

ORIGINAL PAPER

SELECTED FACTORS OF SLOVAK NURSES' JOB SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Aim: The objective of this contribution was to present nurses' job satisfaction in Slovak institutional facilities related to selected characteristics of nurses (e.g. length of professional experience, current job title, etc). **Design:** A cross-sectional study. **Methods:** The research sample was composed of 206 nurses working in institutional healthcare facilities in Slovakia between the ages of 23 to 63. Nurses' job satisfaction was surveyed using the standardized form of the McCloskey/Mueller Satisfaction Scale. The research was realized in Slovak healthcare facilities between December 2014 to January 2015. The respondents replied on-line to a questionnaire that was published on the SKSaPA website. Significant interaction of two qualitative variables was evaluated using Mann-Whitney test with Z_{Adj} statistics, Kruskal-Wallis with H test statistics and correlation analysis with Spearman correlation coefficient $r(S)$. **Results:** The statistical processing found a statistically significant correlation between general satisfaction and total length of professional experience ($p = 0.907$) and also between nurses' general satisfaction and current job title ($p = 0.091$). We found significant correlations between current job title in a healthcare facility and the three sub-scales: satisfaction with scheduling ($p = 0.030$); satisfaction with professional opportunities ($p = 0.026$); and satisfaction with control and responsibility ($p = 0.020$). The overall satisfaction score was $\bar{x} = 2.94$. The highest mean was achieved in the sub-scale Satisfaction with co-workers ($\bar{x} = 3.52$) and the lowest mean in the sub-scale Satisfaction with control and responsibility ($\bar{x} = 2.73$). **Conclusion:** The results of this research demonstrate the need to investigate nurses' job satisfaction with a focus on the identification of factors determining this multi-faceted phenomenon.

Keywords: nurses, job satisfaction, total length of professional experience, job title, institutional healthcare facilities.

Introduction

Job satisfaction is one of the most important subjective aspects in which work and its conditions are reflected in the context of individual norms, value orientation, aspirations and expectations (Fuchsová, Kravčáková, 2004, p. 56; Rymeš, 2003, p. 111), exercise and development of abilities and skills, structure of attitudes, needs, interests, goals and other motives, as well as general orientation of individual's self-realization (Mlčák, Slíva, 2005, p. 305) related to the performance. The issue of job satisfaction is a domain of psychology, in the first place, and the subject of systematic research in the international context from the beginning of the 1930s (Mlčák, Slíva, 2005, p. 305).

It is presented in the studies of Slovak and foreign authors carried out in various healthcare facilities (Aiken et al., 2001; Curtis, 2007; Haroková, Gurková, 2012; Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, 2001; Leung, Spurgeon, Cheung, 2007; Tabaková, Nemčeková, 2009; Vévoda et al., 2010).

The concept of job satisfaction is a multi-faceted, comprehensive phenomenon that embraces psychological, health, social, organizational, economic and legal aspects. It is influenced by a number of factors with a dominant role in the world of work, and which also have an impact on the retention of nurses in their workplace. According to Haroková and Gurková (2013, p. 57) we can include individual factors such as demographic characteristics (age, sex, family status and number of children). Other influencing characteristics include years of service (Ellenbecker, Byleckie, 2005, p. 781), rewards, number of workers, working conditions, working environment (Lu et al., 2007, p. 469), nurse-patient relationship, nurse-doctor

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relationship, wages and benefits, and workload (Ellenbecker, Byleckie, 2005, p. 781).

The level of nurses' satisfaction is an indicator of the successful functioning of a healthcare facility in the healthcare system and may influence how a patient is treated (Kožuchová, 2014, p. 138). Several authors (Lynn, Redman, 2005; Murrells, Robinson, Griffiths, 2008) state that satisfaction at work is an important part of nurses' lives, influencing their performance, the safety of patients, quality of care, and also their relationship to the organization and the profession. Job satisfaction is also influenced by patients' perceptions of nurses and thus the general social status of the profession (Dimunová, 2014, p. 43–50). Job satisfaction has a significant impact on whether nurses remain in a job (stability) and their rates of turnover, productivity and absenteeism (Lynn, Redman, 2005). Rymes (2003) works on the assumption that increased satisfaction boosts job stability and reduces negative phenomena such as absenteeism and turnover. The high turnover rate of nurses has become a global issue (Lu, While, Barriball, 2007). *The European Nurses' Early Exit Study* (known as *The European NEXT-Study*) states that the shortage of nurses is a worldwide phenomenon and an increase of 30% by 2020 is anticipated. The shortage is caused mainly by economic, but also organizational and social factors. 56,000 nurses from ten European countries, including the Slovak Republic, participated in the study. Its results reveal low job satisfaction and that nurses often consider leaving and going to work abroad. Official data confirm that Slovak nurses are inclined to go abroad to work (most commonly to Great Britain and Austria) (Hasselhorn et al., 2005, p. 14–19).

