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Research Article

Correlational Study Measuring Private Sector College of Nursing Empowerment and Nurse Faculty Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

Identifying factors leading to job satisfaction is the first step in stabilizing nursing faculty work environments. The purpose of this descriptive, correlational research was to investigate the extent to which variations in nurse faculty empowerment (opportunity, information, resources, support, and formal and informal power) corresponded with variations in job satisfaction (people, work, pay, opportunity, and supervision). Using Kanter's model of organizational empowerment as the theoretical foundation, the researcher administered an online questionnaire through Survey Monkey® to collect data from a convenience sample of 93 faculty employed full-time in 17 campuses across a national college of nursing. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations were used to examine the facets of the CWEQ-II for workplace empowerment and the aJDI for job satisfaction. The results indicated that nurse faculty empowerment correlates with job satisfaction in regard to formal power of understanding organizational goals, vision, and supervision. However, the respondents reported limited endorsement of informal power regarding visibility in the organization and opportunities for promotion. The results of the study may aid in the identification of ways to reduce attrition of nurse faculty in colleges of nursing.

Keywords: Nursing empowerment; Nursing faculty retention; Job satisfaction; Workplace empowerment

Introduction

The nursing faculty shortage in colleges of nursing represents a significant issue for the field of nursing. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing [1] Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing, "Colleges of nursing in the United States have turned away 75,029 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2018 due to an insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints." Contributing factors adding to the faculty shortage were recruitment costs, increased salary requirements, and faculty positions requiring a doctoral degree [1]. Moreover, the shortage of nurse faculty is cyclical, as the scarcity of masters and doctoral nurses based on limited spots in nursing programs continues to limit qualified, interested nursing students and enrollment into colleges of nursing. Challenges with leadership style and mentoring is a critical component in transforming the environment of healthcare in a partnership of accountability, collaboration, and contribution [2].

One underexplored factor that might help address the nursing faculty shortage is nurse faculty's job satisfaction in colleges and universities. While a significant body of literature exists regarding nurse job satisfaction in acute care settings [3-7], this study aimed to address a gap in the literature in colleges of nursing by assessing tenets of empowerment and faculty job satisfaction. The purpose of this descriptive, correlational research was to investigate the extent to which variations in nurse faculty empowerment (opportunity, information, resources, support, and formal and informal power) corresponded with variations in job satisfaction (people, work, pay, opportunity, and supervision) in a national private sector nursing college. By examining job satisfaction variables factors that relate to private sector nurse faculty's job satisfaction, the present study identifies factors that might increase nurse faculty retention and thereby help to address the nursing faculty shortage that poses an existential risk to the healthcare infrastructure.

Background

Faculty who are employed with colleges of nursing report stressors relating to reductions in workforce and limitations in resources [8]. Specifically, colleges of nursing experience four major constraints that might influence nurse faculty's job satisfaction: clinical placements, too few faculty members, space, and budgets [9]. To retain faculty, colleges of nursing have had to exponentially raise faculty salaries, which leads to escalating tuition costs to cover the rising costs of faculty salaries [10]. The increase in tuition costs has further reduced admissions to college of nursing in today's economic climate, adding to the nursing shortage, and increasing the stress noted within the classrooms.

One strategy to improve nurse faculty retention is through workplace empowerment to build an environment of trust and respect [11-14] and decrease burnout [15,16]. According to Kanter [17], situational aspects within the work environment influence employee beliefs and behaviors to a greater extent than individual predispositions. The value of increasing job satisfaction has been demonstrated among nurses in acute settings [6-8,18,19]. Researchers have reported that healthcare facilities, colleges, and universities focusing on empowering nurses with access to resources, information, and support may increase nurse job satisfaction [20-24]. However, there was limited research regarding the influence of job satisfaction in retaining nurse faculty in the private sector.

