IJCRR

Section: Healthcare

ISI Impact Factor
(2019-20): 1.628

IC Value (2019): 90.81

SJIF (2020) = 7.893

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Job Performance and Occupational Stress among Nurses in a Tertiary Institution in Nigeria: A Letter to the Editor

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It is a pleasure writing a Letter to the Editor for the published article: **Ella RE, Agharandu AE, Osuchukwu E, Samson-Akpan P. Occupational Stress and Job Performance Among Nurses in a Teaching Hospital, in South-South, Nigeria. Int J Curr Res Rev. 2021;13(11):12-17.**

The objective of the study was to investigate the relationship between occupational stress and job performance amongst nurses in a tertiary institution in Nigeria. This was because job performance amongst nurses had been declining over the past years which was thought may have been induced by job-related stress, more so as such phenomenon was observed to be on the increase in developing countries.

Nurses are key performers and pillars of any healthcare delivery system which becomes meaningless without them. They have multi-faceted and multi-dimensional job profiles with a lot of expectations from them. However, in recent times it was noted that they had been performing poorly in their discharge of duties in comparison to what was expected from them.

Hence, the investigators wanted to find out whether occupational stress could be the causal factor for the observed poor performance. This was very important since the job performance of nurses reflects the quality of health care delivered and therefore the outcome of the patient's health. Therefore, poor job performance by nurses may be considered a risk factor for patient's safety.

A descriptive study design was adopted for the investigation and an appropriate sampling technique was used to select 222 nurses from a total of 500. An occupational stress questionnaire was constructed to collect the data by the researchers.

It has been noted from other studies that mild stress may act as a stimulus for better performance, but heavy stress over a long period may give rise to Psycho-somatic disorders. This is more so as their workload usually increased between

8 to 14 hrs especially for in-patients who need more attention. Role conflict and role ambiguity were also identified as stressors. Half the nurses reported conflict with doctors. Respondents also stated that hard work was poorly rewarded and lack of special incentive for them was a source of stress.

In other studies, it was seen that stress amongst workers enhanced their job performance in a positive manner which was statistically validated. However, studies done elsewhere have reported an effect of occupational stress on workers in general, beyond a limited period, resulting in poor performance. A study from Ghana revealed a reduction in the productivity of 44.6% of nurses who reported errors and wrong decisions in their performance due to stress. Therefore this study was undertaken to identify occupational stress that triggers poor performance since stressors differ with different workplace settings which need to be explored from the perspective of a tertiary hospital.

The findings of this study confirmed the presence of occupational stress amongst 91% of nurses. The stress distributions were as follows: heavy workload (67.1%); poor motivation (64.9%); role ambiguity (54.5%) and poor working conditions (53.6%) being the main reasons. The findings agree that occupational stress tends to be negatively allied to job performance and interferes with quality nursing care. In some other criteria, results showed that stress among employees does enhance their job performance in a positive manner. However, excessive stress is harmful and detrimental to the employees' well-being and overall performance.

The performance of such a stressed workforce will only deteriorate over a period of time and calls for remedial measures for improved performance of the hospital. This requires the placement of more nurses where they are needed most in the clinical setting to reduce workload. Administrative decisions may have to be taken to fix the role and responsibility of individuals and a reward system introduced to motivate the nurses for better performance.