

Effects of Work Environment on Job Satisfaction among Nurses in The University of Cape Coast Hospital

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ABSTRACT

The increasing rate of turnover of health professionals especially nurses in Ghana is a cause for concern and worry in the country. The high turnover rate of nurses has negative bearing on health care delivery in the country. Against this backdrop, one wonders whether the high rate of turnover of nurses is due to low job satisfaction resulting from their work environment or not. This survey therefore focused on unravelling the effects of work environment on job satisfaction among nurses within the Cape Coast University Hospital, Ghana. To this end, opinions were elicited from 73 nurses of the said hospital. The census method was used to include all the nurses in the study's institution. Cross tabulation, Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to analyse the data. Results of the study show among others that there is a strong positive relationship between nurses' perception of their work environment and their job satisfaction. That nurses in the hospital were not satisfied with their job and their work environment, that nurses' involvement in decision making, transparency and team work in their human relations, infrastructural development, and opportunities for professional development were key factors that enhance the working conditions of nurses in the study area. Therefore, management should put in place both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational packages for nurses to enhance nurses job satisfaction.

Keywords: *Technical Environment, Human Environment, Organisational Environment, Nurses, Job Satisfaction, Work Environment*

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction is widely researched and researchers vary in their definitions of the concept. According to Locke as cited in Saani (2012) job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. Vroom on the other hand defined job satisfaction as an affective orientation on the part of individuals toward work roles which they are presently occupying (Saani, 2012). According to Aiken *et al* (2002), job satisfaction refers to an employee's general attitude towards the job or some dimensions of it. Job satisfaction thus involves how individuals feel about their job. In the nursing profession, job satisfaction has been found to be positively associated with a number of factors such as one's good feeling about success in handling a patient, positive

working conditions, timely management feedback and a positive work environment (Smith, 1996). Saani (2012) claims that job satisfaction is achieved when an organisation's employees become one with the organisation and show commitment and determination in performing their task to the best of their ability. Saani (2012) believes that job satisfaction and performance correlates and that both are positively influenced by reward. Furthermore, Saani, Opare and Yarquah (2013) also describe other factors pertaining to work environment that have been identified to influence job satisfaction. These include a management regime that encourages employee's involvement and also manages stress in the work place. Such an environment leads to reductions in absenteeism and health issues among employees.

It is therefore important for management to create a work environment where they can develop and communicate performance standards to their employees. The employees must be rewarded in an unbiased manner according to their achievement, based on valid and accurate data. Rewarding fairly thus creates job satisfaction through reward equity. Job satisfaction basically depends upon two most important factors. Firstly, salary and then the working environment, which include work culture, nature of work, colleagues and so on (Saani, Opare and Yarquah, 2013).

Working in a good environment is also important for a healthy mind. An employee with a very good pay may not be satisfied with his or her job if he or she does not find the working environment to be suitable. In fact, there are people who spend their life time working with the same organisation because of the satisfaction they derive from the organisation. On the other hand, some people switch over to other organisations in search of job satisfaction. In such cases the organisation also plays an important role (Flinkman, Leino-Kilpi and Salanterä, 2010). Job satisfaction and work environment are very critical as far as the University of Cape Coast Hospital (UCCH) is concerned (Opare and Saani, 2014). This is because there are serious issues of lack of satisfaction among the nurses because of the general negative perception health workers within the university have toward the work environment and supervision in the UCCH.

Ghana like many other developing countries lacks adequate resources to motivate and retain its health workers (Aiken *et al.*, 2002). The demand for nurses to meet health care requirements is rising in both developed and developing countries and the Central Region of Ghana in particular due to migration of these professionals to advanced countries for greener pastures. According to Aiken *et al.* (2002), between 1996 and 2002, the number of nurses in the developing world decreased by 24 per cent as a result of migration. Such a high turnover rate has negative bearing on health care delivery in the region. Parry (2008) believes that the shortage of nurses and its attendant increase in the workloads of the remaining nursing staff negatively impacts on the delivery of patient care and decrease in the level of job satisfaction. This is a concern for health service managers, and calls for pragmatic policies to reverse the trend. The choice of policy to address the problem of low job satisfaction will critically depend on determining how nurses' work environment affects their job satisfaction. Although there is a lot of literature on the effect of work environment on the job satisfaction of nurses, little has been written on this issue within the cultural context of Ghana, not to mention UCCH which is one of the hospitals in the

