

Assessing Job Stress and Satisfaction among Indian Nurses

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ABSTRACT

Though some amount of stress has been attributed to positively impact work success, but excess can create dissatisfaction and even lead to decrease in moral and high attrition. Understanding the major contributor to work, stress can bring huge changes in every aspect of work life. The objective of present work is to evaluate the sources of job stress and satisfaction among nurses of a super specialty hospital to suggest measures to increase satisfying aspects in work and decrease their stressful aspects of work. This descriptive study employing 115 staff nurses of a super specialty hospital, used a structured personal interview questionnaire consisting of 21 sources of stress and 19 sources of satisfaction. The nurses was asked to rate each item according to the extent by which it contributed to their stress or satisfaction as experienced in their jobs in the past few months. The stress label measured on a scale of 0 (not at all), 1 (a little), 2 (quite a bit) to 3 (a lot). A global rating of stress and satisfaction was also obtained. Three top reasons of stress were found to be feeling poorly paid for the job (66%), having too great an overall volume of work (60%), and being involved with emotional distress of patients (52%). On the other hand, having good relationships with patients (86%), feeling of dealing well with relatives (83%), and being perceived to do the job well by patients (76%) was quoted by nurses to contribute to the satisfying aspect of their job. The nursing staff of the hospital was in moderate stress due to the prime stressors, so adequate measures should be taken to alleviate these stressors. This could be achieved through workload management, job redesign, and by offering occupational health education.

Keywords: Job life, job satisfaction, job stress, Nurses.

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INTRODUCTION

Stressors are common in health care settings includes inadequate staffing levels, long working hours, shift work, role ambiguity and exposure to infectious and hazardous substances. In general studies of nurses have found, that work overload, time pressure, lack of social support at work (especially from supervisors, head nurses and higher management), exposure to infectious diseases, needle stick injuries, exposure to work-related violence or threats, sleep deprivation, role

ambiguity and conflict, understaffing, career development issues and dealing with difficult or seriously ill patients, to be linked with stress [1].

Job satisfaction term can be related to one's feelings or state-of-mind regarding the nature of their work. Job satisfaction can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as quality of one's relationship with their supervisor, quality of the physical environment, in which they work and the degree of fulfillment in their work [2].

There are some important reasons, why the researcher should be concerned with job satisfaction. The first is that people deserve to be treated fairly with full respect. Job satisfaction is to some extent a reflection of good treatment. It can also be considered as an indicator of emotional well-being or physiological health.

The second reason is that job satisfaction can lead to behavior of employees that affects organizational functioning. Furthermore, job satisfaction can be a reflection of organizational functioning. Differences among organizational units in job satisfaction can be diagnostic of potential trouble spot [3]. Dissatisfied workers are more likely to provide inferior services. The physical, mental status and social functioning of these workers can be affected substantially by the level of their job satisfaction [4].

According to Schermerhorn, the importance of job satisfaction can be viewed in the context of two decisions, people make about their work. The first is the decision to belong – that is, join and remain a member of an organization. The second is the decision to perform – that is, to work hard in pursuit of high levels of task performance. Job satisfaction influences absenteeism or the failure of people to attend work. Job satisfaction can also affect turnover or decisions by people to terminate their employment [5].

“Occupational Stress and Coping among Nurses” a paper by Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT, Mumbai explores nurses’ occupational stressors and coping mechanism. In nurses, occupational stress appears to vary according to individual and job characteristics and work-family conflict. Common occupational stressors among nurses are workload, role ambiguity, interpersonal relationships and death and dying concerns. Emotional distress, burnout and psychological morbidity could also result from occupational stress. Nurses common coping mechanism includes problem solving, social support and avoidance. Perceived control appears to be an important mediator of occupational stress. Shift work is highly prevalent among nurses and a significant source of stress [6].

The study carried out in a number of public hospitals in Riyadh city, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aimed at assessing the different sources of job stress for nurses. In addition, it also intended to find out the most and least perceived sources of stress. Four-hundred and twenty-four nurses working in a number of public hospitals in Riyadh city were the sample size. A questionnaire was used as a method of data collection. It was distributed through the first half of year 2002. Six possible sources of job stress for nurses in public hospitals were found. These include organizational structure and climate, job itself, managerial role, interpersonal relationships, career and achievement and homework

interface. The major sources of stress were the first 3 factors, but they have mixed views on the last 3. It was concluded that public hospitals managers must deal with these and other stressors. They manage them more constructively in a way that positive consequences will be maintained and negative ones will be eliminated. Besides, there are many strategies for coping with job stress that managers should adopt. Finally, it must be noted that these results have to be taken with caution [7].

