

Investigation of the attitudes of nurses and the quality of their working lives

Abstract

There has been a prevalence of stress, burnout, and depression among nurses. These symptoms appear to be related to the quality of the nurses' working conditions and lives. This study attempts to analyze these working conditions by investigating several job attitudes such as job satisfaction, job involvement, quality of supervision, and organizational commitment. We posit that long working hours, heavy workloads, role conflict, and role ambiguity are likely to increase the extent to which nurses experience symptoms of stress, burnout, and depression. We also posit that although job involvement may reflect a constructive experience, it may also contribute to higher levels of stress, burnout, and depression when it is combined with long working hours and very limited absence from work. In addition, we expect that low job satisfaction and low organizational commitment when combined with limited opportunities for career growth can exacerbate the extent of stress, burnout, and depression. Moreover, we expect that when nurses deal with heavy workloads and high job demands without adequate supervisory support, they will be much more likely to experience symptoms of stress, burnout and depression, and to develop negative job attitudes, which will translate in lower job satisfaction, lower organizational commitment, and higher intention to quit the job.

This is a cross-sectional survey research aimed at gathering data on the working conditions, occupational mental health, job attitudes, and quality of supervision. It attempts to compare Hispanic nurses in hospitals in America against other nurses. The reason for such comparison is grounded in the fact that Hispanic nurses are high in collectivism and power distance. Furthermore, they do have to integrate in a cultural environment where individualism and low power distance are valued. Thus, we expect that the way they respond to their working conditions may differ from others in general. A questionnaire including pre-validated measures of job satisfaction, job design, role stressors, stress, burnout, depression, job involvement, organizational commitment, supervisory support, social support, absence, and potential for promotions will be administered to participants.

We developed a specific conceptual model to analyze how nurses experience stress, burnout and depression. The model proposes that several antecedents predict occupational mental health. The predictors include role stressors (role overload, role conflict and role ambiguity), job demands, job constraints, workloads, shift work and number of hours worked. These predictors are directly related to occupational mental health. The relationship between each predictor and each mental health variable is likely to be moderated by other individual and organizational factors. The individual factors include personality dimensions. The job factors include job control. Organizational factors include supervisory support.

The model proposes that some behavioral moderators can also alter the relationship among these variables. These include presenteeism, or the act of showing up to work although ill, and absenteeism, or the act of not showing up to work while scheduled to be at work.

