Empirical Investigating on the Role of Supervisor Support, Job Clarity, Employee Training and Performance Appraisal in Addressing Job Satisfaction of Nurses

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Abstract: The study investigated how supervisor support, job clarity, employee training and performance appraisal could enhance job satisfaction amongst nurses. The 200 questionnaires were distributed out of which 167 were received back. A total of 14 were discarded and 153 were taken for final results. The data analysis outlined that supervisor support and job clarity did not show any significant relationship with nurses' job satisfaction. Interestingly, HR factors including employee training and performance appraisal concluded a positive and significant relationship with nurses' job satisfaction.

Key words: Job satisfaction, nurses, job clarity, supervisor support, employee training, performance appraisal

INTRODUCTION

Nurse profession is critical and their job requires to them to be highly focused and committed (Larrabee *et al.*, (2003). According to Lee *et al.* (2011), total number of employed nurses in Malaysia was 79,900 in Malaysia. This immense shortage has resulted in making their job hectic and highly stressed, thus resulting in job dissatisfaction (Alam and Mohammad, 2010). According to Guleryuz *et al.* (2008) satisfied nurses are essential for the healthcare sector in order to provide quality patient care. Currently, the country has been facing a lot of issues pertaining to nurses including job satisfaction, turnover and commitment which according to Atefi *et al.* (2014) has not been empirically examined to an adequate level. According to Yahya (2009), the job dissatisfaction amongst nurses in Malaysia is four times greater than the USA which is an alarming issue requiring urgent empirical attention. Keeping the shortage of studies in Malaysia beforehand, the current study outlined how nurses' job satisfaction could be enhanced through some of the important work and HR components.

Employee job satisfaction is a dream desire of every organization and it is necessary for them to achieve their performance and outcome targets (Judge *et al.*, 2001). Satisfied employees not only perform well but also remain committed with the organization (Mobley, 1977).

Burke *et al.* (1992) have defined supervisor support as the perception of employees regarding the guidance, support, concern and encouragement from their immediate supervisors. The level and extent of the support from

supervisors can dominantly enhance influence individual performance. Supervisors can responsively help employees at the workplace through expert instructions, feedback and information which in turn results in positive employee behaviors and outcomes (Durham *et al.*, 1997). According to Paterson *et al.* (2014) that supervisor support helps to foster responsive work environment whereby, Griffin *et al.* (2001) have highlighted it as an important component for enhancing job satisfaction. Similar results were also empirically reported by Feldman *et al.* (2002). Notably, empirical studies have also outlined views pertaining to the potential biasness of supervisors which may result in different results pertaining to employee outcomes (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Particularly, it has been also outlined that at times in certain professions, the supervisor support is not welcomed and thus may result in affecting individual's personal capabilities (Beehr *et al.*, 2010). Nursing is a critical profession whereby, they have to work in tough emergent situations and hence, it would be credible to outline how supervisor support influences their job satisfaction. Thus, the following hypothesis was tested:

- H₁: perceptions about supervisor support will be positively related with job satisfaction

According to Kim (2009) job clarity is the extent to which employees understand the responsibilities, role and expectations of a given job. Job clarity is crucial for responsive performance and can considerably help

organizations to maximize their outcomes and productivity. Locke and Latham (2002) have underlined that job clarity provides clear outlines as to what is expected thus, resulting in employees' satisfaction with the job. Zeffane and Zarooni (2008) have related it with organizational structuring whereby employee functions and expectations are rooted and mapped. Accordingly, Ann and Bond studied nurses and their job clarity and found that clarity concerns are critical for them to perform in a better manner and job satisfaction. Further, exploration of the literature on job clarity has underlined inconsistent findings for the construct. According to Kroposki *et al.* (1998), there are job clarity is correlated with employee job satisfaction whereby, Smerek and Peterson (2007) outlined that job clarity is not correlated with job satisfaction. The researchers have recommended for further empirical investigation and therefore following hypothesis was tested:

- H_2: perceptions about job clarity will be positively related with job satisfaction

According to Matejko and Landy (1985), employee training is the set of activities that are organized and conducted to enhance knowledge, skills and capabilities of the staff members. Training is a dynamic process, aimed to foster knowledge, skills and abilities for effective job performance (Adams and Bond, 2000). In the views of Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010) there is a strong need for employee training in order to develop skills that are needed for responsive work outcomes. Notably, availability of such opportunities creates a positive perception amongst employees, enabling them perceive positive about the organization and its efforts for the workforce.

Employee training is found to be critical for boosting employees' skills and abilities which enables them to perform as per organizational objectives and result in job satisfaction (Schmidt, 2007). Similar results were also reported by Chin (1998) whereby the empirical results outlined positive correlation of employee training with job satisfaction. Hence, we hypothesized similar for the nurses in this regard.

