HOW DOES A WORK ENVIRONMENT AFFECT JOB PERFORMANCE OF NURSES

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ABSTRACT

Employees productivity and work quality is adversely troubled by the work environment factors of the organizations such as stress, conflicts, disharmony, lack of communication, ineffective decision making, coordination and many more which opens a dispute in almost all the organizations globally. The health sector is one of the most sensitive and upcoming sectors of economy and nurses are said to play the key role in this sector. “Nurse”, considered to be synonymous of “Care” should be highly respected and esteemed for rendering us their services for a noble cause to cure us, heal us, to keep us safe and protected. Being the edifice of health care sector and advocates of patients, it becomes the significant responsibility of health care departments to enrich and enlarge their job profiles. Nurses should be provided with a healthy and cordial work environment in the hospitals, so that they can give the best output and prosper in their jobs. They can said to be the life blood of the health care and then positive work environment factor is the heart that pumps it. So, if health care sector wants to fulfil its vision, they necessarily ought to realize and fulfil the needs and desires of
the nurses who work round the clock for our well being. Thus, it is essential to reorganize work environment and eradicate as many impediments as possible for cordial work environment and job satisfaction of nurses. Studies have proved that stumpy control over work atmosphere is negatively correlated with nurse’s quality of care and patient satisfaction. Hence, the study is designed to highlight some of the problems of nurses work environment that directly affects their job outcomes.

**Key Words:** - Nurses, Work environment, Health care, Job performance.

**INTRODUCTION**

“It is wrong to keep quiet about what is harmful.”

*Columbian of Leinster*

*Moral and Political Activist, Missionary Teacher.*

As the saying goes “Health is Wealth”; health is considered as most vital phenomenon which determines the prosperity and progress of the country at large. The health care industry is one of the largest and upcoming sectors in the world. In order to maintain a equilibrium between delivery and reception of health services, various policies, regulations and strategies have come up to enrich this fast growing profession. Nurses, as they are the nervous centre of the health world play a pivotal role in enlargement and success of the healthcare sector. They are considered to be patient’s advocates and linkage between doctors and patients for being at the lowest hierarchy of health sector and always in constant and close touch with the patients and families. Nurses are always thought of while we talk of health care sector. They are the crusaders for our good health and always try their best to keep us safe and protected the ones who never give up or take any excuse to evade their services. Moreover, they are the key components of health care sector and have a significant role in upgrading its standard and enhancing patient care and safety.

Poor or deficient work environment jeopardizes many aspects of health care delivery. There is a mounting evidence that unhealthy work environment contributes to increased cost to the organization in terms of increased cases of medical negligence, dissatisfied patients, conflicts, turnover and poor reputation of the hospitals. Unpleasant, demoralising and unsafe work conditions in the workplace rots the entire system of almost every organization. Hence, creation of healthy work environment is imperative to ensure patient safety, enhance retention of staff and maintain organisational profitability and goodwill. Nursing is the profession most trusted to act honestly and ethically. Five times since 1999, nurses have topped Gallup’s annual survey of honesty and ethics among all professions [1]. The American Association of Critical Care Nurses has committed to acting boldly, deliberately and relentlessly until issues that obstruct creation of healthy work environment are resolved. AACN defined 2 strategic platforms that now guide the Associations work initiative as:

1. Work and care environment must be safe, healing and humane, respectful of rights, responsibilities, needs and contributions of patients, their families, nurses and all other health professionals.
2. Excellence in acute and critical care nursing practice is driven by the needs of the patients and their families and is achieved when nurse’s competencies are matched to their needs [2].

Thus, in the lieu of crucial role played by the nurses in the health care it becomes obligatory for health leaders to provide the requisites facilities and incentives to the nurses that can be the key drivers of their performances.
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the various work environment factors of nurses.
- To analyse the effects of work environment on the job performance of the nurses.
- To suggest the benefits of a cordial work place for the organization and nurses.

ESSENTIALS OF CORDIAL WORK ENVIRONMENT

Certain principles are necessary to abide by for creating and maintaining an enriched work environment in the health care sector for nurses. These principles if applied ethically and in good concern will make the nurses more devoted, honest and willing in the delivery of their services. The contribution of nurses in true spirits in the service to the mankind cannot be undervalued and needed to be held in high esteem by the health leaders and even the society. They are the ones who still work on the principles of “service to mankind is service to god”. The sensitive role performed by the nurses in the health care can be clearly explained by this statement “Constant attention by a good nurse may be just as important as a major operation done by a surgeon.” Dag Hammarskjold.

