



Integrating conflict handling style of supervisors and job satisfaction of nursing officers in the public hospitals of Anuradhapura District

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Abstract

Nursing profession provides services for the health and wellbeing of people and it is not merely a profession but a social service. Therefore satisfaction among nurses is more important to their productivity and performance, commitment to profession as well as the quality of their patient care, and patient safety. However dissatisfaction among the nurses in public hospitals is a serious issue. Nurses are facing work place conflicts with patients, peers, as well as doctors, and superiors. Therefore the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between superiors' integrating conflict handling style and the job satisfaction of nurses in Anuradhapura District. The research model conceptualized a positive relationship between anxiety, cooperativeness, resolution and the job satisfaction. A sample of 180 nurses was selected from three hospitals located in Anuradhapura district using a proportionate stratified random sampling method. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using the uni-variate, bivariate and multivariate analysis. The results indicated that integrating conflict handling style characterized with anxiety, cooperativeness and resolution has a positive effect on job satisfaction. The findings of this study would help to the supervisory level employees to planning and developing strategies to enhance the subordinates' job satisfaction through resolving conflicts in an appropriate manner.

Keywords: *Anxiety, cooperativeness, integrating conflict handling style, job satisfaction, resolution.*

1. Introduction

Friendly working environment and pleasurable work situation leads to the inspiration of the people, which help to the achievement of individual and organizational goals. Working environment would be unpleasant due to strict working conditions, bad

supervision and management etc. (George, Miroga & Omwari, 2013). In current competitive world every organization is facing new challenges relating to employee job satisfaction. According to Wan (2007) satisfaction is an essential aim for any organization to reach. When satisfaction level of employees increases, then this will result in more returns to the organization. The dissatisfaction of the employees has adverse effects on efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. Job satisfaction has been linked to positive workplace outcomes such as increased organizational commitment (Brown & Peterson, 1993). Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) found that the consequences of job dissatisfaction are absenteeism, turnover, low productivity, early retirement, low organizational commitment, low mental and physical health, low life satisfaction. Sinha (2013) revealed that nearly the most of Indian doctors have low job satisfaction and so that they do not want their next generations to become doctors. The overall employee satisfaction in this sector is decreasing, despite huge increases in salaries and perks across the Information Technology (IT) sector. This is the key finding of the Best Employer Survey in 2006, which analyzed the emerging trends in the IT sector. According to the survey, the overall industry employee satisfaction index has dropped by about 11 percent compared to 2005.

Nishshan, Muraleeswaran and Akilendran (2016) stated that nursing officers in Sri Lanka have low job satisfaction. Further, workload, professional support, training received, and working condition are main factors that influence job satisfaction among nursing officers. In addition to that, study revealed that a significant number of female student nurses was psychologically distressed. Higher nurse workloads are associated with burnout and job dissatisfaction, precursors to voluntary turnover that contribute to the understaffing of nurses in hospitals and poorer patient outcomes. Ellawela and Fonseka (2011) revealed that in government hospitals the dissatisfaction among the medical staff with regard to their working environment has a strong impact, together with workload and pay. Around 6000 public health sector nurses at the main hospitals in Sri Lanka including national hospital, Colombo south, Hambanthota, Matara, Karapitiya, and Rathnapura had been strike demanding the unconditional withdrawal of illegal transfers, better salaries, decent working conditions and improved training on 2nd and 9th of December 2010.

Human Resource is an integral part of an organization. Normally a large number of employees exists in most organization. Therefore their satisfaction is more important to productivity and performance, the extent to which employees engage in cost saving, their commitment to organization and profession as well as the quality of their service. Conversely, dissatisfaction of employees increases rates of absenteeism, staff turnover, intention to leave and migration. When there are large number of employees exist, conflicts are inevitable part of an organization. Conflicts are natural and difficult to avoid, but those are controllable. According to Higazec (2015), conflict management style is very important because, it leads to employee creativity, productivity, job satisfaction and loyalty to the organization.

