

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

According to the motivational theories of Maslow (1954) and Herzberg (1971) it is important that the extrinsic aspects which represent lower level needs according to Maslow, such as job security, salary, conditions of service and social aspects need to be in place for people to be satisfied and to stay in their jobs. Maslow (1954) claims that higher needs (intrinsic factors) like innovation, creativity, and self actualization do not emerge as motivators until lower level needs are satisfied (Gillies, 2002: 354).

This study indicated that the important extrinsic aspects (lower needs) were not in place. Thus although the intrinsic factors are in place and nurses are satisfied, nurses will not stay in their position at this hospital because of their high level of dissatisfaction with the important issues of job satisfaction. According to Herzberg (1971) although satisfying extrinsic factors (hygiene or maintenance factors) will not provide satisfaction, their absence causes job dissatisfaction, for an example, relationship in the workplace with supervisors and co-workers, the ability of the supervisor, the working conditions, policies, and salary and job security.

5.2 Satisfaction of all nurses, professional and sub-professional nurses

Nurses demonstrated a **high dissatisfaction** with *extrinsic factors* (62 %) such as salary, working condition, policies, compliments and/or acknowledgement they receive from their

workplace (See Figure 4.1 in page 36), and they also demonstrated dissatisfaction with some intrinsic factors such as the opportunity for promotion and advancement, and the freedom to use their own judgement. This is congruent with studies by Strachota, Normandin, O'Brien, Clary, and Krukow (2003: 115) about reasons registered nurses leave or change their employment status. Findings by Strachota et al. (2003: 115) indicated that nurses were unhappy with salaries (55%), staffing levels, and management support. Hoffman and Scott (2003: 340) examined role stress and career satisfaction among registered nurses by work shift patterns, where nurses identified *pay, autonomy, and professional status* as the sources of career satisfaction. In agreement with this study, Uys, Minnaar, Reid, and Naidoo. (2004: 52), who studied the perception of nurses in the district health system in Kwa-Zulu Natal regarding supervision, self-esteem and job satisfaction, also indicated that nurses were dissatisfied with *pay, prospects, and workload*.

The striking finding about this study was the fact that despite nurses being dissatisfied with some of the *intrinsic and extrinsic* factors they did demonstrate satisfaction with the way their co-workers get along with one another (*extrinsic factor*), the way they care for other people, and the opportunity to delegate to other people (*intrinsic factor*) which indicated that at least communication and caring existed among nurses. The study by Strachota et al. (2003; 114) about reasons registered nurses leave or change their employment status, also found that 62% of nurses liked their co-workers.

5.3 Comparison of professional and sub-professional nurses' satisfaction

The satisfaction of the professional and the sub-professional nurses were relatively similar in most items with the exception of three items (See Table 4.5 in page 39)

- **The opportunity to delegate to other people** with which professional nurses demonstrated a high level of satisfaction compared with the sub-professional nurses, which can be linked to professional training since the sub-professional nurses don't have the competency to delegate. The study by Yaktin, Azoury, and Doumit (2003: 389) on personal characteristics and job satisfaction among nurses in Lebanon also indicated that nurses in higher positions get a strong feeling of satisfaction from supervising, evaluating and giving professional support to staff nurses.
- **The opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills:** professional nurses were significantly more satisfied than the sub-professionals, probably due to the fact that sub-professionals only undergo training for a maximum period of two years and professionals for a minimum period of three years with a maximum of four years and opportunity for post graduate diplomas and degrees, which limits the knowledge of the sub-professional nurses. Yaktin et al. (2003: 389) agree that nurses in higher positions (professional nurses) are generally well established in their (positions) professional careers and have more self-confidence in their nursing abilities.
- **The freedom to use their own judgement in the workplace:** the professional nurses' scope of practice allows them to direct nursing in the unit while sub-professional nurses have to execute nursing plans. The sub-professional nurses have to provide elementary and basic nursing and the professional nurse has to ensure that quality nursing is provided in the nursing unit (Draft Charter of Nursing Practice, 2005: 47).

It was however surprising to note that professional nurses were more satisfied than the sub-professional nurses with the way that their job is guaranteed since according to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act. No 75 of 1997 all employees' work is guaranteed with no

differentiation at all. The difference could perhaps be linked to the fact that sub-professional nurses are likely to perform outside their scope of practice which could expose them to professional misconduct based on their acts and omissions.