Considering the noble services provided by the nurses to us, the contribution of nurses in true spirits in the service to the mankind cannot be undervalued and needed to be held in high esteem by the health leaders and even the society. Health leaders should share an understanding that an optimistic work environment not only empowers the employees but it is also beneficial in enhancing patient’s satisfaction and wellbeing of the society. Thus, significant standards for establishing and sustaining the positive work environment that inspire the nurses to reach their goal and also help organizations to expand and grow are:

1. VALUABLE COMMUNICATION

Regular, valuable and effective communication is mandatory for optimal organization and patient outcome. Communication is” information” and information is “life”. To survive in this competitive world, we need to have an incessant communication in and among the organization. Clinical skills require expert and valuable communication at all levels of organization and including written, oral and non verbal communication. Patients in the care of clinically expert professionals
suffer medical errors with alarming frequency [3]. Nearly three in four errors are caused by the factors associated with the interpersonal interactions [4]. In addition, according to data from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, breakdown in team communication is a top contributor to sentinel events [5]. Be it conflict with others, or between their own personal and professional values, skilled communication supports the ethical obligation to seek resolution that preserves a nurse’s professional integrity while ensuring patient safety and best interest [6]. Thus, effective communication should be very much clear, timely and precise.

Key Elements

- Effective communication leads to achieving desired outcomes with economy in cost, time and resources.
- Effective communication inculcates the good interpersonal and team relationship.
- Effective communication leads to increased goodwill, profitability and reputation of the organization.
- Effective communication leads to increased innovation and increased ability to face the problems and situations effectively.
- Effective communication in the health care leads to healthy job outcomes with increase in patient satisfaction and less of medical negligence.

2. EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

Nurses are considered to be patient’s advocates and they are also the vital link between the patients and doctors so, it is critical to involve the nurses in the clinical decision making. The nurses are assigned the primary responsibilities of patient care by the physicians, pharmacists and administrators. However, only 8% of the physicians recognize nurses as part of the decision making team. [7]. Other research report that a majority of nurses feel relatively powerless to change things they dislike in their work environment [8]. This lack of empowerment act as an obstacle in the way of nurses exercising their full potential and skills in delivering quality outputs. Failure to incorporate the experienced perspective of nurses in clinical and operational decisions may result in costly errors, jeopardize patient safety and threaten the financial viability of healthcare organizations [9]. Nurses believe that they provide quality nursing care and are accountable for their own practice [10]. Their success is recognized by the national programs such as AACN Beacon Award for Critical Care Excellence, The Magnet Nursing Services Recognition Program and the Baldrige National Quality Program [11].

Key Elements

- Enhanced decisional involvement of nurses will result in fewer psychosomatic and physical complaints and documented physical disorders [12].
- Staff nurse decisional involvement is associated with positive patient outcomes, including a higher nurse-perceived quality of patient care [13].
- Participative management of the nurses is associated with greater nurse satisfaction[14].
- Promotion of staff nurse involvement in decision making will improve the culture of work organizations [15].
- Participative management of nurses will lead to increase in organizational commitment and morale of nurses.
3. LOWER ATTRITION LEVEL

Nursing service is the backbone of the success of health care sector. They are the first one talked of when we think of health care [16]. The patient satisfaction and profitability of the hospitals depend upon the work efficiency of the nurses. However, a shortage of nurses hampers the smooth functioning of health care. Deficits of the nurses are mainly due to lousy and unhealthy work environment. An energetic and cordial work environment can be key factor for lower attrition level of the nurses. Positive work environment energizes the nurses to give their best outputs to health care and society. Understanding the effect of work environment on nurse attitudes and behaviours are relevant to staff retention, organizations can then introduce the strategies to correct work environment deficiencies [17].

Key Elements

- Over duty, continues working hours, exploitations, work-life imbalances, poor recognition and poor pay are the major negative work environment factors leading to the nurses’ high attrition level.
- Reduction in attrition level will result in lower administrative and operational cost to organizations resulting in higher profitability of organization.
- Low rate of attrition will overcome the problem of nursing shortages considering the high demand and scarcity of nurses.
- It will result in less of medical negligence by nurses and higher job stability and morale of nurses.

4. SIGNIFICANT RECOGNITION

Majority of nurses are dissatisfied with the recognition they receive from their employer. Recognition of one’s achievements and contributions are essential requirement for personal and professional growth. Lack of recognition leads to discontent, poor morale, reduced productivity and suboptimal care outcomes. Inadequate recognition is cited as a primary reason for turnover among the employees and is linked to decreasing nurse satisfaction [18-20]. Hospitals recognized for attracting and retaining nurses emphasize personal growth and development and provide multiple rewards for expertise and opportunities for clinical advancement [21].

Key Elements

- Meaningful recognition system should include processes which validate that recognition is meaningful to those being acknowledged [22].
- Healthcare organizations following comprehensive recognition system inculcates excellent work culture.
- Nurses if recognized for their contributions and achievements leads to work pride and organizational commitments.
- If nurses inside the health care departments feel noticeable and appreciated, they will extend the same approach and devotion to the people outside (Patients).

5. SUITABLE STAFFING

Suitable staffing ensures the balance between patient needs and nurse competencies. Inappropriate staffing is one of the most harmful threats to patient safety and to the wellbeing of
nurses. Evidences suggest that better patient outcomes result when a higher proportion of care hours are provided by registered nurses, as compared with care by licensed practical nurses or nursing assistants [23].