When examining the previous literature on factors affecting to the employee job satisfaction, Ying-Chang, Wen-Cheng, and Ying-Chien (2010) stated that job satisfaction

arises from many different sources including autonomy, quality of supervision, levels of role ambiguity quality of social relationships and level of support in the workplace. However, Aydogdu and Asikgil (2011) stated that there are two main factors that influence on job satisfaction, the factors relating to the job and the factors relating to the individual. The factors relating to the job are pay, work itself, supervision, promotion possibilities, peers, working conditions. The factors relating to the individual are individual's loyalty to company, experience, age and gender, education. According to Kabir (2011) there are three dimensions of job satisfaction namely; leadership and communication, salary and welfare, job characteristics. Moissoglou, Panagiotis and Galanis (2014) stated that the dimensions of job satisfaction are salaries and benefits, recognition and promotion, management and supervision, co-workers, task requirement, organization policies, working conditions, nature of the job, job security. In here, difficult to identify consistency of factors relating to the employee job satisfaction. It is an important problem observed in examining prior study.

The literature on conflicts handling methods identified five conflicts handling styles such as integrating, dominating, avoiding, obliging and compromising (Rahim, 1983; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Rahim & Magner, 1995; Dahshan & Lamiaa, 2014; Kazimoto, 2013; Patton, 2014, Amineh & Kangarani, 2014). Thomas and Kilmann, (1974) studied competing, collaborating, compromising, accommodating and avoiding styles. However Dannii, Yeung and Fung (2015) have identified only four conflicts handling styles such as avoiding, dominating, integrating, and obliging. In addition Kirsten, Way and Jimmieson (2016) identified three conflict handling styles namely collaborating, yielding and forcing. Blake and Mouton (1964), who identified five modes of handling conflict; forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, compromising, and problem solving. Accordingly, there is no consistency among the models of conflicts handling styles. Hence, it is an important problem observed in examining how conflict handling style impacts on job satisfaction of nursing officers.

According to the empirical evidence few researchers paid attention to the influence of conflicts handling method on employee satisfaction (Lee, 2009; George, Miroga & Omweri, 2013; Graham, 2009). And also those are related to the various organizations other than public hospitals. Prior research studies have been given various conclusions with respect to the relationship between conflict handling style and employee job satisfaction. George et al. (2013); Lee (2009); Rahim and Buntzman (1989) found that, there is a positive relationship between integrating conflict handling style and job satisfaction. However Alzharani (2013) found integrating conflict handling style had negative impact on job satisfaction. Alzharani (2013); Lee (2009); Meyer (2004) and Hatfield and Hatfield (1996) show that there is a negative relationship between dominating style and employee job satisfaction, George et al. (2013) found dominating style had positive impact on job satisfaction. In addition Alzharani (2013); Lee (2009); Meyer (2004); Hatfield & Hatfield (1996) proved that there is a negative relationship between avoiding style and employee job satisfaction while George et al. (2013) proving that avoiding style has a positive impact on job satisfaction. Studies done by George et al.

(2013); Lee (2009); Hatfield (1996); Alexander (1995) found that there is a positive relationship between obliging style and employee job satisfaction, while Alzharani (2013) found obliging style has a negative impact on job satisfaction. Hence George et al. (2013); Lee(2009); Alexander (1995); Rahim and Buntzman (1989) are showing that there is a positive relationship between compromising style and employee job satisfaction while Alzharani (2013) is proving compromising style has a negative impact on job satisfaction. Even though the theoretical literature suggests that there is a relationship between conflicts handling style and employee satisfaction, it is difficult to understand what the relationship between two variables.

There is no literature related to the relationship between integrating conflicts handling style and employee job satisfaction in Sri Lankan context. Therefore it is important to find out conflicts handling style and how it relates with job satisfaction of nursing officers. Therefore these contradictions on superiors' integrating conflict handling style effects on the nursing officers' job satisfaction lead to identification of a research problem that is worth to study. Thus, this study aims to examine the relationship between superiors' integrating style (anxiety, cooperativeness and resolution) and job satisfaction among nursing officers in public hospitals in Anuradhapura District.