5.4 Intention to stay

Only 22.6% of professional nurses indicated the **intention to leave** the services as opposed to 18.2% of sub-professional nurses. Only a third of professional nurses indicated the **intention to stay** (32.23%) as opposed to (43.6%) of sub-professional nurses, as reflected in the study by Larrabee et al. (2003: 277) on predicting registered nurse job satisfaction and intention to leave. This study found that registered nurses are more likely than others to indicate moving away as a reason to leave. In a study by Akinici and Krolikowski (2005: 230), on nurses' staffing levels and quality of care in North-eastern Pennsylvania, the findings were that nurses were moving to other better paying opportunities outside nursing homes, and away from a patient's bedside. A disturbing finding in the present study is that the majority of nurses indicated that they were uncertain about their intention to stay (42%), with professional nurses accounting for 45.1% (n=28) and sub-professional nurses 38.2% (n=21). Various reasons were provided for the intention to stay:

Intrinsic factors: Firstly, nurses provided reasons such as a love of the hospital, caring provided by themselves to patients and by management to nurses, the way they relate to their co-workers and some personal reasons such as being nearer the hospital and/or nearing retirement which is supported by the study by Yaktin et al. (2003: 387) who found that nurses are satisfied with the *professional support they receive, and their workload.*

Secondly, nurses who *intended to leave* the service in the next 12 months provided mostly **extrinsic factors**, which are lack of supervisory support, pay, promotion, working conditions, and workload. These views are supported by a study by Strachota et al. (2003: 115) on the reasons registered nurses leave or change employment status, which found that nurses leave their services because they are unhappy with salary (55%), staffing levels, and management support. The study by Uys et al. (2004: 52) on “ The perception of nurses in a district health system in Kwa-Zulu Natal regarding their supervision, self-esteem, and job satisfaction” where nurses were dissatisfied with *pay and prospects, and workload*’ which also concurs with Adam’s (1966) equity theory of motivation (Gillies, 2002: 356) that employees continuously compare their work inputs (skills, effort, and time) and outcomes (status, pay, and privileges) with those of other employees. Once the rewards are disproportionate to other employees that provide the same input the employee perceives inequity, and feelings of inequity motivate an employee to resolve the inequity by reducing the input, attempting to increase the outcomes, selecting a different comparison work, or to resign (Gillies, 2002: 356). In contrast with this study, a study by Akinci and Krolkowski (2005: 230) on nurse executives found that raising wages and giving signing-on bonuses is not enough to resolve the present and future staffing levels.

5.5 Retention strategies

The majority of the respondents 88% (n= 103) felt that there was something that could be changed or improved in their workplace. It was inspiring that 92% (n= 57) of professional nurses indicated that there was something that could be changed in their workplace. It was

also noted that 83% (n= 46) of sub-professionals indicated that there was something that could be changed in their workplace.

It is clear that the majority of the respondents felt that change or improvement can be implemented in their workplace/job 88% (n= 103), while a few were uncertain (9% (n= 10) and a minority felt that there was no improvement or change that could be effected (3% (n= 4).

5.5.1 Changes that nurses felt could be implemented/suggestions (Item 28)

The prospective changes that nurses felt could be made were grouped according to intrinsic and extrinsic factors and were as follows:

- **Intrinsic:** Respondents proposed that training and development of staff should be broadened to include all categories and be implemented objectively and consistent, that is, there should be no favouritism. Communication and participation between management and the nurses should be improved, and junior nurses should be mentored, such as being given an opportunity to practise managing skills under the supervision of the unit manager rather than only when s/he is on leave which is in agreement with the findings of an international study done by the employment services company, Manpower, covering 15 countries across Europe, Asia, and Africa (Vaida, 2005), and which states that 62% of employees want educational courses and development.
- **Extrinsic:** Respondents proposed that more nurses should be recruited to reduce the current short staffing that leads to them being overworked. In order to reduce nurses' workload non-nursing tasks should be reduced, for example mentoring doctors, acting as

porters, and so on. It was also suggested that scope of practice, service standards and policies should be made available and be displayed prominently in the wards. Most importantly, salaries need to be restructured. These findings concur with the Work Trends survey by Manpower (Vaida, 2005) that the three most important things an employer can offer South Africans are a competitive salary package, paid courses, and a pension package.

5.6 Conclusions

On the whole the satisfaction of nurses was very low and this is an alarming fact for the health services. Nurses were overall **very dissatisfied** with all aspects of their work (extrinsic factors). On intrinsic aspects of their work professional and sub-professional nurses indicated that they were dissatisfied with the fact that they were doing things against their conscience. One should pose the question why is this a matter for dissatisfaction, or why at all are nurses doing things that go against their conscience? Sub-professional nurses were also dissatisfied with the aspect of using their knowledge and skills. The **intrinsic aspects** of job **satisfaction** with which nurses expressed satisfaction were: the opportunity to work independently, the opportunity to practise different things from time to time, the way in which they are taking care of other people, and the opportunity to delegate.