Methods

The research design was a quantitative descriptive correlational design. Job satisfaction and empowerment were measured using the CWEQ-II tool [8]. The CWEQ-II consists of 19 items that measure 6 components of structural empowerment (opportunity, information, support, resources, formal power, and informal power; [17]. This concept was operationalized for the study with three subscales: The CWEQ-II, the Job Activities Scale (JAS), and the Organizational Relationship Scale (ORS). The JAS measures rewards for innovation, amount of flexibility on the job, and visibility of work-related activities within the organization. The ORS measures collaboration with leadership and peers being sought out for assistance in solving organizational problems and issues outside the organization [8]. Finally, the two-item global empowerment subscale supports construct validation regarding empowerment to accomplish work in an effective manner and overall empowering environment. The abridged Job Descriptive Index (aJDI) was used to assess job satisfaction.

Upon Institutional Review Board approval, the researcher distributed the introduction letter, research tools, and informed consent through email to full time faculty employed at a baccalaureate level program in 17 private sector colleges located across the United States. The detailed responses for each of the questionnaires were entered into Survey Monkey®. Following electronic clicking on the consent form for approval, respondents completed a brief pre-survey to self-assess their appropriateness for study inclusion. Faculty who indicated they did not meet inclusion criteria (employment less than 2 years and less than a graduate degree) were excluded from participation. The data were then transferred by the researcher into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 22.

The following research questions were addressed in the study:

- Research Question- What do nurse faculty in a national private sector college report as the most important construct of empowerment as measured by Laschinger's [22] CWEQ II scale?
- Research Question-What is the level of job satisfaction of nurse faculty in a national private sector college as measured abridged Job Descriptive Index?
- Research Question- What is the relationship between empowerment and job satisfaction among nurse faculty in a national private sector college of nursing?

To assess research questions 1 and 2, exploratory data analysis was conducted to provide a numeric representation of the various subscales of empowerment and job satisfaction; Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons were conducted to determine if subscales scores were significantly different from each other. To examine research question 3, a Pearson correlation was calculated to assess the strength of association between empowerment and job satisfaction. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine significant relationships between the concept of job satisfaction (people on present job, work on present job, pay, opportunity for promotion, supervision) and empowerment. A power analysis conducted using G*Power software indicated that a target sample size of 92 participants was needed to achieve a statistical power level of .80 for a multiple linear regression with five predictors, assuming a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$) and an alpha level of .05.

Results

Demographics

Initial response to the email survey yielded 102 participants. After data cleaning, 9 participants were removed from the study for having more than 50% of their responses missing, so the final sample consisted of 93 participants out of 223 total possible participants at a response rate of 42%. The average age of the participants was 51 years old, with a range from 27 to 73 years old. Of the total sample 9.4% ($N = 21$) of the full-time faculty are male; 90.5% are female ($N = 202$). Average length of employment with the research site is three years and an annual salary range of $75,000.00 to $90,000.00. Eight percent of the total population

were doctorally prepared and 82% held master's degrees in nursing.

Research Question 1

To assess what construct of empowerment was rated most highly for the participants in this study, the means and standard deviations for the participants' responses to the CWEQ II scale were calculated. Note: on this scale, (5) = "a lot" and (1) = "none," thus higher scores represent higher levels of empowerment opportunity provided by the college. Opportunity was the highest endorsed (M = 3.58, SD = 0.76), followed by information (M = 3.57, SD = 0.83) and support (M = 3.45, SD = 0.89). Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons revealed that opportunity, information, and support scores were all significantly higher than the scores for resources (M = 3.11, SD = 0.91), formal power (M = 3.03, SD = 0.82), and informal power (M = 2.78, SD = 0.89; all p-values < .001). The only other statistically significant difference in the scores was between formal power and informal power (p = .049). The means and standard deviations of all constructs of the CWEQ-II are presented in (Table 1).

Variable	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
Empowerment	1.89	5	3.24	0.64
Opportunity	2	5	3.58	0.76
Information	1.67	5	3.57	0.83
Support	2	5	3.46	0.89
Resources	1	5	3.11	0.91
Formal Power	1	5	3.03	0.82
Informal Power	1	5	2.78	0.89

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Responses to the CWEQ-II Scale.

