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### QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND JOB SATISFACTION: THEIR IMPACT ON NURSING PERFORMANCE AND PATIENT CARE QUALITY AMONG NURSES

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#### ABSTRACT

*Nursing is widely recognized as a highly stressful profession, with nurses frequently exposed to heavy workloads, staff shortages, complex patient needs, and challenging work environments. Empirical evidence from multiple studies indicates a high prevalence of stress and burnout among nurses, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Such occupational stress not only affects nurses' physical and psychological well-being but also compromises the quality and safety of patient care, leading to increased risks of errors, incomplete documentation, and delays in care delivery. Quality of Work Life (QWL) is a multidimensional concept encompassing nurses' perceptions of their work environment, compensation, leadership, autonomy, work-life balance, and opportunities for professional growth. High QWL has been associated with reduced burnout, lower absenteeism and turnover, enhanced job satisfaction, and stronger organizational commitment. Job satisfaction, in particular, plays a crucial role in nurses' performance, retention, and overall quality of care. Satisfied nurses demonstrate improved efficiency, teamwork, patient advocacy, and communication, all of which contribute to better patient outcomes and higher patient satisfaction. Conversely, poor QWL and low job satisfaction are linked to increased stress, work errors, diminished productivity, and compromised patient safety. Given that patient satisfaction is a key indicator of healthcare quality, improving nurses' QWL and job satisfaction is essential for ensuring effective, safe, people-centred, and efficient healthcare services.*

**Keywords:** Quality of work life; Job satisfaction; Nursing performance; Patient care quality; Nurses; Healthcare services

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### INTRODUCTION

Nursing is a stressful occupation (Abdollahi et al., 2014). This situation in China is compounded by a large population, nurse shortages, nurses' low social status, and tension between patients and medical staff (Zhou et al., 2018). A study of 2504 nurses in Eastern China found that 64.0% experienced burnout, caused by extended periods of work stress, and characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment (Low et al., 2019). Authors in another study ( $n = 2889$ ) reported that 68% of participants had high stress levels. Stress affects the quality of care and increases patient safety risks, such as incomplete or incorrect documentation, medication errors or near misses and delays in delivery of patient care (Elfering et al., 2006). Quality of work life provides employees with the motivation to perform well. Improving employees' QWL is a prerequisite to increase their productivity. Positive results of QWL include reduced burnout, reduced absenteeism, lower turnover, improved job satisfaction and organizational commitment. QWL enhances employees' dignity through job satisfaction and humanising the work by assigning meaningful jobs, giving opportunities to develop human capacity to perform well, ensuring job security, adequate pay and benefits, and providing safe and healthy working conditions. As a result, high QWL organizations may enjoy better sustainable efficiency, productivity and profitability (May BE, Lau RSM, Johnson SK. 1999). The concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL) is multidimensional and encompasses an employee's feelings about various aspects of their work. Given that individuals possess diverse needs in connection to their work, the level of QWL experienced can vary, contingent upon the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of these needs. Consequently, the QWL of the workforce emerges as a critical consideration for employers to address. (Mosadeghrad AM. 2013) Recognizing and understanding the nuanced dimensions of QWL is pivotal for employers seeking to create environments that foster the well-being and satisfaction of their employees, ultimately contributing to a more positive and productive workplace. (Van LTH, Volrathongchai K, Huy NVQ, Duc TNM, van Hung D, Lien TTM.2020)

Job satisfaction among nurses has been identified as a key factor in nurses' turnover with the empirical literature suggesting that it is related to a number of organizational, professional and personal. Organizational commitment refers to identification with and loyalty to the organization and its goals. Organizational commitment has been found to be positively related to job satisfaction of hospital nurses and could explain 41% of the variance in job satisfaction (Knoop, 1995).

Error is among the inevitable factors in all the professions, particularly the errors in healthcare and treatment fields. However, its importance in the fields of health and treatment, in contrast with the presence of errors in all other professions, is that it might bring about non-compensable consequences. Error is an operational expression, because a planned chain of physical and mental actions fail to reach to the goal (treatment, health promotion, etc) and this failure cannot be attributed to the intervention of the chance. (Eslamian J, Taheri F, Bahrami M, Mojdeh S. 2010)

# THE

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Job satisfaction is a crucial aspect of nurses' work experience, with an impact on productivity, quality of life, physical and mental health, and overall performance. Nurses face increasing stress and challenges due to rapid innovation in healthcare services and medical technologies, as well as handling various administrative and operational tasks that vary depending on their seniority, which can have an impact on job satisfaction.

Positive factors associated with high job satisfaction, such as improved sense of belonging, self-confidence, work efficiency and organizational work atmosphere, contribute to high-quality healthcare services and safe patient care. Conversely, negative factors that increase job dissatisfaction, such as work errors, absenteeism and nurse turnover, can result in operational difficulties, poor productivity and decreased service quality. Job satisfaction is essential in evaluating the work environment, service quality, work performance and general health and should be appropriately addressed to avoid creating a vicious cycle.