2. Literature review

According to Wan (2007) satisfaction is an essential aim for any organization to reach. When satisfaction level of employees increases, then this will result in more returns to the organization. The dissatisfaction of the employees has adverse effects on efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. So studying job satisfaction is one of the most significant areas of organizations setup. The higher the job satisfaction, the more likely employee will hold a positive attitude toward his job (Wang & Feng, 2003 as cited in Javed, Balouch & Hassan, 2014). Employees will be more satisfied if employees get what they anticipated. So, job satisfaction is relating to inner feelings of employees. Jayarathna and Hettiarachchi (2014) stated that job satisfaction is one of the most important attitudes of the employees of an organization. Job satisfaction used to describe whether the employees are happy or not. The organizations have to challenge, have to make the employee's satisfied in current job. When employees are satisfied with job then employee will perform better and therefore organization will achieve employees' competitive edge (Higazec, 2015). It is known that people usually spend a long time span of their life at work since job is one of the most important parts of their life. Therefore, an understanding of the factors relating to job satisfaction is essential in improving employees' performance and productivity (Suki & Suki, 2011). Job satisfaction can be explained as multidimensional psychological responses to one's job. These responses consist with cognitive (evaluative) and affective (emotional) components. The multidimensional responses can be identified as good/bad, positive/negative scales. Those may be quantified using assessment techniques. Those techniques assess evaluations of features or characteristics of the job, emotional responses to events that occur on the job and it depends on how one defines attitudes, behavioral dispositions, intentions, and enacted

behaviors (Judy, Hulin, & Dalal, 2009). Job satisfaction is the feelings or state of mind regarding the nature of employee work. Job satisfaction can be influenced by a variety of factors, those factors can be identified as the quality of employee's relationship with supervisor, the quality of the physical environment in which employee execute work, degree of the fulfillment of worker's work (Nawab & Bhatti, 2011). Job satisfaction is an important indicator of how employees feel about jobs and also it is a predictor of work behaviors, such as organizational citizenship, absenteeism, and turnover. Furthermore, job satisfaction can partially mediate the relationship of personality variables and deviant work behaviors (Ciarnien, Kumpikait, & Vienazindien, 2010). Jahufer (2015) identified job satisfaction as a bi-dimensional concept consisting of intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction dimensions. Intrinsic sources of satisfaction depend on the individual characteristics of the person. Extrinsic sources of satisfaction are situational and depend on the environment. Both extrinsic and intrinsic job facets should be represented, as equally as possible, in a composite measure of overall job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is difficult to measure and is dependent on a number of factors, management may reduce levels of dissatisfaction and control workplace conflicts through common objectives like career development, training, appropriate rewards and improvements in the quality of working life.

Various definitions of conflict have been provided by many researchers from multiple disciplines like psychology, behavioral sciences, sociology, communication and anthropology. According to Wilmot and Hocker (2011), "the conflict is a felt struggle between two or more interdependent individuals over perceived incompatible differences in beliefs, values, and goals, or over differences in desires for esteem, control, and connectedness". Fisher (2000) defined destructive conflict as "a social situation in which there are perceived incompatibilities in goals or values between two (or more) parties, attempt by the parties to control one another, and antagonistic feelings towards each other". Almost, Doran, Hall and Laschinger (2010) noted that dispositional characteristics are found to be major causes of conflict in the nursing field. Individuals have unique personalities and vary in "attitudes, opinion, beliefs, culture emotional stability, maturity, education, gender, language, etc." (Jha, 2010). Therefore, individuals' reactions to specific stimuli are also differ. These differences cause some individuals to identify some matters as discouraging employees' positions or refuting employee values. Patton (2014) discussed a case of value differences resulting in micro-level conflict within a hospice inpatient unit. Blurred boundaries between nurses and physicians lead to conflict when senior-level nurses, who are experts in their specialties, "frequently fail to observe the formal boundaries of nursing practice" (Bonner & Walker, 2004). Fewer employees, tighter budgets for equipment purchases, and workflow changes contribute to intergroup and intragroup conflicts (Tomajan, 2012). Discontent and frustration occur among health care workers when there are "constraints on the decision-making process" (Dougan & Mulkey, 1996).