Research Question 2

To measure the level of job satisfaction, the mean and standard deviation for the participants' responses to the aJDI were calculated. For this index, (3) = "yes," (1) = "uncertain," and (0) = "no." Responses were summed and higher scores indicated greater endorsement. Participants most frequently endorsed 'people on your present job' (M = 15.16, SD = 4.07), followed by supervision (M = 13.81, SD = 5.16) and work on present job (M = 13.76, SD = 4.55). Opportunities for promotion was least endorsed (M = 6.22, SD = 5.51). Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons revealed that scores for people on present job, supervision, and work on present job were all higher than scores for pay and opportunities for promotion (all p-values < .001). The pairwise comparisons also revealed that pay was rated significantly higher than opportunities for promotion (p < .001). The means and standard deviations of all responses are presented in (Table 2).

Variable	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
People on present job	3	18	15.16	4.07
Work on present job	0	18	13.76	4.55
Pay	0	18	10.7	5.74
Opportunities for promotion	0	18	6.21	5.51
Supervision	0	18	13.81	5.16

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations of Responses to the aJDI.

Research Question 3

To assess the relationship between the subscales of empowerment and job satisfaction among nurse faculty, Pearson correlations were conducted with a Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons. Eleven significant correlations were found and highlighted in bold in (Table 3). The strongest correlation was between formal power and supervision (r = 0.56, p < .001). All significant correlations were positive. The results of the correlation analyses are presented in (Table 4).

Variable	Opportunity	Information	Support	Resources	Formal power	Informal power
People on present job	0.14	0.2	0.17	0.023	0.31	0.18
Work on present job	0.46**	0.17	0.35*	0.3	0.40**	0.32
Pay	0.3	-0.03	0.21	0.32	0.34*	0.07
Opportunity for promotion	0.44**	0.26	0.32	0.27	0.51**	0.38**
Supervision	0.37**	0.2	0.51**	0.54**	0.56**	0.31
Note. *p < .05, **p < .01 with Bonferroni adjustment.						

Table 3: Correlation between the Subscales of the CWEQ II and JDI.

Variable	*VIF*
People	1.17
Work	1.42
Pay	1.06
Promotion	1.25
Supervision	1.6

Table 4: Variance Inflation Factors for People, Work, Pay, Promotion, and Supervision.

Multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to assess relationships among variables. The selection method of the 'Enter' variable was adopted for the linear regression model. Under the 'Enter' variable method, all of the variables were loaded at the same time instead of using a step-wise regression method. As recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell [26], normality was assessed by plotting the quantiles of the model residuals against the quantiles of the Chi-square distribution. The Q-Q scatterplot, or probability plot, supported a graphical depiction of a comparison of two probability distributions. The assumption of normality was assessed through the use of a Q-Q scatterplot. Homoscedasticity was assessed by plotting the predicted model residuals against the predicted model values. Finally, calculation of Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) was conducted to detect the presence of multicollinearity between predictors. Table 5 includes all VIFs in the study.

All predictors in the regression model have VIFs less than 10 quantifying the severity of the multicollinearity and a measure of variance. The results of the linear regression model predicting overall empowerment were significant, $F(5, 87) = 13.58$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.44$, indicating that approximately 44% of the variance in empowerment is explainable by people on present job, work on present job, pay, opportunity for promotion, and supervision. Promotion, ($B = 0.03$, $t(87) = 3.17$, $p = .002$) and supervision ($B = 0.04$, $t(87) = 3.04$, $p = .003$) significantly predicted empowerment. (Table 5) summarizes the results of the regression model.

Variable	*B*	*SE*	B	*T*	*P*
People	0.01	0.01	0.07	0.85	0.395
Work	0.02	0.01	0.14	1.46	0.149
Pay	0.02	0.01	0.16	1.96	0.053
Promotion	0.03	0.01	0.29	3.17	0.002
Supervision	0.04	0.01	0.31	3.04	0.003
Note. $F(5, 87) = 13.58$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.44$.					

Table 5: Results for Multiple Linear Regression with People, Work, Pay, Promotion, and Supervision predicting Empowerment.

The results of the linear regression model predicting opportunity were significant, $F(5, 87) = 9.71$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.36$, indicating that approximately 36% of the variance in opportunity is explainable by people, work, pay, promotion, and supervision. Work ($B = 0.05$, $t(87) = 3.06$, $p = .003$), pay ($B = 0.03$, $t(87) = 2.49$, $p = .015$), and promotion ($B = 0.04$, $t(87) = 3.21$, $p = .002$) significantly predicted opportunity. significantly predicted opportunity. (Table 6) summarizes the results of the regression model.

