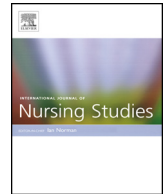




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Review

Work engagement in professional nursing practice: A systematic review



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ABSTRACT

Background: Work engagement in professional nursing practice is critically important to consider when addressing key challenges of health systems, including the global nursing shortage, pressures to reduce health care spending, and increasing demands for quality care and positive outcomes for patients. However, research on work engagement in professional nursing practice has not yet been synthesized and therefore, does not provide a sufficient foundation of knowledge to guide practice and further research.

Objectives: The overall aim of this systematic review is to determine what is currently known about the antecedents and outcomes of work engagement in professional nursing practice.

Design: Systematic review.

Data sources: The search strategy included eight electronic databases: CINAHL, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, PROQUEST, SCOPUS, Web of Science, EMBASE, and Business Source Complete. The search was conducted in October 2013. Quantitative and qualitative research that examined relationships between work engagement and antecedent or outcome factors was included.

Review methods: Quality assessment, data extractions, and analysis were completed on all included studies. Data extracted from included studies were synthesized through descriptive and narrative synthesis. Content analysis was used to categorize factors into themes and categories.

Results: 3621 titles and abstracts were screened and yielded 113 manuscripts for full text review. Full text review resulted in 18 included studies. All factors examined were grouped into either influences or outcomes of work engagement. A total of 77 influencing factors were categorized into 6 themes: organizational climate, job resources, professional resources, personal resources, job demands, and demographic variables. A total of 17 outcomes of work engagement were categorized into 3 themes: performance and care outcomes, professional outcomes, and personal outcomes. Based on the results, we adapted the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and developed the Nursing Job Demands-Resources (NJD-R) model for work engagement in professional nursing practice, which reflects key adaptations related to organizational climate and professional resources.

Conclusions: Our findings indicate that a wide range of antecedents, at multiple levels, are related to registered nurses' work engagement. Positive outcomes of work engagement are valuable to both performance and the individual nurse. The NJD-R model offers nursing science a valuable beginning framework to understand the current evidence, further direct

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nursing research, and begin to guide practice and policy. The results offer opportunities for nurse leaders to promote work engagement in professional nurses through action on organizational level resources.

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What is already known about the topic?

- A significant body of research in other disciplines demonstrates relationships between work engagement of employees and positive organizational outcomes and has stimulated recent interest in work engagement of registered nurses.
- Understanding the factors that are related to registered nurses' work engagement is needed to enable development of initiatives that enhance work engagement and its outcomes within the current health care context.

What this paper adds

- A wide range of antecedents that exist at multiple levels (individual, operational and organizational), are related to registered nurses' work engagement.
- Results largely indicate that work engagement in registered nursing practice contributes to increased positive personal and performance-related outcomes and decreased negative outcomes for individual nurses and health care organizations.
- Development of the Nursing Job Demands-Resources (NJD-R) model, which details key antecedents and outcomes relevant to work engagement in professional nursing practice and assists in understanding the complex phenomena of work engagement in professional nursing practice.

Contemporary service organizations have recognized the need to have employees who are psychologically connected to their work, or engaged in their work (Bakker et al., 2011). A significant and growing body of research in various disciplines, namely business and psychology correlates work engagement of employees with positive organizational outcomes (Bakker et al., 2011), including job performance (Bakker and Bal, 2010; Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2008), productivity (Harter et al., 2002), and financial benefits (Harter et al., 2002; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Significant associations between work engagement and both commitment and turnover intention have also been documented in an extensive meta-analysis that included studies from a wide range of disciplines (Halbesleben, 2010). Accordingly, organizations have become increasingly interested in how to develop engagement of employees (Halbesleben, 2010; Bakker et al., 2011). A strong theoretical case indicates that interventions can influence work engagement and therefore, presents a critical opportunity for organizational action to promote employee work engagement (Bakker et al., 2011).

The reality of rising health care costs, overburdened health care systems, a global shortage of nurses, and continual pressure to reduce errors, improve patient

outcomes, and improve quality of care, pose significant challenges to health systems and governments around the world (Bargagliotti, 2012). It is not surprising that the documented organizational outcomes of work engagement have stimulated recent interest in work engagement of registered nurses as health systems strive to cope with increasing demands and limited resources (Bargagliotti, 2012; Fasoli, 2010; Salanova et al., 2011; Simpson, 2009a). Registered nurses make up a significant portion of the health care workforce and directly interact with patients on a daily basis, which inherently makes them important players in achieving quality care and positive patient outcomes (Cummings, 2013; McHugh et al., 2012; National Expert Commission, 2012). Magnet hospital research has demonstrated that better patient outcomes can largely be attributed to investment in qualified and educated registered nurses and practice environments that support high-quality nursing care (McHugh et al., 2012). This highlights the need to understand registered nurses' work engagement in order to improve retention, performance, safety, financial positions, and most importantly, patient care and outcomes (Bargagliotti, 2012; Laschinger, 2010; Simpson, 2009a).

Work engagement in nursing practice is argued to be essential for ethical nursing practice (Keyko, 2014). The inherent ethical nature of everyday nursing practice presents an important consideration when examining work engagement of registered nurses and suggests a distinguishable difference between registered nurses and other professions. Within nursing, work engagement is relevant beyond the domain of solving organizational issues.

Determining the factors that potentially influence or are associated with registered nurses' work engagement will enable development of initiatives to improve work engagement in professional nursing practice, which may have significant outcomes within the current global health care context. Bargagliotti (2012) argues that increased knowledge about work engagement in nursing is inherently valuable because of its potential to reinforce nurse and manager behaviours that create practice environments for safe and effective patient care.

Research related to work engagement in nursing practice has been published continuously over the last decade. However, this expanding body of research has not been synthesized systematically to identify the antecedents and outcomes associated with work engagement in professional nursing practice. Existing published English language reviews about work engagement in nursing have included studies from non-nursing disciplines without providing disciplinary distinction within the results or are primarily conceptual (Bargagliotti, 2012; Simpson, 2009a; Willoughby, 2011).

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