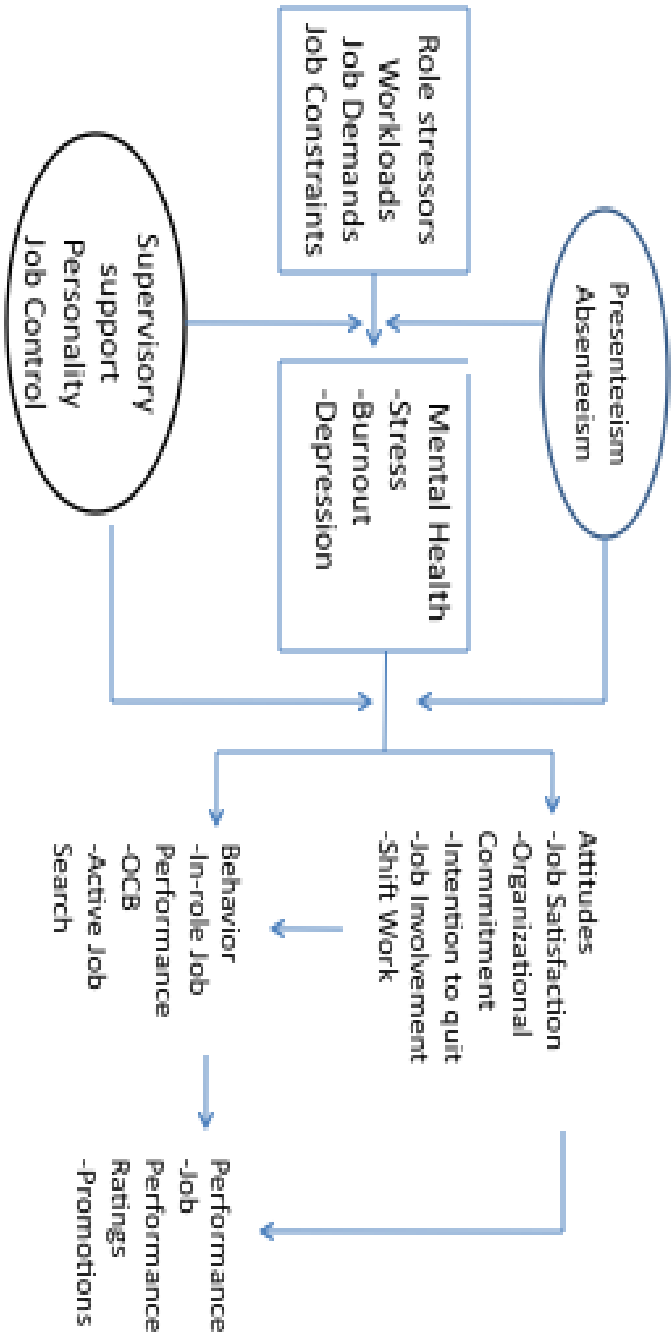


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Occupational Mental Health

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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The major goal of this research project is to attain knowledge on the working conditions of nurses and to determine how these conditions contribute to stress, burnout, and depression.

The following objectives are pursued:

- a) Assess the level of stress, burnout, and depression among nurses by collecting filled questionnaires and then analyzing the data.
- b) Assess the working conditions based on the following antecedents: role overload, role conflict, role ambiguity, hours worked, and shift work. Assess the working conditions based on the following moderators: supervisory support, job control, personal resources, safety climate, presenteeism, potential for career progression, and absences.
- c) Develop insights on mental health outcomes by analyzing stress, burnout, and depression and related attitudinal outcomes such as job satisfaction, job commitment, job involvement, and in-role job performance, including organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and in-role job performance.
- d) Develop insights on how organizational policies could affect the level of stress to provide guidelines for stress management programs.

METHODS

Description of subjects

The study is going to be conducted in a medium size general hospital. We include both genders. There will be no discrimination based on age, ethnic origin, race and educational background to ensure that we have an adequate representative sample. However, a main goal of this study is to obtain insight on Hispanic nurses. The questionnaire will be available in both English and Spanish languages. The subjects have nursing responsibilities and/or special responsibilities that require nursing knowledge. The subjects will be offered to fill in the questionnaire form after preliminary introduction about the purpose of this study and after signing an informed consent form, which is kept separate from the questionnaire to be completed. The participation will be completely voluntary. Subjects are normally in good mental and physical health. The measures of mental health included in this study are used only with normal subjects. There will be no participation of minors and mentally incompetent people, since such kind of employees could not be employed in nursing positions. There will be no participation of legally restricted groups. Screening of employees is performed before hiring.

The principal investigator and co-investigator are completely independent from the administrator of the hospital, and have never worked there as employees or volunteers.

Procedures for Data Collection

The questionnaire form will be distributed to all registered nurses listed on the hospital roster.

a) Major hypotheses:

- Hyp. 1: There is a direct relationship between working conditions such as role stressors, workloads, job demands, and job constraints and the accumulation of stress, burnout, and work-related depression as well as job attitudes.
- Hyp. 2: Stress, burnout, and work-related depression are moderated by quality of supervision, job control, and personality.
- Hyp. 3: Job involvement, presenteeism, absenteeism, and working hours moderate stress, burnout, and depression.
- Hyp. 4: Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is influenced by stress, burnout, and depression.
- Hyp. 5: In-role job performance, opportunity for promotion, and performance ratings are influenced by stress, burnout, and depression.
- Hyp. 6: Job attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement and behaviors such as in-role job performance and OCB affect performance such as job performance ratings and opportunity for promotion.

