


Human Journals

Review Article

April 2018 Vol.:9, Issue:2

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Motivation: An Integral Part towards Job Satisfaction among Nurses



IJSRM

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An Official Publication of Human Journals



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Submission: 20 March 2018

Accepted: 27 March 2018

Published: 30 April 2018



HUMAN JOURNALS

www.ijsrm.humanjournals.com

Keywords: Motivation, Job Satisfaction, Nurses, Hygiene factors, extrinsic factors, intrinsic factors

ABSTRACT

World over, there has been a dearth of nursing staff in hospitals. It has been observed that our most precious asset – ‘A Nurse’ is disappointed with the working conditions in the hospital settings and intends to quit her profession which she chose with a lot of enthusiasm. A multi-component approach rather than a single strategy would work to create the milieu of job satisfaction. Efforts need to be made to motivate employees for Hygiene factors (extrinsic factors), such as good working conditions and interpersonal relations focus on dissatisfaction and promote satisfaction among the employees, and motivators (intrinsic factors) such as recognition, promotions on achievement and the work itself increase motivation and commitment to their jobs.

INTRODUCTION

World over, there has been a dearth of nursing staff in hospitals. It has been observed that our most precious asset – ‘A Nurse’ is disappointed with the working conditions in the hospital settings and intends to quit her profession which she chose with a lot of enthusiasm. This problem is giving rise to decreased quality of care for the patients and concern for the stakeholders in the hospital Management. The major cause of this problem is job dissatisfaction among nurses which can be positively tackled by motivation. Quitting jobs can lead to nursing shortages and the factors leading to nursing shortages are increased workload, long shift duties, frequent schedule changes, inflexible working hours, decreased salaries, availability of better prospects, migration, turnover, burnout, poor working conditions, lack of motivation from the management and support from the co-workers. This paper would discuss the problem, followed by the background, significance, magnitude, and impact of the problem, why nurses should be motivated, effect of motivation on job satisfaction, strategies for motivation and recommendations.

Problem Statement

The same scenario of staffing shortage and dissatisfaction among nurses is prevalent at a private tertiary care Hospital, in Karachi. During the period I worked at the Emergency Room, I found nurses to be frustrated, overworked, exhausted, and some intended to quit their jobs. During an informal talk with the nurses of the hospital, they verbalized that the primary reason for job dissatisfaction was tremendous workload, inflexible work hours, not being paid for extra work and lack of appreciation from the management. The key to success is to curtail these problems with motivating factors of job satisfaction such as providing general job happiness, satisfaction with salary, promotions, appropriate workload, staff appreciation, flexible work schedules, and support from the management. But at the same time, the nursing staff at this private hospital was satisfied with the working conditions such as availability of necessary equipment to perform their duties, continuing education, extensive learning opportunities, benefits, recreational opportunities and working with an internationally renowned institution. But, their frustrations, exhaustion, dissatisfaction with their jobs are some of the reasons for burnout and they cannot be ignored. A study was carried out by Khowaja, Merchant and Hirani (2005) at the same tertiary care hospital and reasons for the dissatisfaction of staff were revealed, and they were increased workload, stress linked to high workload, lack of appreciation, lack of monetary incentives and

inflexibility in the attitude of the nursing management. One of the recommendations suggested after this study was recognition and motivation of the staff.

Position Statement

“Motivation plays an integral role towards job satisfaction among nurses and therefore strategies need to be implemented to increase the motivation level of nurses, which would in turn help in improving job satisfaction among nurses.”

Definitions

Tzeng (2002) says “Job Satisfaction” is being content with ones working environment, salary and promotion, professional role and growth, challenge in work, appreciation from patients, and management style. All these factors promote satisfaction of an individual in professional life. “Motivation describes the factors that initiate and direct behavior” (Sullivan & Decker, 2001). Motivation also means the effort that an individual exerts to meet the organizational goals, and that can result only if there is a successful motivating environment that the organization and managers provide to the employees.