Aim

The objective of this study was to assess nurses' job satisfaction; to assess nurses' job satisfaction in the individual sub-scales; to focus on the selected factors (length of professional experience, current job title) of job satisfaction of nurses working in Slovak institutional facilities; and to establish whether there is a statistically significant correlation between general job satisfaction and the selected factors. Partial results of the study are presented in the contribution.

Methods

Design

A cross-sectional study using the quantitative research methods was conducted.

Sample

The research set was composed of 206 nurses (11 men – 5.5% and 190 women – 94.5%) working in institutional healthcare facilities in Slovakia, between the ages of 23 to 63. The average age of respondents was 44.94. With the guarantee of anonymity, the respondents included in the sample were required to meet the following predetermined criteria: an age of over 18; employment in a healthcare facility; willingness to collaborate; and membership of the professional organization, the Slovak chamber of Nurses and Midwives (SKSaPA). Table 1 and Table 2 show other characteristics of the nurses.

Table 1 Characteristics of the set in terms of length of experience

	n	d	SD	median	min	max
Length of experience	204	23.115	9.758	24.000	2.000 (years)	42.000

Table 2 Characteristics of the respondents in terms of job title

Job title	n	%
head nurse, sister ward	22	11.0
nurse	178	89.0
Total	200	100.0

Data collection

The standardized form of the McCloskey/Mueller Satisfaction Scale (MMSS) was used in the research as the main method for collecting information. The MMSS scale was designed to assess the satisfaction of nurses working in institutional

healthcare facilities. It includes 31 items rated on a five point Likert scale (5 = very satisfied, 4 = moderately satisfied, 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 1 = very dissatisfied) arranged into 8 sub-scales (Mueller, McCloskey, 1990):

1. satisfaction with extrinsic rewards,
2. satisfaction with scheduling,
3. satisfaction with the balance of family and work,
4. satisfaction with co-workers,
5. satisfaction with interaction opportunities,
6. satisfaction with professional opportunities,
7. satisfaction with praise/recognition,
8. satisfaction with control and responsibility.

The mean score of each sub-scale of the questionnaire and also the overall job satisfaction score are calculated here. A higher score indicates a higher level of job satisfaction. Chronbach alphas for each of the eight sub-scales range between 0.52–0.84; the alpha for the global scale is 0.89. In our research the score within the eight sub-scales ranged between 0.56–0.88. Intrinsic consistence for extrinsic rewards 0.71; scheduling 0.85; the balance of family and work 0.56; relationships with co-workers 0.61; interaction opportunities 0.78; professional opportunities 0.78; praise and recognition 0.84; control and responsibility 0.88. The alpha for the global scale was 0.94. Written permission to use the form was granted by Associate Professor Sue Moorhead from the Center for Nursing Classification & Clinical Effectiveness, University of Iowa. A prerequisite for the research was to acquire written assent to distribute the questionnaire and allow the research. Written assent to distribute the questionnaire through the Slovak Chamber of Nurses and Midwives (SKSaPA) portal was granted by Mgr. Iveta Lazorova, Dipl. p. a. – president of the Chamber. The respondents answered the questionnaire questions on-line. The questionnaire was published on the SKSaPA website. The questionnaire was completed by the respondents who are SKSaPA members. As mentioned above, the questionnaire was completed by 206 nurses. The enclosed e-mail contained basic information about the research and the requirement to give assent to the distribution of the questionnaire. The research was realized in Slovak health-care facilities between December 2014 to January 2015.

Data analysis

The evaluation of data and the statistical analysis of the individual hypotheses were made using STATISTICA software. Significant interaction of two variables was evaluated using a Mann-Whitney test with Z_{Adj} statistics, Kruskal-Wallis with H test statistics and correlation analysis with the Spearman correlation coefficient $r(S)$. Any probability (P) value lower than 0.05 in the individual tests means a statistically significant result and shows a correlation of variables tested.