Variable	*B*	*SE*	B	*T*	*P*
People	-0.01	0.02	-0.04	-0.4	0.69
Work	0.05	0.02	0.31	3.06	0.003
Pay	0.03	0.01	0.22	2.49	0.015
Promotion	0.04	0.01	0.31	3.21	0.002
Supervision	0.01	0.02	0.05	0.42	0.673
Note. $F(5, 87) = 9.71$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.36$					

Table 6: Results for Multiple Linear Regression with People, Work, Pay, Promotion, and Supervision Predicting Opportunity.

The results of the linear regression model predicting information results were not significant, $F(5, 87) = 2.04$, $p = .081$, $R^2 = 0.11$. This indicated that the variables people, work, pay, promotion, and supervision did not explain a significant proportion of variation in the variable information. The results of the linear regression model predicting support were significant, $F(5, 87) = 7.21$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.29$, indicating that approximately 29% of the variance in support is explainable by people, work, pay, promotion, and supervision. Supervision significantly predicted support, $B = 0.07$, $t(87) = 3.45$, $p < .001$. (Table 7) summarizes the results of the regression model.

Variable	*B*	*SE*	B	*T*	*P*
People	0	0.02	-0.02	-0.17	0.864
Work	0.02	0.02	0.1	0.94	0.348
Pay	0.02	0.01	0.1	1.11	0.27
Promotion	0.02	0.02	0.12	1.16	0.248
Supervision	0.07	0.02	0.39	3.45	< .001
Note. $F(5, 87) = 7.21$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.29$					

Table 7: Results for Multiple Linear Regression with People, Work, Pay, Promotion, and Supervision Predicting Support.

The results of the linear regression model predicting resources were significant, $F(5, 87) = 8.80$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.34$, indicating that approximately 34% of the variance in resources is explainable by people, work, pay, promotion, and supervision. Pay significantly predicted resources, $B = 0.03$, $t(87) = 2.31$, $p = .023$. Supervision also significantly predicted resources, $B = 0.08$, $t(87) = 4.06$, $p < .001$. (Table 8) summarizes the results of the regression model.

Variable	*B*	*SE*	B	*T*	*P*
People	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.47	0.642
Work	0	0.02	0.01	0.06	0.95
Pay	0.03	0.01	0.21	2.31	0.023
Promotion	0.01	0.02	0.06	0.59	0.558
Supervision	0.08	0.02	0.45	4.06	< .001
Note. $F(5,87) = 8.80$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.34$					

Table 8: Results for Multiple Linear Regression with People, Work, Pay, Promotion, and Supervision Predicting Resources.

The results of the linear regression model predicting formal power were significant, F (5, 87) = 15.81, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.48$, indicating that approximately 48% of the variance in formal power is explainable by people, work, pay, promotion, and supervision. Pay significantly predicted formal power, $B = 0.03$, $t(87) = 2.91$, $p = .005$. Promotion significantly predicted formal power, $B = 0.05$, $t(87) = 3.84$, $p < .001$. Supervision significantly predicted formal power, $B = 0.05$, $t(87) = 2.98$, $p = .004$. (Table 9) summarizes the results of the regression model.

Variable	*B*	*SE*	B	*T*	*P*
People	0.02	0.02	0.12	1.43	0.156
Work	0.01	0.02	0.07	0.71	0.477
Pay	0.03	0.01	0.23	2.91	0.005
Promotion	0.05	0.01	0.33	3.84	< .001
Supervision	0.05	0.02	0.29	2.98	0.004
Note. $F(5, 87) = 15.81$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.48$					

Table 9: Results for Multiple Linear Regression with People, Work, Pay, Promotion, and Supervision Predicting Formal Power.

The results of the linear regression model predicting informal power were significant, $F(5, 87) = 4.31$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = 0.20$, indicating that approximately 20% of the variance in informal power is explainable by people, work, pay, promotion, and supervision. Promotion significantly predicted informal power, $B = 0.05$, $t(87) = 2.64$, $p = .010$. (Table 10) summarizes the results of the regression model.