- b) There are no direct and immediate specific benefits to subjects who participate in this survey. There may be several possible benefits of this study.
- Obtaining a clearer picture of the working conditions among nurses
 - Investigate reasons and consequences of stress, burnout, and depression among nurses.
 - To compare the working conditions of Hispanic nurses and other nurses in terms of how they experience stress, burnout, and depression as well as in related attitudes and behaviors. Hypotheses will be tested in both groups to determine whether there are major differences. These results will be compared to data obtained from a previous study in Argentina.
 - Develop timely and significant knowledge in organizational behavior
 - Determine how burnout and its consequences could be prevented in that particular work setting (e.g., policies for absence, career progression, quality of supervision)
 - Present the conceptual framework and survey development at the undergraduate research day.
 - Communicate findings to other researchers and practitioners by publishing in respected journals and presenting at various conferences.
- c) There will be neither inclusion nor exclusion criteria for participants. All nurses will be given an opportunity to participate in the research.

d) The questionnaire will be given to an official representative working at the selected hospital. He/She is responsible for signing the affiliation letter. He/she will explain the purpose of this study to nurses during their usual meetings and distribute the questionnaires and consent forms to all managers. They will be instructed to return the completed questionnaire in a sealed envelope directly to the official representative who will be responsible for collecting the filled questionnaire and mailing them back to the principal investigator in their sealed envelopes. He/She will also mail the completed affiliation letter and participant consent forms in a separate mailing envelope. A sample affiliation letter and consent form is included in appendix.

e) Research procedures and methodologies

- The survey method is used to collect direct data from the research participants
- Copies of the instrument in English and its translated version in Spanish are included in the appendix.
- There are several measures in the questionnaire
 - i. Role stressors and stress
 - ii. Burnout: Maslach Burnout Inventory
 - iii. Depression: Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Survey (CES-D) (Radloff, 1977)
 - iv. Supervisory support
 - v. Job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment

- vi. Absence: duration and frequency measured with 2 items and reasons for absence
 - vii. Presenteeism: Deviation and frequency with two items measuring presence at work while ill.
 - viii. OCB (Organizational Citizenship Behavior)
 - ix. Job Performance
 - x. Promotions: items measuring previous and anticipated promotions
 - xi. Turnover intention
 - xii. Demographics
 - xiii. Working hours, shift, job status
 - All measures have been used in previous research and show strong validity and reliability
 - All data will be stored in SPSS for data analysis
 - The database will be kept at least for five years after the date of the first publication coming out of this research
 - The completed questionnaires will be kept in a file for five years after data collection. The file will be stored in a file cabinet in the office of the principal investigator.
- f) Personnel interacting with the subjects: Only the official representative will communicate with the research participants. Participants will complete the questionnaires on their own and do not need any direct assistance.
- g) Research will be performed at the selected hospital.

- h) The duration of the project will be determined by the time required to distribute and fill in the questionnaire. It will take approximately 30 minutes to fill it in after the preliminary introduction of the purpose of the study.
- i) Consent forms and questionnaires are handled separately so that there cannot be any identification of the subjects participating in the research. Questionnaires are distributed via internal mail whereas consent forms are distributed in hands during the meetings. Consent forms are returned separately not with the completed questionnaires. Questionnaires are independently returned to the official representative via internal mail in a sealed envelope.
- j) The project will not involve any invasive procedures.
- k) There is no Internet involved in any way. All questionnaires are paper and pencil only.
- l) There is no risk involved. Surveys used can be easily accessed via different websites and textbooks.

Safeguarding the Identity of Participants

- a) The findings of the research will not be available to any agencies, organizations, nor to the selected hospital. Data will not be published or presented in the raw format. The research instrument will be appropriately described in any publication. Only aggregated data will be used for publication and presentation purposes.

- b) Responses to the questionnaire will be anonymous, and are not directly handled by anyone working at the selected hospital. All of the completed questionnaires will be placed in a separate sealed envelope and given to the official representative who will directly mail them to the principal investigator at UW-W. Data will be used strictly for research purpose. Statistical analyses will be conducted to test the main hypothesis. Only the principal investigator and co-investigator will have direct access to the raw data. Because all responses are anonymous, the investigators cannot trace back any information to the individual participants. The name of the hospital will not be mentioned in publications or presentations and the investigators will not provide identifying information about the institution in any published documentation.