Results

We analysed job satisfaction for each sub-scale, the selected research hypotheses stated in the objectives in which we present the correlation between nurses' general satisfaction and length of professional experience and correlation between nurses' general satisfaction and current job title.

Table 3 Nurses' job satisfaction by sub-scales

Sub-scales	\bar{x}	SD	n
Satisfaction with co-workers	3.52	0.91	203
Satisfaction with opportunities for opportunities interaction	3.27	0.81	192
Satisfaction with scheduling	3.02	1.00	185
Satisfaction with praise and recognition	2.99	1.07	195
Satisfaction with the balance of family and work	2.89	0.92	193
Satisfaction with professional opportunities	2.80	0.81	191
Satisfaction with extrinsic rewards	2.78	0.99	203
Satisfaction with control and responsibility	2.73	1.01	195
Overall satisfaction	2.94	0.73	150

The highest mean is achieved in the sub-scale Satisfaction with co-workers ($\bar{x} = 3.52$) and in the sub-scale Satisfaction with opportunities for interaction ($\bar{x} = 3.27$). The lowest mean is in the sub-scale Satisfaction with control and responsibility ($\bar{x} = 2.73$) and Satisfaction with extrinsic rewards ($\bar{x} = 2.78$). The overall job satisfaction achieved an arithmetical mean of ($\bar{x} = 2.94$).

Table 4 Correlation between nurses' general satisfaction and length of professional experience

Length of professional experience	n	r(S)	P(R)
General satisfaction	148	-0.010	0.907
Extrinsic rewards	201	-0.010	0.884
Scheduling	183	0.057	0.447
Balance of family and work	191	-0.055	0.446
Co-workers	201	-0.114	0.106
Interaction opportunities	190	-0.069	0.347
Professional opportunities	189	-0.005	0.941
Praise/recognition	193	-0.071	0.325
Control and responsibility	193	-0.050	0.487

n = number; r(S) Spearman correlation coefficient; P(R) probability of independence test of correlated variables

Correlation between general satisfaction and total length of professional experience was tested using correlation analysis based on the Spearman correlation coefficient. We discovered that there is no

statistically significant correlation ($p = 0.907$) between the variables. Similarly, we tested each sub-scale in relation to total length of professional experience. The probability values were higher than 0.106, i.e. none of the sub-scales deviates from the result of nurses' general satisfaction.

Table 5 Correlation between nurses' general satisfaction and current job title

Job title	n	Z _{Adj}	P(M-W)
General satisfaction	147	-1.692	0.091
Extrinsic rewards	196	-0.872	0.383
Scheduling	179	-2.169	0.030
Balance of family and work	189	0.183	0.855
Co-workers	197	-0.157	0.875
Interaction opportunities	188	-0.570	0.569
Professional opportunities	186	-2.223	0.026
Praise/recognition	188	-0.836	0.403
Control and responsibility	189	-2.336	0.020

n = number; Z_{Adj} = test statistics of Mann-Whitney test; P(M-W) = probability of Mann-Whitney test

Correlation between general satisfaction and current job title in a healthcare facility was tested using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test. We did not find a statistically significant correlation between the variables ($p = 0.091$). Taking into account the fact that the probability of the test approached the value of $p = 0.05$, we can consider the tendency of nurses' job title to influence general satisfaction. It is obvious from the table that nurses not in managerial positions have a lower level of general satisfaction than nurses in managerial positions.

Similarly, we tested each sub-scale in relation to current job title in a healthcare facility. Probability values for the sub-scales Satisfaction with scheduling ($p = 0.030$), Satisfaction with professional opportunities ($p = 0.026$), and Satisfaction with control and responsibility ($p = 0.020$) demonstrate statistically significant results. It is obvious from the charts below that in both satisfaction sub-scales nurses in lower positions had a lower score, i.e. were less satisfied in the given sub-scale, than nurses in managerial positions.

Discussions

Satisfaction as a comprehensive attitude is influenced by many factors, (predominantly in the world of work) each of which, to some extent, contributes to its general level. These factors characterize a particular job, thus also the job of nurse in a hospital environment.