People resolve the conflict with the best solution agreeable to all parties. This style is known as problem solving style. The issues of conflict require openness and people

involved in conflict work together, share information, and express their perspective of the problem (Rahim, 2002). When the individual is not able to solve an intricate problem, individual may collaborates with other parties to create operative solutions, and alternatives. Although collaboration is a time-consuming process, it is an integrated approach and a long-term resolution of conflict (Marquis & Huston, 2009). Rahim (2002) revealed that integrating is the most preferred style to manage conflict. Integrating style yields positive outcomes for both parties involved in conflicts. This is always perceived as a win-win solution where each party gains satisfactory outcomes. Therefore integrating is associated with many positive organizational outcomes productivity, job satisfaction, job performance, and effectiveness (Sharma & Samantara, 1994). This style is most appropriate when issues are complex and is most useful in dealing with strategic issues relating to objectives, policies and long range planning (Cai & Fink, 2002). The advantage of using this style is making all parties happy with the final decision (Rahim, 2002). On the other hand, due to letting all parties to be satisfying the final decision, it may use longer time and put in more effort than other styles.

Alexander (1995) found that there are significant positive relationships between principals' use of the collaborating style and teachers' satisfaction with their work, their supervision, and their jobs in general. Further, Rahim and Buntzman (1989) reported that subordinates' perception of their superiors' integrating style is positively correlated with attitudinal and behavioral compliance and satisfaction with their supervisor. According to Sharma and Samantara (1994), integrating is associated with many positive organizational outcomes productivity, job satisfaction, job performance, and effectiveness. Hatfield and Hatfield (1995) and Brahnam et al. (2005) found that integrating strategy had a strong association with job satisfaction. Above research evidence proving that there is a positive relationship between integrating style and employee job satisfaction. Therefore present study proposes following hypothesis.

Hypothesis (H): There is a positive relationship between superiors' integrating conflict handling style, characterized with anxiety, cooperativeness and resolution, and job satisfaction of nursing officers in the public hospitals of Anuradhapura District.

3. Methodology

This study, which is based on correlational type, is designed to explore the relationship between superiors' integrating conflict handling style (anxiety, cooperativeness and resolution) and employee job satisfaction. Variables taken into consideration are not controlled or manipulated in this study. And also, this research was conducted in natural environment and no any influence for respondents. The unit of analysis is individual. This study selected nursing officers working in Madawachchiya, Thabuttegama and Anuradhapura teaching hospitals for the survey. There were two nursing sisters and 36 nurses in Madavachchiya Hospital, 10 nursing sisters and 108 nurses in Thambutegama Hospital and 10 matrons, 43 nursing sisters and masters, 940 nurses in Anuradhapura

Teaching Hospital. Altogether, there were 1084 nursing officers except nursing sisters, masters and special grade nurses (matrons) in these hospitals. From this group, a sample of 216 nursing officers was selected using proportionate stratified sampling technique. The survey was carried out using a structured and self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was separated into five sections focusing demographic information, anxiety, cooperativeness, resolution, and job satisfaction. Four questions were used in first section to gather important demographic information of the respondents. Anxiety, cooperativeness, resolution, and job satisfaction were measured using 5, 5, 4 and 6 items respectively on five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

In order to establish the content validity of the instrument, scale developed by Rahim (1983) to measure employee superiors' integrating conflict handling style (anxiety, cooperativeness and resolution) was adopted and job satisfaction was measured with the items used by Wilson and Sebee (2004) and Kabir (2011). In addition to that the content validity of the constructs was ensured through pre-testing of the questionnaires. Test-retest method was also used to ensure stability of the questionnaire. The test was performed by selecting 20 nursing officers in Anuradhapura teaching hospital with two week time interval. The coefficients reported over 0.7 at the test-retest reveals the evidence that constructs developed to measure the key variables are suitable for the present study. Moreover, internal consistency of the constructs was assessed using reliability analysis based on Cronbach's alpha test. The alpha values reported for the constructs used to measure anxiety, cooperativeness, resolution and job satisfaction are 0.795, 0.738, 0.755 and 0.836 respectively and reveal that items used are suitable to measure the target variables. Data were analyzed using univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis techniques and more especially correlation and regression analysis were applied to test the hypothesis.