Nurses demonstrated dissatisfaction with **extrinsic aspects** of job satisfaction which were: the lack of compliments and/or acknowledgement they get for doing their job, the way the policies are implemented, their salary compared to the work that they perform, the opportunity for promotion and advancement, and the working conditions, and nurses only expressed **satisfaction** with one extrinsic factor, namely, the way that their co-workers get along with one another.

Only a third of nurses in this hospital demonstrated the intention to stay in the service of this hospital in the next 12 months. An overwhelming number of nurses felt that there were things that could be changed in the hospital and the Department of Health. The areas that could be changed included the following: training and development, communication structures, availability of policies, and standards in the workplace, salary restructuring, and consistent application of a performance management and development system.

5.7 Recommendations

Health services must be made aware of the high level of dissatisfaction of nurses regarding the extrinsic aspects of their jobs. The hospital struggles to keep nurses in their posts, and could gain by taking note of the results of this study. The hospital and nursing management need to rethink their supervision methods and relationships, and also how the Department of Health's policies are implemented. There must be a partnership between community representatives, nursing personnel, nursing leaders, and policymakers. If this hospital intends to retain nurses, very serious attention needs to be given to the basic needs of nurses such as salary and workload, working conditions, which are at times totally unacceptable, and lastly, the recognition of nurses for their contribution.

5.7.1 Recommendation regarding further research:

A broader replication study using a larger sample and population, and various health settings needs to be done in order to establish if the same extrinsic and intrinsic factors are affecting nurses elsewhere. Further research could also include a qualitative study on the reasons nurses felt that they were doing things against their conscience (Item 10). The reason nurses

are so dissatisfied with the freedom to use their own judgement (Item 18) also needs to be researched further, and a qualitative focus group could shed more light on this aspect.

An in-depth study on why nurses feel that they do not get a sense of accomplishment from their work needs to be done in order to establish what can be done to give them satisfaction again. Further research on why nurses felt that there is no opportunity for promotion and advancement in their current jobs (Item 17) also needs to be conducted.

5.7.2 Nursing management:

- **General aspects of management:**

Institutional personnel development units need to draft short courses for unit managers that deal with unit management issues. All area managers need to attend hospital management programmes that are provided by recognised academic institutions. In-service programmes need to be drawn up for the whole year and nurses' attendance thereof should be monitored. The nursing personnel manager should draft a consistent and periodic job rotation system of nurses across different disciplines. It would also be beneficial to develop flexible work schedules that may attract younger nurses, such as introducing allocation and work shifts, including moonlighting. Other suggestions might include an internal reward system for nurses, for example, nurse of the month and/or the year.

- **Department of Health:**

The Department of Health needs to recruit nurses by increasing incentives that could draw them from their international positions, such as restructuring salaries, providing attractive

and comparable housing and medical allowances, recognising qualifications, and so on. It is however acknowledged that the above cannot be achieved without the government approving a comparable budget for the Department of Health. The Department of Health needs to implement (capability) competency based promotion opportunities as opposed to those based on experience and qualifications. The Department of Health should also make money available for upgrading nursing supervisors, in terms of management and supervisory skills.

The Department of Health needs to invest in the future and mentoring of young nurses, because when nurses are exposed to a learning environment and development they are stimulated to aspire to higher learning which in turn benefit the practice.

5.7.3 Nursing education:

To enhance the retention strategies for nurses in this hospital, practical short courses should be developed to upgrade skills and educate managers on changing paradigms in nursing: change management, soft skills of managing, staff development, decision-making, total quality management, conflict management, principles of staffing, budgeting, communication, and so on.

Academic institutions need to draft curricula for undergraduates that prepare neophyte nurses for the role of managing the unit, including aspects such as ethical decision-making, supervision of staff, delegation skills, and assertiveness in the unit, participative management, and policy implementation.

5.7.4 Nursing practice:

Patient satisfaction levels need to be monitored and compared to the nurses' since nurses' satisfaction bears a positive relationship to patients' satisfaction. This means finding ways that nursing personnel can meet the emotional and social needs of patient as well as the physical aspects of care.

5.8 Conclusions: From this study it is clear that nurses are **highly dissatisfied** with the *extrinsic* factors of their job. They also demonstrated a low satisfaction with the intrinsic factors. Job satisfaction cannot be achieved until the lower needs of employees (extrinsic factors) are in place, such as working conditions, implementation of policies, equitable salary, and appreciation in the workplace, supervision and supervisor's competency. Once the extrinsic factors are in place, then the employer can focus on heightening the intrinsic factors, such as the opportunity to work independently, to practise different things from time to time, to delegate to others, to apply their knowledge and skills, promotion and advancement, freedom to use their own judgement, to be innovative and creative, and the feeling of accomplishment they get from their work. There is a need to explore further why nurses feel that they are doing things that go against their conscience.