

Professional satisfaction and its associated factors in Health-Care Organizations: A cross-sectional study of the hospital nurses in Greece

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Abstract

The goal of this particular study is to evaluate the level of the professional satisfaction of the nurses who work in a Greek, public, general hospital in northern Greece and to give a detailed account of the factors that influence it. A quantitative cross-sectional study has been applied including a self-administered questionnaire of 43 items. There have been distributed 184 questionnaires with a responsiveness percentage of 90.76% (N=167). All statistical processes have been completed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 15.0 and included frequencies, percentages, independent sample T-Test, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. The nurses of this specific hospital appeared to be greatly disappointed with the low wages, the limited ability of continuing education and the work load. These findings show that the nursing managers along with the health policy makers should evaluate the level of professional satisfaction in order to manage the human nursing staff more effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: nurses, occupational satisfaction, hospital, hospital management

1. Introduction

The investigation of the professional satisfaction in the international nursing area has extensively constituted a subject of research [1]. since the nurses form the largest population group of workers in most Health-Care Organizations, private or public, all over the world. Inevitably, their performance and behavior contribute to develop the necessary conditions in order to provide high quality services and a climate of satisfaction towards the patients. This fact is reflected in the correlation of the professional satisfaction, on the one hand with the quality and insurance of the provided nursing care [2-4] and on the other hand with the low morale and burnout [5-7].

2. Materials and methods

The sample of this study has consisted of 184 nurses of a public general hospital in northern Greece. The survey has been conducted during January and February of the year 2014 and the percentage of participation was 90, 76% (N=167).

2.1 Instrument

The measuring instrument that has been used is a questionnaire containing 43 questions. It is divided into three parts. The first part (6 closed-ended questions) provided the ability to take demographic data as independent variables. The second part consisted of 36 closed-ended questions regarding the factors of the professional satisfaction. Some statements were negatively formulated. It was made to ensure that the participants read carefully and understood the statements. The negatively formulated questions were reversed during the codification, so as for the measurement of the professional satisfaction level, per satisfaction factor, to be estimated in five point Likert scale (1: totally agree, to 5: totally disagree). The use of the Likert scale is considered to be expedient tool for measurements of

this kind [8,9]. The third part of the questionnaire (1 open-ended question) regarded the selection of three factors, which were viewed as the most important ones, and much contribute to professional satisfaction.

The configuration of the questionnaire was completed after the literature review of the international bibliography [10-16] from 2000 onwards, in order for the studies to be limited and for the findings to be recent.

The factors of the professional satisfaction that were examined are the following:

1. Adequate Fees.
2. Relations with the colleagues.
3. Relations with the supervisors.
4. Education opportunities.
5. Working conditions-workload.
6. Quality of life.
7. Social status.
8. Autonomy.
9. Reward-relation with the Administration.

2.2 Statistical Methodology

The structure of the questionnaires provided the ability of taking qualitative data (information of nominal type) and quantitative data (scale Likert). The implementation of these data included descriptive and concluding statistical processing, such as the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient for the finding of positive/negative correlation among the variables, the independent sample T-Test and the ANOVA for the finding of correlation of satisfaction factors with qualitative data. A reliability analysis has been conducted for the measurement of the reliability in all scales (cross-thematic variables – factors). All statistical processing has been completed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 15.0.

2.3 Ethical Issues

The required authorization from the competent authorities was obtained for the compilation of the data and the conducting of the research. The participants were informed for the goal and procedure of the research in written form and the ethical principles for the research were followed according to the International Committee of Editors of Medical Science Journals.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

As far as the gender is concerned, it has been observed uneven distribution in view of the fact that the percentage of women (85, 02%) was higher of the percentage of men (14, 97%). The highest percentage (71, 25%) belonged to those ones who were from 36 to 50 years of age while the smallest percentage belonged to those from 18 to 35 years of age (7, 18%). The majority of the respondents were married (88, 02%). A small number of the respondents hold management positions (11, 37%). A quite high percentage work in the surgical sector (58, 68%), smaller percentage work in the pathological sector (33, 53%), whereas the smallest percentage of the respondents are occupied in the laboratory sections (7, 78%). The highest percentage (48, 50%) had work experience over 20 years, while the smallest percentage (14, 97%) worked less than 10 years. The features of this sample are imprinted on table: 1.

