

Job Aspects Leading to Nurses' Job Satisfaction in Relation to Voluntary Turnover Intentions and Retention in a Ghanaian Healthcare Center

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Abstract: The purpose of this qualitative single purpose phenomenological study was to establish the main determinants accounting for job satisfaction based on voluntary turnover intentions and retention among nurses in a government health center within the Volta Region of the Republic of Ghana. The study population was 35 nurses and purposive sampling method was used to select 20 study participants. The study was based on hierarchy of human needs and two factor theories (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959; Maslow, 1943), and used the electronic, online anonymous survey, and email in gathering data. The data was analyzed, and interpreted using the NVivo. Findings from the study suggest that appropriate and adequate logistics must be provided to reduce nursing turnover intentions and boost job satisfaction in the area, nursing education must be free, fair wages, periodic refresher and training programs must be organized for the nurses.

Keywords: government health center, voluntary turnover intentions, nursing education, training programs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative single purpose phenomenological study was to establish the main determinants accounting for job satisfaction among nurses in a government health center within the Volta Region of the Republic of Ghana. The sample size for the study included 20 registered nurses. A purposive sampling method was used to select 20 key participants to provide for data saturation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Turnover and Job Satisfaction of Employees

Prolific writers and researchers made several contributions to turnover in the fields of psychology and industrial organization because of the importance the concept has on the progress or retardation of the corporate enterprises. Turnover of employees is expressed as the ratio of total separations to average sum of workers in the business organization (Basu, 2016). The U.S. Bureau of Labor defined separations as both voluntary and involuntary terminations of employees, including resignations or layoffs, dismissals, and retirements.

A 2012 qualitative study around the globe found nearly 85% of workers had the intention to quit state and public employments. In many states in the United States nearly 40% of the respondents said they had the intention of seeking employment elsewhere (Adams, 2012). Health administrators are confronted on a daily basis with high turnover of medical and nursing professional in parts of the world. According to the Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) Saragota's U.S. Human Capital Effectiveness Report of 2013, hospitals are suffering a much higher turnover rate than other industries in

the country. The PwC team gathered data from about 60 hospitals involving 1 million employees. In Ghana, researchers (Bonenberger, Wyss, Aikens, & Akweongo, 2014) conducted a cutting-edge study that examined employee satisfaction and work motivation influences on turnover intentions. The researchers also aimed at establishing how human resource executives in hospitals can apply employee motivation and satisfaction methods to reduce phenomenon of nursing staff leaving the hospitals to other sectors in the country. About 260 health workers including nurses responded to interview questions in that study. The study was conducted in selected provinces or districts in Ghana. Nearly 70% of the respondents reported that they had the intention to leave (turnover) the Ghana Health Service. In that same study, the researchers concluded that relationships existed between the variables including employee motivation, job satisfaction, and turnover for nursing professionals. More important, health managers and government's health policy makers must strengthen the skills of personnel at the districts and support hospital and nursing administrators in implementing methods that can help retain both newly and experienced nurses in Ghana (Bonenberger et al., 2014).

3. POPULATION/SAMPLE

The study population for this study included 35 nursing professionals in a government hospital in the Volta Region part of Ghana. The nurses were graduates from nursing institutions in the country and possessed the registered nurses' certification. The participants were all full-time male (14) and female (21) nursing professionals, 21 years of age and older, employed in Ghana Health Service anywhere from 1 to 20 years or more (Amon-Kotei, 2016). Nearly all the nurses involved worked in the out-patients, delivery and emergency wards in the hospital.

4. RESULTS

Nurses' turnover intentions. The results on this theme included inadequate infrastructures and amenities 13 respondents (65%), heavy workload and unnecessary reshuffles 2 (10%), patients' behavior 3 (15%), delay in postings 1 (5%), and political interference 1 (5%). A participant stated, "I think the government and the authorities have a lot to do to avoid high turnover because there are inadequate beds at the health center." Another participant mentioned inadequate computerized machines in hospitals, inadequate laboratory equipment, inadequate logistics, and inadequate vehicles to reach the hinterlands, lack of accommodation, and lack of ambulances at health center as a reason of nurses' turnover intention. The nurses reported that over hundreds and thousands of well-trained nurses have not been posted to the various state-owned hospitals since the last three to four years after they graduated from the various nursing institutions. Also, moving to the private hospital should nurses quite from their current public hospital was well commented. A participant said, "Working in private hospitals may be more satisfying than state hospitals." The statement was supported by another participant that, "I know many private hospitals in the country that pay nurses more than what the government pays nurses in public hospitals." This also gives an indication that private health centers in the country were money-spinning as compared with the public hospital. In addition, 35% of the respondents wanted to travel abroad. One of the participant said, "Some of my relatives and friends are nurses working in various hospital in the U.S.A., U.K, Australia, and Germany I would join them." A participant also learnt from friends during "telephone conversations and emails that they are better off and well-compensated in these countries than nurses in Ghana." This revelation supports anecdotal evidence that nurses in foreign countries received higher salaries, bonuses, and incentives than nurses in Ghana and other developing countries.

