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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Motivation and work performance in the nursing staff of a public institution of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires

Motivación y desempeño laboral en el personal de enfermería de una institución pública de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: motivation is an internal state that generates behaviors which trigger into actions in a specific direction and for a specific purpose.
Objective: to describe the relationship between motivation and work performance in the nursing staff of a public institution in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.
Method: an observational, descriptive, cross-sectional, descriptive study was conducted between November 2021 and January 2022 in nursing professionals of a public institution in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. The sample consisted of 60 nursing professionals from a public institution selected by non-probabilistic convenience sampling. Two instruments were used: approach to motivation in three dimensions and a competency-based work performance evaluation.
Results: the sample was characterized by being mostly females aged between 34 and 53, with a professional nursing degree. The professional performance in the three dimensions was of medium level in more than 96 % of the sample studied, and it is noteworthy that there were no people with high performance. The inferential analysis between general motivation and the 3 dimensions of professional performance had a statistically significant positive correlation, so it can be stated that, in the three dimensions, the higher the general motivation, the higher the professional performance.
Conclusions: one of the most important findings is the statistically significant positive correlation between motivation and professional performance. That demonstrates the need to work on future research where intervention strategies are evaluated in order to qualitatively characterize and raise both indicators in light of the obtained results.

Keywords: Motivation; Professional Performance; Nursing; Job Performance Evaluation.

RESUMEN

Introducción: la motivación es un estado interno que genera comportamientos desencadenando acciones en una dirección y para un fin específicos.
Objetivo: describir la relación entre motivación y desempeño laboral en el personal de enfermería de una institución pública de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires.
Método: se realizó un estudio observacional, descriptivo, de corte transversal desde noviembre de 2021 a enero de 2022 en profesionales de enfermería de una institución pública en la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires. La muestra estuvo constituida por 60 profesionales de enfermería de una institución pública seleccionados mediante muestreo no probabilístico por conveniencia. Se utilizaron dos instrumentos: abordaje de la motivación en tres dimensiones y evaluación del desempeño laboral por competencias.
Resultados: la muestra se caracterizó por ser del género femenino, entre 34 y 53 años, y poseer formación de enfermero profesional mayormente. El desempeño profesional, en las tres dimensiones, fue de nivel medio en más del 96% de la muestra, y destaca que no se encontraron personas con desempeño alto. El análisis inferencial entre la motivación general y las 3 dimensiones del desempeño profesional tuvieron una correlación positiva estadísticamente significativa, por lo que se puede afirmar que, en las tres dimensiones, a mayor motivación general, mayor es el desempeño profesional.
Conclusiones: uno de los hallazgos más importantes es la correlación positiva estadísticamente significativa entre la motivación y el desempeño profesional. Esto demuestra la necesidad de futuras investigaciones donde se evalúen estrategias de intervención que caractericen cualitativamente y eleven ambos indicadores según los resultados obtenidos.

Palabras Claves: Motivación; Desempeño Profesional; Enfermería; Evaluación del Desempeño Laboral.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation is an inner state that induces conduct such as the motives that generate behaviors that, in turn, trigger actions. Some authors conceive motivation as a force. In addition, motivation defines as the use of energy towards a specific path and objective.[1]

Motivation presents multiple attributes: trust, optimism, persistence, enthusiasm, and endurance. The way in which said sources of motivation are used to cope with daily basis responsibilities may vary from one person to another.[1]

The head nurse must develop an understanding of emotional intelligence at the workplace to find tools that best help them control their own emotions and consider those of their colleagues, thus ensuring a better understanding and performance in helping them achieve it.[1]

According to Maslow, motivation is the force that comes from within an individual and it is based on how strong the desire to satisfy a need is. In his theory, human needs follow a hierarchical order starting with physiological (fair wage, physical setting), safety (work security, friendly environment, job stability), social (coworkers, status, relationship with the boss, relationship with the group), ego (self-esteem, work reputation, competition, job attractiveness, responsibility, progress), and self-fulfillment (developing their capacity, personal fulfillment, creative development, and self-confidence).[2]

McClelland et al.[3] discusses three systems for human motivation and provides the foundation for competency-based management:

- Motivation by achievement is identified by the development and expansion of the work as an individual or group. Degrees of fulfillment, motivation, keeping up-to-date, self-assertiveness, perfection, and socialization are considered. People motivated by a certain degree of efficiency

aim to do their best. People with a higher degree of achievement prefer to take on personal responsibilities for the outcome.