Table 1: Features of sample (N=167)

Features		Frequency N	Percent %
Gender	men	25	14,97
	women	142	85,02
Age group	18-35	12	7,18
	36-50	119	71,25
	50+	36	21,55
Marital status	married	147	88,02
	unmarried	20	11,97
Management position	yes	19	11,37
	no	148	88,62
Work field	surgical sector	98	58,68
	pathological sector	56	33,53
	laboratory sections	13	7,78
Experience	< 10	25	14,97
	10-20	61	36,52
	> 20	81	48,50

3.2 Statistical Analysis

The 9 factors of the professional satisfaction, that have been examined, have also been imprinted as cumulative scales and have arisen by grouping the individual questions of the questionnaire. Every question was associated with a particular parameter of the nurses work experience in the workplace of the hospital. Furthermore, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient has been calculated for every factor of professional satisfaction. The mean value, the standard deviation and reliability for all 9 factors are imprinted on table: 2. The selection of the three considered most important factors that contribute to the professional satisfaction as well as the frequency of the answers are recorded on table: 3.

Table 2: Mean value and reliability of professional satisfaction factors

Factors	Items (N=36)	Mean ± SD*	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Adequate Fees	3	4,60±0,59	0,875
Relations with the colleagues	5	2,83±0,60	0,452
Relations with the supervisors	5	2,60±0,95	0,913
Education opportunities	3	4,02±0,93	0,830
Working conditions-workload	6	4,33±0,46	0,149
Quality of life	5	3,87±0,48	0,232
Social status	3	3,69±0,91	0,664
Autonomy	3	4,19±0,92	0,872
Reward-relation with the Administration	3	4,30±0,78	0,695

* Mean (on scale from 1 to 5)

Table 3: The considered most important professional factors

Factors	Frequency N	Percent %
Adequate fees	150	89,82
Job safety	148	88,62
Good working conditions	136	81,43
Adequacy of staff	95	56,88
Praise from the patients	88	52,69
More free time	76	45,50

3.3 Correlation of satisfaction factors with qualitative data Gender

The statistical check of the average satisfaction per gender (t-test) for every single satisfaction factor has not revealed statistically important differentiations ($p > 0,05$).

Age group

The statistical check of the differentiation regarding the average satisfaction, for every satisfaction factor, (ANOVA), per age group, has shown that statistically important differentiations appear in the factor "Adequate Fees" ($p < 0,001$) and "Reward-relation with the Administration" ($p < 0,05$).

Management position in the Nursing Service

The statistical check of the average satisfaction (t-test) for every satisfaction factor has revealed a statistically important differentiation only for the factor "Autonomy". The employees that have a management position in the Nursing Service appear to possess a higher degree of satisfaction ($3,5 \pm 1,28$) from the others ($4,31 \pm 0,83$) [$p = 0,003$].

Work field

The statistical check of the average satisfaction per work field, for every satisfaction factor, (one-way ANOVA) has not revealed statistically important differentiations ($p > 0,05$).

Years of professional experience

The parameter of the years of professional experience is the one which has revealed the most statistically important differentiations, in relation to the satisfaction factors, from the rest professional parameters. According to the findings, it

arises that the factors “Fees”, “Reward-relation to the Administration” show homogeneity in the average satisfaction.

3.4 Bivariate correlations

There have been arisen 25 statistically important correlations (9 negative and 16 positive) out of 36 correlations (Spearman

correlation) among the satisfaction factors. During the statistical analysis and processing of the data, the correlations that arise are considered statistically important only if they correspond to probability $p < 0,05$ (as it results every time from the counterpart statistical check) (table: 4).