Background

The nurses at this private hospital are hired on the basis of their education and experience. The process of recruiting is on merit basis and the possible best nurse candidates are hired. They then go through a thorough orientation program where basic skills, procedures, and competencies are tested. They are given a week of orientation in the unit they are assigned and paired with senior staff to get adapted with the environment, policies and procedures (mentor-mentee relationship). So, a lot of care is being taken during their hiring and adaptation phase. The benefits other than the salary, such as medical allowances, insurance policy, provident fund, are incomparable to other institutions. High importance is placed on continuing education, and recreational facilities offered to staff. The institution also offers an easy payback facility of tuition fee loan for further education in different fields of education at their own University. The working conditions at this hospital are good in terms of the environment and provision of modern equipment to fulfill the job expectations of a nurse. Most of the employees come to work here to gain experience in an internationally accepted hospital setting. As this organization is ISO and JCIA certified people prefer to work here to gain experience in an internationally accredited organization. But at the same time, there are

reasons for their dissatisfaction such as increased workloads, inflexible work schedules and unattractive salaries.

In this era, remuneration takes a higher place than ever before, due to the inflation all over the world. At this Hospital, the salary of a novice registered nurse is quite low. It has been observed that other professions such as banking or teaching with an undergraduate training of four years are being well paid with equally good benefits and their working hours are less or they just do day duties. On the other hand, the nurses work long hours, round the clock, double shifts and earn salaries that are not enough to run their household comfortably. The staff at the hospital even voiced their concern that when they work double shifts, they do not get paid for overtime, they are given an off instead. In addition to that, they are not paid extra for working on weekends and additional nights, which they think would be a bonus incentive for them if it is implemented. Recently, the salaries of the nurses at this private hospital were increased but other bonus incentives were not worked upon.

Another concern raised by the nurses is that they are given colossal workloads to be carried out. There are times when they are so exhausted and frustrated by the workload that they intend to quit. These reasons are still reported even after five years of the study carried out by Khowaja, Merchant and Hirani (2005). Therefore, the major two issues related to unsatisfied nurses are the increased workload and unattractive monetary bonus benefits.

Other Reasons for Dissatisfaction and Turnover

There is decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover among nurses at this institution in spite of continuing education opportunities, benefits and excellent work environment. The turnover rate among the BScN graduates is more due to increased salaries and positions elsewhere in the country. The turnover among the diploma nurses is also increasing as they are moving towards education and want to attain a bachelor's degree. Nurses are leaving their jobs and migrating for better prospects, professional growth, quality of life and personal safety (Shattuck, 2008).

Significance

This paper would be significant for the nursing services of different hospitals, as factors for nurses' turnover and recommendations to curtail these issues through motivation are discussed supported by literature. Nurses, patients, society, healthcare managers and organizations would benefit.

Major Impact of Job Dissatisfaction

The impact of job dissatisfaction is enormous in terms of quality patient care and patient satisfaction. Because, the nurses are not satisfied, they are not motivated and have a low morale towards their work. Nurses' job performance is affected and then quality patient care and patient satisfaction are at stake. According to Carayon & Gurses (n.d.) researchers have shown that decreased job satisfaction which is because of decreased motivation can result in increased turnover, staffing shortages which can further result in increased workload and that can in turn jeopardize patient's safety. In modern times a competitive and quality oriented healthcare market is prevalent and so are the expectations of the consumers (Tzeng, 2002). When the consumers of health care would be disappointed with the care, they would go to other providers of health care. In this way, the organization will incur losses in terms of customers. Therefore, improvement in the quality of healthcare is a continuous challenge for nurse managers in the industry of health care. Serious action needs to be taken in this regard and every effort made towards retaining these precious assets of the healthcare industry.

Another major impact of this job dissatisfaction and increased turnover is high financial cost. The actual financial cost of turnover is a lot but is difficult to estimate in rupees. There are numerous time and financial costs incurred in the process of recruiting, hiring, orienting, and familiarizing the new nurse and the time she takes in adjustment also adds on (Sullivan & Decker, 2001). Furthermore, a study showed that employee turnover results in heavy replacement costs which can reach beyond 150% of annual compensation of an employee (Hayajneh, 2009). This institution is also spending a lot in recruiting, hiring and training staff. Attention is genuinely required and action needs to be taken in terms of retaining these trained and experienced staff and saving the institution from heavy financial costs.

Why motivate Nurses?

