

NURSES' VIEWS ON THEIR PROFESSION AND JOB SATISFACTION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

HEMŞİRELERİN MESLEK VE İŞ DOYUMLARI HAKKINDAKİ GÖRÜŞLERİ: BİR KALİTATİF ÇALIŞMA

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ÖZET

AMAÇ: Bu çalışmanın amacı hemşirelerin meslek ve iş doyumları ile ilgili görüşlerinin belirlenmesidir.

YÖNTEMLER: Hemşirelerin meslek ve iş doyumları ile ilgili görüşlerini belirlemek için kalitatif yaklaşım kullanılmıştır. Kalitatif tanımlayıcı çalışmada yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmadaki katılımcıları bir üniversite hastanesinden 20 hemşire oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmaya alınma kriteri tüm hemşirelerin meslekte en az 5 yıl deneyimlerinin olmasıdır. Kalitatif veriler odak grup görüşmesi kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Görüşme süresince katılımcılara meslek ve iş doyumları ile ilgili düşüncelerini soran üç soru sorulmuş ve katılımcılardan izin alınarak kayıt yapılmıştır. Veriler tematik analiz kullanılarak sistematik olarak analiz edilmiştir.

BULGULAR: Katılımcıların yaş ortalaması 30.3 ve tüm hemşirelerin lisans derecesine sahiptir. Katılımcıların çoğu mesleklerini isteyerek seçmediklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bazı katılımcılara göre hemşirelik mesleği toplum için yeteri kadar iyi değildir. Genellikle hemşireler düşük iş doyum seviyesinde olduklarını belirtmişlerdir.

SONUÇ: Katılımcı hemşirelerin iş ve meslek doyumları ile ilgili görüşleri, meslek seçimini, iş stresini, hemşire açığını, yöneticilerin tutumunu, diğer sağlık personeli, doktorlar ve toplum içindeki hemşirelik imajını içermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hemşirelik, iş doyumları, kalitatif çalışma.

SUMMARY

OBJECTIVE: The aim of this study was to explore in nurses' views on the profession and job satisfaction.

METHODS: A qualitative approach was used to explore nurse's views related to their profession and job satisfaction. This qualitative descriptive study was conducted using semi-structured interview guide. The study participants consisted of 20 nurses from an university hospital. All nurses had baccalaureate degrees in nursing. The inclusion criteria for this study stipulated that all nurses had at least 5 years of experience of the job. Qualitative data were collected by using focus group interviews. During the interview, participants were asked to respond to three questions about their perceptions related to their profession and job satisfaction and the audio recording is made within the permission of the participants. Data were studied systematically by using thematic analysis.

RESULTS: The age range of participants was 30,3 and all nurses had baccalaureate degrees in nursing. Most of the participants indicated that they didn't prefer their job voluntarily. Some of the participant's opinion about the position of the nursing profession is not so good for public. Generally the nurses reported low levels of job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION: Participant nurses' views related to their profession and job satisfaction includes choice of profession, job stress, shortfall of nurses' number, attitudes of managers and image of nursing among the public, doctors and the other health personnel.

Key words: Nursing, job satisfaction, qualitative study.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing is as old as human life itself. Although the nursing is an integral part of the social system in every country, its identification with the traditional role of motherhood has made it difficult to strengthen its

position as a health discipline and profession. In the course of time, nursing profession has advanced with the effect of technological developments substantially until today. Significant steps have been taken in the name of

establishing a scientific and professional stand for nursing, and these developments have still continued.¹ During the last few decades, nursing has changed in many ways, putting extra pressure on nurses. Several researchers describe nurses' work as stressful.^{2,3} As nurses make a unique contribution to the multidisciplinary teams they work in Baxter 2002,⁴ job satisfaction influences the quality of the care they provide, just as nurses job dissatisfaction influences the nurse-patient relationship.⁵ When nurses feel dissatisfied with their work, they have a tendency to distance themselves from patients, from nursing tasks.⁶ Less attention has been paid to factors within the nursing job satisfaction, which may have a direct effect on nursing outcomes and, consequently, influence patient outcomes. These factors can be explored by examining the quality of nursing work environments (e.g. the configuration of care delivery models and the quality of the coordination of care among the staff) in relation to outcomes experienced by the nurse.

Job satisfaction has become a key concept within nursing workforce research in recent years. This is largely due to the view that nurses' job satisfaction has widespread and significant implications for nurses, patients and hospitals. Misener and Cox (2001)⁷ defined job satisfaction as a concept that incorporated the employee's personal beliefs, surroundings, individual characteristics, and expectations with the understanding that satisfiers and dissatisfiers are unique to the individual.