4. Results and discussion

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the main variables. The result show the evidence that integrating conflict handling style is in practice in the selected hospitals. Moreover, moderately higher level of job satisfaction is shown by selected group of nursing officers.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics

| Variables | Mean | Standard deviation | Variance |
|------------------|--------|--------------------|----------|
| Anxiety | 3.5731 | 0.6451 | 0.372 |
| Cooperativeness | 3.6212 | 0.6048 | 0.344 |
| Resolution | 3.8136 | 0.5289 | 0.253 |
| Job satisfaction | 3.7686 | 0.5256 | 0.265 |

The results of the correlation coefficient between supervisors integrating conflict handling style and job satisfaction are presented in Table 2. According to the results, the correlation coefficients between anxiety and job satisfaction ($r = .863, p < 0.01$), cooperativeness and job satisfaction ($r = 0.253, p < 0.05$), resolution and job satisfaction ($r = .348, p < 0.01$) are significant and positive. According to the analysis anxiety recorded a strong positive relationship with job satisfaction but cooperativeness and resolution reported a weak positive relationship with job satisfaction.

Table 2
Results of correlation analysis

| Variable | A | B | C | D |
|---------------------|--------|--------|------|---|
| A. Job Satisfaction | - | | | |
| B. Anxiety | .863** | - | | |
| C. Cooperativeness | .253* | .101 | - | |
| D. Resolution | .348** | .298** | .125 | - |

** Correlation is significant at 0.01

* Correlation is significant at 0.05

Multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the effect of all dimensions of the integrating conflict handling style and job satisfaction. In this study, job satisfaction is the dependent variable and dimensions of integrating conflict handling style are independent variables. Anxiety, cooperativeness and resolution are the dimensions of the Integrating conflict handling styles. The result of the multiple regressions is shown in Table 3. Result reveals that overall regression model is significant and suitable in predicting the job satisfaction by anxiety, cooperativeness and resolution as Adj. R square received higher value (Adj. R Square = 0.595) and F-value is significant at 0.01 ($F = 24.170, p < .01$). Individual coefficients indicate that anxiety ($\beta = .72, p < .01$), cooperativeness ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) and resolution ($\beta = .34, p < .01$) have positive and significant effects on job satisfaction.

Table 3
Results of regression analysis

| Variable | β | Std. error | t-value | p-value |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------|----------------|---------|
| Intercept | xx | xx | xx | xx |
| Anxiety | 0.725 | xx | xx | 0.000 |
| Cooperativeness | 0.217 | xx | xx | 0.030 |
| Resolution | 0.346 | xx | xx | 0.004 |
| Adj. R Square = 0.595 | F-Value = 24.170 | | Sig. F = 0.000 | |

According to the Pearson's product movement correlation analysis there is a strong positive relationship between integrating style and job satisfaction. The regression analysis also confirm the positive effect of integrating conflict handling style on job

satisfaction. According to the both analysis, hypothesis of the study is supported. This result is similar to the previous research studies which were conducted by George et al. (2013), Lee (2009), Rahim and Buntzman (1989). Those researchers found that, there is a positive relationship between integrating conflict handling style and job satisfaction.

5. Conclusion

General objective of the study was to examine the relationship between superior's integrating conflict handling style and job satisfaction of nursing officers of public hospitals in Anuradhapura District. The study found that integrating conflict handling style is more effective in resolving the conflict among the employees and it has positive influence on employee satisfaction as well. These findings would help to supervisory level employees to plan and develop their strategies to enhance the subordinates' job satisfaction through resolving conflicts in an appropriate manner. This research served as a guideline for all the researchers interested in studying this area. Future research should validate the findings of the present study focusing the other organizations in the country.

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