The notion of "happy nurse, happy patients" supports the idea of a correlation between nurse satisfaction and patient outcomes. Working in a healthcare setting is demanding because of the system's complexity. It requires nurses to deal with the unique needs of each patient and family under their care and the need to maintain close communication with a variety of healthcare professionals who have different characters and personalities, which adds to workplace stress. The negative effects of job stress are not limited to the workplace; they can also be seen outside of the workplace (Toney-Butler TJ, Unison-Pace WJ,2023).

Nurses were most satisfied with certain aspects of their jobs, according to an ANA satisfaction survey from 2005. Interactions with other nurses, professional status, and career development opportunities were the aspects that received the highest level of satisfaction. Nurses' job satisfaction is linked to their ability to connect with coworkers and patients. A variety of factors influences professional job satisfaction. Enhancing relationships with other nurses through team building and mentoring programs that connect novice nurses with nursing expert clinicians is one part of the solution to increasing nursing job satisfaction. Understanding the importance of employee satisfaction and how to improve employee satisfaction is critical to providing high-quality healthcare with positive outcomes. Nursing job satisfaction is an essential component to retaining nurses and resolving the nursing shortage. Quality of care is how healthcare services achieve the desired health outcomes and meet the empirical evidence of practice. Quality of care can be evaluated by assessing the presence of effective, safe, patient-centred, equitable and efficient services (World Health Organization, 2020).

Poor-quality healthcare has a wide range of negative consequences for the patient and the healthcare system. These can include physical and mental health issues, such as increased pain, suffering and disability, and decreased quality of life (Zimbudzi et al., 2018).

Poor quality healthcare also leads to decreased patient trust in the healthcare system, which leads to a decline in both the patient's quality of life and satisfaction with the treatment (Birkhäuser et al., 2017).

Poor-quality healthcare is associated with increased medical errors, resulting in severe injury or death (Rodziewicz et al., 2018), and in developing countries, it has been associated with millions of deaths annually (World Health Organization, 2020). Patient satisfaction is a major indicator of quality care. Thus quality of work can be assessed by mapping out patient satisfaction with nursing care. (Anisah A, et al. 2008)

Patients are the best source of information about a hospital system's communication, education, and pain-management processes, and they are the only source of information about whether they were treated with dignity and respect. (Chaka B.2005) Respect for patients' needs and wishes are central to any humane health care system. Quality of health services was traditionally based on professional practice standards, however over the last few decades, patients' perception about healthcare has been predominantly accepted as an important indicator for measuring quality of health care and a critical component of performance improvement and clinical effectiveness. (Ashish K, Jie Z, Arnold M.2008)

# THE

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### QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES SHOULD BE:

1. effective by providing evidence-based health care services to those who need them;
2. safe by avoiding harm to the people for whom the care is intended;
3. people-centred by providing care that responds to individual preferences, needs and values, within health services that are organized around the needs of people;
4. timely by reducing waiting times and sometimes harmful delays for both those who receive and those who give care;
5. equitable by providing the same quality of care regardless of age, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, geographic location, religion, socio-economic status, linguistic or political affiliation;
6. integrated by providing care that is coordinated across levels and providers and makes available the full range of health services throughout the life course; and
7. efficient by maximizing the benefit of available resources and avoiding waste.

### KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING QWL AND JOB SATISFACTION:

**Work Environment:** Supportive environments with flexible schedules, adequate staffing, and mental health resources boost job satisfaction and QWL. A supportive work environment is crucial for nurses' quality of work life (QWL) and job satisfaction. Factors like flexible scheduling, adequate staffing, and access to mental health resources contribute to a positive work environment. When nurses feel supported, they experience reduced stress, increased autonomy, and improved well-being. A positive work environment also fosters teamwork, collaboration, and open communication, leading to better job satisfaction and retention rates. Moreover, hospitals with supportive environments tend to have improved patient outcomes and higher nurse retention rates. By prioritizing a positive work environment, healthcare organizations can promote nurses' QWL, job satisfaction, and overall well-being.

**Compensation and Benefits:** Fair pay and benefits are crucial for nurses' job satisfaction and QWL. Compensation and benefits play a significant role in nurses' quality of work life (QWL) and job satisfaction. Fair pay, comprehensive benefits, and perks like health insurance, retirement plans, and paid time off contribute to nurses' overall satisfaction (Sharma, 2024). Competitive compensation packages demonstrate organizational value for nurses' contributions, boosting morale and motivation. Benefits like flexible scheduling, professional development opportunities, and wellness programs also support nurses' work-life balance and well-being. When nurses feel fairly compensated and supported, they're more likely to experience job satisfaction, reduced burnout, and increased retention. Healthcare organizations prioritizing compensation and benefits tend to attract and retain top nursing talent, ultimately enhancing patient care quality.