In relation to the work of a nurse in nursing research and management, nursing job satisfaction is also

assessed (Gurková, 2009, p. 162–163). In this study, the arithmetical mean of the total score for job satisfaction was 2.94, according to which we can assume that there was a medium level of nurse satisfaction (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) (Table 3). Similarly, Curtis (2007) found that nurses' satisfaction in a monitored sample was medium to low level. In research carried out by Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian (2001, p. 15) nurses reported a slightly lower level of satisfaction ($\bar{x} = 2.78$) compared to the results of this study. In a study by Aiken et al. (2001), as many as 40% of nurses reported a low level of job satisfaction. A study carried out by Gurková et al. (2013) found, in a sample of 1,055 nurses working in hospitals in the Slovak and Czech Republic that Czech nurses reported higher satisfaction in all sub-scales of job satisfaction and less frequent inclination to work abroad. Based on the results of this study, it can be observed that the highest level of nurses' job satisfaction was in the sub-scale Co-workers, while the lowest level of nurses' job satisfaction was in the sub-scale Control and responsibility (Table 3).

The fact that the highest mean was achieved in the sub-scale Co-workers compares with the results of the Haroková/Gurková study (2012, p. 404–405) in which the highest score for nurses' job satisfaction was also in the sub-scale Co-workers ($\bar{x} = 3.83$). Similarly, a number of other studies (Leung et al., 2007; Tabaková, Nemčková, 2009) identified satisfaction with co-workers (workplace relationships) as the area with the highest level of satisfaction. The results obtained are in accordance with the standards in relationships between healthcare workers defined in the *Ethical Code of Healthcare Worker* (2004) annexed to the Act No.574/2004 Coll., advocating honest, decent and socially correct behaviour with critical thinking, and respecting powers, and also endorsing the right to have differing points of view. Haroková and Gurková (2012, p. 407) observed that workplace relationships can be described as the general area of job satisfaction predominating in the nursing profession, its various clinical specialities and cultural contexts. The lowest mean ($\bar{x} = 2.73$) was achieved in the sub-scale dealing with satisfaction with control and responsibility (Table 3). A study by Lu et al. (2005, p. 42) explored the levels of satisfaction with work, working conditions and the organization of the working environment in relation to the working role, organizational and professional obligations at work, and actions and responsibility in the workplace. They confirmed the close relationship between these factors. Nowadays, nurses make up the largest groups of healthcare workers. Demands for professional

qualifications are increasing, the amount of responsibility has been extended. After achieving the highest possible education in their speciality, a nurse might have a greater chance of being promoted, however, the responsibility and control over actions in the workplace often do not correlate with extrinsic rewards.

In this study we did not find a statistically significant correlation between general satisfaction and total length of professional experience. Similarly, no significant difference was found between the individual sub-scales in relation to total length of professional experience (Table 4). On the other hand, in their study, Haroková and Gurková (2012, p. 408) found, in a sample of 499 nurses, a positive association between age, total length of clinical experience and job satisfaction. An interesting finding of their study was that nurses' satisfaction increases with age and experience in those areas where the results of their experience and skills can be demonstrated – control and responsibility at work, praise and recognition and scheduling in the workplace. Lerner et al. (2011) state that length of service markedly influences nurses' job satisfaction. Total length of clinical experience is, according to Li and Lambert (2008), a positive predictor of nurses' job satisfaction. Cimete, Gencalp, Keskin (2003, p. 157) state that nurses with more years of service are more satisfied with their jobs. This fact has been confirmed by several studies (Ellenbecker, 2001, p. 465; 2005, p. 781; Tabaková, Nemčková, 2009, p. 221). Slight correlations between nurses' age, length of service and general job satisfaction are stated by several authors (Chu et al., 2003, p. 180; Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, 2001, p. 10). Blegen (1993, p. 39) states that variables related to the individual characteristics of nurses such as age, and length of service represent, in relation to nurses' satisfaction, low but stable correlations. He attaches more significance to other variables, such as quality of working relationships and job content. Similar issues are examined in the work of Cimete, Gencalp, Keskin (2003) who researched subjective well-being in relation to length of experience, finding a positive correlation between the variables.

