



EXPLORING JOB SATISFACTION OF NURSING FACULTY: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

YINGCHEN WANG, PhD* AND JUDY LIESVELD, PHD, PPCNP-BC, RN†

The Future of Nursing report identified the shortage of nursing faculty as 1 of the barriers to nursing education. In light of this, it is becoming increasingly important to understand the work-life of nursing faculty. The current research focused on job satisfaction of nursing faculty from 4 theoretical perspectives: human capital theory, which emphasizes the expected monetary and nonmonetary returns for any career choices; structural theory, which emphasizes the impact of institutional features on job satisfaction; positive extrinsic environment by self-determination theory, which asserts that a positive extrinsic environment promotes competency and effective outcomes at work; and psychological theory, which emphasizes the proposed relationship between job performance and satisfaction. In addition to the measures for human capital theory, institutional variables (from structural theory and self-determination theory), and productivity measures (from psychological theory), the authors also selected sets of variables for personal characteristics to investigate their effects on job satisfaction. The results indicated that variables related to human capital theory, especially salary, contributed the most to job satisfaction, followed by those related to institutional variables. Personal variables and productivity variables as a whole contributed as well. The only other variable with marginal significance was faculty's perception of institutional support for teaching. (Index words: Nursing faculty; Job satisfaction; Weighted logistic regression) J Prof Nurs 31:482–492, 2015. Published by Elsevier Inc.

THE SHORTAGE OF nursing faculty has been a severe barrier to nursing programs across the nation. *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* (Institute of Medicine, 2010) pointed this out. The National League for Nursing (NLN, 2010) also acknowledged this as one of the reasons for turning down qualified applicants to prelicensure programs. With the goal of doubling doctoral students by 2020, it is imperative to study and understand the work-life issues of nursing faculty, such as job satisfaction, to identify problems related to the recruitment and retention of qualified faculty.

The importance of faculty job satisfaction has been documented in the literature for both nursing and general

faculty. Many studies in nursing showed that job satisfaction is a key determinant in faculty retention (Al-Hussami, Saleh, Abdalkader, & Mahadeen, 2011; Baker, 2010; Chung & Kowalski, 2012; Disch, Edwardson, & Adwan, 2004; Gormley, 2003; Kaufman, 2007). Recently, Darby-Davis (2014) found that there was a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and nursing faculty's intent to stay. Gutierrez, Candela, and Carver (2012) found that organizational support, development experiences, and job satisfaction positively predicted faculty's commitment.

Research on job satisfaction of general faculty also provides some insight into understanding the work-life of nursing faculty. Smart (1990) developed a model and found that job satisfaction had direct and indirect effects on faculty's intent to leave and that a higher level of satisfaction reduced faculty's intent to leave. Using a national dataset, Mamiseishvili and Rosser (2011) found that for research faculty, service productivity and undergraduate teaching significantly and negatively related to job satisfaction. Also using a national dataset, Zhou and Volkwein (2004) found that compensation had a positive influence on faculty's job satisfaction and intent to leave.

*Sr. Statistician, University of New Mexico, Enrollment Management, Albuquerque, NM, 87131.

Address correspondence to Dr. Wang: Institutional Analyst, University of New Mexico, Office of Institutional Analytics, Rm 108 608 Buena Vista Dr. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87131.

E-mail: yingchenwang@unm.edu (Y. Wang), jliesveld@salud.unm.edu (J. Liesveld)
8755-7223

The literature on general faculty provides some, yet limited, understanding of nursing faculty's job satisfaction without discipline-specific information. In addition, few studies in the nursing literature have been conducted on this topic using national datasets from theoretical perspectives. The purpose of the current study was to investigate nursing faculty's job satisfaction from different theoretical perspectives using a national and secondary dataset.

Theoretical Frameworks

Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as positive and pleasant feelings associated with “the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (p. 1300). Existing literature demonstrates that job satisfaction is composed of multiple factors (Lent & Brown, 2008; Mamiseishvili, 2011; Sheu & Lent, 2009). Theoretically, four important frameworks for job satisfaction exist—human capital theory, structural theory, self-determination theory, and the relation between job performance and satisfaction from psychological theory.

