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Professionally-relevant Behaviour in Healthcare Professionals

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Abstract

Professionally relevant behaviour (PRB) is the activity of an employee as an individual's activity where it is possible to distinguish activities or conduct and reactions; it is characterized by such parameters as job motivation, creativity, job involvement, job satisfaction, etc. The purpose of this paper was to identify the parameters of PRB in practicing nurses. The research methods were used: the survey of socio-demographic characteristics and a questionnaire to determine the significance of PRB parameters. The most significant parameters are „ability to cooperate”, „appropriate behavior in a given situation”, „ability to concentrate”, etc.

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1. Introduction

Nurses constitute the major part of healthcare personnel; there are defined common skills in the field and specific professional skills which constitute in nurse's professional behaviour in the standard of nurse's profession. However, there have not been identified parameters significant for professional behaviour in healthcare industry. Professionally relevant behaviour is the activity of an employee as an individual's activity where it is possible to distinguish activities or conduct and reactions; it is characterized by such parameters as job motivation, creativity, job involvement, job satisfaction, etc. Patients have a right to receive qualitative health care, which comprises several aspects. Besides effective treatment and application of medical diagnostic technologies, the personality and professionally relevant behaviour (PRB) of healthcare employees are essential. The relation of these parameters with personality factors emerge in researches. It is essential not only to evaluate person's professional suitability, but also to handle the issues related to the choice of those people to work in healthcare in long-term. Finding solutions to these issues are related to both more careful professionally-psychological selection of entrants and work with healthcare employees. It is essential not only to prepare well educated professionals, but also to take care of human resources' maintenance in the job market of healthcare, to pay attention to their professional suitability and personality resources which would facilitate high job performance results in future. In recent years, the conducted studies have clearly revealed the relationship of broad range of professionally relevant behaviour with personality factors (Hough and Schneider, 1996; Salgado, 1997; Furnham, 1999).

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2. Method

The study sample consists of 484 nurses from health care institutions in various regions of Latvia in the age range from 21 to 66 years, the average age in the sample is 42 years, and the average duration of nursing service is 20 years. The majority of the sample is constituted by nurses in the age interval 21-51 years (82.03%), while 53.3% of the sample consists of nurses within the age interval 36-51 years. 30.4% of the nurses in the sample has 11-20-year nursing experience. The sample is dominated by hospital nurses (71.1%) with secondary professional education (68.2%) working in a single workplace (73.8%) with 1.0 load (76%) in shifts (55.2%) and every day (44.8%).

In order to achieve the aim of the study and to prove the research hypotheses, quantitative research methods were used applying several research instruments: the survey of socio-demographic characteristics survey and a questionnaire to determine the significance of professionally-relevant behavioural parameters.

The survey of socio-demographic indicators consists of 9 questions. They include the questions about respondent's age, nursing experience, educational attainment, profession, and place of work (its profile, the number of workplaces, workload, and characteristics of work schedule). The questionnaire to determine the significance of professionally-relevant behavioural parameters were designed in order to identify significant professionally relevant behavioural parameters in health care professionals. It consists of 26 behavioural parameters which are rated by the respondents according to their significance in health care work. The responses were rated according to Likert's scale (1- insignificant; 2 - of little significance; 3 - moderately significant; 4 - of great significance). The mean values of each behavioural parameter were calculated.

3. Results

The descriptive statistics indicators of sample's professionally relevant behaviour (PRB) were calculated, and the obtained data show that mean values of all professionally relevant parameters are rather similar as they are in the range of 3.51 to 3.92 (min = 1, max = 4), which may indicate that all these parameters are considered as essential by health care professionals. Three leading parameters include the ability to cooperate, appropriate behaviour in certain situation and ability to concentrate. During the study, parameters were the mean values of the parameters were compared over the groups of nursing experience duration. Table No 1. represent three parameters with the highest and three with the lowest values for healthcare professionals with different duration of nursing experience.

In order to calculate the differences among demographic groups mono-factorial dispersion analysis was performed. To draw conclusions about statistically significant differences in PRB parameter results by age groups, their mean values were compared using a post-hoc test (LSD) and the results of dispersion analysis indicate (Tab. No. 2.)

The PRB parameters which have statistically significant differences in respondents with different work experience were identified and the groups among which these differences exist were established in a similar way. The acquired data indicate that statistically significant differences in health care professionals with different work experience were found in eight parameters (Tab. No 3.). The most distinct differences can be observed in the following PRB parameters: the ability to be objectively critical of the other $F(3; 477) = 4.23$, $p < 0.05$, and job satisfaction $F(3; 478) = 4.18$, $p < 0.05$.

