A Study of Nurses' Job Satisfaction: The Relationship to Organizational Commitment, Perceived Organizational Support, Transactional Leadership, Transformational Leadership, and Level of Education

Mahmoud AL-Hussami, RN
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Nursing, University of Jordan, Amman 11942 Jordan
E-mail: m.alhussami@jo.edu.jo
Tel: (962-6) 5355000, Ext.: 23138

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of nurses' job satisfaction to organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and level of education. Whereas previous research had explored these constructs separately, this study investigated two distinct paths to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceived organizational support.

The analytical procedure of multiple regression was utilized to determine the predicting strength among job satisfaction and the independent variables: organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, transactional and transformational leadership behavior, and nurses’ level of education. The researcher chose randomly four nursing homes from a total of 53 Medicare/Medicaid certified nursing homes located in Miami-Dade County. The participants were randomly chosen from a list of nursing staff provided by each facility.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient revealed that positive correlation existed between the dependent variable and the following independent variables. Of the five independent variables, a multiple regression analysis indicated that organizational support was most strongly related to job satisfaction. This study provides new support to previous research about the importance of nurses’ commitment and satisfaction for organizational effectiveness and performance.

Keywords: Nurses' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and level of education.

1. Introduction
The shortage of nurses nationwide and locally has been well documented and extended to the long-term care industry (Fletcher, 2001; Mark, 2002; Mitchell, 2003). As a growing segment of the population ages and strains the capacity of these institutions, most are having difficulties in finding and retaining qualified nursing staff (Gohen & Van Nostrand, 1995; Kassner & Bertel, 1998). Employees’ job satisfaction and their commitment have always been important issues for health care administrators. After all, high levels of absenteeism and staff turnover can affect the administrators’
bottom lines, as temps, recruitment, and retaining take their toll (McNeese-Smith, 1996). Satisfied employees tend to be more productive, creative, and committed to their employers, and recent studies have shown a direct correlation between staff satisfaction and patient satisfaction in health care organizations (Al–Aameri, 2000). The traditional model of job satisfaction focuses on all the feelings that an individual has about his/her job (Lu, While, & Barriball, 2005). However, what makes a job satisfying or dissatisfying does not depend only on the nature of the job, but also on the expectations that individuals have of what their job should provide (Spector, 1997).

Looking forward, almost all surveyed nurses see the shortage in the future as a catalyst for increasing stress on nurses, lowering patient care quality, and causing nurses to leave the profession. High nurse turnover and vacancy rates are affecting access to health care (Best & Thurston, 2004). Continuously hiring new employees is costly, and frequent staff turnover affects employees’ morale and impairs patient care (Sofie, Belzar, & Young, 2003). Rapid turnover has been found to have negative physical and emotional effects on nursing home residents, leading to a greater incidence of falls, medication errors, fear and anxiety, and feelings of hopelessness (Best & Thurston, 2004; Sofie, Belza, & Young, 2003).

According to Borda and Norman (1997) and Lu, While, and Barriball (2005), the retention and recruitment of nurses have shown that low wages and poor job satisfaction are the primary reasons why nurses leave their positions. Their dissatisfaction is often attributed to heavy workloads, leadership styles, motivation, inadequate training, and lack of respect (Lu, While, & Barriball 2005). Compared to their counterparts in other health care settings, such as those who work for home health care, staffing agencies, and acute care facilities, nursing home facility employees are often underpaid (Lu, While, & Barriball 2005). Wilson (2005) stated that recruitment and retention efforts need to concentrate on increasing financial incentives to these staff members and creating a desirable work place that will lead to greater job satisfaction because the expertise required of direct caregivers and the heavy workload they are assigned often far exceed the financial compensation they receive.

2. Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study focused on the predictive effects of organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, transformational leadership, transactional leadership behavior, and level of education on the degree of job satisfaction among registered and licensed practical nurses in South Florida’s long-term facilities using standardized instruments validated in previous research. Most studies of health care settings tend to focus on nurses and other medical personnel in acute care settings resulting in a major gap in the literature on issues and concerns of health professionals in long-term care settings. Studies of this nature and magnitude may be instrumental in helping administrators to better meet the needs of long-term care nurses employed in their organizations, which may have implications for services delivery.