Job satisfaction is largely believed to be linked with a number of positive outcomes. While there are some inconsistencies across research findings Fisher (2003)⁸, the large majority of international and UK studies suggest that higher levels of job satisfaction are associated with positive, but very rarely negative, outcomes. Positive and direct outcomes for nurses found by recent studies are higher perceived quality of life⁹, less work-related stress¹⁰, decision latitude, social support from supervisor, information, interdepartmental cooperation and a reduced likelihood to report burnout.¹¹ Additionally, positive associated outcomes for patients have recently been reported, such as greater inpatient satisfaction¹² and greater perceived quality of care.¹³

Determining the nurses' views on their profession is a significant data for managers in predicting employees job satisfaction, performances and productivity.¹⁴ Therefore researches on views and attitudes are great importance to improve employees' job satisfaction and to enhance their quality of professional life, and consequently, to achieve organizational goals. In institutions providing human services in health care industry, characterization of nurses' views on their profession is essential for both

other individuals employed in the same organization and patients receiving healthcare from these institutions as nurses are the members of the healthcare team who spend the most time and therefore, the most familiar with patients.

While earlier work has demonstrated that changes to nurse staffing models may impact the nursing work environment, there has been little systematic examination of the influence of these changes on outcomes experienced by nurses. Recent reports from an international study of over 43000 nurses in five countries identify that the structure of nurses work environments have led to lower morale, job strain, burnout and job dissatisfaction.^{15,16,17}

Most of the nurses are employed in public hospitals which account for the majority of the hospitals in Turkish healthcare system. In these hospitals, nurses have to work in settings where the number of personnel is often inadequate, while the number of patients in their responsibility is extremely high; in addition working hours are long, vacation times are not always granted, which are the factors that further lead the nurses in Turkey to perceive less job satisfaction and develop negative attitudes towards their profession.¹⁸

Nurses are involved in patients suffering, and the interpersonal aspects of nursing are dependent on the autonomy and courage of the individual nurse.¹⁹ To be able to meet the challenges of their profession, nurses need to be clear about why they think and act as they do, and they need to perceive themselves as being empowered.

Purpose

The aim of this study was to explore in nurses' views on the profession and job satisfaction.

METHODS

Design

A qualitative approach was used to explore nurse's views related to their profession and job satisfaction. Particularly in nursing, qualitative research is adopted to comprehend or describe a particular incident or phenomenon that is rarely explored. This qualitative descriptive study was conducted using the focus group interviews.

Participants

The study participants consisted of 20 nurses from an university hospital. All nurses had baccalaureate degrees in nursing. The age range of participants was 24–40 years old with a mean of 30,3. Seventeen of the participants were married, two were widowed and one of them was single.

The inclusion criteria for this study stipulated that all nurses had at least 5 years of experience of the job and that they were employed on a permanent basis at an educational hospital. All participants volunteered to take part in the study.

Data collection

Qualitative data were collected by using focus groups. During the interview, participants were asked to respond to a number of questions about their perceptions related to their profession and job satisfaction. Before the start of interview, the purpose of the focus group interviews are described to all the participants particularly. Focus group interviews took about a half hour. The interview moderation was conducted by researcher.

It was used semi-structured interview guide for discussion managing. Interviews were guided by an interview guideline consisting of three questions. During the interviews, the audio recording is made within the permission of the participants.

These explicitly use group interaction as part of the method, by encouraging people to talk to each other, ask questions and comment on each others' experiences and points of view (Kitzinger 1994).²⁰ Focus groups are also efficient by providing data from larger numbers than individual interviews would allow.

A focus group schedule was used as the main tool for data collection. It consisted of a list of questions to be covered, although the questions were not adhered to in a strict order. The main aim was to stimulate participants to express freely their views on the content and functions of the profession and job satisfaction.

The interviews were based on an interview guide relating to the main questions of interest for the study. It included the following questions: (1) what do you think about the position of the nursing profession (2) which factors do you think affected to prefer your job? (3) how does your job satisfaction related to nursing?

Ethical considerations

The study was approved by the Ataturk University Ethics Committee, and informed consent was obtained from each participant. The study was also approved by the hospital administration. Nurses were invited to participate the study and were fully informed before verbal and written consent were obtained.

Data analysis

Data were studied systematically, by using thematic analysis. The transcripts were re-read several times to give the researcher an overall idea of the content. Following this, concepts – i.e. working codes – were allocated to significant sentences or paragraphs. Then, the concepts were grouped into themes. These themes

were largely descriptive and represented a wide scope to allow for variation. Instead of imposing a preselected theoretical grid on the data, this method ensured that the elements of the coding frame reflected the language of the focus group participant.²⁰ Coding was undertaken manually, using techniques such as 'cut and paste' and colored pens to categorize data.