- H_3: perceptions about employee training will be positively related with job satisfaction

Performance appraisal one of the most critical and crucial elements of HR (Kuvaas, 2006) and has become one of the core components of focus for businesses to assess and develop employee competence. Studies have outlined that employees need to be satisfied and positive about their performance appraisal in order to perform effectively at work. Notably researchers have outlined gaps in literature pertaining to how it could foster employee behaviors and outcomes (Kuvaas, 2006; Blau, 1999). According to O'Reilly and Anderson (1980), performance appraisal has mixed impacts on job satisfaction as it is based on how the extent an employee his/her supervising authority. Keeping this in view, the current study also underlined to assess how supervisor and their support is perceived as well. Poon (2004) empirically outlined that biasness in performance appraisal can negatively affect subordinates' job satisfaction and therefore it is important for organizations to ensure how their employees perceive about them. Hence, the following hypothesis was tested:

- H_4: perceptions about performance appraisal will be positively related with job satisfaction

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sampling and primary data collection: Nurses from the 5 big public hospitals of Kedah State of Malaysia were sampled for the study. Based on the nature and work dynamics of the target respondents (nurses), random sampling technique was deployed whereby, questionnaire were self-administered. Krejcie and Morgan (1970)'s table was used to determine the sample size for 263 employed nurses from the selected hospitals. As per the Table 1, 155 samples were required. Through self-administered approach 200 questionnaires were distributed during the period of November, 2015. A total of 167 were received back out of which 14 were discarded due to incompleteness. Table 1 outlines core demographics of the respondents.

Instrument: The 15 item scale by Warr *et al.* (1979) was used to assess job satisfaction amongst nurses, Cronbach alpha. The 0.88 (Bluen *et al.*, 1990); the scale is renowned with robust application in major studies on the topic. Supervisor support was assessed through

Table 1: Demographics

Demographics/category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	119	77.7
Male	34	22.3
Age		
<30	73	47.7
30-40	35	22.8
41-50	29	18.9
51-60	16	10.4
Length of service		
0-5 years	54	35.2
6-10 years	72	47.0
11-15 years	16	10.4
16 and above	11	7.1

9-item scale by Van Veldhoven, Cronbach alpha 0.8; the scale assessed the different aspects of supervisor support, guidance, relationship and recognition. Job clarity was examined through 4-item scale by Rainey; Cronbach alpha 88 (Baldwin, 1990). Accordingly, 0.8 item scale by Kuvaas (2006) was deployed to assess employee training, Cronbach alpha 0.81. Similarly, performance appraisal was assessed through 7-item scale by Kuvaas (2006). Cronbach alpha 0.86, the scale facilitates in assessing how employees view the performance appraisal and its concerned aspects.

RESULTS

Structural equation modeling was used to test the hypothesized relationships (Wold, 1975). Through deploying Partial least squares approach, SmartPLS 2.0 (Fang and Canter, 2005) was employed for the analysis of primary data. In it, bootstrapping approach was used examine the extent of significance of the relationships via loadings and path coefficients (Hair *et al.*, 2012). PLS approach of path modeling has been popularly known and widely used in the commercial and academic research studies at present (Hair *et al.*, 2011; Marcoulides and Saunders, 2006).

Measurement model: Reliability, convergent and discriminant validity were assessed; Table 2 in this regard highlights the details. All the loading were reasonably higher than the accepted (0.5) threshold (Chin, 1998).

Notably, 1 item from employee training and 3 items from job satisfaction were removed due to the lower loadings. Accordingly, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct has also marked above the suggested (0.5) value (Esposito *et al.*, 2010). These scores outline the assurance of convergent validity.

These scores are basically note to assure the convergent validity and the results hence have assured its achievement.

Accordingly, Table 3 mentions results regarding the discriminant validity. As per the assertions by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Fornell and Cha (1994), square root of AVE of each construct should be greater than the AVE compared in correlations. Table 3 underlines that all the latent constructs of the present study have effectively met the discriminant validity criterion.

Structural model: For the purpose of assessing the structural model, t-values were obtained through applying the bootstrapping procedure with 500 samples. Table 4 highlights the results concerning to hypothesis testing

Table 2: Measurement model

Latent variables	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR	R^2
Employee training			0.602	0.901	
	ET1	0.738			
	ET2	0.809			
	ET3	0.746			
	ET4	0.784			
	ET5	0.735			
	ET6	0.804			
Job clarity			0.564	0.835	
	JC1	0.801			
	JC2	0.824			
	JC3	0.783			
	JC4	0.568			
Job satisfaction			0.512	0.904	0.43
	JS11	0.532			
	JS12	0.686			
	JS13	0.766			
	JS14	0.745			
	JS15	0.664			
	JS2	0.779			
	JS3	0.829			
	JS5	0.784			
	JS6	0.734			
	JS7	0.784			
	JS8	0.761			
Performance appraisal			0.541	0.875	
	PA1	0.720			
	PA2	0.583			
	PA3	0.805			
	PA4	0.807			
	PA5	0.689			
	PA6	0.785			
Supervisor support			0.513	0.904	
	SS1	0.795			
	SS2	0.795			
	SS3	0.608			
	SS4	0.680			
	SS5	0.744			
	SS6	0.732			
	SS7	0.717			
	SS8	0.726			
	SS9	0.621			