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory assumes that people evaluate both monetary and nonmonetary benefits and costs to maximize the well-being of occupational choice (Ehrenberg, 1991; Ehrenberg & Smith, 1991). According to this theory, wage plays a central role in labor market distribution. This concept is both intuitive and empirically supported (Flyer, 1997). Hagedorn (1996) pointed out that salary is an index of equity and personal achievement. Ehrenberg, Kasper, and Rees (1990) found that compensation appeared to be more important to assistant and associate professors. A similar finding was reported in the nursing literature by Evans (2013).

Other monetary and nonmonetary benefits and costs include expected future earnings and the quality of academic life (Ehrenberg, 1991). The quality of academic life includes time to tenure, difficulty of getting tenure, tightness or looseness of the academic labor market, and the supply of doctoral students. The human capital theory has been applied extensively to study relevant topics in higher education, including science, technology, engineering, mathematics-related issues, and faculty work–life (Perna, 2001, 2002, 2003; Smart, 1990; Xu, 2013). The common acknowledged human capital measures include salary and benefits (Ehrenberg, 1991; Flyer, 1997). In our study, we used self-reported ratings of satisfaction with salary and benefits to investigate the impact of salary and benefits on global job satisfaction.

Despite its popularity, human capital theory only explains social phenomena from the perspective of econometrics. It limits the understanding of social phenomena to one theoretical perspective. Some researchers have pointed out that it is unable to explain the low returns on educational investment for women and minorities (DeYoung, 1989; Perna, 2001, 2005). Acknowledging the usefulness of human capital theory, Dreijmanis (1991) elaborated on the criticisms of human

capital theory. Youn (1988) suggested incorporating the organizational structure for empirical research into academic career and market research. Researchers often combine human capital theory with other theories. For example, Perna (2001, 2005) investigated educational phenomena by incorporating human capital theory with structural theory.

Structural Theory and Self-Determination Theory

Structural theory focuses on the influence of the characteristics of colleges and universities on the labor market and career outcomes. Examples of institutional characteristics include prestige, position, type, rankings, and student enrollment. This theory suggests that the institution affects career outcomes, such as employment, job mobility, job status, and productivity. Studies have investigated the inequality of the labor market, such as earnings, tenure, and promotions (Perna, 2001, 2002), using structural theory as part of the theoretical framework. Other studies have evaluated organizational characteristics to examine faculty life, although structural theory was not explicitly specified (e.g., Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2011; Smart, 1990; Zhou & Volkwein, 2004).

Overlapping with structural theory, self-determination theory asserts that the positive extrinsic environment promotes competency and effective outcomes at work. Gagner and Deci (2005) proposed that a supportive working environment and individual differences contributed to autonomous work motivation, which was related to effective performance, psychological well-being, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. Motivation, either autonomous or controlled, is associated with effective performance, which results in satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gagner & Deci, 2005; Judge, Bono, Thoresen, & Patton, 2001; Locke, 1976). However, unlike autonomous motivation, controlled motivation is likely to lead to low satisfaction. Settles, Cortina, Buchanan, and Miner (2013) studied science and engineering faculty members and found that for both female and male faculty, gender discrimination and gender derogation were perceived as a negative work climate and decreased job satisfaction. Similarly, under the perceived negative work environment, female faculty were found to be less likely to have job satisfaction (Greene, Stockard, Priscilla, & Richmond, 2010). This perceived negative work climate is one in which differential treatment between female and male faculty exists with respect to resources, privileges, hiring, and academic progression. Laden and Hagedorn (2000) found that for faculty of color, collegial environment (e.g., supportive administrators, racial understanding, support for teaching and research) was important to their job satisfaction.

Conceptually, *structural* and *environmental* terms in the above two theories are the same, both referring to institutional- or organizational-related features. The emphasis on organizational features by different theories demonstrates the important role of the institution in the work–life of faculty. Based on the literature review,

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