Risk

- a. We do not foresee any physical, psychological, social, legal, economic, or any other risks. The risks to participants are not any different from the normal risks encountered in everyday life.
- b. We do not plan to conduct “non-beneficial research on a person, life, or surroundings”

Deception

There is no deception involved in our research and participants are fully informed before they decide to complete the questionnaire.

Informed consent

A sample consent form is included in appendix. Respondents will be given the consent form during meetings where they will be able to ask questions regarding the project.

**INFORMED CONSENT
THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN WHITEWATER**

Project Title: Investigation of the attitudes of nurses and the quality of their working lives

Principal Investigator: Louise Tourigny E-mail: tourignl@uww.edu

Duration: Spring 2011-Fall 2011 (Survey should take 30-40 minutes to complete)

Student co-investigator: Bradley Behrend, Undergraduate E-mail: BehrendB13@uww.edu

Address and Phone: University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

800 West Main Street, Whitewater, WI 53190-1790 USA

Phone: (262) 472-5735

Purpose of the Project: to study stress, burnout, and depression among Hispanic nurses working at the selected hospital.

Procedures: if you agree to participate, you will be asked a series of questions about your psychological and emotional well-being and job attitudes in the workplace. This research is aimed at discovering how the working conditions affecting stress, burnout, and depression can be modified. You may ask any questions you have about the research procedure and these questions will be answered. This study involves a minimal risk; that is, no risks to you beyond encountered in the normal course of everyday life.

Confidentiality: All of your responses to the questionnaires will be confidential. **Your name will not appear anywhere on the questionnaire.** No one outside of the research team will have access to the responses.

Questions regarding this project can be addressed to Denise Ehlen, Director, IRB, Research and Sponsor Programs, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, 800 W. Main St., 2023 Roseman, Whitewater, WI 53190 USA. Telephone: (262) 472-5212 Fax: (262) 472-4214 E-mail: ehlend@uww.edu

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

Participation in this project is completely, voluntary, and refusal to participate or withdraw from participation at any time during the project will involve no penalty or loss of benefit to which the subject is otherwise entitled. The principal investigator also can terminate participation of the subject in the research project entirely without regard to the subject's consent. In the event of questions or difficulties of any kind during or following participation, the subject may contact the Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator as indicated above.

CONSENT

I have read the above information and my questions and concerns have been responded to satisfactorily by project staff. I believe I understand the purpose, benefits, and risks, if any, of the study, and give my informed and free consent to be participant

I agree with the conditions presented in the consent form

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Check here if you want a copy of the survey in Spanish: _____

**UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-WHTEWATER
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN
SUBJECTS**

SAMPLE AFFILIATION LETTER

Page 1

Louise Tourigny
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
800 West Main Street, Whitewater, WI 53190

December 12, 2010

Dear _____,

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater wishes to express their appreciation to you and your organization for allowing Bradley Behrend to perform scholarly research on your premises.

The researcher will require access to data (and other resources if listed below) necessary to conduct research for a project titled "Investigation of the attitudes of nurses and the quality of their working lives" with University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects Protocol # _____. The researcher has agreed to safeguard all data from unauthorized access and protect confidentiality to the extent possible under the law. The research will conduct the following study:

"Investigation of the attitudes of nurses and the quality of their working lives"

I understand the contact person at your organization with whom the researcher is to communicate with regarding the research project is _____, who may be reached at _____. If any problems and/or concerns arise concerning this project, please notify Denise Ehlen in the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 800 West Main Street, WI 53190, E-mail: ehlend@uww.edu, Telephone: (262) 472-5215

Please sign a copy of this letter to acknowledge receipt and your understanding of the scope of the researcher's proposed activity. Return it to Louise Tourigny at the address listed above.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Principal Investigator/ UW-Whitewater

Collaborating Institution

By

By

Louise Tourigny, Associate Professor

Name and Title

Name and Title

Date: _____

Date: _____