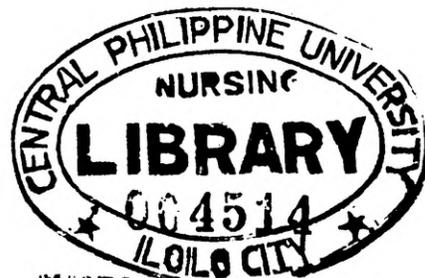


**NURSES' LEVEL OF EMPOWERMENT IN THE WORKPLACE:
THE EXPERIENCE AT ST. ANTHONY
COLLEGE HOSPITAL**

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by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the nurses' demographic and work-related characteristics, the nature of their relationship with superiors and co-workers, and their level of empowerment. It also tried to establish the relationship between the nurses demographic characteristics such as sex, gender, and civil status and work-related characteristics such as area of assignment, length of experience in the area of assignment, length of clinical experience, and continuing education and training undertaken to the degree of openness and harmony with superiors and co-workers and their level of empowerment; and also the relationship between nurses' degree of openness and harmony with superiors and co-workers and their level of empowerment.

The study was conducted at the St. Anthony college Hospital in Roxas City from December 2005 to January 2006. Respondents of the study consisted of a population of 126 nurses on duty at the hospital at the time the study was conducted.

The descriptive method of research using a survey questionnaire which included the Conditions for Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ) of Chandler and Laschinger (1996) which was earlier used by Kanter (1977) was used to determine the

respondents' level of empowerment. The Alternatives for Measuring Empowerment (Laschinger, 1996) was also used as a scoring guide to obtain empowerment scores.

Frequency count, percentages and means were used to analyze descriptive data and the chi-square and analysis of variance were used to analyze statistical data. All results were computer-generated. Relationships were tested at a five percent level of significance.

Major Findings of the Study

Nurses at St. Anthony College Hospital were predominantly females, single, and mostly within the age group of 26 to 30 years old. They are assigned in the various areas in the hospital with 25.40 percent and 24.60 percent of them in the Medical and the OB and Pedia wards, respectively at the time of the study. Majority of them (66.7 percent) had experience in the area of assignment of not less than two years, and almost the same percentage had clinical experience of not less than two years. Most of them (98.41 percent) had no overseas clinical experience and 68.3 percent had not attended seminars or undergone any training related to nursing.

The degree of their openness and harmony with their superiors was good and that with co-workers was very good, as indicated by the obtained overall mean of 4.12 and 4.38, respectively. These mean that nurses maintain a high degree of openness and harmony with their superiors and a higher degree of openness and harmony with co-workers in the workplace.

Results of the study also found that respondents have a high level of empowerment as indicated by the overall mean of 3.99 for all six components. Specifically, they saw very much opportunity to make decisions as indicated by the

obtained mean score of 4.22, and much support and power in the work setting as indicated by obtained mean scores of 4.12 and 4.14, respectively. They were, however, moderately empowered in the area of autonomy as indicated by the mean score of 3.15, but highly and very highly empowered in the area of participation and responsibility, respectively. For the last three components, respondents saw occasional opportunities to do things on their own but frequently clearing things with superiors; were frequently involved and participated in activities and decisions affecting themselves and their work. They were found to be very high on responsibility and they acknowledged that they hold themselves responsible for what they do.

Among their demographic characteristics, only age was found significantly related to their degree of openness and harmony with superiors; sex and civil status were not. For work-related characteristics, respondents' area of assignment, length of experience in the area of assignment, and length of clinical experience were found significantly related to their degree of openness and harmony with their superiors; continuing education and training was not.

Not one of the demographic nor work-related characteristics of respondents was found significantly related to the degree of their openness and harmony with their co-workers. Likewise, not one of the demographic nor work-related characteristics of respondents was found significantly related to their level of empowerment.

A very highly significant relationship was found between respondents' degree of openness and harmony with superiors and co-workers and their level of empowerment. This means that the higher the nurses' degree of openness and harmony with superiors and co-workers, the higher is their level of empowerment and vice-versa.

Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following conclusions are arrived at:

1. Nursing continues to be a domain of the female gender. The good number of male nurses on duty in the hospital signals a shift in gender related perception of nursing as a profession.
2. Nurses content themselves with their baccalaureate degrees. While a few have masteral units, only one among them was a master's degree holder.
3. Younger and older age groups of nurses tend to have a better relationship with superiors.
4. Nurses maintain a good relationship with their superiors regardless of their sex, civil status, area of assignment, length of experience, and training.
5. There is a high degree of openness and harmony between and among the nursing staff in the hospital. Sharing of knowledge and skills, assistance, and cooperation between and among them prevail in the work setting.
6. There is a high level of empowerment among nurses in the workplace. They see much opportunity for advancement – they find their work challenging and
7. a chance to use their own skills and knowledge and gain new ones. They find much support and appreciation for the work they do.
8. Nurses take full responsibility for the work they do and for decisions they make in the work setting. They participate and are involved in activities affecting them and their work.
9. Despite the high level of empowerment among nurses in the hospital, the superior-subordinate structure continues to exist. Nurses feel they cannot be

fully autonomous in their job considering that they are dealing with people with ailments and that they still have to consult and get clearance and the go-signal from superiors on certain procedures to do.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of the study and the conclusions made, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Hospital management should continue to support the good relationship prevailing between and among nurses and their superiors. Initiatives where these nurses can be together in social and recreation activities should be encouraged.
2. Hospital management should endeavor to maintain the prevailing high level of empowerment among its nursing staff. Ways by which opportunities for advancement and the development of confidence in the delivery of nursing service have to be provided.
3. Nurses should realize the importance of advancement in their nursing career. They have to find ways by which they can pursue advance education so that they continue to be relevant and responsive to changing and innovative strategies employed in the delivery of healthcare service specifically for nurses.
4. A similar and more in-depth study on empowerment should be conducted to further verify the finding of this study using other respondents and considering other factors of empowerment in the workplace.