Central Region of Ghana. How the work environment of nurses' affects their job satisfaction remains a question to be explored. This challenge has not been identified empirically in the UCCH yet (Opore and Saani, 2014). This study is therefore undertaken to find answers to the above question. The results of this study may be used to inform hospital administrators of the work environmental factors that may predict nurse's job satisfaction. The study will also help hospital officials in making policies and decisions that will enhance nurses' job satisfaction and ultimately increase retention and their output. This will have the effect of reducing nurse shortage in the UCCH and in the nation at large. The purpose of this study therefore is to explore the relationship between work environment as perceived by nurses and job satisfaction among nurses in the UCCH. Based on this, the following questions were raised.

1. To what extent are nurses in the University of Cape Coast Hospital satisfied with their jobs?
2. To what extent do nurses at the University of Cape Coast Hospital perceive that they work in a congenial environment?
3. To what extent do nurses perceive that their work environment and their job satisfaction are related?
4. What is the effect of the work environment as perceived by nurses on nurses' job satisfaction?

Job Satisfaction

Even though a universal definition of job satisfaction could not be found in the literature, a commonality among the definitions seems to be that job satisfaction is an emotional response to work. Job satisfaction reflects positive work-related emotions, while job dissatisfaction reflects negative emotions. Job satisfaction is important to individuals, organisations and society since high job satisfaction levels can be viewed as health indicators. Job satisfaction is one of the micro aspects of the macro concept of satisfaction with life. Job satisfaction, viewed as one of the outcomes of organisational operations, can be a reflection of effectiveness and efficiency (Barlin and Frone, 2002). Organisations influence individuals' life satisfaction via job satisfaction, which in turn contributes to the well-being of society. The study of job satisfaction is anchored on three basic theoretical frameworks known as content theories, process theories, and situation models. Content theorists such as motivator-hygiene theories believe that need fulfillment leads to job satisfaction while process theorists find explanations for job satisfaction through investigating the interaction of expectancies, values and needs (Gruneberg as cited in Saani, 2012). Saani (2012) further commends that situational theorists also agree that job satisfaction is influenced through the interaction of individual, job and organisational variables. The nursing professional work environment is a multidimensional phenomenon, which includes many elements that enable nurses to practice with a sense of contribution and professional satisfaction. According to Estabrooks *et al.* (2002), the professional practice environment of nurses must possess characteristics that allow them to provide the quality of care aspired by the profession. In 2002, Aiken *et al.* found a relationship between nurse staffing and patient death and nurses' burnout and

job dissatisfaction. While it may not be surprising that the nurses' work environment is related to patient safety (Aiken *et al.* 2002), the study also emphasises on the opportunity to have a positive impact on patient safety while improving working conditions for nurses. Healthy work environments are empirically linked to patient satisfaction, employee retention, reduced turnover, increased attraction, job satisfaction and lower degree of job stress and burnout among nurses (O'Brien-Pallas, Duffield and Hayes, 2006). More and more nurses report that their ability to deliver quality care is either hindered or supported by their working conditions. Hegyevary and Hausman (2000) have also find that the work environment affects nurses satisfaction and turnover. Job satisfaction of nurses according to Hegyevary and Hausman (2000), depends upon providing an environment that encourages adequate use of their abilities. The availability of protective materials and functional equipment to safeguard nurses from unnecessary accidents, as well as the implementation of structures and processes to help nurses improve their personal safety skills and provide support for victims of workplace violence will help contribute to a safer environment for nurses in the public health care setting. Similarly research identifies new variables that influence nurses job satisfaction such as environment and job settings.