● Motivation by power is presented in those people who have a constant need for prestige and respect. Those with a higher degree of power are the ones who carry out competitive and assertive activities and obtain maximum results. This type of motivation seeks ownership, conquest, leadership, and authority. These people are aggressive towards positive aspects.

● Motivation by affiliation (need for belonging) is depicted by the following factors: herd instincts, sense of community, altruism, friendship and admiration, partnership and relaxation, and tolerance.

At the beginning of the 20th century, several research groups started to investigate the factors that affect the performance of nurses as well as their preferences, aspirations, and intellectual and physical capacities.

Results showed that, in terms of Intellectual Capacity, nursing students with the worst evaluation were above the average population.[4,5]

Graduate nurses exhibited some key qualities such as the ability to collaborate, to be satisfied with others, emotional stability, and extroversion.[4]

Later studies indicated that certain characteristics may be used to describe the nurses' character. Pucheu suggested that studying the motivational aspects is highly relevant. This depends on the context, their association to different variables, and group membership.[4]

Motivation refers to the choice of ends and means, a certain degree of satisfaction within a situation or context. Both motivation and satisfaction largely depend on the values and beliefs, and even on what people have established as standards, and how they interpret motives and judge situations. For example, if a person feels that his workload is excessive or unfair, this will result in anger and stress, but if he believes that he is working hard, that it is a necessary sacrifice, and that he is rewarded for it, he proudly embraces it.[6]

Feeling more capable and in control is what tends to produce pleasure and personal security in the individual. Such gratifying sensations drive to action. Aspects that do inhibit us produce dissatisfaction and, when perceived negatively, trigger discomfort and complaints.[6]

Currently, motivation and satisfaction are concepts considered different. For some, motivation is a phenomenon that occurs prior to conduct and manifests in future as consequences over their performance.[7]

Satisfaction is an attitude resulting from conduct and it reflects the feelings of a person in relation to the reward received. Hersey et al.[8] suggest that satisfaction is the consequence of past events; meanwhile motivation, as we exposed before, is the result of expectations yet to come.

The head nurse may help the members of the team to attain satisfaction and promote self-esteem as follows:

1. Let them know that their efforts are appreciated, listen to what they have to say, and thank them for their collaboration.

2. Allow them to attain satisfaction, help them acquire new skills, or to improve the ones they already have.

3. Show you trust every person's capacity by conferring them as many responsibilities as possible.

4. Provide opportunities for promotion or advancement in their area of work.

The work done in health care is varied. It carries great responsibility and demands immediate action. Hence, the need for motivated, well-trained, and autonomous professionals in the workplace, accompanied by good interprofessional communication and the recognition of their professional work.[9]

This paper aims to describe the relationship between motivation and work performance on the nursing staff of a public institution in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.

METHOD

Type of study and context: From November 2021 to January 2022, an observational, descriptive, and cross-sectional study was conducted on the nursing professionals of a public institution in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.

Sample: The sample consisted of 60 nursing professionals of a public institution that were selected through a non-probabilistic convenience sample.

Inclusion criteria: Nursing personnel with a degree in nursing, a bachelor's degree in nursing or postgraduate with over 6 months of seniority in the institution.

Exclusion criteria: Personnel who did not agree to participate in the study or avoided having contact with their patients during their professional activities within the institution.

Data collection instrument: Two instruments were used. On the one hand, the instrument proposed and validated by Rojas Rosales[10] composed of 15 items and three dimensions: intrinsic, extrinsic, and transcendental motivation (Cronbach's alpha = 0,854).

