



Racial and ethnic minority nurses' job satisfaction in the U.S.



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 May 2014

Received in revised form 14 October 2014

Accepted 17 October 2014

Keywords:

Minority
Nursing
Job satisfaction
Race
Ethnicity

ABSTRACT

Background: Understanding minority nurses' job satisfaction is a critical first step to inform strategies designed to retain minority nurses and improve institutional climate to ensure sustained diversity. Yet, empirical evidence is limited in this regard, especially comparisons across racial and ethnic groups in a national sample in the U.S.

Objectives: To determine minority nurses' job satisfaction across racial and ethnic groups relative to White nurses using a national representative sample.

Methods: A retrospective cross-sectional analysis was conducted using the 2008 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses. The sample includes registered nurses who were primarily employed in nursing in the U.S. Job satisfaction was measured by a single survey item. Racial and ethnic minority status was defined as self-identified membership in a group other than White non-Hispanic, including Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Multiracial. Multinomial logistic regression was performed to compare job satisfaction across racial and ethnic groups while adjusting for individual and job-related characteristics.

Results: The majority of nurses were satisfied with their job. The nurse group that had the highest proportion of being satisfied with their job was Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (88.8%), followed by White (81.6%), Asian (81%), Hispanic (78.9%), Black (76%), Multiracial (75.7%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (74.3%). Adjusting for individual and job-related characteristics, evidence indicated the potential for lower job satisfaction among Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Multiracial nurses compared to White nurses. Asian nurses reported the highest levels of neutral (versus dissatisfaction) compared to White nurses. There was no evidence indicating a clear difference in job satisfaction between Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and White nurses.

Conclusions: Moderate differences in job satisfaction were observed across racial and ethnic groups. More research is needed to understand factors underlying these differences, so that nursing and hospital administrators can develop effective strategies to improve job satisfaction and retain minority nurses.

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What is already known about the topic?

- Job satisfaction is a robust predictor of nurse retention.
- Understanding minority nurses' job satisfaction is a critical first step to inform strategies designed to retain

minority nurses and improve institutional climate to ensure sustained diversity.

- Empirical evidence is limited in racial and ethnic minority nurses' job satisfaction, especially comparisons across racial and ethnic groups in a national sample in the U.S.

What this paper adds

- Moderate differences in job satisfaction were observed across racial and ethnic group. Black, American

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Indian/Alaska Native, and Multiracial minority nurses had a marginally significant lower job satisfaction compared to their counterpart White nurses.

- Asian nurses reported the highest levels of neutral (versus dissatisfaction) compared to White nurses.
- There was no evidence indicating a clear difference in job satisfaction between Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and White nurses.

1. Background

The proportion of the global population represented by racial and ethnic minorities has increased dramatically in recent decades, especially in developed countries such as the United States (U.S.) and those in Western Europe (Castles, 2000; RT Question More, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Cultivating a diverse healthcare workforce has been recognized as an effective strategy to provide culturally competent patient-centered care, improve access to care, and help reduce health inequalities affecting minority populations (Smedley et al., 2004; Smedley et al., 2002). Nurses are the largest group of frontline healthcare providers in the U.S. and internationally, interacting and communicating closely with an increasingly diverse patient and caregiver population to provide patient-centered care. In the U.S., as the minority population continues to grow and is projected to account for 57% of the overall population by 2060, it is imperative to develop a diverse nurse workforce that mirrors the racial and ethnic composition of the population. According to the 2013 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses, minority nurses accounted for 18% of the nurse population (Budden et al., 2013), which lags far behind the overall U.S. population of 37% minority.

The nursing professional pipeline emphasizes the recruitment and retention of minority students in nursing schools and retention of minority nurses in the nursing profession. Whereas current strategies have mainly focused on addressing the recruitment and retention of minority students, the job experiences of minority nurses related to retention are not well-understood. Extensive evidence has shown that job satisfaction is a robust predictor of retention in nursing (Hayes et al., 2010; Twigg and McCullough, 2014; Utriainen and Kyngas, 2009; Zangaro and Soeken, 2007).

Empirical evidence on racial and ethnic minority nurses' job satisfaction is limited and the findings are mixed. Coward et al. (1995) examined job satisfaction between nurses employed in rural and urban long-term care facilities in a sample of 281 nurses from 26 nursing homes in north Florida and found that minority nurses had lower job satisfaction than White nurses. In a larger study that consisted of 1538 nurses randomly selected from 40 metropolitan statistical areas across 29 states in the U.S. to test a model of factors contributing to job satisfaction, Black nurses were found to be less satisfied than White nurses with their jobs, and nurses belonging to Hispanic, Asian and other racial/ethnic groups were not different from White nurses (Kovner et al., 2006). Seago and Spetz (2008) took a further step to examine California minority nurses' job experience in their work environment, job advancement, and promotion, and found that, overall,

minority nurses had a positive experience in regards to the workplace and opportunities to gain new skills; however, minority nurses were more likely than White nurses to perceive their race or ethnicity as the primary barrier to promotion. In another study examining job satisfaction in a sample of 112 nurses in critical care units in a large nonprofit healthcare organization in New York City, race and ethnicity was not associated with job satisfaction (Moneke and Umeh, 2013).

Considering the imperative of retaining minority nurses in the workforce, a crucial first step is to measure and describe job satisfaction among minority nurses and their counterpart White nurses. While previous studies provide some insights on this issue, they have been limited in the number of racial and ethnic groups examined or employed small or regional samples. To overcome these limitations, the objective of this study is to describe U.S. minority nurses' job satisfaction across racial and ethnic groups relative to White nurses using a national representative sample.

A variety of individual characteristics, in addition to race and ethnicity, might influence perceived job satisfaction among nurses. These characteristics include age, generational cohort, gender, marital status, education, nursing experience, and whether a foreign-educated nurse (Choi et al., 2013; Hayes et al., 2010; Kaddourah et al., 2013; Lu et al., 2012; Utriainen and Kyngas, 2009; Wilson et al., 2008; Xu et al., 2010). With the exception of nursing experience, which has been consistently reported as being associated with job satisfaction, the effects of other individual characteristics on job satisfaction are mixed (Choi et al., 2013; Hayes et al., 2010; Kaddourah et al., 2013; Lu et al., 2012). In relation to age, there are four generations in the nurse workforce: the Veterans (born before 1945); Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964); Generation X (born 1965–1979) and Generation Y or Millennials (born 1980 onwards). These generations have shown differences in work values and expectations (Hendricks and Cope, 2013); however, evidence on the effect of generational cohort on job satisfaction is conflicting (Curry, 2005; Wilson et al., 2008). Evidence examining differences in job satisfaction between foreign-educated and U.S.-educated nurses has also been inconclusive (Pizer et al., 1992; Xu et al., 2010); although several studies have reported that foreign-educated nurses were more likely to experience discrimination on the job (Moceri, 2012; Pitman et al., 2014; Wheeler et al., 2014).

Job satisfaction has also been linked to job-related characteristics, including employment setting, clinical specialty, and full-time status (Boyle et al., 2006; Davis et al., 2007; Neal-Boylan, 2006). In addition, studies suggest that agency-employed supplemental nurses report higher job satisfaction because they have lower expectations of their employers than nurses in a permanent position (Faller et al., 2011; Golbasi et al., 2008; Van Dyne and Ang, 1998).

2. Methods

2.1. Data source and study sample

A retrospective cross-sectional study was conducted using the 2008 National Sample Survey of Registered

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