

Discussing Factors of Payment, Healthcare System Policies and Available Resources Relate to the Low Job Satisfaction of Nurses in China

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Abstract. The exploring of the Low Job Satisfaction of nurses in China and its related factors, include Payment, Healthcare System Policies and Available Resources. It is apparent that these three factors are cross correlation to each other, and together give a strong negative impact on the job satisfaction of nurses in China.

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction of nurses is generally believed to be associated with variety of positive outcomes. High level of job satisfaction for nurses, better life quality with less psychological stress is reported and the positive reflection from nurses at the same time drives a good result on patient care [1-2]. On the other hand, low level of job satisfaction can pose the professionals a condition of intention to leave, which is one of the contribution factors for nursing shortage [3]. Across global study findings proved that higher level of job satisfaction is very important, therefore, increasing nurses' level of job satisfaction should be emphasized.

However, it shows in some studies that a big number of nurses in China do not satisfied with their jobs. Based on the study of, 54 percent of bedside nurses along 21 hospitals in Guangdong province of China indicated dissatisfaction of their job [4]. Another questionnaire survey applied to nurses worked in 19 Shanghai hospitals reported a 50.2 percent of dissatisfied and 40.4 percent of the nurses express their intention to leave the current employment [5]. Because, the nursing quality and the labour force in China faces the same challenges as the world does, and its relationship towards job satisfaction, above studies suggested an urgent need in exploring and enhancing certain factors which associated with high satisfaction among nurses specifically in China [6].

A study conducted by Hays, Bonner and Pryor aimed in exploring contributing factors to nurse job satisfaction in acute hospital setting, selected 17 articles covered from year 2004 to year 2009 highlighted the payment issue, health system policies and available resources [7]. Those three factors are also addressed by researchers focus on China nursing condition. This study will apply a thorough discussion about how these three factors affecting the low level nursing satisfaction in China.

According to the result of a questionnaire survey conducted by Lu, While and Barriball among 512 nurses working in Beijing, China, almost three quarters of the sample population felt dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the payment [8]. A nationwide survey covered sixteen provinces in China, applying the Job Descriptive Index Scale and the result presented that only 24 percent of nurses are satisfied with their pay [9]. Another research also emphasised the least satisfied with pay compared with the satisfied level with family-work balance and co-workers [10].

The concerns behind the low level satisfaction of the payment in nursing profession in China are various, and one of them is the conflict between expected payment and the payment in real. Based on the same study of Hu and Liu, 83 percent of nurses indicated their pay is less than they deserved. [9] This might relate to the overload of workforce when nurses considered their salary being paid is not equivalence with their workload. Chen et al. conducted a study focus on role stress and job satisfaction of nurses, the role stress which include ambiguity, conflict, overload and incompetence are examined to assess their relationship with the job satisfaction which include professionalism, interaction, reward and recognition. Specifically to the workload, the participant nurses need to reflect on the questions (as

considering my workload, I am satisfied with my monthly remuneration), and the paper concluded with a positive prediction of role overload with the reward of nurses. Hence, back to the research of Hu and Liu 81 percent of the respondents said the work is tiresome, and 67 percent of nurses thought their schedule are not healthy and 60 percent felt it frustrated, it is likely to be associated with the unsatisfied with their payment and in turn affects the overall job satisfaction [9].

Another pay-related dissatisfied factor could relate to the concerned of unfair distribution of the monthly hospital bonuses. Further information was found in a research exploring nursing shortage in China, the different between two kinds of categories in nurse profession was discussed. One is the formal nurse, the other one called contract supernumerary employed nurses, which are known as temporary nurses. The contract nurses do not receive equal pay as they contribute to the same workforce as the formal nurses do, sometimes the salary could be half less than the formal nurses earn. Consequently, many hospitals reduced their expenditure of salary aspect by hiring only contract nurses instead of formal ones. Some hospitals do not pay for public holidays for those temporary hired nurses, neither offer them job promotion nor continuing education, thus to cut cost for the hospital [6]. This concern contributed a percentage of 75 in the study of Hu and Liu [9]. It is noticeable that fairly allocate monthly salary and other bonuses should be considered to increase the level of nurses job satisfaction.

The health system policy in China do not only interfere the regular monthly remuneration to be paid to the nurses, it also dominates the amount of payment as both reward and disciplinary method. Many hospitals use deduction of bonuses as a strategy to improve clinical nursing practice, and majority of nurses disagree against this idea, in the study of Hu and Liu it is also found that most nurse administrators in China do not receive a systematic training for their leadership management skills, and 53 percent of nurses with less than 10 years of experience thought that the nurse managers lacked scientific management and leadership skills [9]. This may pose nurses with a dissatisfaction perception towards the decision made by higher authorities that included in healthcare system policy. As the consideration of this, the healthcare system policy need to be ameliorated and thoroughly discussed before applied.