Variable	*B*	*SE*	B	*T*	*P*
People	0.01	0.02	0.07	0.66	0.51
Work	0.03	0.02	0.16	1.42	0.158
Pay	0	0.02	0	-0.02	0.987
Promotion	0.05	0.02	0.28	2.64	0.01
Supervision	0.01	0.02	0.08	0.69	0.491
Note. $F(5, 87) = 4.31$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = 0.20$					

Table 10: Results for Multiple Linear Regression with People, Work, Pay, Promotion, and Supervision Predicting Informal Power.

Discussion

Empowerment

The nurse faculty responses and findings relating to empowerment were not anticipated. The strongest empowerment variable within the job satisfaction model was relating to the faculty perceptions of their co-workers, while lower endorsement was noted regarding organizational visibility and being sought out by peers for help with problems. The faculty reported having the ability to use their own skills and knowledge, and were able to gain new skills and knowledge. However, they did not feel there were significant opportunities to seek out ideas from professionals other than leadership or experience opportunities to be sought out by peers for help with problems within a national organization.

Another issue related to empowerment involved communication, visibility, and promotion. Although the faculty reported that they were given access to necessary resources related to shared goals and information regarding the current state of their campus and the values and goals of campus leadership, they did not

feel they had opportunities for promotion. This was a significant finding as the average length of employment of faculty within the organization is 3 years. In addition, while the faculty reported having access to support in regard to helpful hints on problem solving advice, they did not feel that they had visibility in work related activities within the organization. Faculty reported that they received moderate feedback and guidance on work performance, but did not feel they had access to rewards for innovation.

Job Satisfaction

The nurse faculty's responses related to job satisfaction supported similar considerations that were noted in the empowerment survey. Considerations of job satisfaction throughout the literature include, supervision, opportunity, coworkers, promotion, and pay [26]. Participants in this study were satisfied with their supervisors, their work, and the intelligence of their coworkers. However, they described pay as not enough to live on. The most significant finding regarding job satisfaction was related to opportunity for promotion. The most significant correlation noted in this research relating to the responses to the job satisfaction JDI survey was the correlation between the construct of promotion and job satisfaction. These findings were consistent with McCausland, et al. [27], who reported job satisfaction as strongly related to the enhancement of responsibility and rank.

Job Satisfaction and Empowerment

A positive relationship was noted between the constructs of empowerment and job satisfaction. The results mirror empirical evidence similar to research conducted in academics and other healthcare settings, and indicate there may be additional opportunities to increase empowerment among nurse faculty, which may lead to job satisfaction. The exploration of constructs related to empowerment, job satisfaction, and retention in various settings serve to support empirical inquiry to support or refute transferrable findings in private sector colleges.

Conclusion

Implications

In summary, academic leaders in private sector colleges of nursing must foster a sharing, empowered partnership with nurse faculty. Job satisfaction is an important leadership focus as the construct is linked to nurse retention in academic settings in both public and private sector colleges of nursing [28], and empowerment may provide a venue for increasing satisfaction and retention of nurse faculty. The findings of this study support a call to action from the academic leaders within the organization to further explore the reasons why faculty do not feel advancement and mobilization of resources is available to them. Although the faculty reported understanding the strategic goals, they did not report feeling formal or informal power to contribute to solutions for organizational challenges. According to Kanter [17], innovating organizations must consistently support an integrative culture of employee engagement that includes all levels within the organization.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has few limitations that could be addressed in future researchers. There is the potential for research bias due to the participants being selected from the researcher's place of employment. Participation is also limited to voluntary respondents across 17 campuses within the same private sector institution in the United States, which may represent faculty in other private or public organizations. Second, the demographic profile of the population is restricted to colleges of nursing within the United States. Future researchers might consider expanding the scope to multiple private sector colleges, internationally, or comparing a sample of both private and public colleges to more closely and thoroughly examine nursing faculty satisfaction.

Finally, the quantitative method inherently limits participants' responses to the scope of the research tools. The research tools used in this study do not allow for individual responses, limiting self- determined responses. This type of research method may omit components of nurse faculty job dissatisfaction that was not identified in this research tool. Future researchers might consider developing qualitative or mixed methods studies that might provide a broader perspective regarding nursing faculty job satisfaction.

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