Job satisfaction can be described as a match between what individuals perceived they needed and what rewards they perceived they received from their jobs. Job satisfaction has been found to be related to performance within the work setting (Landerwead and Boumans, 1988). Using syntheses of research results, Kangas (1999) examines variables affecting nurses' job satisfaction from 38 previous studies. The results indicated that job satisfaction of nurses correlated with prestige or job status, independence in decision-making, control over practice, and perceived social support. Additionally, the factors of salary and interpersonal relationships had substantially increased, while job stress continued to correlate negatively with nurses' job satisfaction. Numerous factors influence job satisfaction, including: clinical duty and type of work, nursing care delivery model, degree of professionalism, organisational climate, supervision and interpersonal relationships, autonomy, repetition of duties, the nature of tasks to be performed and job outcomes. Also in an environment where nurses are understaffed they are not able to give each patient the time and attention that they deserve. Studies have shown that under-staffing has led to negative outcomes for patients (Berens, 2000). Research has also found that patients are more likely to have positive outcomes in facilities with higher ratios of nurses who have baccalaureate or higher degrees (Aiken *et al.*, 2002). These positive outcomes are likely to lead to higher patient satisfaction and therefore higher nurse satisfaction.

Satisfied nurses are more likely to stay not only in the field of nursing, but in the organisation in which they are satisfied. A range of findings has been reported in the literature on health care and nursing. Cavangh (1992) reports that a range of factors including participation in decision making, education and opportunity for advancement contribute to nurses' job satisfaction. Salary was not found to be statistically significant. Kuokkanen, Leino-Kilpi and Katajisto (2003) note that an organisational climate which fosters responsibility, warmth and support contribute to high level of job satisfaction among employees. Although international researchers vary in their specific findings, the general

conclusion seem to support a sentiment of growing dissatisfaction experienced by nurses around the world. Key dissatisfiers were found to include non-supportive work environments and increased workloads while important predictors of nurses' work satisfaction included autonomy, work content, professional development and recognition and relationships with co-workers and peers (Saani, 2012). These findings suggest that managers need to be aware of the different facets of job satisfaction so that effective policies and strategies may be put in place to address problem areas. The conceptual framework for this study took into consideration all possible factors from the literature and from observations to derive the dependent and independent variables for analysis. The dependent variable is nurses' job satisfaction while work environment which comprises technical, human and organisational environments constitute the independent variables. The conceptual framework is illustrated in the Figure 1. Work environment in general comprises the technical, human and organisational environments. The study also agrees that the work environments of nurses in the university influence their job satisfaction significantly. The general argument is that if the work environments such as technical, human and organisational environments of the university are perceived positively as expected, nurses within the UCCH will be significantly satisfied with their job.

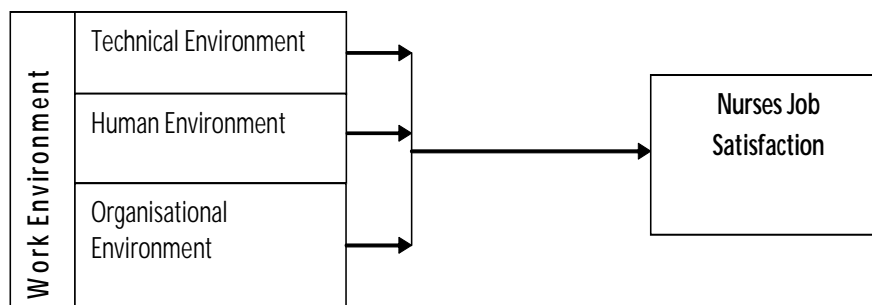


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for examining the effects of work environment on job satisfaction among nurses in the University of Cape Coast Hospital, Ghana.