The promotion policy also has a great impact on nurses' job satisfaction. Evidence showed the promotions could be a strong intrinsic factors or motivators influencing the level of satisfaction of nursing profession [12]. However, nurses in China mostly have only a secondary education (diploma) in nursing, and this restrains their chances for promotions due to education is one of the most important criteria for promotion in China's clinical culture. It was found in this study that the promotions were rated by nurses as the second least satisfying element followed behind the factor of payment. 66 percent of the participants concerned their promotions opportunities were limited, 56 percent deemed it is not based on one's capability in order to get promotions. Specifically, 51 percent thought the policy of promotion in their hospitals was not fair, and 38 percent consider their current work as a dead-end job. Therefore, actions such as reform the promotion policy by modify its criteria and ensure it is consistent, and implement advancement opportunities need to be done to enhancing nurses' level of job satisfaction in China.

Another healthcare system policy- related aspect, which strongly impacted on the job satisfaction, is the staffing level. Poor staffing levels directly result in the low nurse-to-patient ratio. It is reported that the lower nurse-to-patient ratio could cause poorer nurse outcome, and nurses are more likely reporting lower quality of care. In a review paper of recent literature, the sense of being used like a machine is indicated when nurses are burnout with too many patients, at the same time the stress level increased, the nurses may experience more frequently of fatigue, lower empowerment and less available time spend on their own issues such as with family and friends. In addition to that, high tension with patients may also pose nurses inability attending further education, because they are too busy accomplishing their tasks in clinic settings and do not have enough time for workshops. In this case nurses may feel they miss the opportunity to achieve higher professional development. From above discussion, it is clear that a proper staffing level plays a vital role in good organization management, thus produce a better nurse satisfaction.

Nevertheless, the staffing condition in regard to nursing profession remains critical in China. In a research paper study about nursing shortage in China, investigate the ratio of nurses to bed in Grade (A) hospitals. The Grade (A) hospitals are considered the clinical settings where provide highest quality of comprehensive health care services. However, the result of the research showed a far lower ratio of nurses to beds compared with other countries. The investigation discloses that in those Grades (A) hospitals, it is expected of the ward nurses to handle at least 10-14 patients, and sometimes more than 30 patients to one nurse. 65 percent of nurses on duty worked over 10 hours per day [6]. This reflects an urgent need in reforming the staffing policies in order to minimize the negative outcomes of nurse satisfaction as well as the patient care quality.

In an overall view of Chinese nursing, the front line nurses attend little in making decision of patient care, the collaborations with other health care professions are the responsibility of the nurse managers only, and same thing happened in the policy making and changing in one unit or the whole hospital. Nurses' hands are tied and they are given very limited rights participating the organization policymaking. Such condition should be changed in order to improve the job satisfaction among Chinese nurses.

Apart from the payment and the healthcare system policy issue, a study aims to exploring the impact of nurse empowerment on job satisfaction concluded that resources is one of the lowest scoring item by nurses regards their diversions in job satisfaction [15]. Resource in one specific work environment was defined by Laschinger et al. [14]. As the ability to access the materials, money, supplies, time and equipment required to accomplish organizational goals. It was stated that Chinese nurses felt less access to resources within their institution compare with the nurses in western countries. The financial controls and restraints imposed on nursing department, so the front line nurses gain little support from the organization to perform task on work, and this feeling of lacking access to resources make them disempowered thereby decreased their level of job satisfaction For this reason, the hospital should provide adequate information and materials necessary for the nurses to help them gain better effects in their work environment.

As we could see through the article, the three factors, which are payment, healthcare system policy and resources access, are cross correlation to each other, it is always the policy effect on the fiscal concern, thereby impacting on the resources available. In summary, for the payment issue of nurses, include feeling underpaid and being treated unfair alert the hospital administrators to consider the value of the nurses, meanwhile to provide fair support and payments to them. For the healthcare system policy, the article mainly discussed about the reward and discipline policy, promotion policy and the staffing policy. The reward and discipline policy and the promotion policy reflect the need of encouraging nurses participates in decision-making regarding the formulation of policies and any changes related, and experience the feeling of involved in decision-making process could produce higher levels of job satisfaction. Specifically, nurse managers should pay close attention to nurses' pay scales and provide opportunities to encourage nurses attend continuing education. Staffing policy as one essential factor directly affect on nurses and patient outcomes, must be dealt wisely, assuring the nurses-to-patients ratio to be in a satisfied level. However, it is not only the issue of certain clinical settings, but also relate to the nationwide nurse shortage problem. Hence, the countrywide strategies must be implemented such as improving the health care system, making greater investments in nursing education and enhancing the image of the nursing profession. For the resources required by nurses, the most important things by nurses' manager and other related administers in hospitals is to set strategies and materials and empower nurses to do job effectively.

In conclusion, China is in a state of severe imbalance between the supply and the demand in nursing professions, and increasing job retention through regulation and policy becomes a significant social topic. More studies are needed to further explore the factors influencing nurses' level of job satisfaction thereby to enhance their job retention as well as the overall outcome of work.

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