3. Previous Research
Despite the large number of studies on nursing job satisfaction (Elloy, 2005; Lee, 2005; Loke, 2001; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Silverthorne, 2004; Yoon & Thye, 2002), the influence of organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, leadership behavior, and level of education have received little attention among health care professionals. Research (Freund, 2005; Loke, 2001; Yoon & Thye, 2002) has shown that job satisfaction is affected by organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, leadership behavior, and level of education. Wagner and Huber (2003) identified two key factors, organizational commitment and job tension, as reasons behind nurses leaving their positions.
A leader’s behavior or leadership style may influence the subordinates’ level of job satisfaction. Studies have been carried out to determine how leadership behaviors can be used to influence employees for better organizational outcome. Many studies concluded that effective leadership is associated with better and more ethical performance (Loke, 2001; McNeese-Smith, 1995). Fletcher (2001), Friedrich (2001), Janney, Horstman, and Bane (2001), Kleinman (2003), Krairiksh and Anthony (2001), and Wynd (2003) found that the opinions of the employees’ immediate supervisor had more impact on the employee than overall company policies or procedures.

A positive relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment has been reported by studies involving qualified professionals. A study was conducted by Wu & Norman (2005) in a nursing department of a medical university in China with a sample (75) of full time final year (clinical practice year) degree level nursing students. The authors found a positive correlation between job satisfaction and organizational commitment (r = .464, P < .01), indicating that student nurses who were more satisfied with the nursing as a job were also more committed to the health care service. Redfern, Hannan, Norman, & Martin (2002) reported a strong relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment (r = .60, P < .001), in a study of the health care staff in the United Kingdom. The aim of their study, which was carried out in a nursing home for older people, was to determine the feasibility of working with health care workers and very frail service users to investigate links between the levels of work satisfaction and organizational commitment. Similarly, Al-Aameri (2000) found a strong positive correlation between job satisfaction and organizational commitment with a sample of registered nurses in Saudi Arabia (r = .59, P < .01). The means and standard deviations showed that nurses were satisfied with their jobs to some extent, and they were slightly committed to their hospitals. The study’s findings showed that age was significantly correlated with satisfaction and commitment, but experience was correlated only with commitment. This finding is consistent with a large survey of qualified nurses in the United States conducted by Ingersoll, Olsan, Drew-Cates, DeVinney, and Davies (2002), which revealed a closely positive correlation between job satisfaction and organizational commitment (r = .63, P < .001).

4. Research Question
What is the multiple correlation between the predictors (organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, transformational leadership behavior, and level of education) and the nurses’ job satisfaction?

5. Research Method
5.1. Design
The study took place at private, not-for-profit, nursing homes in the Southeastern United States. The nursing population was diverse including a large representation of white non-Hispanic, Hispanic, and Black-non-Hispanic nurses. Four nursing homes were included in the study. The average capacities of these facilities were around eight hundred beds with a total of 192 nurses serving in these facilities. The majority of the nurses were licensed practical nurses with at least eighteen months of training in nursing.

The study utilized the analytical procedure of multiple regression to determine whether organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and level of education predict a score on the Nurses’ Job Satisfaction Questionnaire.

The researcher randomly chose four nursing homes from a total of 53 Medicare/Medicaid certified nursing homes located in Miami-Dade County (Stabley, 2005). Miami-Dade County was divided into four geographical quadrants, north, south, west, and east; the researcher randomly chose one nursing home from each quadrant. The participants were randomly chosen by the directors of
nursing from a list of nursing staff provided by each facility. To assure anonymity, the list had only identifying numbers representing nurses in each of the randomly chosen facilities.

A simple random sample was used to select 15 participants from each one of the four nursing homes. Before the sample was drawn, every participant in the sampling frame was assigned a unique identifying number, and then all numbers placed on a list for each nursing home; after that the nursing directors of the randomly chosen facilities selected a total of 60 nurses.

5.2. Data Collection Procedures

The sample groups were invited to participate voluntarily by a recruitment letter attached to the survey questionnaire. The purpose of the study was explained and the nurse was allowed to decline if he/she did not want to participate. The instruments and the survey questions were assembled in packets and were distributed by nursing directors to each individual employee who met the study criteria. The questionnaire was completed in a private room and took about 45 to 60 minutes. Written guidelines were given to the administrators of the questionnaire to assure that each nurse received the same directions and information. After the questionnaire was completed, the nurse deposited the questionnaire in a sealed envelope in the collection box to assure anonymity. The information provided by the participants was completely anonymous and no names or identifying numbers were collected on any of the instruments.