What is already known about the topic

- Job satisfaction has become a key concept within nursing workforce research in recent years.
- Little empirical research, however, has been undertaken to determine nurses' views on their profession and job satisfaction.
- The available quantitative studies merely give some information on nurses' views and their job satisfaction.

What this paper adds

- This study explored nurses' views on the profession and job satisfaction.
- The nurses reported low levels of job satisfaction in Turkey.

Implications for practice and/or policy

The results may be used in planning strategies that promote healthy organizational cultures that are conducive to quality care and high job satisfaction.

RESULTS

According to the focus group participants, the job satisfaction could fulfil several functions, including stress, shortfall of nurses' number, attitudes of managers and image of nursing among the public, doctors and the other health personnel.

The position of the nursing profession

Some of the participant's opinion about the position of the nursing profession is not so good for public. They think the nursing profession has not *not reached the state that it deserves*. But some participants think that the health of a society depends on nurses;
Participant 1: *I think nursing is a holy and noble profession because it gives service directly to people. In my opinion, the nursing will exist as long as humanity exists.*

Participant 12: *I think nurses are indispensable members of the health staff. In my opinion, the nursing profession is an indispensable profession for a society.*

Participant 3: *I believe that the nursing profession is frazzled the nurses so much because of the nurses' profession has not reached the state that it deserves.*

Participant 7: *I have wanted to be a nurse since I had gone to primary school. Nursing is a profession requiring sacrifice and a very exhausting profession. But if you make your job properly, the position of nursing will be good among the society. What I love most about nursing is the opportunity it provides to help people.*

Participant 15: *I think that everybody can not become a nurse because it is a profession requiring taking great responsibilities. So people must regard to the nursing profession.*

Prefer to nursing profession:

Most of the participants indicated that they didn't prefer their job voluntarily. Some of the participants wanted to be a doctor or teacher in the past because of this jobs are famous and are in demand.

Participant 2: *"Nursing is very close to my ideal profession in mind. I want to be a doctor but I can't take enough number in the University exam. I would not like my children become nurses."*

Participant 7: *"I think nursing is the most appropriate profession. I would practice nursing in any condition. I preferred this job because the nursing is an honourable profession."*

Participant 6: *"I think nursing is not a cheerful profession. I hate this profession. I prefer being unemployed rather than practicing nursing."*

Participant 5: *"Although the nurses work under very difficult conditions, the job opportunities are more abundant in the profession of nursing. So it is a job that is more preferred. I prefer my job voluntarily."*

Participant 11: *"I preferred the nursing profession as it provides me economically independence. If I were a teacher I couldn't earn as now. I think today nursing is very good profession to take employment early and easily."*

Participant 14: *"Nursing can be practiced only by enthusiasm. I don't like nursing. But I was reduced to prefer this job because of my parents. They preferred my job on behalf of me because I was very young."*

Participant 18: *"Nursing is a very exhausting profession and cannot afford any mistakes. If I knew that, I didn't prefer this job."*

Job satisfaction

Generally the nurses reported low levels of job satisfaction. Some of them indicated that this is because the nursing management attitude.

Participant 11: *"One stressful part of my job for me is the lack of clarity that surrounds our role, I think that's quite stressful, because it's not clear, it's frustrating."*

Participant 4: *"I love my job. In evenings I go home and ask myself "today how many patients said me: thanks or*

I'm thankful to God. If I answer one or more I'm pleased and I don't remember the difficulties of my job".

Participant 5: *"My organization seeks patient feedback on satisfaction with care. Good patient feedback has a positive effect on how I perform my job."*

Participant 14: *"I am a nurse about 13 years in the same clinic. I worked at nights about 10 years and now the nursing management took me the night shifts again. I have a baby and there is no one to look after my baby. I am victim for this case. At first, my job satisfaction was very high but now it is decreased."*

Participant 8: *"I think the nursing management is very effective on our job satisfaction. They don't appreciate us for our good works and sometimes they don't be fair."*

Participant 9: *"I'm a nurse with have a postgraduate degree in nursing. But my charge nurse has a high school degree. I can't understand why the education level of nurses is not important. This inequality effectes my job satisfaction."*

DISCUSSION

Participants think that the health of a society depends on nurses, but the position of the nursing profession is not so good for public.

In a study conducted by Eskimez, Oztunç ve Alparslan (2008)²¹, 68% of the participants indicated that nursing was an indispensable occupation in meeting the health requirements of the public. In the same study, when asked about their views on choosing nursing as an occupation, 71.2% of the participants stated that they would not prefer the occupation of nursing. Accordingly, nurses in our country believe that their occupation is essential; however, argue that the public comprehend the situation otherwise. As a result, the number of individuals choosing to become nurses is decreasing.