METHOD

The research design employed in this study was survey. The design was appropriate because this study elicited opinions of nurses on their work environment and their job satisfaction. The study also sought to explore the relationship between work environment and job satisfaction. The accessible population for this study was all the 78 nurses at the UCCH. Due to the small number of nurses in the UCCH, the census method was seen as the most appropriate and feasible method to use. The census again was necessary since nurses of the UCCH were quite different from each other because some of them are general nurses; others are midwives, nursing officers and so on. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), it is always appropriate to use the census method in such studies since when the population is small and variable, any sample drawn would not be representative of the population from which it is drawn. At the end of data collection procedure, 73 nurses made up of 27 males (37.0%) and 46 females (63.0%) were captured for the study. Self design questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. The questionnaire was divided

into three sections, A, B and C. Section A dealt with the background information of the respondents. The background information covered included gender, marital status, age, educational qualification and work experience. Section B measured the satisfaction of nurses with their work environment with 16 items on a five-point Likert scale. Section C measured the level of job satisfaction with statements which needed to be rated from one to five, where one represents the least agreement to the issues while five represents the strongest agreement to the issues. The questionnaire was pilot-tested in March, 2014, on a sample of 18 nurses from the Regional Hospital, Cape Coast. The questionnaire results were tested for their internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha with a reliability coefficient of 0.86. This according to Malhotra and Birks (2007) is high and satisfactory.

The data collection was done by the researchers. This enabled the researchers to clarify questions which the respondents were not clear with. Before approaching the respondents, permission was sought from the administrator of the UCCH to facilitate data collection at the hospitals. A period of one month was used to collect the data. Not all the targeted population was met on the day of visit and that demanded a considerable length of time to reach the stipulated number of respondents. The data collected were first grouped for editing. After the editing, they were coded using numerical values for the variable view of the Statistical Product and Service Solutions Version 19.0. After this, the data were inputted into the data view to complete the keying process. After these were done with, they were transformed into tables and extracted for the presentation and discussion in the subsequent section of this study. Basically, statistical tools such as cross tabulation, frequency, percentage, Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Job Satisfaction of Nurses in the University of Cape Coast Hospital: As shown on table 1, majority of the nurses were dissatisfied with their job in the hospital. The nurses were further asked to indicate some of the things about their job that they were not satisfied with. Most of them indicated in order of importance that they are not satisfied with their work schedule, amount offered on vacation time/sick leave, salary, recognition for work accomplished, relationships with supervisors, variety of job responsibilities, and degree of independence associated with ones work roles. The findings are consistent with the comment of Saani (2012) who posits that general conclusions from many researchers seem to support a sentiment of growing dissatisfaction such as non-supportive work environments and increased workloads experienced by nurses around the world. The second objective of the study sought to investigate the nurses' perceptions about the facility they found themselves in. A closed-ended item was used to elicit the data on the issue. Work environment was categorised into "conducive" and "not conducive". As table 2 depicts majority of the nurses indicated that their work environment was not conducive. They further asserted that noise, temperature, work space, fatigue, and the use of cell phone by clients are some of the factors that distract them in their work. This negative perception of the work environment can negatively affect nurses' satisfaction and turnover (Hegyevary and

Hausman, 2000). With regard to the mechanisms that can be put in place to improve the working conditions of the nurses, three of the senior staff nurses further asserted that management of the hospital could improve the work environment and the facilities in order to improve the retention and job satisfaction of nurses in the facilities by providing adequate facilities, recruiting adequate staff, involving of staff in decision making and ensuring teamwork and transparency. These interventions indicated by the nurses are likely to lead to higher patient satisfaction and therefore higher nurse satisfaction (Aiken *et al.*, 2002).

The Relationship between Work Environment and Job Satisfaction among Nurses:

Here a correlation was established between perception of the work environment and the job satisfaction as expected by the nurses. The work environment as a variable was made up of 20 items while that of job satisfaction was made up of 16 items. These items were pooled together to form the job satisfaction and perceived work environment variables and a correlation between the two were computed. The results on table 3 show that there is a strong and positive relationship between nurses perception of the work environment and their job satisfaction in the UCCH ($r = 0.615$ (**), $**p < 0.01$). However, the mean values which are the average score of the responses show that nurses are not happy with their work environment (Mean = 2.82, Std. Dev. = 0.56) and are not satisfied with their job (Mean = 2.74, Std. Dev. = 0.44). These mean that the more positively nurses perceive their work environment, the more satisfied they become with their work in the hospital and the university at large. The findings are in line with the assertion of Saani (2012) who posits that supportive work environments and appropriate workloads of employees will lead to a corresponding increase in their job satisfaction.