5.3. Data Collection Measures

In addition to demographic information, the Nurses’ Job Satisfaction Questionnaire focused on respondents’ level of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and perceived organizational support. All items of organizational commitment and perceived organizational support were responded to on a 7-point likert scale. The items from job satisfaction were responded to on a 5-point likert scale. Total scores on each measure were obtained by averaging across items.

The dependent variable, job Satisfaction was measured by a 20 item index called Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) short-form, developed by Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist (1967) with an estimated Cronbach’s alpha .91 (Ben-Bakr, Al-Shammari, & Jefri, 1994). The independent variable, organizational commitment, was measured by a 23 item index called Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) with an estimated Cronbach’s alpha .85 (Feather & Rauter, 2004). Perceived Organizational Support was examined via a 16-item questionnaire called Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) scale, developed by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986). The Cronbach’s alpha for these items was found to be reliable at .75 (Yoon & Thye, 2002).

To evaluate the nurses’ perceptions of their administrators’ transformational and transactional leadership behavior, study participants were asked to respond to 18 descriptive elements of transactional and transformational leadership behavior developed by Bass and Avolio (1992). The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 6S (Bass & Avolio, 1992) included 18 items to measure the four factors of transformational leadership and two factors of transactional leadership. It contains three items each for idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, two items of contingent rewards, two items of management by exception active and two items of management by exception passive. Respondents were requested to answer the MLQ by rating how frequently their current immediate supervisor had displayed the behaviors described, using a five-point scale (1 = not at all; 2 = once in a while; 3 = sometimes; 4 = fairly often; 5 = frequently, if not always). The mean rating on the three items comprising a factor was taken as the score of that factor.
6. Research Findings
Pearson product-moment correlations coefficients (r) were conducted to determine whether a relationship existed between the dependent variable job satisfaction and the independent variables, organizational commitment, organizational support, transactional leadership, transformational leadership behavior, and level of education. In addition, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the predictive values of organizational commitment, organizational support, transactional leadership, transformational leadership behavior and level of education on the nurses’ job satisfaction in health care organizations. All analyses were conducted at the .05 significance level.

The research findings in this study of nurses' job satisfaction (n = 55), indicated that there was a strong correlation $r (55) = .93, p < .05$ between the nurses' organizational commitment and their job satisfaction. The correlation .90 indicated that approximately 80 percent of the variance of job satisfaction was accounted for by the predictor, organizational commitment.

Of all the independent variables, organizational support resulted in the highest correlation with job satisfaction. The results which indicated that approximately 85 percent of the variance of job satisfaction was accounted for by the predictor, organizational support. Table 1 reflects that a correlation (N = 55), $r (55) = .93, p < .05$ was obtained between job satisfaction and organizational support.

Table 1 shows the results of a Pearson product-moment correlation which produced a positive correlation of (n = 55), $r (55) = .08, p > .05$ between transactional leadership behavior and job satisfaction. Also table 1 shows a positive correlation of (n = 55), $r (55) = .91, p < .05$, between transformational leadership and job satisfaction. These results suggested that the predictor, transformational leadership accounted for an estimated 80 percent of the variance of job satisfaction.

Consistent with other research findings, this study of nurses' job satisfaction (55), also revealed a positive correlation of $r (55) = .34, p < .05$ between job satisfaction and nurses' level of education. Of the five measures of predictors, organizational commitment, organizational support, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and level of education, organizational support was most strongly related to nurses' job satisfaction. Supporting this finding is the strength of the bivariate correlation between organizational commitment, organizational support, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and level of education, and the dependent variable, job satisfaction, which were .90, .93, .08, .91, .34 (p < .001), respectively.
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Table 1: Person correlation of Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Perceived Organizational Support, Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, and Level of Education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JS</th>
<th>OC</th>
<th>OS</th>
<th>TF</th>
<th>TA</th>
<th>LE</th>
<th>EX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JS Pearson Correlation (2-tailed)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC Pearson Correlation (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.905**</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.920**</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>OS Pearson Correlation (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>.920**</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>.000</td>
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<td>.905**</td>
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<td>TA Pearson Correlation (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>LE Pearson Correlation (2-tailed)</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>.227</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.135</td>
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<td>EX Pearson Correlation (2-tailed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>.907</td>
<td>.647</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.645</td>
<td>.596</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). (JS = Job Satisfaction; OC = Organizational Commitment; OS = Organizational Support; TF = Transformational Leadership; TA = Transactional Leadership; LE = Level of Education; EX = Experience).