Table 1. Dynamics in Highest and Lowest Mean Values of Professionally Relevant Behaviour (PRB) Parameters for Respondents With Different Duration of Nursing Experience

| Interval of nursing experience | Parameter of professionally relevant behaviour | | N | M | SD |
|--------------------------------|--|--|-----|------|------|
| | Highest mean values | Lowest mean values | | | |
| Less than 10 years | Ability to cooperate | | 128 | 3,94 | 0,24 |
| | Appropriate behaviour in certain situation | | 128 | 3,89 | 0,34 |
| | Job satisfaction | | 128 | 3,88 | 0,40 |
| | | Creative approach to work | 128 | 3,42 | 0,60 |
| | | Ability to be objectively critical of others | 128 | 3,49 | 0,64 |
| | | Optimism | 128 | 3,51 | 0,59 |
| | Ability to cooperate | | 147 | 3,90 | 0,32 |
| | Ability to concentrate | | 147 | 3,88 | 0,34 |
| | Appropriate behaviour in certain situation | | 147 | 3,87 | 0,44 |
| | | Optimism | 147 | 3,44 | 0,62 |
| 11-20 years | | Tendency to reflect on one's own activities | 147 | 3,50 | 0,61 |
| | | Creative approach to work | 147 | 3,53 | 0,60 |
| | Ability to cooperate | | 126 | 3,91 | 0,34 |
| | Appropriate behaviour in certain situation | | 126 | 3,88 | 0,37 |
| | Ability to concentrate | | 126 | 3,82 | 0,43 |
| | | Ability to be objectively critical of others | 126 | 3,42 | 0,67 |
| | | Optimism | 126 | 3,46 | 0,65 |
| | | Empathy | 126 | 3,49 | 0,67 |
| | Ability to cooperate | | 81 | 3,93 | 0,38 |
| | Ability to apply the theoretical knowledge | | 81 | 3,91 | 0,32 |
| More than 30 years | Appropriate behaviour in certain situation | | 81 | 3,88 | 0,37 |
| | | Optimism | 81 | 3,54 | 0,71 |
| | | Creative approach to work | 81 | 3,58 | 0,74 |
| | | Empathy | 81 | 3,65 | 0,57 |

Statistically significant differences in professionally relevant behaviour among the respondents with different educational attainment have not been revealed by the obtained results.

Table 2. Comparison of Statistically Significant Differences in parameters of Professionally Relevant Behaviour (PRB) Across Age Groups

| Parameters of professionally relevant behaviour | Age group interval | Age group interval | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------|------|
| Ability to solve conflicts constructively | 21-35 | 36-51 | -0,16* | 0,05 | 0,01 |
| | 21-35 | 52-76 | -0,15* | 0,06 | 0,02 |
| Professional and life experience | 21-35 | 36-51 | -0,12* | 0,05 | 0,01 |
| | 21-35 | 52-76 | -0,15* | 0,07 | 0,04 |
| Ability to be objectively critical of others | 52-76 | 21-35 | 0,22* | 0,08 | 0,01 |
| | 52-76 | 36-51 | 0,19* | 0,08 | 0,01 |
| Compliance with work ethics | 21-35 | 52-76 | -0,15* | 0,07 | 0,02 |
| Tendency to reflect on one's own activities | 36-51 | 52-76 | -0,16* | 0,07 | 0,03 |
| Job satisfaction | 21-35 | 36-51 | 0,12* | 0,05 | 0,02 |

*. $p < 0.05$

Table 3. Comparison of Statistically Significant Differences in the Parameters of Professionally Relevant Behaviour in Groups with Different Length of Nursing Experience

| Parameters of professionally relevant behaviour | Range of work experience | Range of work experience | Mean Difference | Std. Error | Sig. |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|------------|------|
| Ability to apply theoretical knowledge | 21-30 | more than 30 | -0,13* | 0,06 | 0,03 |
| Ability to constructively deal with conflicts | less than 10 | 11-20 | -0,13* | 0,06 | 0,02 |
| | less than 10 | more than 30 | -0,14* | 0,07 | 0,04 |
| Ability to achieve the aim | less than 10 | 11-20 | 0,13* | 0,06 | 0,04 |
| | less than 10 | 21-30 | 0,14* | 0,07 | 0,04 |
| Ability to be objectively critical of others | more than 30 | less than 10 | 0,23* | 0,09 | 0,01 |
| | more than 30 | 11-20 | 0,19* | 0,09 | 0,02 |
| | more than 30 | 21-30 | 0,30* | 0,09 | 0,01 |
| Compliance with work ethics | more than 30 | till 10 | 0,14* | 0,07 | 0,04 |
| | more than 30 | 11-20 | 0,18* | 0,07 | 0,01 |
| Tendency to reflect on their actions | 11-20 | more than 30 | -0,17* | 0,08 | 0,04 |
| Tolerance | more than 30 | 21-30 | 0,17* | 0,08 | 0,04 |
| Job satisfaction | less than 10 | 11-20 | 0,15* | 0,06 | 0,01 |
| | less than 10 | 21-30 | 0,12* | 0,06 | 0,01 |