Motivation for nurses is most important because Nursing is a sensitive profession and nurses are individuals who work in the most stressful conditions. Nurses deal with lives, which is really challenging as here they face pain, sickness, loss, death, depression and much more. Their profession is very demanding as they have to deal with lives and no mistakes are allowed. How can nurses work without making mistakes when they are so overworked? The nature of their job is tough as they have to work long hours, shift duties, work on weekends, holidays and occasions, which takes them away from their normal family life. Boivin & James (2004) state that a night shift healthcare worker reports decreased alertness, performance during shift duties, have difficulty in achieving recuperative sleep and is more likely to develop health complications. They even risk their health and life when caring for patients; they encounter sharp injuries where they can be infected with diseases. Nurses are the ones who deal with the dying patient and provide comfort to their family and at the same time, they have to continue to care for another patient with a smile on their faces. They are expected to possess the art of dealing with such situations simultaneously. In other words, we can say that nurses have to wear different hats during the course of their single shift duty. Inside, they are human beings and need to be rewarded for their untiring work of caring and saving lives and so words of admiration would do wonders. Appreciation would really pay off, it will absorb their stressors and motivate them and help them move along their tough careers. Motivating these healthcare personnel is all the more important for their job satisfaction, patient contentment and prosperity of an organization. So all possible efforts should be made to satisfy them and the best way to reach our goal is through motivation.

How can motivation increase job satisfaction?

Motivation and job satisfaction are directly proportional. If you increase motivation, the job satisfaction also increases and it works vice-versa. "In order to become good in anything, the only talent you need is motivation." *Charles De Gaulle*. For any organization to succeed, motivation should be the ingredient of their policies. The employer should look for the needs of the employees and try to satisfy their needs to attain their job satisfaction. The performance of employees depends on the extent of motivation that encourages an individual to work upon required tasks to meet the goals. The employer should also focus on recruiting the right person for the right job or else there will be dissatisfactions which could lead to turnovers, staffing shortages, work overload, unsatisfied patients and a loss to organizations.

The goal of most institutions is to promote positive job performance by satisfying the needs of the employees who will in turn satisfy the needs of the organization thus creating a win-win situation for both the employee and the employer (Al -Jishi, 2009).

Maslow's Hierarchy and Job satisfaction

The Maslow's Hierarchy of needs will be discussed to further elaborate on motivation. In her book, Tomey (2004) describes the five stages of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs in the context of Job satisfaction. In the first stage of physiological needs, she refers that in this stage the needs of the employees should be met, such as staff should not be overworked, they should get their tea and meal breaks on time. In addition to these, their wages should be enough to cater for their food, housing, health and leisure. In the second stage, that is Safety and security needs, there should be job security, adequate income, safety at work and no discrimination among other employees. In the third stage of Social and Belonging needs, she addresses the acceptance among the peers and recognition as an important member of a cohesive group. In the fourth stage of Esteem needs, she links it to the positive performance appraisals when deserved by the staff, increments in salaries, recognition, and titles. In the final stage of Self-actualization, she associates it with the feelings of achievement, accomplishment, challenge, opportunities and contribution to self-fulfillment (Tomey, 2004, p. 90). So, each individual has different motivators and their performance is also affected by the satisfaction of their needs according to their individual priorities. Referring to Tomey (2004), the needs that the nursing staff at this tertiary care hospital expressed were similar to those discussed earlier in the Maslow's Hierarchy.

In-depth Analysis of the Problem

The first issue expressed by the nurses was their workload. Nurses care for ten patients in a general ward scenario with one nursing assistant to help her. In the Emergency room, a nurse takes care of six sick patients, where a nurse is expected to do assessment, perform diagnostic procedures, provide medications and perform all treatment procedures. It is a situation where a nurse would work like a robot and does not even get time to communicate to the patient. Lengthy documentation also needs to be completed simultaneously, which at times is a repetition in different documentation. We as nurses are trained to document our nursing care promptly, but due to the workload, nurses can't do timely documentation. Nurses gave priority to complete their assessments, doing diagnostic and treatment procedures, and

administering medications to documentation. Due to such issues of workload, the nurses feel exhausted, dissatisfied due to guilt feelings, frustrated and burned out. These when not tackled lead to absenteeism, further shortage of staff, increased workload, leading to double shifts, and the vicious cycle then continues and there is no end to it. When these staffing shortages prevail, they would lead to other grave concerns which will threaten patient outcomes, quality of patient care and their satisfaction. If these issues could be taken care of initially they will not lead to such serious problems. If there is improvement in job satisfaction of nurses, the retention and patient satisfaction will also improve.

Workloads have a direct effect on patient satisfaction and patient safety and the reasons being lack of time, exhaustion, decreased performance due to stress and burnout, increased chances of errors and lack of motivation. Lack of time and increased workload would impact on patient's safety due to unsafe practices, lack of patient monitoring and commitment of errors (Carayon & Gurses, n.d.). The nurses even reported that they are not satisfied with their work and go through a guilt trip because of incomplete tasks, chances of errors, lack of communication with patients and unsatisfied patients.