Table 3: Discriminant validity

Latent variable correlations	1	2	3	4	5
Discriminant validity					
ET	0.776				
J C	0.273	0.751			
JS	0.645	0.359	0.740		
PA	0.403	0.256	0.394	0.736	
SS	0.408	0.569	0.489	0.395	0.7159

Table 4: Hypothesis testing and results

Hypothesis	Relation	Beta	SE	t-values	Result
H1	SS->JS	0.065	0.050	1.305	Not supported
H2	JC->JS	0.058	0.048	1.226	Not supported
H3	ET->JS	0.610	0.079	7.742	Supported
H4	PA->JS	0.340	0.084	4.041	Supported

and the same is presented in Fig. 1. Bootstrapping procedure was performed with 500 samples to assess the structural model and obtain t-values. Results pertaining to which are presented in Table 4 below and diagrammatically shown in Fig. 1.
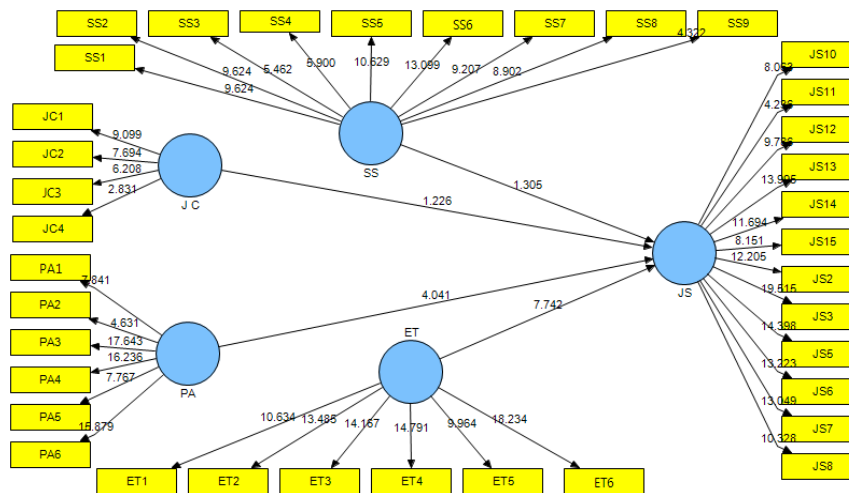
Fig. 1: Structural model

Results in Table 4 show that supervisor support has resulted in an insignificant relationship with job satisfaction (β = 0.065, p<0.01); thus rejecting hypothesis 1. Similarly, job clarity has also turned out insignificant in its relationship with job satisfaction (β = 0.058, p<0.01) which has also rejected hypothesis 2. However, the relationship between employee training (β = 0.610, p<0.01) and performance appraisal (β = 0.340, p<0.01) has resulted to be in positively related with job satisfaction. Job satisfaction in terms of variance has outlined 43% with these relationships.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of some of the HR and general work characteristics on nurses' job satisfaction. It has been evidently found that supervisor support is not related with the satisfaction of nurses. This primarily is in line with the arguments by Beehr *et al.* (2010) whereby the researchers stated that supervisor support is at times not welcomed and less encouraged by the recipient. Furthermore, the result could also be due to the fact that the nurse profession is critical and most of the times they are very well aware of what they require to do and what needs to be done. Hence, any support, particularly in emergent situations could turn out to be as a hurdle for them. This could also be analyzed through the views by Galletta *et al.* (2011) which empirically found that supervisor support is important but it could result differently when it comes to nurses.

Accordingly, the results have concluded no correlation between job clarity and nurses' job satisfaction. This is parallel to the explanations to

Smerek and Peterson (2007) where the author forwarded similar results. This is a surprising result as job clarity is highly essential component in every occupational setting. This may be due to the fact that nurse profession primarily is concerned to specific and confined to specific set of activities due to which they are well aware of what is actually needed to be done which hence results in diminishing the need and significance of job clarity. Employee training on the other hand has proven to be significantly influencing nurses' job satisfaction. This is in line with the findings of Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010), where employee training has significantly influence job satisfaction and other employee outcomes. This means that training has been viewed positive by nurses which are also influencing their job satisfaction levels. Accordingly, performance appraisal has termed to be positively related with job satisfaction of nurses. This asserts that nurses perceived positive about their performance appraisals which also linked them to remain satisfied with their jobs.

CONCLUSION

The study tested and examined the relationship between employee supervisor support, job clarity, employee training and performance appraisal on job satisfaction. The surprising results have outlined that supervisor support and job clarity is of not much value and significance for nurses to influence their job satisfaction. This absence of correlation recommends for further empirical investigation and attention on the topic in order to outline and forward better suggestions. In connection to research, the current studyfindings recommend hospital management in Malaysia as well as

globally to assess the nurse supervisors and how they are way of supervision in order to improve and enhance job satisfaction and other work outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings also recommend for further investigation of other factors that could potentially influence nurse job satisfaction. Additionally, the paper also recommends future researchers to investigate the issue through potential moderators/mediators effectively.

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