*. $p < 0.05$

4. Discussion

The obtained descriptive statistics indicators of professionally relevant behaviour (PRB) indicate that all 26 parameters are significant for healthcare professionals, however ten leading parameters are: ability to cooperate, appropriate behaviour in a given situation, ability to concentrate, ability to apply their theoretical knowledge, ability to improve and develop their practical skills, emotional stability, ability to constructively deal with conflicts, compliance with work ethics, ability to take decisions and implement them as well as job satisfaction. Personality dimensions - the locus of control, general self-efficacy, neuroticism and personal value related with job satisfaction which is one of the parameters characterizing professionally relevant behaviour (Judge, Locke, Kluger, 1998). The

correlation of this set of personal qualities with job satisfaction is 0.37. Locus of control is an important factor in characterizing the personality, because it has a relationship with both the stress and the burnout syndrome (Schmitz, Neumann, Oppermann, 2000). Studies show that nurses with external locus of control have a higher risk of burnout (Shimizutani et al., 2008).

Assessing three highest mean parameters of PRB for the respondents with different length of work experience, it must be marked that the following parameters are the most notable: “ability to cooperate” and “appropriate behaviour in a given situation” (regardless of the length of work experience); less experienced nurses mention “job satisfaction” as the third most essential parameter; for more experienced nurses, “ability to concentrate” is the third most important parameter and for nurses with work experience more than 30 year, it is “ability to apply their theoretical knowledge”. It is worth paying attention to the fact that, among PRB parameters with the lowest mean scores there are such parameters as “creative approach to work” and “empathy”, which indicates that the nurses assign them less importance than to other parameters. It is essential to note that emotional intellect which comprises, for example, empathy and control over emotions can play an important role in regulation of aggressive impulses and creation of effective interpersonal relationships. This is confirmed by the results of the study carried out by D.Santesso, D.Reker, L. Schmidt and S. Segalowitz on relationship of low parameters of emotional intellect with high indicators of aggressiveness (Santesso, Reker, Schmidt & Segalowitz, 2006).

The results of dispersion analysis and post-hoc test (LSD) reveal that there are statistically significant age related differences in six PRB parameters: “the ability to constructively deal with conflicts”, “professional and life experience”, “ability to be objectively critical of others”, “compliance with work ethics”, “tendency to reflect on one’s actions”, and “job satisfaction”. In respect of the nurses within the age group 21-35years, there is a statistically significant difference with older nurses in five PRB parameters: the significance of such parameters as “ability to constructively deal with conflicts”, “professional and life experience”, “compliance with work ethics” (the nurses aged 52 -76) increase with age; “job satisfaction” is more essential for nurses in the age group 21-35 years than to 36-51 years old nurses, the importance of “ability to be objectively critical of others” increases with age (the nurses in the age ranges 36-51 years and 52-76 years). Older nurses (52-76 years) assign more importance to “tendency to reflect on one’s actions” if compared to the nurses who are 36-51 years old.

Statistically significant differences were found in eight PRB parameters in relation to the length of nursing experience: “ability to apply their theoretical knowledge”, “ability to constructively deal with conflicts”, “ability to achieve the aims”, “ability to be critically objective of others”, “compliance with work ethics”, “tendency to reflect on their actions”, “tolerance” and “job satisfaction”.

The most significant differences are noted for two parameters: „ability to be objectively critical of others”, importance of which increases with gaining more work experience, and opposite tendency is observed for the second parameter – “job satisfaction”, significance of which decreases with gaining more work experience.

5. Conclusion

The following PRB parameters are the most significant among nurses: „ability to cooperate”, „appropriate behaviour in a given situation”, „ability to concentrate”, „ability to apply they theoretical knowledge in practice”, „ability to improve and develop their practical skills”, „emotional stability”, „ability to constructively deal with conflicts”, „compliance with work ethics”, „ability to make decisions and implement them” as well as job satisfaction”. There are have not been observed any statistically significant differences in PRB related to education, however, there exist differences in relation to age and work experience:

- The significance of “ability to deal constructively with conflicts”, “professional and life experience” , “compliance with work ethics” and “tendency to reflect on own behaviour” increases with age;
- Statistically significant differences in PRB parameters related to nursing experience: the significance of “ability to be objectively critical of others” increases with the increase in nurses’ work experience and the importance of “job satisfaction decreases”.

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