The Effect Work Environment has on Nurses' Job Satisfaction: Quite apart from the data elicited on general work environment using one categorical item, the study further elicited data on the various dimensions of work environment (technical, human and organisational) using a five-point numerical scale where one represents the least agreement to the issues while five represents the strongest agreement to the issues. Multiple regression procedures were adopted to analyse the data. First, nurses' satisfaction with their job was used as the dependent variable while the three dimensions of work environment were used as independent variables. As shown on table 4, the dimensions of work environment that predicted nurses job satisfaction significantly in order of importance are organisational environment ($b = 0.410$, $p < 0.01$) and human environment ($b = 0.399$, $p < 0.01$). However, technical environment was a nonsignificant contributor to the variance in the dependent variable. The total contribution of the independent variables to the variance in the dependent variable is 0.401 with an adjusted R^2 of 0.392. This means that these variables predicted or explained about 40 percent of the variance in the nurses' satisfaction with their job in the UCCH. That is, the nurses' work environment in the UCCH to some extent has a statistically significant influence on their job satisfaction. The findings mean that job satisfaction of nurses depends upon providing an environment that encourages adequate use of their abilities. For example the availability of protective materials and functional equipment to safeguard nurses from unnecessary accidents, as well as the implementation of structures

and processes to help nurses improve their personal safety skills and provide support for victims of workplace violence (Hegyevary and Hausman, 2000). This will help contribute to a safer environment for nurses in the public health care setting.

Table 1: Nurses job satisfaction by rank

Categories/Rank of nurses	Job satisfaction			
	Satisfied		Not satisfied	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Senior staff	2	22.2	11	17.2
Junior staff	7	77.8	53	82.8
Total	9	100	64	100
% Sample Size	12.3%		87.7%	

Source: Field survey, 2014. (N = 73)

Table 2: Nurses perception of the work environment

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Conducive	24	32.9
Not conducive	49	67.1
Total	73	100

Source: Field survey, 2014.

Table 3: The relationship between nurses work environment and their job satisfaction

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Perceived nurse work environment	
			Correlation coefficient (r)	Sig.
Perceived nurses work environment	2.82	0.56	1	
Nurses job satisfaction	2.74	0.44	0.615**	0.000

Source: Field survey, 2014. **p < 0.01 Sample size (N) = 73

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis results showing the effect of nurses' perceived work environment on their job satisfaction

Independent Variables	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	T	Sig.
	Beta	Std. Error			
Technical Environment	-0.910	0.107	-0.519	-1.896	0.059
Human Environment	0.547	0.092	0.399**	5.045	0.000
Organisational Environment	0.502	0.076	0.410**	3.720	0.000
Constant				3.643	
R				0.633	
R Square				0.401	
Adjusted R Square				0.392	

Source: Field survey, 2014. Dependent variable: Nurses job satisfaction **p < 0.01, N = 73.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data gathered and its interpretation, it can rightly be concluded that nurses work environment in the UCCH relate positively and strongly with their job satisfaction. This implies that when the work environments of health facilities are poor, nurses are also likely to be dissatisfied with their job. Many of the nurses at the UCCH were not satisfied with their job. This implies that nurses in UCCH lack factors like autonomy, opportunity for promotion, and support from supervisors and so on which are the factors that determine job satisfaction. The nurses perceived that their work environment at the hospital lack

factors like work life balance, equal opportunity, safety policies, staffing level and so on. Adequate equipment can improve their working condition. The solutions to creating positive work environments and job satisfaction for nurses are multifaceted. Based on the results of this study, management should put in place both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational packages for nurses to enhance nurses job satisfaction. Congenial environment is needed at health centres to encourage nurses to work hard. Lastly, adequate equipment should be provided to improve work environment at hospital.

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