WORK SCHEDULE GENDER AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AS PREDICTORS OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG MEDICAL LABORATORY ATTENDANTS IN OWERRI

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated work schedule, gender and occupational stress as predictors of job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in Owerri, Imo state. A total of 200 participants comprising of 120 females and 80 males were randomly selected from Seven hospitals in Owerri. Their age ranged between 23 and 50 years with a mean age of 32 years. Two questionnaires were used for data collection. They are Job - Related Tension Scale (JTS) developed by Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek and Rosenthal (1964) and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) developed by Weiss, Dawis, England and Tofquist (1967). Three null hypotheses were postulated and tested using Multiple Regression Statistics. The design used was Descriptive Survey Design. Findings of this study showed that work schedule did not significantly predict job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in Owerri, Imo state. However, gender and occupational stress significantly predicted job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in Owerri. The researcher therefore recommends that adequate strategies and orientation programs should be introduced to help laboratory attendants reduce occupational stress.

INTRODUCTION

The role of medical laboratory attendants in ensuring quality health care has become so prominent with the emergence of Covid-19. Although the prominence of their job has been recognized earlier, it has grown exponentially with the outbreak of Covid-19 and other attendant diseases. The medical laboratory attendants now work assiduously in helping to diagnose the virus and other diseases that are ravaging the world.. Medical laboratory attendants are responsible for collecting and receiving blood, tissue, and other samples from patients, logging and prepping, performing routine tests, setting up, cleaning, and sterilizing the laboratory and its equipment. These are really demanding and their services are expected to be nurtured in view of these tremendous roles they play in health care delivery especially in Nigeria. For them to be able to deliver in this important assignment, they should be satisfied with their work. The satisfaction is very necessary so that they can have the resources and strength to deliver in their job schedules.

Job satisfaction is the extent to which an employee likes or enjoys his/her jobs (Chan, Leong, Luk, Yeung & Van, 2010). It can be referred to the individual's general attitude or perceptions towards work (Willem, Buelens & De Jonghe, 2007). Spector (1997) defined job satisfaction as all the feelings which people have about their job which could be like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) of their job. Therefore job satisfaction serves as a benchmark on how employee either feels positive or negative about their job and that is the main reason why job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are always present at certain point and situation (Davis, Nestrom 1985). Similarly Aziri

(2011) asserts that the level of job satisfaction is within the range of extreme satisfaction and extreme dissatisfaction. Also, according kaliski (2007), job satisfaction can be perceived as feelings of accomplishment and how successful an employee is on the job which can have a direct relationship to employee performance as well as wellbeing of the employee. Moreover, George and Jones (2008) suggest that job satisfaction is composed to beliefs and feelings that individuals perceive about their respective jobs. However, job satisfaction is believed to be multi- dimensional and intricate, it can be viewed in many different ways by different individuals, usually it is related to motivation even though the scope of the connection is still not very clear Aziri (2011).

Rue and Ryaes (2003) suggest that job satisfaction is determined by some element in the workplace which include financial packages like salaries, opportunities, advancement, working conditions, and work group, further the resultant effect of the determinant serves as yardstick for job satisfaction of dissatisfaction as well as what the outcome will be, as asserted by Aziri (2011) that when discussing issues regarding job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction should be considered in order to ensure balance. Squires, Hoben, Carleton and Graham (2015) argued that though, dissatisfied employees may not quit their jobs, but such feeling of dissatisfaction can impact on them, their colleagues as well as the their quality of performance and the service they deliver in the sense that such dissatisfied employees have tendencies of displaying hostility on other employees in the workplace.

In addition, a study conducted by Bos, Donders, and Bounman- Bowner (2009) aimed at obtaining a intuition concerning job satisfaction from employee's view point opined that job satisfaction has five determinants which consist of independence, skill discretion, support from superior, chances to further education and relationship with co- workers.

The level of job satisfaction can be based on the level of importance that an employee has placed on the rewards and/or benefits in their employment. Employees will be more satisfied with their job if it provides a reward that is very important for them (Flanagan, 2006). The concept of Job Satisfaction is an essential component for employee motivation and encouragement towards better performance (Raziqa & Maulabakhsh, 2015).