Nurses' voluntary retention. The nurses posited that retention was a critical element of an organization's approach to talent management. Eighty percent succinctly said they loved and cared for patients in the health institution. A participants actually commented, "I am motivated to become a nurse and I would remain a nurse when given the chance." "I think I would want to remain nurse in government hospitals in this country than travelling abroad or change my profession." was a comment of a participant. Another participant simply said, "I just love to care for the patients in remote places like this." The majority of the nurses were in the profession not because of the huge and steady salary and prestige only but because of the passion they had in the work. Ten percent of the respondents said they were nurses because of prestige and a steady salary respectively.

Aspects improving satisfaction and preventing turnover. About 8 participants (40%) said better salary and respect, 8 participants (40%) mentioned love for patients, 2 (10%) mentioned employee training and promotion, and 2 (10%) stated the availability of medical equipment and suppliers to the theme. In a participant's view, "Although the salary is not too

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good, I'm satisfied with the nursing job because people in my community give me a lot of respect." Another participant said, "I think one factor that mainly makes me satisfied with this nursing profession is the love to care for patients." In the view of another individual in the study, even though the salary the government pays nurses in Ghana was not very attractive, some nurses were satisfied with the nursing job because of the positive contributions and differences they make in the lives of the sick and patients on a daily basis. The respondents opined that training and promotions, availability of medical equipment and suppliers, prestige, big pay, and bonuses were specific factors that prevented turnover and improved job satisfaction. The participants argued that employee respect, competitive pay, recognition, love and promotion were essential psychological needs and intrinsic factors necessary for high job satisfaction.

Preferred number of years in Ghana Health Service (GHS). Only 5 respondents, representing (25%) said they had the intention to work with GHS for 1-5 years, 15 (75%) were willing to work and remain employed for more than 6 years with GHS. A participating nurse said, "I am satisfied working as a nurse in this hospital and with Ghana Health Service. I don't think I would seek any other employment in this country." Another person in the study noted "I think I would remain working in this hospital till retirement from the Ghana Health Service, the salary is not too bad." There were other individuals who said because of the huge unemployment situation in the country, they had no other place to work except with the government health service. A particular individual involved in the study said, "I personally dislike the salary paid to nurses, but I think the huge graduate unemployment in the country is devastating." This was emphasized by another participant noting, "I will remain with the health service in this country." The participants description meant that most of the nurse were compelled to remain employed in the health service. A participant argued that the situation was in contrast with the tenets of Herzberg's theory and Maslow's fourth and final levels of the motivation hierarchy theory, the esteem and self-actualization.

In conclusion, nurse and health administrators required adequate knowledge in improving job satisfaction in the nursing profession in the region. Refresher courses was necessary for nurse managers as the result implied inadequate infrastructure and amenities, and political interferences could compel most nurses to quit government health institutions. Empirical research noted that Ghana was faced with a major health crisis that jeopardized the lives of millions of its citizens. The country of nearly 30 million people had only 55 functioning ambulances serving all the 16 regions (Ghana Web, 2018). Voluntary retention was major result caused by love to care for patients similar to love and belongings in the human needs theory Maslow (1943). This supported anecdotal evidence that nursing profession was a calling to people that truly love to care for the sick. Similarly, it was revealed the nurses wanted to work in the private hospitals, travel abroad and join different professions respectively. Provision of appropriate and adequate logistics must be noted by the nurses' administrators since this may reduce nursing turnover intentions and boost job satisfaction in the area. This require organizing periodic seminars and symposia on the importance of the nursing profession for nurses in the area. Third, the current government's policy of free basic and high school education in the country must be extended to every individual pursuing healthcare education, particularly nursing education in the country. About contributing factors to satisfaction in relation to nurse's job, the implications for adopt in nursing departments were fair wages, periodic refresher and training programs, and institutionalization of modern medical equipment and logistical suppliers in improving satisfaction in the nursing profession should be considered by health authorities in the region

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