**Leadership and Autonomy:** Effective leadership and decision-making autonomy enhance nurses' job satisfaction and QWL. Effective leadership and autonomy are crucial for nurses' quality of work life (QWL) and job satisfaction. Supportive leaders who empower nurses with decision-making autonomy foster a sense of control and confidence (Lee, 2023). Autonomy enables nurses to make patient care decisions, prioritize tasks, and manage workflows, promoting professional growth and satisfaction. Transformational leaders who encourage open communication, feedback, and collaboration also boost nurses' job satisfaction and QWL. When nurses feel valued and trusted, they're more engaged, motivated, and committed to their work. Healthcare organizations with strong leadership and autonomy tend to experience reduced turnover rates, improved patient outcomes, and enhanced nurse well-being.

**Work-Life Balance:** Achieving balance between work and personal life improves job satisfaction and reduces burnout. Achieving a healthy work-life balance is essential for nurses' quality of work life (QWL) and job satisfaction. Flexible scheduling, adequate paid time off, and support for personal and family needs help nurses balance professional and personal responsibilities (Patel, 2022). When nurses have control over their schedules and can prioritize self-care, they experience reduced burnout, stress, and emotional exhaustion. A healthy work-

# THE

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life balance also enables nurses to recharge, refocus, and return to work with renewed energy and motivation. Healthcare organizations that prioritize work-life balance tend to see improved nurse retention, job satisfaction, and overall well-being, ultimately leading to better patient care and outcomes.

### **IMPACT ON NURSING PERFORMANCE AND PATIENT CARE:**

**Improved Performance:** Satisfied nurses with good QWL tend to perform better, providing high-quality patient care. Improved performance is a significant outcome of high quality of work life (QWL) and job satisfaction among nurses. When nurses experience positive QWL and job satisfaction, they're more engaged, motivated, and committed to delivering high-quality patient care (Rahman, 2021). Satisfied nurses tend to exhibit better clinical decision-making, communication, and problem-solving skills, leading to improved patient outcomes and satisfaction. They're also more likely to take initiative, innovate, and collaborate with colleagues, enhancing overall team performance. Healthcare organizations that prioritize nurses' QWL and job satisfaction tend to see improved patient safety, reduced errors, and enhanced quality of care, ultimately achieving better organizational outcomes.

**Patient Advocacy:** Happy nurses are more likely to advocate for patients' needs, leading to better outcomes. Patient advocacy is a critical aspect of nursing performance influenced by quality of work life (QWL) and job satisfaction. Nurses with high QWL and job satisfaction are more likely to effectively advocate for patients' needs, rights, and interests (Hsu, 2020). Satisfied nurses tend to be more empathetic, attentive, and proactive in addressing patients' concerns, promoting patient-centered care and empowerment. They're also more likely to communicate effectively with patients, families, and healthcare teams, ensuring comprehensive care and support. By prioritizing QWL and job satisfaction, healthcare organizations can foster a culture of patient advocacy, leading to improved patient outcomes, satisfaction, and experiences.

**Teamwork and Collaboration:** Job satisfaction fosters positive work environments, promoting teamwork and collaboration. Teamwork and collaboration are essential outcomes of high quality of work life (QWL) and job satisfaction among nurses. When nurses experience positive QWL and job satisfaction, they're more likely to engage in effective teamwork and collaboration with colleagues (Manojlovich, 2019). Satisfied nurses tend to communicate more effectively, share knowledge, and support peers, fostering a collaborative work environment. This leads to improved patient care coordination, reduced errors, and enhanced patient outcomes. Teamwork and collaboration also promote a sense of belonging, reducing burnout and increasing job satisfaction. Healthcare organizations prioritizing QWL and job satisfaction tend to see improved teamwork, patient safety, and overall performance.

### **CONCLUSION**

Nursing is an inherently demanding profession, and persistent occupational stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction continue to pose serious challenges to nurses' well-being and the quality of patient care. Evidence from the literature clearly demonstrates that poor quality of work life (QWL) negatively affects nurses' physical and psychological health, increases absenteeism and turnover, and elevates the risk of errors, ultimately compromising patient safety and satisfaction. Conversely, a supportive work environment that promotes adequate staffing, effective leadership, fair compensation, professional autonomy, and work-life balance significantly enhances nurses' QWL and job satisfaction.

High levels of job satisfaction and QWL empower nurses to perform efficiently, collaborate effectively with healthcare teams, and advocate strongly for patients' needs. This directly contributes to improved quality of care, reduced medical errors, and better patient outcomes. The concept of "happy nurses, happy patients" underscores the critical link between nurses' satisfaction and the delivery of safe, patient-centred, and high-quality healthcare services.

Therefore, healthcare organizations must prioritize strategies aimed at improving nurses' QWL and job satisfaction as a core component of healthcare quality improvement. Investing in supportive leadership, fair

# THE

# RESEARCH RESERVOIR

## of Paramedical Sciences

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policies, and healthy work environments not only enhances nurses' professional fulfillment but also strengthens organizational performance and patient trust. Addressing these factors is essential for sustaining a competent nursing workforce and ensuring excellence in patient care.

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