The likelihood of death or serious complications after surgery increases when fewer nurses are assigned to care for patients [24]. Inadequate staffing leads to nurse dissatisfaction, increased attrition level and depersonalisation. Moreover, it hampers the quality of care leading to wastage of hospital time and resources. Because the condition of critically ill patients rapidly and continuously fluctuates, flexibility of nurse staffing that goes beyond fix nurse-to-patient ratios is imperative [25].

Thus, organizations must engage in dramatic innovation to devise and systematically test new staffing models [26].

**Key Elements**

- Sound staffing polices of health care organisations leads nurses to generate effective and desired quality care.
- The mismatch between patient needs and nurse competencies can lead to most harmful threats to patient safety as likelihood of death or serious complications after surgery increases when fewer nurses are assigned to care for the patients [27].
- Inappropriate staffing results in increased negligence and errors as nurses feel overstressed and overburdened due to high workloads.
- Adequate and appropriate staffing generates healthy outcomes for both the patients and organizations.

6. SAFETY COMES FIRST

Nursing profession has been reported to have the more possibility of sexual exploitation in the clinical field because majority of nurses are still women (Lee et al., 2011). The nursing professionals are exposed to sexual harassment more considering their precarious position of being in a weak position in the authority during the clinical training (Bronner et al 2003). Moreover, nurses are also prone to work place violence because they are on the front line of the health care system and in closest contact with the patients and their relatives. The most commonly encountered violence is verbal abuse [28, 29]. Work place violence and sexual abuse have a negative correlation with job satisfaction and job outcomes. International studies have reported that the prevalence of work place violence against nurses in work place setting varied from 10% to 50% and even up to 87%. [30-32]. They are also instrumental for increase in the suicidal tendencies among the nursing professionals.

**Key Elements**

- Work place violence and sexual abuse leads to suicidal thoughts among the medical professionals.
- On the job physical or verbal abuse gives way to high burnout and depersonalisation of the job.
- Quality of medical services offered by the nurse’s depreciates leading to high negligence and absenteeism because of work place conflicts and violence.
- Sexual abuse and work place conflicts results in high operational and legal cost to the organization as more of turnovers and criminal cases can be registered in the name of organizations and individuals working in it.
7. CORDIAL INTER PERSONAL RELATIONS

People devote a majority of their time in the organization and thus, workplace is like a family to them. Work helps them infuse meaning to their life and it’s not just a way to earn money for livelihood. As a result, workplace relations have a tremendous impact on not only the job satisfaction but also on general well-being. A harmonious and amicable relationship with supervisors and colleagues is vital in overall job satisfaction. Interpersonal conflict has shown to have positive relationship with counter productive work behaviour and in some cases, it is found to be one of the strongest predictors of CWB out of a variety of other workplace stressors (Bayram, Gursakal & Bilgel, 2009). The strain associated with interpersonal conflict at work has also been shown to be related to increased absenteeism (Giebels & Janssen, 2005). Additionally, mistreatment between supervisors and their subordinates has been shown to negatively impact overall performance as well as extra role performance (Aquin & Bommer, 2003). Thus, harmonious interpersonal relations have influencing effect on employee behaviour relevant to the organization.

Key Elements

- It is rightly said “It’s all done with the people”. If human resource is ignored, nothing else will work well as it could have had.
- If nurses will collaborate well then the organization too will have a competitive edge.
- A healthy work culture will be created due to amicable interpersonal relationships leading to high effectiveness and productivity of nurses and hospitals both.
- The best talent also comes out with synergistic exchanges.

**BENEFITS OF PLEASANT WORK ENVIRONMENT**

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<tr>
<th>To the hospitals</th>
<th>To the nurses</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Positive image</td>
<td>High self esteem</td>
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<td>2. High good will</td>
<td>Increased job satisfaction</td>
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<td>3. Improved employee morale</td>
<td>Increase in pride and dedication towards work</td>
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<td>4. Reduced employee turnover</td>
<td>Improved sense of well being</td>
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<td>5. High work quality</td>
<td>Cordial interpersonal relations</td>
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<td>6. Economy in resources time and cost</td>
<td>Reduction in job stress and burnout</td>
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<td>7. High customer satisfaction</td>
<td>High service out comes</td>
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<td>8. Reduced health care/insurance cost</td>
<td>Improved health with less of stress and depression</td>
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<td>9. Reduced risk of litigation</td>
<td>Increase in well being of patients and community</td>
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**CONCLUSION**

Thus, the aforesaid standards are the barometer for measuring the performance and development of almost all the clinical nurses and health departments worldwide. Safe and ethical work environment are imperative for generating excellent outcomes in form of high productivity, superior work quality and optimal care for patient and society if adopted at every level of the organization from top to bottom. Success will further be assured if the employees themselves abide...
by these work standards and consider it their sole responsibility and personal obligation. They should also have the will and understanding to follow and practice these norms.

Thus, it is rightly said “Our environment the world in which we live and work, is a mirror of our attitudes and expectations” - Earl Nightingale.

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