The response scale used was as follows: Always (5), Often (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), and Never (1). Dimensions were scored according to the following dimension scales and on a general level:

Table 1. Score scale by dimensions

Intrinsic motivation	Extrinsic motivation	Transcendental motivation	General motivation	Level
7-8	4-9	4-9	≤50	Low
9-23	10-15	10-15	50-69	Medium
25-35	16-20	16-20	70-100	High

A second instrument used was a questionnaire proposed by Chumpitaz Ipanaque et al.[11] consisting of a competency-based work performance evaluation format made up of a list of 21 items (Cronbach's alpha = 0,924).

For this second instrument, the following response scale was used: Always (5), Often (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2), and Never (1). Dimensions were scored according to the following: Low (0-21), Medium (22-42), and High (43-63).

Ethical aspects: The survey was anonymous and applied after approval of the informed consent, clearly stating the commitment of the researchers that no data would be shared with third parties and no data that could allow the identification of the respondents would be disclosed.

Statistical analysis: Microsoft Excel and Medcalc software were used for statistical processing. Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to analyze whether there was a relationship between variables. Statistical results were considered of significance when the value of $p<0,05$.

RESULTS

Table 2 shows the distribution of variables according to socio-demographic behavior.

Table 2. Behavior of the socio-demographic variables

Variable	N	%
Gender		
Feminine	51	83,6
Masculine	10	16,4

Age		
24 to 33	13	21,3
34 to 43	20	32,8
44 to 53	22	36,1
54 to 61	6	9,8
Level of Education		
Nursing Assistant	3	4,9
Staff Nurse	32	52,5
Bachelor's in nursing	23	37,7
Master's Degree	2	3,3
Doctorate	1	1,6
Years graduated		
0 to 9	39	63,9
10 to 19	15	24,6
20 to 29	11	18,0
30 to 40	1	1,6

After analyzing the behavior of motivation in the study sample, results were subdivided in levels of motivation: low, medium, and high. This behavior was analyzed in general motivation, as well as in the intrinsic, extrinsic, and transcendental subdivisions (table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of the variable general motivation and by spheres in accord with the level categorization

Motivation	Low	Medium	High
Intrinsic	4,9	82	13,1
Extrinsic	24,6	57,4	18
Transcendental	3,3	34,4	62,3
General motivation	65,6	34,4	0

The behavior of the variable professional performance was analyzed in regards of the levels achieved and in accordance with its three levels of dimension (Cognitive, Attitudinal and Social, and Technical Capacity Competencies); it was noteworthy that there were no respondents with performance categorized as high (table 4).

Table 4. Distribution by dimensions of the variable professional performance in accord with the level categorization

Professional performance	Low	Medium	High
Cognitive competencies	1,6	98,4	0
Attitudinal and social competencies	3,3	96,7	0
Technical capacity competencies	1,6	98,4	0

The inferential analysis between general motivation and the three dimensions of professional performance showed a significantly positive correlation. Thus, we could conclude that, in all three dimensions, the higher the level of general motivation, the higher the professional performance (table 5).

Table 5. Linear correlation between general motivation and dimensions of professional performance

Variables	General Motivation
Cognitive competencies	0,3788; p=0,0026
Attitudinal and social competencies	0,3336; p=0,0086
Technical capacity competencies	0,3490; p=0,0058

DISCUSSION

The studied sample consisted of a majority female, aged between 34 and 53 and with a bachelor's degree in nursing.

Since its beginning, nursing as a profession has been a prominently feminine activity. This probably has to do with the direct relationship between womanhood and care provider, which is evident in this study as the vast majority of the nursing professionals were women. This data is consistent with several studies on the subject.[12,13,14]

Every individual has unique needs that must be met accordingly. For that reason, institutional authorities must create mechanisms within the organization with the intention of taking care of said necessities, even when these are originated in the workplace, ensuring that the employee is motivated and feels part of the organization they work for. Given the fact that the work performance of a demotivated individual has a negative impact on the success of the organization, taking this action will provide the answers to the question posed. Likewise, the institution needs to establish which factors have a greater impact on the performance of the employee in order to develop a method of distinctions and work improvement, as well as favorable conditions in the workplace. Those key points previously exposed improve, as a whole, the employees' work performance in the organization.[15]

Although general motivation was found on a majority of low indicators, it is noteworthy that, at a specific level, most of the specific indicators were found within the medium (intrinsic and extrinsic) and high range, as in the case of transcendental motivation.