The correlation between satisfaction at work and professional growth and promotion is also significant. Bartlová (2009, p. 38) states that nurses' satisfaction, and stability of employment can contribute to a positive correlation between their professional growth and other factors, such as improvement in patient care quality. Leung, Spurgeon, Cheung (2007) found that professional opportunities is the area in which nurses are least satisfied. In this study we found no statistically significant correlation between

the variables (Table 5). Taking into consideration the fact that the probability value approaches $p = 0.05$ we can consider the tendency of job title to influence nurses' general satisfaction, i.e. nurses not in managerial positions have a lower level of general satisfaction than nurses in managerial positions. Low correlations in the area of job title were reported in a study by Tabaková and Nemčková (2009). On the other hand, Adams and Bond (2000, p. 539) confirmed a statistically significant difference in satisfaction of nurses according to their position. Similarly, we tested each sub-scale in relation to current job title in a healthcare facility. The probability values for the sub-scales Satisfaction with scheduling, Satisfaction with professional opportunities, Satisfaction with control and responsibility (Table 5) show statistically significant results. This means that nurses in managerial positions are more satisfied than nurses not in managerial positions. We assume that nurses in managerial positions have a particular schedule whereby they can use their time in the workplace more efficiently. On the other hand, ward nurses must respond to the pressing needs of the current situation, which means that their schedule is less stable and they work under more stress. Haroková and Gurková (2012, p. 406) also found a correlation between nurses' scheduling and job satisfaction. A Mann-Whitney test of multiple comparisons confirmed significantly higher satisfaction in the scheduling of childless nurses compared to nurses with children. Gurková et al. (2013) found that reasons for leaving a workplace, the nursing profession or working abroad were dependent on the level of nurses' satisfaction with control / responsibility and scheduling. The higher their satisfaction with control / responsibility, scheduling, and co-workers, the less nurses reported that they had considered leaving their current workplace, the nursing profession, or working abroad. According to Arcand and Neumann (2005), for an efficient assessment of nurse's work, it is necessary to clearly define the amount of responsibility, job content, scheduling and all requirements related to a nurse's performance.

Conclusions

The objective of this study was to assess the level of nurses' job satisfaction and also the level of nurses' job satisfaction for each of the job satisfaction sub-scales. We wanted to establish whether there is a correlation between general job satisfaction and the selected demographic indicators (e.g. length of professional experience, current job title, etc.). An analysis of the results did not reveal any positive

correlation between general satisfaction, total length of professional experience and current job title. We found significant correlations between current job title in a healthcare facility and satisfaction with scheduling, satisfaction with professional opportunities, and satisfaction with control and responsibility. In our set, we ascertained a medium level of general job satisfaction to low level of job satisfaction, with regard to extrinsic rewards and control and responsibility, requiring interventions focusing on increasing job satisfaction. It is necessary to raise awareness of nurses' rewards, to focus on the amount of their variable pay, to encourage feedback and praise for the work performed. The highest mean was achieved in the sub-scale Satisfaction with co-workers. It is necessary to continuously support and maintain positive assessments in the area of relationships (nurse-doctor relationships, relationships between nurses).

The issue of job satisfaction of nurses working in institutional healthcare facilities has come to the fore nowadays, as healthcare facilities face a high turnover of nurses not only in the Slovak Republic, but also abroad. Management of these facilities should focus intensely on assessments of job satisfaction of nurses, who make up the largest group of healthcare workers. The level of nurses' satisfaction is an important indicator of the successful functioning of a healthcare facility in the healthcare system. We are of the opinion that the issue of job satisfaction is highly topical, as more and more nurses are leaving to work abroad.

Study limits

The limits of our study stem particularly from the limited size of the sample (compared to other studies) considering the basic set of respondents. This might have been influenced by the fact that the nurses completed the questionnaire on-line. Presumably not every nurse has access to the internet or is able to work with it. Another factor might have been nurses' willingness to and (lack of) interest in expressing their feelings about these issues and by the relatively short time interval for data collection. Finally, the low number of nurses in managerial positions involved in the study might have influenced the validity of the results when comparing nurses' satisfaction according to their job title.

Ethical aspects and conflict of interest

Written consent to distribute the questionnaire through the SKSaPA portal was granted by Mgr. Iveta Lazorova, Dipl. p. a. – SKSaPA president. The

respondents were informed of the research purpose. The authors are not aware of any conflict of interest.

Author contribution

Conception and design (MK), data analysis and interpretation (MK, AV), draft of the manuscript (MK, AV), critical revision of the manuscript (MK, AV), final version of the manuscript (MK, AV).

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