expense w/MD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner w/ OD</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
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<td>22.5</td>
<td>19.4</td>
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<td>7.0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franchise owner</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.8</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>21.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self Emp. Other</td>
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<td>6.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Self Emp.</td>
<td>(457)</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associateship</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophthal./Clinic</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMO</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov. or Military</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain/Corporate</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Employed</td>
<td>(114)</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Overall</td>
<td>(571)</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3

Net practitioner annual income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $20,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20-40,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40-75,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75-150,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; $150,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benefits

The actual question of benefits was written as follows:
What benefits are offered to you as a practitioner which have no effect on your take home pay?

A. HEALTH INSURANCE  E. DISABILITY
B. DENTAL INSURANCE  F. NONE
C. LIFE INSURANCE    G. OTHER
D. RETIREMENT PLAN   

The OTHER response category was used to cover such benefits as continuing education, paid vacation time, the payment of license fees and membership dues.

The benefits results are illustrated in table 7 and figure 4. Table 7 does not cover all of the benefit possibilities but shows that 54.2% of those in self-employed practice situations reported having no benefits while only 17.6% of the employed reported the same. There was very little difference among modes.
Table 7  Benefits provided by mode

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>1 or more</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Self Emp.</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Employed</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>54.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Overall</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4

Benefits provided by mode of practice

Days Practiced

As shown in table 8 and figure 5, 80% of the profession work between 200 and 300 days of the year (3.8-5.7 days per week) while less than 14% practice less than 200 days of the year.

Table 8  Days practiced in 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>0-99</th>
<th>100-149</th>
<th>150-199</th>
<th>200-249</th>
<th>250-300</th>
<th>300+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Self Emp.</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Employed</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TPA Use

In regard to therapeutic pharmaceutical agents (TPAs) in this study (table 9 & figure 6), states with TPA laws in force as of December 31, 1990 were designated as TPA and all others non-TPA. Only 49 states were included in the results as no response was received from Wyoming.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATES</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>% Very Satisfied</th>
<th>% Satisfied</th>
<th>% Unsatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TPA states</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-TPA states</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6 illustrates the usage of TPAs in those states which are legal and how this compares to the respondents respective levels of satisfaction.
Time Off

All but five modes reported very good ability to get time off (table 10 and figure 7). Solo, by its very nature demands more time of its practitioner. Government, Chain and Employed Other as expected require more rigid or fixed schedules. Franchise Owner has the poorest rating with 40% of those practitioners reporting either fair or poor.

Table 10 Ability to take vacation time or time off

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10</th>
<th>Ability to take vacation time or time off</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sample Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Self Emp.</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Employed</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. % Overall</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bold figures represent the statistical mode.
DISCUSSION

In terms of satisfaction (table 2, figure 2), the self-employed modes generally reported a higher level than the employed modes. This is supported by the recommendations of current modes (table 4), which are remarkably similar to the satisfaction results (table 2). 41.4% of the respondents strongly recommend their modes while 44.2% were very satisfied. 48.8% recommend their mode and similarly 47.2% are satisfied. Those responses reporting discourage and strongly discourage are at 9.0% and 0.8% respectively. These latter two combined, closely match the 8.6% of unsatisfied practitioners.

Of the six variables analyzed: benefits, days practiced, ability to take time off, TPA use, net annual income and practice control, only the latter two were found to have a direct relationship with practitioner satisfaction. Figures 8 and 9 demonstrate the relationship between practitioner satisfaction and these two parameters.

Figure 8

In figure 8, the "Very Satisfied" results from table 2 are compared to the "Very Good" practice control data from table 5. For the most part there is linear decline in practice control corresponding to the drop in practitioner satisfaction. It is evident from this that practice control is a factor affecting satisfaction among the respondents.
Figure 9 compares satisfaction with income. The "Very Satisfied" results from table 2 are compared to a net annual income range of $75,000 or greater. With the exception of self-employed other and franchise owner, there is a decrease in satisfaction corresponding to the decrease of income. This indicates that those optometrists who are very satisfied with their mode of practice are also achieving a higher level of income.

While other variables may have an influence, it is not apparent that they directly affect satisfaction.

The question of benefits was a difficult one to evaluate as there were numerous combinations of responses. Table 7 and figure 4 illustrates the approximate relationship between benefits and satisfaction. One could argue that there is an indirect relationship between benefits and satisfaction as benefits are a function of income. While increased benefits in actuality act to raise the net annual income, it is questionable as to whether this is a significant variable by itself.

The number of days practiced (table 8 & figure 5) does not seem to be a significant factor affecting satisfaction as all the practice modes appear very similar.
While the number of days worked may contribute to satisfaction in some way, a relationship was not discovered.