It is amazing that how multi skilled nurses are expected to be, and how minutely it is reflected in their wages or benefits. Majority of the nurses feel underpaid for the untiring work that they perform. They are expected to work in endless specialties such as neurology, nephrology, cardiology, gastroenterology, medical, surgical, emergency, intensive care and many more. Al-Jishi (2009), states that monetary rewards are the most valued by employees and these result in job satisfaction, motivation, and retention. Monetary rewards can be salaries, overtime, extra earnings for weekend and night shifts, bonuses, medical benefits, loans, tuition fees reimbursements, insurances etc. Nurses verbalized that whenever there is a shortage of staff or absenteeism due to riots in the city, they are asked to do a double shift. They said that they do not get overtime for their extra shift but get a day off instead. The staff preferred getting overtime pay over a day off. According to the report by UNISON (2002), shift workers should receive premium payment, especially for evening and night shifts, compensating for temporary detachment from the family and physical disruption caused by shift duties. These premium payments makeshift duties more attractive and assure that there is enough staff to accomplish the work. Such considerations for nurses needs are essential for motivation and recognition of shift workers. Motivation would improve the adaptation of nurses to awkward hours of shift duties.

Recommending Strategies to increase Job Satisfaction and Motivation

To motivate nurses and increase their job satisfaction, measures need to be taken at institution level to address their needs. Addressing the workload issue, by increasing the nurse patient ratio according to international standards in different work settings would deem to be an effective strategy. Hiring of new staff needs to be considered to improve nurse patient ratio which would focus towards appropriate workload distribution. Float pool staff can be utilized to decrease nursing shortages and increase nurse patient ratio. The major problem would be solved leaving positive results of effective patient monitoring and communication, less chances of errors by nurses, patient and nurse satisfaction and increased motivation towards job.

Appreciation of the staff and support from the management staff would result in happy employees and job satisfaction (Longo, 2007). In a study, it was identified that staff feel important when appreciated and respected for their work and contributions, and feel good when treated equal to the practitioners by the multidisciplinary teams (Maben, 2008). According to Khowaja, Merchant & Hirani (2005), appreciation and recognition of good performers play an important role towards job satisfaction and raising ones morale. So, a step needs to be taken to appreciate the staff for the hard work that they do and the extra hours that they work in times of need. Appreciation will boost the egos of individuals and surely pay off in the form of highly motivated employees. According to Herzberg's motivation hygiene theory, developing intrinsic motivation factors is equally important, as then the staff would work to improve their performance for recognition and achievement rather than just being content with the wages, benefits, and job security (Tomey, 2004, p. 93).

Improving the monetary benefits with enhanced increments according to their performance appraisals is another major strategy towards job satisfaction and motivation. Nurses feel motivated when they earn monetary benefits for working extra hours, so the options of overtime earnings need to be considered. It has remained a trend in health care organizations abroad to pay extra to those who work extra night shifts and for working on weekends. This would be satisfactory for the staff and they would happily work extra hours, extra nights and on weekends as well. Improving remuneration and paying for overtime would consequently pay off in the form of satisfied employees (Longo, 2007). Implementation of the above strategies would promote retention of valuable, worthy and better employees.

Further Research Areas

In addition to these reasons, there could be other confounding factors such as family responsibilities, cultural reasons, political situation of the country, and migration for the high turnover and job dissatisfaction which need to be studied. Further research is required in these areas and recommendations for these issues can also be worked on.

CONCLUSION

A multi-component approach rather than a single strategy would work to create the milieu of job satisfaction. Here, I would mention a quote that “The grass is greener where you water it” (Anonymous). This means, if we want the desired outcomes from our employees, we need to boost their ego and that can be done by ‘Motivation’. Motivators are an essential part of one’s life, irrespective of the age of an individual. Efforts need to be made to motivate employees for Hygiene factors (extrinsic factors), such as good working conditions and interpersonal relations focus on dissatisfaction and promote satisfaction among the employees, and motivators (intrinsic factors) such as recognition, promotions on achievement and the work itself increase motivation and commitment to their jobs. Once the hygiene factors are taken care of the motivators would enhance motivation and productivity, and would motivate the nurses to stay in the organization (Tomey, 2004, p. 93). Institutions and specially hospitals should, therefore, know how to motivate their nurses and prevent demotivation and burn out. This endeavor of theirs would then account for employee satisfaction, patient satisfaction and even prosperity of the organization.

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