The model analysis included the five independent variables of organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and level of education. The linear combination of the five independent variables was significantly related to the dependent variable (job satisfaction), R squared = .92, adjusted R squared = .90, F (4, 50) = 52.763, P = .000 (Table 2). An estimated 92% of variance of the organizational commitment index can be accounted for by the linear combination of predictors, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, and level of education.

Table 2: Multiple linear Regressions for a Single Set of Predictors: Model Summary and ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Summary</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.961*</td>
<td>.923</td>
<td>.905</td>
<td>2.81387</td>
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ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>4175.542</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>417.554</td>
<td>52.763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>348.385</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7.918</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4523.927</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: Level of Education, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Support, Transformational Leadership, and Transactional Leadership.
b. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction.

As indicated in Table 3, the four measures of predictors, organizational commitment, perceived organizational support, transformational leadership, and level of education were most strongly related to job satisfaction. Supporting this conclusion was the strength of the bivariate correlation between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which was .90 and perceived organizational support, which was .93, p ≤ .001. Transactional leadership behavior was found not to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction.
The results from the regression equation for the standardized variables were as follows: 
Predicted job satisfaction score = 18.160 + .198 (level of education) + .360 (organizational commitment) + .395 (organizational support) + .202 (transformational leadership) + .014 (transactional leadership) (shown in Table 3).

Table 3: Multiple Linear Regressions for a Single Set of Predictors: Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficient</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficient</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>18.160</td>
<td>6.645</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
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<td>.464</td>
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<tr>
<td>Org. Commitment</td>
<td>.360</td>
<td>.128</td>
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<td>Organizational Support</td>
<td>.395</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transactional Leadership</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

This study provides new support to previous research about the importance of nurses’ commitment and satisfaction for organizational effectiveness and performance. It also provides further evidence that the more committed they are to their organizations, the more they will be productive and effective in their organizations. This gives a clear message to all nursing home administrators and nursing directors to pay considerable attention to the issues of organizational commitment and job satisfaction for nurses and other employees in their institutions.

7. Summary and Concluding Remarks

The findings indicated that there was a strong correlation $r (55) = .90, p < .05$ between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment were found to be significantly related in all 20 of the correlation items. The results suggested that the nurses' strongest attitudes towards organizational commitment and job satisfaction were their feelings of strong loyalty to their organization and satisfaction with the job itself. Also nurses' job satisfaction and perceived organizational support were determined to be significantly related. A correlation of (N=55), $R (55) = .93, P < .05$ was obtained between job satisfaction and organizational support.

Although there remains a plethora of research on job satisfaction, there remains a scarcity of studies that have focused on job satisfaction and classified employees in the education arena. The results in this study revealed that a positive correlation existed between the dependent variable, job satisfaction and the independent variables: organizational commitment, organizational support, level of education, and transformational leadership. The multiple regression performed in this study indicated that 92% of the variance in job satisfaction was accounted for by the linear combinations of organizational support, organizational commitment, and level of education, transactional and transformational leadership. Organizational support was determined to be the strongest predictor of the five variables and transactional leadership was the weakest predictor of job satisfaction.

One of the major implications that a study of this nature raises is the manner in which administrators monitor the work climate, observe and identify factors that may increase or decrease job satisfaction and work commitment of classified employees. Even though the findings were positive toward job satisfaction, continued consideration should be given to the fact that nurses and other health care workers remain committed. The cost associated with leaving is high. Nurses have identified behaviors and conditions that promote job satisfaction, organizational support, and organizational commitment. They are more likely to be more committed to the organization when they are provided a proportionate amount of job autonomy and equitable workloads. The perception that the organization also focus on competitive salaries may also contribute to employee commitment.
Another implication is that nurse managers should stay abreast of the current trends and factors that contribute to job satisfaction. Issues related to organizational commitment and organizational support, such as unfair work conditions, salary inequities, lack of employee support should be addressed promptly and justly.

Recommendation for future research is to replicate this study or conduct a similar one on nurses in acute settings. The purpose of such a study would be to determine how job satisfaction is viewed by nurses in other settings compared to the nurses in this study. Another recommendation would be to conduct further studies with nurses regarding their commitment to the organization, without including their construct of organizational support. Requesting employees to address questions regarding their employers as opposed to themselves, or in addition to themselves, may produce totally different outcomes.
References
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