It might be hypothesized that the use of TPAs would, by increasing practice freedom, increase practitioner satisfaction. According to the data presented in table 9 and figure 6, however, there is no significant change in the levels of the respondents' satisfaction between TPA and non-TPA states. In fact, optometrists in non-TPA states registered a slightly higher rate of being very satisfied. This is shown further in figure 6 where the 76% to 100% level of TPA use has the highest level of unsatisfied respondents (30%). Assuming this sample is an accurate representation of practitioner satisfaction throughout TPA and non-TPA states, there are several possible reasons for this. First of all, it is possible that while the use of TPAs increases a practitioner's freedom to treat disease it likewise binds the optometrist with an increased demand on his or her time. The practitioner must be more available to his or her patients with the increased responsibility. This in effect could negate any net increase in satisfaction. A second possibility is that optometrists interested in using TPAs would initially move into those states in which TPAs are legal and set up a practice there, in which case there would be satisfaction in this regard from the onset. The third possibility is that the use of TPAs is not a factor influencing practice satisfaction.

The time off results were very similar among practice modes. All but five modes (table 10 & figure 7) reported "very good" ability to get time off.

While individual preferences prevent a blanket statement of self-employed practice mode superiority, the overall findings do suggest a lower level of satisfaction in the employed modes of practice.

Changing from mode to mode can be a costly means of finding an ideal practice setting, both in terms of time and income. With this in mind the information presented should prove helpful in giving an overview of the difference of the various modes of optometric practice today.
APPENDIX
Dear Doctor:

We are conducting a survey of 1,500 optometrists practicing throughout the United States. This survey is designed to evaluate certain variables and their correlation to various practice modes of optometry today. This is of interest to both practicing optometrists and students entering the field who are contemplating their future practice modes.

Your completion and return of the enclosed questionnaire is vital to this project and greatly appreciated. The questionnaire should take no more than five minutes of your time. Your responses will be kept anonymous and only the combined data will be analyzed and prepared for publication. For your convenience a preaddressed, postage-paid envelope is enclosed. Please complete and return the enclosed questionnaire within 15 days of receipt. Again, your name or signature is not required on the questionnaire or on the return envelope.

Thank you very much for your time.

Jason W. Porritt  
Pacific University College of Optometry  
Class of 1992

Lee Ann Remington, O.D.  
Assistant Professor of Optometry

Nada J. Lingel, O.D., M.S.  
Associate Professor of Optometry

enc.
PRACTICE MODE SURVEY

Instructions:
1. Please answer all questions
2. Any and all comments are welcome
3. Please be as honest as possible, your responses are completely anonymous and confidential.
4. Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire.

1. What year did you graduate from Optometry school? 19__
2. From which College or School of Optometry did you graduate? ________________
3. In which state are you currently practicing? ____________
4. Please circle your gender. Male Female

5. Which of the following would best describe your current practice mode?

SELF EMPLOYED
[ ] A. SOLO PRACTICE
   [ ] B. SHARED-EXPENSE ARRANGEMENT (Dr.s sharing overhead w/ separate practices.)
   [ ] 1. WITH ONE OR MORE OPTOMETRISTS
   [ ] 2. WITH ONE OR MORE OPHTHALMOLOGISTS
[ ] C. PARTNERSHIP WITH ONE OR MORE OPTOMETRISTS (Joint Ownership)
[ ] D. PARTNERSHIP WITH ONE OR MORE OPHTHALMOLOGISTS (Joint Ownership)
[ ] E. FRANCHISE OWNER
[ ] F. OTHER ________________

EMPLOYED
[ ] G. ASSOCIATESHIP (Employed by an Optometrist)
[ ] H. OPHTHALMOLOGIST/MEDICAL CLINIC (Employed by an MD)
[ ] I. HMO (Health Maintenance Organization)
[ ] J. GOVERNMENT/MILITARY
[ ] K. CHAIN OR CORPORATE
[ ] L. OTHER ________________

6. How many years have you been in your current practice mode? ______
7. How many years have you been in practice? ____________

8. Of the areas listed below, which would you describe as your main practice emphasis?

[ ] A. SPECTACLE LENSES
[ ] B. CONTACT LENSES
[ ] C. GERIATRIC OR LOW VISION
[ ] D. PEDIATRICS
[ ] E. VISION TRAINING OR THERAPY
[ ] F. SPORTS VISION
[ ] G. POST. OPERATIVE/PATHOLOGY
[ ] H. FULL SCOPE OR COMPREHENSIVE CARE

9. It is important to understand your practice history. Please indicate any and all previous practice modes.

SELF EMPLOYED
[ ] A. SOLO PRACTICE
[ ] B-1 SHARED-EXPENSE W/ OD
[ ] B-2 SHARED-EXPENSE W/ MD
[ ] C. PARTNERSHIP W/ ONE OR MORE ODs
[ ] D. PARTNERSHIP W/ ONE OR MORE MDs
[ ] E. FRANCHISE OWNER
[ ] F. OTHER ________________