A study was carried out among 153 nurses working in two public hospitals in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. It investigated the effects of job stress on the physical health, mental health, personal and work behaviors of nurses in public hospitals. It aimed at addressing the issue of how stress at work can be effectively managed, reduced or prevented by the government and hospital management board in order to enhance the health of the nurses as well as improving their personal and work behaviors.

A single questionnaire tagged "Stress Assessment Questionnaire for Hospital Nurses (SAQFHN) was developed and used for the study. It contains 72 items measuring demographic variables, job stress, physical and mental symptoms, personal and work behavior. The study established that job stress has significant effect on physical and mental health of the nurses. It also established that

there was a significant difference in personal and work behavior of highly stressed nurses and less stressed nurses. Based on these findings, it was recommended that the government (Federal or State) and Hospital Management Boards should improve the welfare of the nurses. It was also recommended that their morale should be boosted by involving them in policy or decision-making like important role concerning their welfare or care of their patients. Their salary should be reviewed and they should be promoted as at when due [8].

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

A descriptive study was carried out at a 350-bedded super specialty hospital during Feb-June 2009. The study included all the nurses of the hospital present at the time of the study.

Data Collection Tool

The questionnaire used for the study was adapted from 'The Hospital Consultants' Job Stress and Satisfaction Questionnaire (HCJSSQ), 2002 [10]. The questionnaire was customized by appropriate selection of questions and validated by 5 experts (General Administrator, 2 physicians, Nursing Superintendent, Human Resource manager). The questionnaire consisted of 21 questions on sources of stress and 19 questions on sources of satisfaction.

Method of Data Collection

A structured personal interview was conducted with the nursing staff, after obtaining their verbal consent. These interviews happened with consensus of the administrators and the nursing superintendent. The nurses were asked to rate each item on the questionnaire, according to the extent to which it had contributed to the stress and satisfaction, they experienced in their jobs in the past few months. The stress label measured on a scale of 0 (not at all), 1(a little), 2(quite a bit) to 3 (a lot). Global ratings of stress and satisfaction were also obtained.

Statistical Analysis

The relative importance of different sources of stress and satisfaction were assessed by calculating the percentage of staff reporting each item as contributing “not at all” to “a lot” to their job stress. This was analyzed categorically according to the percentage of scoring at each point on the scale. Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) 16.0 version was used to analyze the data. $P < 0.05$ was considered and significant.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

A total of 115 nurses, including nursing supervisors & staff nurses (ward, OPD, casualty, ICU).

Though physicians are responsible for the diagnosis and treatment of the patients, but

with the increasing concern with holistic care, including nutrition, physical comfort, personal hygiene, mobilization, communication, emotional care and social support, a growing proportion of responsibility for patient care now lies with the nurse [9]. Therefore, the present study tried to understand and find out not only the sources of stress among them, the satisfying aspect of their work as well.

The major source of stress for the nurses was found to be underpayment. This is in accordance to the study done by J. K. Mojinyinola “Effects of Job Stress on Health, Personal and Work Behavior of Nurses in Public Hospitals” in which it was recommended that their salary should be reviewed and they should be promoted as at when due [7]. The nurses in the present case felt that their remuneration needs to be in accordance to the effort put up by them (Table I).

Second major source of stress was found to be their work pressure. Studies have shown that people who start to feel the ‘pressure to perform’ find that they experience an increasing effort to meet rising expectations with no increase in their job satisfaction. The relentless requirement to work at optimum performance takes its toll in job satisfaction, employee turnover, reduced efficiency, illness and even death. Absenteeism, illness, alcoholism, poor decision-making, indifference, lack of motivation and creativity

Table I Sources of Stress in Nursing Department.

