

The Influence of Organizational Respect on Job Satisfaction in the Human Services: Findings from a New York State Multi-Site Job Satisfaction Cross-Sectional Survey – A Short Commentary

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INTRODUCTION

This article is a summary discussing the author's conceptualized and implemented Master's research project for: Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service, May 2009: "The influence of organizational respect on job satisfaction in the human services". The findings from a New York State-based multi-site job satisfaction cross-sectional survey design, drawing from a larger study, which utilized a longitudinal, quasi-experimental design. This research explored the relationship between respect and job satisfaction from a sample of 1,216 of nursing home staff. The following hypothesis has guided this study: respect on the job will be positively related to job satisfaction, when tenure (length of time employed by current employer obtained by Human Resources), site (location of facility), affect (Employee's personality), and subgroups (professional and paraprofessionals) of nursing home staff, are controlled for.

The purpose of publishing this article is to contribute to the efforts made to support public organizations in being less bureaucratic and more result-oriented, accountable, and customer driven (Park, 2017). A major problem in quality of care is nursing home staff turnover, which has been an acute problem in the nursing home industry for decades (Donoghue & Castle, 2006). Most research on nursing staff turnover links turnover to individual explanations such as job satisfaction (Curtis, 2007). Appropriate staffing allows nurses to provide the necessary quality of care, as well as to improve nursing job satisfaction. Nurses continue to identify that improving their work environment will improve job satisfaction, which is the most important solution to resolving the nursing shortage (Krueger, 2002). Respect is perceived in terms of (1) inclusion within a group captured in terms of perceived liking (Branscombe et al., 2002); (2) fair treatment (e.g. Huo & Molina, 2006); (3) appraisal of qualities (Prestwich & Lalljee, 2009).

Respect manifested in nursing homes, a reliable influencing variable for improving employee job satisfaction, would begin with organizational leadership shifting their management approach from a predominately authoritarian one, to more of a partnership

model. Such a respectful management style would encompass a social dynamic that is supportive and inclusive of their employees, valuing how such a partnership with nursing staff influences job satisfaction, and ultimately, patient satisfaction. There are necessary steps to take if such a management approach is not already in existence. As a starting point, management would need to effect a cultural transformation that is nurturing to a collaborative environment. Without respect for collaboration, a hierarchy will most likely be the dominating management approach (Potter, 2017).

An organization that has genuine respect for all employees, thereby remaining competitive, would reveal the following critical components: 1) shared core values between management and all employees, 2) respect as an organizational strength, including employee retention, 3) respect in the workplace is a significant work/life issue, 4) prioritizing treating all staff equitably, with dignity and politeness, 5) recognizing the whole person, consistently, thereby fully engaging them. (Prince, 2000).

This study was designed and implemented by the research staff of a large, long-term health care facility for the elderly, Jewish Home and Hospital Lifecare System (JHH). JHH is comprised of three campuses: Manhattan, the Bronx and Westchester. These campuses include forty-seven units, serving approximately 1600 elderly nursing home residents. The participants were all nursing home staff, from 13 units across the three sites of the organization. All staff, from every level of the organization, that was on the study units for two or more months, was asked to voluntarily fill out questionnaires. The author did not perform any analyses comparing the different study sites.

The findings were from the quantitative component of a self-administered questionnaire (N = 216). The data were drawn from a larger study which utilized a longitudinal, quasi-experimental design. Job satisfaction was measured with the Alliance Job Satisfaction Scale, a scale that was developed internally by the JHH research team, for their internal Culture Change Study. This job satisfaction scale consisted of 10 items that reflected what it means to be satisfied professionally in this organization. Examples of questions include: "Would staff recommend services of JHH to a friend, or family member? Does the opinion of

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staff count? Does staff feel comfortable asking the help of their supervisor? Demonstration of respect was measured with the JHH Organizational Values Scale. This scale was developed internally by the JHH research team, for their internal Culture Change Study, and designed to reflect the staff value opinion of staff respect. This scale included 5 items that reflected what it meant to be respected in this environment.

The results indicated that four variables were found to be statistically associated with job satisfaction (univariate analyses). Logistic regression analyses identified respect as a significant predictor of job satisfaction, and this is presented for each of the thirteen units across the three sites of the organizations combined. The study participants were all nursing home staff, from 13 units across the three sites of the organization. All staff that was on the study units for two or more months was asked to voluntarily fill out questionnaires. Emergent themes included: 1) an overall model of three predictors (gender, site, and affect) that significantly predicted job satisfaction. 2) Respect accounted for 27.6% of variance in job satisfaction.

There are a few notable attributes of this study. First, to the author's knowledge, at the time of the data collection, it is one of the largest employee job satisfaction investigations of human services in the New York metro area, with 1,216 completed interviews. Second, it is significant that information collected was from staff at three separate sites, located in three different boroughs (Manhattan, the Bronx, and Westchester), providing feedback from multicultural and diverse units. Third, in place of using an "off-the-shelf" employee job satisfaction instrument, the research staff at JHH developed the JHH Organizational Values Scale for the Culture Change Study. This scale suited their needs, and collected all the information desired by key stakeholders. Finally, the findings appear to be consistent with the published literature, on job satisfaction and respect. The discoveries were deemed reliable by management and staff at each of the sites. The findings indicate that respect in the workplace, which is empowering, is a predictor of job satisfaction, in nursing home employees. More specifically, based on the literature on burnout and emotional dissonance, the author suggests that emotional job demands which contribute to burnout (Bakker & Heuven, 2006), can be buffered with respect from management, colleagues and staff (Holmberg et al., 2016).

Given the prevalence of job dissatisfaction and turn-over among nursing home staff, in addition to facility-specific organizational dimensions, such as nursing and hospital management, all related to perceptions of workload and with burnout and job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and nurse-reported quality of care (Bogaert et al., 2013), the experience of respect may just be the linchpin of how the staff experiences their value to their employer, co-workers, and ultimately the clients they are entrusted to care for. Therefore, it is safe to say that including respect in future research on job satisfaction, will provide a reliable baseline measure, within

a quality improvement agenda for interested organizations. And finally, understanding how respect is perceived, may be most beneficial in developing efficacious interventions to reduce job dissatisfaction in nursing home employees.

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