Perceived Public Image of a Nurse and Work Meaningfulness among Nurses

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ABSTRACT

Background: Despite remarkable developments in the profession, nurses are viewed as physician-dependent professionals with restricted career opportunities. Their humane services are barely acknowledged which could influence the meaningfulness of their work.

Aim: The aim of the study was to find the relation between perceived public image and work meaningfulness among nurses.

Method: In a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, data was gathered using work and meaning inventory (WAMI) and Porter Nursing Image Scale (PNIS) from nurses (n =163) employed in the government sector.

Main findings: The data show a significant relation between perceived public image of a nurse and work meaningfulness, between interpersonal power and interpersonal relations of a nurse and work meaningfulness. Area of work influenced work meaningfulness, qualification influenced perceived public image and the interpersonal relation, and marital status influenced interpersonal power.

Managerial implications: Public feedback and recognition of nursing profession favour recruitment and retention of individuals into this viable career. Nurse leaders should consider strategies to enhance nurses' morale and experience of their work.

Keywords: Nurses, Perceived public image, Work meaningfulness.

INTRODUCTION

Meaningful work is defined as challenging work leading to a sense of achievement for self and making a difference in other person's life [1]. Meaningful work is also described as just and dignified work [2]. Martela [3] defined meaningful work as the work which offers a worker positive significance in life. Meaning is an significant variable in predicting work attitudes and behaviour such as satisfaction, engagement and performance [4][5]. Engagement in meaningful work brings about satisfaction and commitment at work [5].

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Quests for meaning in life are abstract and we live amidst demanding jobs, time pressures, and repetitive tasks [4]. Meaningful work is positively related to certain job characteristics and some varieties of work are felt as more meaningful compared to others. Such is a case among fire-fighters or a nurses where one doesn't have to contemplate much about the work meaningfulness as their experience of saving lives of others is felt as meaningful [3]. Nursing profession has paved through remarkable developments. However, research show that nurses perceive and in reality receive minimal recognition from public as well as media [6] which impacts their work meaningfulness.

The stereotypical public image of nursing professionals is a major concern for nurses worldwide. Nursing images in accepted media often draw on stereotypes that can damage the potential students' appeal of nursing and defame status of the profession [7]. Nurses' current job perception can have negative

consequences for themselves (e.g. burnout) as well as for the profession (e.g. negative selection)[8]. Public feedback and recognition is greatly related to job satisfaction. Today, nursing profession is developing as a valuable public service. Focus should be towards retention of experienced nurses and attracting young individuals into the viable nursing career[9].

Empirical research that investigates work meaningfulness is needed for greater understanding of the interplay between individual, organization and wider society and to understand the differences depending on the job characteristics. No studies have considered meaningful work experiences among nurses in relation to nurses' public image nor have considered factors such as type of employment or various areas of work in the health care industry. Hence this study aims at assessing the relationship between the perceived public image of a nurse and work meaningfulness among nurses and also finding the influence of the demographic variables on these two constructs.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study was conducted using a quantitative approach in which 180 participants were conveniently selected from six clusters of nurses working in the different areas of the government sector in the state of Goa, India. A sample of 30 was selected from each of these clusters. Tools used for data collection include the demographic information guide (DIG), The work and meaning inventory (WAMI) developed by Sterger[5] which consists of 10 items which would be assessed on a five point scale from absolutely untrue (Score=1) to absolutely true (Score=5) and the score could range from 10-50. The Porter nurses image scale (PNIS) was developed by Porter and Porter[10] consisting of 30 adjectives describing a nurse on a semantic differential scale with seven point rating and the overall scores could range from a minimum of 30 to a maximum of 210. The PNSI has three sub area i.e. interpersonal power consisting of 13 items which describe the nurses' professional power (score range=13-91), the second area is the interpersonal relation which consists of 10 items (score range=10-70) and gives the description about the nurses interaction with the patient and patients' family and the third area consisting of 7 items (score range=7-49) highlight the intrapersonal abilities of a nurse. After informing the participants about the purpose

of the study, their written consent was obtained and confidentiality of their response was assured. The data collection tools were provided to the participants during their work hours and were collected back personally by the researcher after two days. One hundred seventy respondents returned the data filled tools back. However, only 163 responses (90.5%) were found to be complete and therefore used for analysis. Data were analysed using SPSS version 10.0.

Data Analysis: Data analysis was done using Windows SPSS version 10.0. Data were entered in the SPSS data base and assessed for consistency, completeness and missing values. Internal consistency of the tools was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and the tools were found to be reliable (WMAI= .804, PNIS =.912). The data were analyzed using the descriptive statistics suitable for the scale of measurement. The relationships between work meaningfulness and perceived public image were evaluated using Pearson correlation coefficients and analysis of variance (ANOVA, Bonferroni) or independent K-tests (Kruskal-Wallis) were used to examine differences in group means for categorical variables and identify the association between the demographic variables and the main study variables, work meaningfulness and perceived public image.

