

SHORT COMMUNICATION

Promoting Work Engagement in Nurses to Improve Service Climate and Patient Experience and Addressing Nurse Shortage in Healthcare Industry: A Viewpoint.

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Worldwide, the number of healthcare facilities are expanding at a rapid pace. Hospitals as healthcare organisations provide services and healthcare facilities to accommodate the needs of their consumers, i.e., the patients. The patients are the key component of the healthcare infrastructure [1]. Patients perform financial transactions in hospitals to get the expected services, but obtaining healthcare services are more than just monetary transactions. It is crucial to provide satisfactory care so the patients may develop a favourable experience from the medical treatment or healthcare service they receive in hospital settings. One of the main concerns with the global healthcare system is the turnover of nurses. The shortages of skilled nurses continue to impede the provision of elevated care delivery, thus negatively impacting health outcomes and increasing the risk of mortality. A worldwide scarcity of nurses is expected in the coming decade [2], which requires urgent attention and demonstrates the significance of nursing staff in healthcare sectors.

In order to generate a satisfactory and comfortable ambience for the patients, hospitals need to promote a positive service climate for the nurses. Service climate is all about the employee's view regarding management practices across various disciplines, including human resources, leadership, and marketing [3]. Focus on patients' experiences accelerated within the past few years due to the growing increase in competition and consumerism in the healthcare industry. The increased demand to improve patient loyalty, quality and outcomes, market share, and reputation to maintain high financial returns has been a major driving force behind this initiative [4]. The service climate foundations consist of both internal and external consumers. The internal customers are their employees while the external customers are the patients in hospitals [5].

Nurses, as an agent of change play a dual role in an organisation, not only as a caregiver but as an

organisation keeper and internal link [6]. Thus, they become the connector between the patient as a customer and the hospital as an organisation. Nurses are expected to demonstrate high employee engagement in their work environments. The energy and focus inherent in work engagement allow nurse employees to bring their potential to the job, which enhances the quality of the core work responsibilities. Work engagement introduces an extra mile attitude in the nurses, and those who 'go the extra mile' help to facilitate the achievements of the hospital mission, promote positive experiences and encourage interrelationships between nurses and patients by involving them in hospital activities that foster healthy work environments [7].

Recently, work engagement has emerged as an influencing factor in the quality of nursing services, and it entails a positive and fulfilling mind-set, characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption in one's work. Greater job engagement among nurses leads to fewer errors, higher patient safety, and higher patient satisfaction, resulting in better quality of nursing services [8]. Research indicates that work engagement can mediate the relationship between work environment and turnover intention [9]. In terms of engagement, the healthcare industry has historically lagged behind without realizing that an investment towards engagement can lead to a psychological contract between the employee and employers [2]. Improvement strategies focusing on consistent initiatives to enhance patient experience and nurses' engagement may serve as key factors in achieving excellent quality care and safety outcomes [10].

A recent South Korean study demonstrated that managerial leadership in nurse and other resources serve as important factors toward nurses' work engagement. In addition, nurses themselves should find meaningfulness in their work, such as fulfilment or recognition, as this helps to promote higher work engagement [11]. Similarly, another study in Norway found that

nurses' work engagement was highly correlated to their job satisfaction. Working engagement and turnover intentions are mediated by the nurses' job satisfaction. Employers should therefore focus on improving the job satisfaction of nursing professionals since it can be a key factor for improvement [12]. While George et al, [13] emphasised on a proactive strategy to improve staff engagement through leader visibility, a 2-way communication, and promotion of recognition called the Visibility, Communication, Recognition (VCR). VCR has become a focused strategy to improve staff involvement, resulting in meaningful and sustainable engagement in the healthcare industry. Understanding the relationship between certain factors such as leadership styles, work engagement, and organizational commitment among nurses is important due to the rapidly changing regulations, procedures, and work-life balance, which may consequently impact the healthcare services and quality [14].

The healthcare sector is a competitive industry that requires consistent monitoring and upgrading of services to fulfil patient demands [5]. Worldwide, nurse scarcity has become a critical concern in the healthcare industry. The shortage of nursing staff directly affects the quality of clinical care and patients' satisfaction [15]. Due to scarce nursing workforce, essence of labour market is getting disrupted, resulting in notable struggles among the workers to define their job roles and responsibilities, hence leading to loss of productivity in the organisation. When a nurse employee leaves the healthcare organisation, the employers do not only lose monetarily, but also lose a person with valuable information and

experience, which is difficult to replace and may take additional time or efforts to compensate. In contrast, better workplace environments with skilled and highly engaged nurses can promote improved patient outcomes.

Since transformational leadership styles reflects positive effect on work engagement through intrinsic motivation enhancement [14], managerial nurses should avoid authoritative leadership and provide active training or support to the employees to boost their skills and motivate them to engage spontaneously in various organizational tasks. Nurse leaders' visibility, communication, and recognition may facilitate a highly engaged team and create a healthy work environment to increase nurses' commitment towards organization. Consequently, nursing professionals' work engagement should focus on enhancing organizational culture and climate to enable multiple beneficial outcomes for both patient and hospital. In summary, a highly engaged workforce will certainly lead to an effective institutional growth. Therefore, healthcare organisations should focus on promoting positive work engagement among nurses to improve the service climate and facilitate better patient experiences. Simultaneously, nursing staff shortage should be addressed with adequate attention since it may present as a major issue in the coming years, especially if there is a possibility of another pandemic.

Keywords: *healthcare industry, nurses, work engagement, patient experience, service climate.*

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