Purohit et al.[16] conducted their study with a larger population than the one presented in this paper and applied an instrument modeled on Herzberg's motivational theory, similar to the one we applied, finding job security as the most important factor. This result coincides with those ones related to association followed by an interesting job, respect, and knowledge (p<0,01). However, our results were different: the motivational factor with the highest score was personal growth and relationship with colleagues due to the physical work setting where this study was conducted.

It is important to point out that every organization is responsible for generating intermediary mechanisms. Those mechanisms must enable the employee to grow within the organization as well as recognize the divergences of each employee to offer the best motivational solutions such as incentives, praise, promotions, and raises. In this way, the employee will feel comfortable, noticed and satisfied within their work environment and that they are given opportunities for development. As a result, the employee will be more productive and will be more willing to cooperate with the activities required by the organization.

In all three dimensions, professional performance ranked at a medium level in over 96 % of the total, and it is worth noting that there were no people with high performance.

Professional competencies have been a subject of growing concern among managers, as well as of the nurses involved in management and care. The nurse, who works at a hospital, stands out for the technical responsibility to provide care, both for their expertise and their team performance, notwithstanding their own administrative role. This multiplicity of actions requires developing specific skills for professional practice on a high level of excellence.

Avellaneda et al.[12] found, with respect to performance evaluation, that nursing professionals exhibited moderate work performance, given that the methods based on personal reflection usually relate to a lack of commitment towards self-criticism. Often, this depends on the motivation and ability to perform it, in the same way as Müggenburg et al.[18] found, from the very first assessment, nurses rated themselves with very high scores on most behaviors.

Personal motivation should be a consistent judgment that makes human beings reassure their self-confidence, as this provides effectiveness and positivism to their daily environment. This means that motivation is a key element that enables individuals to move forward day by day. When a person feels motivated, they perform their tasks more effectively. This same motivation is essential not only in all aspects of life but also for determining how to act, how to treat people, and how to perform in the workplace. It is also crucial when it comes to growth, advancement, and goal achievement.[19]

This approach supports our finding that general motivation had a positive impact on work performance indicators.

Regarding the existing association between motivational factors and work performance, a study undertaken at the Universidad Nacional de San Marcos reported that, the most relevant factors, 2 out of 15 motivational factors, were work security (r: 0,2511, p=0,04) and relationship with the boss (r: -0,2508, p=0,04). Additionally, those authors demonstrated that the higher the prioritization of the motivational factors of the relationship with the boss, the lower the level of work performance; and conversely, the higher the prioritization of the motivational factors, the higher the level of work performance.[20]

In contrast to the research conducted in this paper, Cancha Méndez et al.[13] approach to Work Performance has four dimensions: technical capacity (with indicators: protocol compliance, care processes implementation, and teamwork), training and professional education (indicators: assistant or speaker participation, and conducting research), productivity (indicators: work efficiency, efficacy, and effectiveness), and skills (indicators: problem recognition, adaptability, institutional needs, and developing work initiatives). However, there are similarities with our findings concluding that motivational factors have a significant association with nursing professionals' work performance.

The main challenge organizations face today demands the implementation and reinforcement of strategies that allow for successful work motivation. This will result in the creation of: a meaningful bond, key elements to achieve harmony, balance between the organization and its employees, as well as the compensation of basic needs. Consequently, the employee will feel the satisfaction of being useful and valued, feeling that their work is an added value to the organization, thus creating a sense of belonging and a favorable work atmosphere that establishes behavioral patterns, making for a pleasant coexistence in the individual's growing social process.[15]

CONCLUSION

According to the analysis of our results concerning the motivation and its influence on work performance, one of the most important findings was the significantly positive correlation between motivation and professional performance. This particular outcome highlights a need for further research on intervention strategies that characterize, from a qualitative point of view, both indicators, considering a priori that if one indicator increases, the other will improve too. Finally, our results support the idea that motivation deeply affects employees' work performance due to the lack of necessary tools to maintain a high level of motivation and, therefore, a better work performance in the workplace.

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