Table 4: Bivariate correlations (Spearman's rank correlation)

S. No.	N=167	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Adequate Fees								
2	Relations with the colleagues	0,172							
3	Relations with the supervisors	0,133	+ 0,695***						
4	Education opportunities	+ 0,473***	+0,354***	+ 0,376***					
5	Working conditions-workload	- 0,353***	- 0,132	- 0,089	- 0,234**				
6	Quality of life	+ 0,183*	0,140	0,059	- 0,064	0,155			
7	Social status	+ 0,457***	+ 0,242**	+ 0,236**	+ 0,442***	- 0,361***	+ 0,343***		
8	Autonomy	+ 0,542***	0,175	+ 0,270**	+ 0,632***	- 0,259**	+ 0,402***	+ 0,557***	
9	Reward-relation with Administration	+ 0,560***	0,094	0,174	+ 0,643***	- 0,361***	+ 0,196*	+ 0,539***	+ 0,753***

***correlation is significant at $p < 0,001$; **correlation is significant at $p < 0,01$; *correlation is significant at $p < 0,05$

4. Discussion

The nurses appeared to be greatly disappointed due to the low payments. This fact has been highlighted by other researchers as well [17-21]. The age seemed to have great importance because it differentiated the levels of satisfaction in relation to the payments. More specifically, the younger employees (18-35), seem to be less disappointed than the older ones. Apparently, due to the fact that the majority of the older employees are married, they have increased family responsibilities and thus they demand higher earnings over time.

The professional relationships and the collaboration with other colleagues have been found to create positive emotions. The interprofessional collaboration is positively associated with the professional satisfaction [22-25]. While the ineffective communication and the bad relationships have adverse effects on human [26-28] and economic resources [29].

The relationships with the supervisors have also been found of satisfactory level. The positive association between the satisfactory relationships with the supervisors and the professional satisfaction is often traced in recent surveys [23, 25, 30-35].

In the context of the dissatisfaction emotions of the nurses, the issue of education is significant and this fact is deduced by other studies too [6]. In the present research, the dissatisfaction owing to the limited capability for continuing education is observed to be more intense to older employees in relation to younger ones. Apparently this can be explained because the former experience the permanent nature of this phenomenon.

In reference to the workload, which is related to the labor shortage, the variety of duties along with the absence of educational opportunities, there have been noticed an overall dissatisfaction in accordance with other researchers [22, 24-27, 35-37]. The adverse working conditions, in combination with the low payments, affect negatively the professional satisfaction [38-40].

The quality of the respondents' life did not seem to be affected negatively from their work. However there is a tendency to abandon this profession, a finding which corresponds both with

previous studies [41, 42]. And recent ones [43-45]. Similar were the findings when it comes to the social status of the profession, where the respondents kept neutral attitude.

Regarding the issue of autonomy, the dissatisfaction that has been found is high. Nevertheless, the employees who have a management position are less dissatisfied. These conclusions are confirmed by international studies, where there is clear association between the mode of administration and the level of professional satisfaction [34, 43, 45, 46].

5. Conclusions

It is obvious that the nurses experience intense dissatisfaction from their work. As a result, it is totally necessary for the Administration of the hospital to acknowledge the problem of professional dissatisfaction of the nurses and explore its solutions periodically.

The executives of the health organization should be informed about the problems and needs of the employees, express publicly the praise from the patients concerning the nurses' efforts and delegate the duties to their subordinates. What is more, the existence of a safer working status, which derives from the fact that these positions are permanent, and the more attractive work place along with the operation of continuing education programs are strongly advisable. Thus, it can be achieved the reduction of the levels of work stress, the ensuring of job safety for the employees by eliminating the fear of dismissal, the provision of career opportunities to them and the reinforcement of their ability to provide nursing care and treatment of high quality to the users of health services.

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