Source of stress	N=115 (%)
Feeling poorly paid for the job	65.7
Having too great an overall volume of work	59.6
Being involved with the emotional distress of patients	51.5
Having inadequate staff to do the job properly	46.5
Dealing with patients or relatives having expectations that cannot be met	42.5
Encountering difficulties in relationships with staff of other department	37.4
Having to deal with angry, distressed or blaming relatives	37.4
Encountering difficulties in relationship with colleagues	35.4
Disruption of home life through spending long hours at work	35.3
Having inadequate facilities (e.g., Equipment, space) to do the job properly	35.3
Being responsible for the quality of work of other staff	34.4
Feeling you have insufficient input into the management of your department or institution	32.3
Having to take on more managerial responsibilities	28.3
Encountering difficulties in relationship with managers	27.3
Uncertainty over the future funding of one's department	27.3
Feeling that the accumulated skills and expertise are not being put to their best use	27.3
Feeling under pressure to meet deadlines	24.3
Having performance targets which are unrealistic or unattainable	24.3
Having to comply with increasing bureaucratic and regulatory procedures	23.2
Disruption of home life as a result of taking paperwork home	9.1

are all by-products of an over stressed workplace [2]. The finding is similar to the study done by Marina Kaarna "The importance of job satisfaction in hospital quality process" which stated that "A heavy workload was the most influential variable in determining job satisfaction for nurses" [10].

Around 35.3% nurses reported that disruption of home life through spending long hours at work consequently resulted in stress. Furthermore, other studies of work-related stress in nurses have shown that irregular working hours, often involving overtime is the main source of stress and that excessive stress at work may be one of the factors causing dissatisfaction [11].

According to the study done by Al-Aameri, “A.S. Source of job stress for nurses in public hospitals” six possible sources of job stress for nurses in public hospitals were found to be organizational structure, climate, job itself, managerial role, interpersonal relationships, career, achievements and homework interface [7]. In the present study too, 46.5% nurses reported stress due to understaffing, 35.4% due to difficulties faced in encountering

colleagues and 28.3% due to taking up more managerial roles.

According to the study done by J. K. Mojinyinola “Effects of Job Stress on Health, Personal and Work Behavior of Nurses in Public Hospitals” job stress has significant effect on physical and mental health of the nurses. It also established that there was a significant difference in personal and work behavior of highly stressed nurses and less stressed nurses [7].

Table II Sources of Satisfaction in Nursing Department.

Source of satisfaction	N=115
Having good relationships with patients	85.7
Feeling you deal well with relatives	82.8
Being perceived to do the job well by patients	76.2
Feeling you have high level of job security	70.5
Having a high variety in job	66.6
Having good relationships with other staff members	65.7
Being an expert in a specialist area	63.9
Being involved in activities that contribute to the development of one’s profession	59.1
Being perceived to do the job well by colleagues	59.1
Feeling your knowledge is used to full in the job you do	59
Having opportunities for personal learning (developing clinical/research/managerial skills)	58.1
Being able to bring about positive change in department/institution	56.2
Having adequate facilities to do a good job	53.3
Having a high level of autonomy	52.4
Having a high level of responsibility	50.4
Feeling you have the necessary staff to do a good job	50.4
Having adequate financial resources to do a good job	44.8
Deriving intellectual stimulation from research	29.5
Deriving intellectual stimulation from teaching	23.8

Nurses who were in constant communication with their patients, listening to their problems, feel comfortable and enable during the entire period of treatment (Table II). Therefore the major sources of satisfaction for this professional group are having good relationships with patients (85.7%), dealing well with relatives (82.8%) and being perceive to do the job well by patients (76.2%).

Blegen's meta-analysis of 48 studies looked at work satisfaction in over 15,000 nurses, revealing that job satisfaction was strongly associated with reduced work stress, employee recognition, organizational commitment, communication with superiors, autonomy, fairness, and years of experience, education and professionalism [11].

The present study too showed that feeling of:

- job security (70.5%),
- having high variety in job (66.6%)
- having good relationships with others (65.7%)
- being an expert (63.9%)
- being involved in one's professional development (59.1%)
- being perceive to do the job well by colleagues (59.1%)
- using their knowledge fully in the job (59%)
- being able to bring positive changes (56.2%)
- having adequate facilities (infrastructure, finance, and human resource)

- having high level of responsibility, etc. are reasons of satisfaction for these nurses as well.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study brought to light the major contributors to job stress and also the satisfying aspects of job among the nurses of multispecialty hospitals. The findings indicated that the prime sources of stress were underpayment, excessive workload, inadequate staff and being involved in the emotional distress of patients. While having good relationships with patients, peer and superior being perceive to do the job well by patients, job security, having high variety in job, has been found to be major reasons for satisfaction for this professional group. A proper workload management policy, adequate delegation of authority along with responsibility, recognition of efforts along with ongoing training, stress and time management will go a long way in managing stress and giving a sense of satisfaction.

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