One of the most important turning points in an individual's life is choosing the right career, as it is the equivalent of choosing a life style.²² An individual's career success depends on their physical characteristics, how much they know and want about the career they have chosen, and how they are prepared, both mentally and spiritually, for the career they have chosen.²³

Koç ve Sağlam (2009)²⁴ conducted a study called "The Determination of The High School Last Class Students' Opinions Related to Nursing Job With Job's Are Prefer States." Results of the study illustrated that 72.1% of them chose nursing because they liked the profession, 77.9% they liked helping people; 54.1% of them chose nursing because they under the present economic conditions they wanted to find a job easily.

Law ve Arthur (2003)²⁵ conducted a similar study on secondary school pupils. The results of this study

revealed that 67.39% of them were thinking of choosing nursing because it was a well-paid profession, and 67.26% wanted to become a nurse because they liked helping patients.

In the present study, most of the participants indicated that they didn't prefer their job as voluntarily. Job satisfaction is important in any profession. However, factors such as difficult working conditions, irregular working hours, low wages, and the lack of respect for the profession may be the reasons behind the decrease in job satisfaction. These circumstances give rise to issues such as a decrease in labour productivity and early retirement. While job satisfaction can differ between different professions, it can also differ according to different countries, regions, and organisations within the same profession group.²⁶

Job satisfaction among nurses has been identified as a key factor in nurses' turnover with the empirical literature suggesting that it is related to a number of organizational, professional and personal variables. In this study generally the nurses reported low levels of job satisfaction.

In a study conducted by Durmuş ve Günay (2007)²⁷, they discovered that, in general, the job satisfaction scores, obtained from the job satisfaction scale, were relatively low for nurses. The lowest scores obtained were for the salary and reward sub-scales, and the sub-scales of inter-department communications and employee development. The general job satisfaction score of nurses working in private hospitals was higher in comparison to nurses working in public hospitals. In conclusion of a study conducted in Jordan, the job satisfaction of nurses was deemed moderate, and job satisfaction of nurses working in private hospitals was higher in comparison to nurses working in public hospitals.²⁸ The reasons behind this could be that private hospitals make more efforts to meet the needs of their staff, or the fact that the nurses working in these hospitals are so intimidated by their employer that they are unable to verbalise their issues.

The study conducted by Durmuş ve Günay (2007)²⁷ proved that the general job satisfaction score for nurses that enjoyed their job was higher in comparison to those that did not enjoy their job. In our study, the majority of the nurses did not enjoy their job. Under these circumstances, it is possible to state that the job satisfaction of nurses is expected to be below.

Altuntas ve Baykal's (2010)²⁹ study showed that, nurses had willingly chosen the profession, but they were negatively affected by the lack of public respect for the profession and lack of patient appreciation and society's negative value judgement about nurses. In the same

study nurses who had willingly chosen the profession were expected to have more positive attitudes towards the profession.

In a study conducted in USA with 1638 nurses, half of the nurses stated that they were sometimes satisfied with their job.³⁰

In a study conducted by Yüksel (2003)³, the factors that decreased job satisfaction were determined as the high number of on-calls, the low wages, the subjective criteria regarding promotions, the number of unnecessary interventions made by the head nurse. These variables were found as affecting the decrease in job satisfaction. Our study also talks about similar factors that affect the job satisfaction of nurses.

We analyzed the views of 20 nurses, but do not claim to give a picture of the views of nurses in general. Quantitative researches based on our results might allow to the findings be generalized to a broader population.

CONCLUSION

Listed below are the suggestions thought in light of the results obtained by the study.

- Working hours and the number of on-calls should be within the limits that nurses, who are on duty at hospital, can endure. In other words, working hours should be changed in accordance with ergonomic measures.
- Measures regarding personal rights and promotions should be objective. A performance-based promotion system should be implemented.
- Job analysis and job descriptions should be prepared regarding the duty areas of the nurses working at the hospital.
- Nurses should be able to directly contribute to planning of the health service production, organisation, and presentation phases, and they should have the right to have a say in and decide on issues regarding their own duty areas in every phase.
- Nurses should be trained in coping with stress, resolving issues, communication techniques, and team work.
- A management policy and action plan that allows nurses to have a say in, decide, and directly contribute to improving their working conditions should be developed and implemented by healthcare staffs professionals.
- Nurse managers can try to cultivate a good relationship with the nurses. This can enhance nurses' job satisfaction and in turn lower their turnover intentions.

Implications for Practice

The results may be used in planning strategies that promote healthy organizational cultures that are conducive to quality care and high job satisfaction.

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