FINDINGS

Section. I: Distribution of sample according to their demographic Variables

Table I: showing frequency and percentage distribution of sample characteristics N = 163

No.	Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	**Age in years**		
	20-30	71	43.6
	30-40	47	28.8
	40-50	28	17.2
	50-60	17	10.4
2.	**Marital status**		
	Married	52	31.9
	Unmarried	111	68.1
3.	**Religion**		
	Christian	59	36.2
	Hindu	104	63.8

Conted…

4.	Employment status		
	Regular	134	82.2
	Contract	29	17.8
5.	Qualification		
	GNM	88	54
	B.Sc. N	75	46
6.	Present rank		
	Staff nurse	150	92
	Ward in-charge	13	8
7.	Gender		
	Male	15	9.2
	Female	148	90.8
8.	Experience		
	1-5 years	51	31.3
	5-10 years	37	22.7
	More than 10years	75	46

Conted…

9.	Area of work		
	Community	25	15.3
	Psychiatry	25	15.3
	Medicine	26	16.0
	Intensive care	30	18.4
	Maternal & child health	29	17.8
	Surgery	28	17.2

Data in Table I show that most (43.6%) of the sample were younger nurses (20-30) years of age), Majority were married (68.1), Hindu (63.8%), regularly employed (82.2%), diploma qualified (54%), females (90.8%), in the staff nurses rank (92%). Many of them had 1-5 years of experience (31.3%). In terms of area of duty the sample was almost uniformly distributed with a higher response rate from intensive care area (18.4%).

Section II. Relationship between perceived public image and work meaningfulness

Table II: showing relation between work meaningfulness and perceived public image and relation between work meaningfulness and sub scales of perceived public image. N = 163

No.	Variables	Mean	SD	r	Significance
1.	Work meaningfulness	39.7730	5.4966		
2.	Perceived public image	140.5399	29.03877	.161*	Significant
3.	Perceived public image (IPR)	61.0307	12.31551	.177*	Significant
4.	Perceived public image (IPA)	45.0859	11.20923	.154*	Significant
5.	Perceived public image (IPP)	34.4233	8.82190	.086	Not Significant

Data in Table II show that nurses experienced much meaningfulness in their work (mean= 39.7730; range 16-49), and had positive perceived image of a nurse, (mean=140.5399, range= 60-210). There is a significant relationship between work meaningfulness and the perceived public image among nurses (r=.161). There was a significant relationship between work meaningfulness and the subscales of perceived public image; Interpersonal power (r=.177) and interpersonal relations, (r=.154), but not with the subscale measuring intrapersonal ability.

Section III. Association between demographic variables and the two major constructs; perceived public image and work meaningfulness

Table III: Showing association between work meaningfulness and demographic variables N = 163

No.	Demographic Variables	Chi-Square Value	df	Significance
1.	Age	.748	3	.525
2.	Gender	.080	1	.778
3.	Religion	.215	1	.643
4.	Marital Status	1.173	1	.279
5.	Employment Status	2.696	1	.101
6.	Area of work	2.674*	5	0.24*
7.	Qualification	2.774	1	.096
8.	Present Rank	1.319	1	.251
9.	Experience	.265	2	.767

*Level of significance at P< 0.05

Data in Table III show that there is a significant association between work meaningfulness and the area of work (X^2=2.674; P=.024). The experience of work meaningfulness among the sample in the community area (mean=42.2400; SD=4.675) is higher than the experience of sample in the area of maternal and child health (mean=37.5517; SD=5.61622).

Table IV: showing association between perceived public image and demographic variables N = 163

No.	Demographic Variables	Chi-Square Value	df	Significance
1.	Age	.893	3	.446
2.	Gender	.317	1	.574
3.	Religion	.258	1	.612
4.	Marital Status	2.625	1	.105
5.	Employment Status	.249	1	.618
6.	Area of work	1.119	5	.352
7.	Qualification	4.395*	1	.036*
8.	Present Rank	.098	1	.755
9.	Experience	1.463	2	.235

*Level of significance at P< 0.05

Data in Table IV show that there is a significant association between perceived public image and qualification (X^2=4.395; P=.036). The perceived public image among the diploma qualified nurses was more positive as compared to the degree qualified nurses.

Table V: showing association between perceived interpersonal power and marital status and interpersonal relations and qualification N = 163

No.	Demographic Variables	Chi-Square Value	df	Significance
1.	Perceived Interpersonal Power Marital status	4.277	1	.039*
2.	Perceived interpersonal relations Qualification	5.064	1	.024*

*Level of significance at P< 0.05

Data in Table V show that there was significant association between the sub area of perceived public image, i.e. interpersonal power and the marital status (X^2=4.277; P<0.039, df=1), which indicate that married nurses perception of public view about them as having interpersonal power is stronger than the perceptions of unmarried nurses. Similarly, there was significant association between the sub area of interpersonal relations and qualification (X^2=5.064; P<0.024, df=1), which indicate that the perception of diploma qualified nurses is more positive than the perception of degree qualified nurses. However, there was no significant association between the other demographic variables and neither interpersonal power, nor interpersonal relations nor intrapersonal ability.

CONCLUSION

Meaningful work is a balance between the individual values and characteristics of work and both of these are influenced by organization and society. Organizations should aim at attracting and retaining proficient employees who having found meaningfulness in their work will be empowered to perform more productively. One of the ways to provide environment and meaningful work is in which employees can build up meaningful relationships. Meaningful work should support the solemnity of human beings and emphasize on the importance of employee autonomy. Identifying concerns and issues related to their public image of nurses and developing strategies towards its improvement will give way meaningful work outcomes for the profession, the organisation and the public. This study is limited to the nursing profession and nurses working in the government sector. Future research recommendations are to find the mediation role of work meaningfulness between public image and other employee behaviours such as job performance, citizenship behaviours and commitment among nurse professionals.

Conflict of Interest: Nil

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Ethical Clearance: Verbal permission from the authorities and written consent from the participants were sought before the data collection.

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