EMPLOYED
[ ] G. ASSOCIATESHIP
[ ] H. OPHTHALMOLOGIST/MED. CLINIC
[ ] I. HMO
[ ] J. GOVERNMENT/MILITARY
[ ] K. CHAIN OR CORPORATE
[ ] L. OTHER ________________
10. How would you recommend your current and previous (if applicable) practice modes to other Optometrists? (please enter letter from selections below if applicable)

A. STRONGLY RECOMMEND
B. RECOMMEND
C. DISCOURAGE
D. STRONGLY DISCOURAGE

SELF EMPLOYED
SOLE PRACTICE
______SHARED-EXPENSE W/ OD
______SHARED-EXPENSE W/ MD
______PARTNERSHIP W/ OPTOMETRISTS
______PARTNERSHIP W/ OPHTHALMOLOGISTS
______FRANCHISE OWNER

EMPLOYED
______ASSOCIATESHIP
______OPHTHALMOLOGIST/MED. CLINIC
______HMO
______GOVERNMENT/MILITARY
______CHAIN OR CORPORATE
______OTHER

11. What is the population of the city or town in which you practice?

[ ] A. LESS THAN 10,000
[ ] B. 10,000 TO 24,999
[ ] C. 25,000 TO 49,999
[ ] D. 50,000 TO 74,999
[ ] E. 75,000 TO 99,999
[ ] F. 100,000 TO 199,999
[ ] G. 200,000 TO 300,000
[ ] H. MORE THAN 300,000

12. Which of the following is best representative of your 1990 NET annual practice income?

[ ] A. LESS THAN $20,000
[ ] B. $20,000 TO $29,999
[ ] C. $30,000 TO $39,999
[ ] D. $40,000 TO $49,999
[ ] E. $50,000 TO $74,999
[ ] F. $75,000 TO $99,999
[ ] G. $100,000 TO $150,000
[ ] H. MORE THAN $150,000

13. How many days did you practice or see patients in 1990? ______

PLEASE SELECT THE LETTER BELOW WHICH BEST CORRESPONDS TO QUESTIONS 14-16

A. LESS THAN 150
B. 150 TO 249
C. 250 TO 499
D. 500 TO 999
E. 1,000 TO 1,499
F. 1,500 TO 1,999
G. 2,000 TO 2,999
H. 3,000 TO 3,999
I. 4,000 TO 5,000
J. MORE THAN 5,000

14. How many patient visits did you have in 1990? ______

15. Of your patient visits in 1990, how many were comprehensive exams? ______

16. Of your patient visits in 1990, how many were new patients? ______

FOR QUESTIONS 17-21 PLEASE SELECT A LETTER FROM THE PERCENTAGES BELOW

A. LESS THAN 10%
B. 10% TO 25%
C. 26% TO 50%
D. 51% TO 75%
E. 76% TO 100%

Of your patients seen in 1990, please estimate:

17. What percentage received a basic visual examination? ______

18. What percentage received contact lens fits or care? ______

19. What percentage received vision training or therapy? ______

20. If in a TPA state, what percentage did you treat for disease? (if non TPA leave blank) ______

21. Of those presenting with disease, what percentage was referred for treatment? ______
22. How would you rate your ability to get or take vacation time or time off?

[ ] A. VERY GOOD, TIME OFF WHENEVER WANTED
[ ] B. GOOD, TIME OFF WHEN NEEDED
[ ] C. FAIR, SOMETIMES GET TIME OFF WHEN NEEDED
[ ] D. POOR, SELDOM GET TIME OFF WHEN NEEDED

23. In regard to practice management, how would you describe your control over your practice, such as hiring and firing of employees, bookkeeping, fees, advertising, etc.

[ ] A. VERY GOOD, TOTAL CONTROL
[ ] B. FAIR, PARTIAL CONTROL
[ ] C. POOR, NO CONTROL

24. What benefits are offered to you as a practitioner which have no effect on your take home pay?

[ ] A. HEALTH INSURANCE
[ ] B. DENTAL INSURANCE
[ ] C. LIFE INSURANCE
[ ] D. RETIREMENT PLAN
[ ] E. DISABILITY
[ ] F. NONE
[ ] G. OTHER ________________

25. How satisfied are you with your current practice setting?

[ ] A. VERY SATISFIED, NO DESIRE TO CHANGE
[ ] B. SATISFIED, CHANGE IS ALWAYS A POSSIBILITY
[ ] C. UNSATISFIED, CONSIDERING CHANGING MODE OF PRACTICE

26. If you had it to do all over again, would you enter the field of Optometry?

[ ] A. MOST DEFINITELY
[ ] B. PROBABLY
[ ] C. NOT LIKELY
[ ] D. NEVER

27. With the future trends in mind, would you recommend the field of Optometry to your son or daughter?

[ ] A. MOST DEFINITELY
[ ] B. PROBABLY
[ ] C. NOT LIKELY
[ ] D. NEVER

Thank you once again for your time and effort in completing this questionnaire.

COMMENTS: ________________________________

______________________________