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Original article

Study on the relationships between nurses' job burnout and subjective well-being

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To study factors influencing nurses' job burnout and their subjective well-being and to explore the relationships between these two phenomena.
Methods: A total of 250 nurses from three hospitals in Shandong were evaluated with the Maslach Burnout Inventory and a subjective well-being scale.
Results: Nursing staff showed significantly different levels of job burnout ($P < 0.05$) according to the following characteristics: age, marital status, educational background, technical title, years of nursing experience, monthly income, manning quotas and parental status. Level of burnout is higher for nursing staff who are under the age of 30 years, are unmarried, had secondary education, had unofficial manning quota status, are childless, hold a primary title and whose years of nursing experience are less than five years. Statistical significance was found for life satisfaction ($P < 0.05$) with differences in age; marital status; technical title; years of nursing experience; monthly income; manning quota status; and parental status in positive emotion, negative emotion and degree. There is a significant negative correlation between every dimension of job burnout and life satisfaction and positive emotions for subjective well-being. Every component of job burnout was significantly positively correlated with negative emotions. ($P < 0.05$).
Conclusion: Age, marital status, educational background, technical title, years of nursing experience, monthly income, manning quotas and parental status have different influences on occupation burnout and subjective well-being. Dimensions of occupation burnout have functions of predicting subjective well-being.
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1. Introduction

Burnout at work is a psychological reaction by an individual to continued sources of interpersonal stress in the workplace. Subjective well-being is the self-reported evaluation of the quality of life, that is, the subjective evaluation of individual happiness as the standard. It is a measure of individual quality of life of general key indicators. Preventing, mitigating and reducing burnout have a positive significance in improving people's feelings of subjective well-being.

There are few studies on the relationship between job burnout and the subjective well-being of nursing staff in China. With the fast development of our society, residents have an increasing demand for medical services; therefore, the concept of patient-centred care becomes dominant. In addition, job burnout has become an important factor affecting nurses' quality of life and work efficiency for which it has increased nurses' occupational stress and burnout.[1]

Some studies have proven that nursing staff job burnout has a positive correlation with subjective well-being.[2] However, domestically, little research on the relationships between job burnout and subjective well-being in China has been conducted. The aim of this study was to explore the nursing staff's factors associated with and characteristics of job burnout and its correlation with subjective well-being.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Subjects

Two hundred and fifty nurses in three tertiary hospitals were selected to complete questionnaires.

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The survey was completed three times from March to May, 2013. Instructions for filling in the questionnaire were given in detail, and informed consent was obtained from each participant. Participants were told to finish the questionnaire on their own within the time allotted, and the questionnaires were collected shortly after they were filled in. Of the 250 questionnaires distributed, 229 valid questionnaires were returned. The return rate was 91.6%.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. General status

The questionnaire for general status collected personal characteristics including age, marital status, educational background, technical title, years of nursing experience, monthly income, manning quotas and parental status.

2.2.2. Maslach burnout inventory (MBI)[3]

The MBI contained three subscales: ① the emotional exhaustion subscale, ② the depersonalization subscale and ③the diminished personal accomplishment subscale. Cronbach's α value for the main scale was 0.93, and for the emotional exhaustion subscale, it was 0.91, for the depersonalization subscale it was 0.81, and for the diminished personal accomplishment subscale, it was 0.84.[4,5]

2.2.3. Subjective well-being scale[6]

The subjective well-being scale was used to investigate the individual's positive emotions, negative emotions and status of life satisfaction. The scale, which consists of 19 items and is divided into three domains, was created by Dinner. All of the items were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (totally inconsistent) to 5 (totally consistent). In addition, the correlation of the subscales and the main scale varied from 0.56 to 0.88, and the test-retest reliability was 0.85.

2.3. Data analysis

Data were analyzed by independent sample *t*-test, one-way ANOVA, correlation analysis and regression analysis.

3. Results

3.1. Demographic data of nurses in the study

The basic situations of the 229 nurses are shown in Table 1.

3.2. Comparisons of job burnout and subjective well-being among age, marital status, educational background, technical title, years of nursing experience, monthly income, manning quota status and parental status

As shown in Table 2, the differences of nurses' total scores for job burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and low personal accomplishment among age, marital status, technical title, years of nursing experience, manning quotas and parental status are statistically significant ($^*P < 0.05$).

The differences in nurses' emotional exhaustion and depersonalization according to educational background and monthly income were statistically significant as well ($^*P < 0.05$).

The further Scheffe post hoc comparisons showed the following: In the three dimensions of job burnout and total score, nurses aged less than 30 years scored significantly higher than those between 30 and 40 years and those between 40 and 50 years. Unmarried nurses scored significantly higher than the married nurses. Nurses with a primary technical title scored significantly higher than those with an intermediate or with advanced technical title. The group with 5–10 years of nursing experiences scored higher than any other groups in the aspects of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The group with less than five years of nursing experience scored higher than other groups in low personal accomplishment. The group with unofficial manning quota status had higher scores than those with official status. Nursing staff who have no child have a higher burnout level than other nursing staff in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and low personal accomplishment.

In the aspect of subjective well-being, nursing staff in different marital status and manning quota status have significant differences in positive emotions, negative emotions, life satisfaction and total score for subjective well-being ($^*P < 0.05$). Nursing staff with different technical title and parental status have significant differences in negative emotions, life satisfaction and total score for subjective well-being ($^*P < 0.05$). Nursing staff in different age categories, years of nursing experience, and monthly income have significant differences in life satisfaction and total score for subjective well-being ($^*P < 0.05$).

Further Scheffe post hoc comparisons showed the following: in the aspects of positive emotions and life satisfaction, nurses who are married have a higher level than those who are single; the group with official manning quota status have a higher level than those with unofficial status. In the aspects of life satisfaction and total scores of subjective well-being, the group with an advanced technical title have a higher level than the other two groups. In the dimension of life satisfaction, nurses with fewer than five years of nursing experience scored lowest, followed by those with 5–10 years of experience and then by the group with 11–15 years of nursing experience. The group with 16–20 years of experience in nursing had the highest total score for subjective well-being. The group under 30 years of age had a higher level than other groups in life satisfaction and subjective well-being. The group with an educational background of a bachelor's degree or above had a higher level than other groups of positive emotion and life well-being. The childless group had a higher level than other nursing staff of negative emotion.

Nurses with different monthly income have significant differences in the life satisfaction dimensions and total score of subjective well-being ($P < 0.05$). Post hoc comparison showed that nurses with a monthly income between 2000 and 3000 yuan and 3000 yuan or more scored significantly higher in the aspect of negative emotion. Nurses with a monthly income of 3000 yuan or more, 2000 yuan or less and 2000–3000 yuan had significantly higher scores in the aspect of life satisfaction ($P < 0.05$). Nurses with a monthly income of 3000 yuan and more rated significantly higher than the nurses with other monthly income levels in the aspects of positive emotion and life satisfaction. Nurses with a monthly income of 2000–3000 yuan rated significantly higher than those with other monthly income levels in negative emotion.

Nursing staff that have no children have significantly lower scores for life satisfaction than those in all categories of those with children ($^*P < 0.05$). The group with an educational background of college or above had a higher level than other groups in positive emotion and life satisfaction; the group with no children has a higher level than other groups in negative emotion.

3.3. The relationships between nurses' job burnout and subjective well-being

3.3.1. Correlation between job burnout and subjective well-being

As shown in Table 3, positive emotion and life satisfaction have a statistically significant, positive correlation with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and low personal accomplishment, while negative emotion has a negative correlation with job burnout

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