Job satisfaction has different elements including salary satisfaction, the satisfaction of having potential for creativity, autonomy, nature of work, satisfaction of organizational and individual promotion policies, co-worker's satisfaction and satisfaction with available continuing education opportunities (Sveinsdottir, Biering&Ramel, 2006).The overall job satisfaction depends on what one expects and what he or she receives. An employee will remain satisfied with fewer amenities, provided he or she expects less. However, dissatisfaction occurs when one gets less than what he/she expects (Azim, Haque & Chowdhury, 2013). It can therefore be deduced that job satisfaction speaks of the positive attitudes or emotional dispositions people may gain from work or through aspects of work. Kaushik (2012) sees the job satisfaction as an emotional response to a job situation which cannot be seen, it is only be inferred and simply how the people feel about their job and different aspects of it and it refers to the way one feels about events, rewards, people, relation and amount of mental gladness on the job. Hulin and

Judge (2003) noted that job satisfaction includes multidimensional psychological responses to one's job, and that such responses have cognitive (evaluative), affective (emotional), and behavioural components.

Another important variable of note in this study is work schedule. A work schedule generally refers to the days per week and the hours per day that an employee is expected to be at their job (Doyle, 2019). There are several different types of work schedules, which vary based on the organization and the position. As identified by Alison Doyle (2019), some of them include; Full-Time Work Schedule: A full-time work schedule often requires a commitment of 37-40 hours per week. As a result of the long hours, most jobs with full-time schedules are eligible for employee benefits. These benefits can include vacation and sick days, health insurance, and different retirement plan options. Full-time schedules vary from company to company, but most of the time, employees will work the same shift every week. The most common full-time work schedule is a variant of 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, adding up to 40 hours per week.

Part-Time Work Schedule: A part-time work schedule is any schedule less than full-time employment. The benefit of this type of schedule is that it allows for greater flexibility to maintain other responsibilities outside of work. Part-time work often does not include benefits offered to full-time employees, and hours can be erratic and inconsistent from week to week. An example of a part-time work schedule could be Monday through Wednesday from 7:00 AM to 11:00 AM and Saturday and Sunday 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM.

Fixed Work Schedule: A fixed work schedule is a timetable that generally consists of the same number of hours and days worked per week. Fixed work schedules tend to stay consistent once the number of hours and the days has been agreed upon by both the employer and the worker. An example of a fixed schedule would be Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM or Thursday through Sunday from 3:00 PM to 11:00 PM.

Flexible Work Schedule: A flexible work schedule is less rigid than a fixed schedule. Employees and employers work together to determine the number of hours and days of the week the employee will work. Depending on the employer's policy, employees may be expected to work a minimum number of hours or be at work at a certain daily block of time, but shifts can often be switched with other coworkers in order to satisfy the needs of the employer and the busy life of the employee. Flexible work schedules can vary infinitely, but an example might look like: Monday - 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM, Tuesday - 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Saturday and Sunday - 2:00 PM to close.

Rotating Shift Work Schedule: Rotating work schedules cycle employees through day, swing, and night shifts. This cycle helps to distribute different shifts between all employees so that no one is stuck with the less desirable hours every shift. This work schedule is not as common but can be seen in many careers like the military, construction work, roadwork jobs, power plants, and health care. These shifts can cycle weekly or quarterly, depending on the type of work required.

A study on work schedule and job satisfaction by Sundaril, and Kathiravan, (2016)

revealed that, there is no significant relationship between shift time and job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants. Codemint (2014) reported that the interaction of work schedule and occupational stress did not significantly influence job satisfaction among hospital workers.

Another variable of note is Gender. Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of men and women, such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of men and women. It varies from society to society and can be changed (World Health Organization, 2021).

Regarding gender and job satisfaction, there appears to be a pre-established relationship between job satisfaction and a professional's gender. This relationship has been explained by the idea that job satisfaction in women is an innate quality to their gender (Sloanne & Williams, 2000). A research by Siu (2002) showed that male medical laboratory attendants were less satisfied with their job than the female medical laboratory attendants.

Some studies depict lower satisfaction among women than men (Women's Health Observatory, 2009; Hernandez, Rondon, Ariza & Manrrique, 2010), also McGilton, Hall, Wodchis, and Petroz, (2007) indicated lower levels of job satisfaction are more common in females due to higher job-related stress and less collegial support received. Other studies report similar levels of satisfaction for both genders and overall dissatisfaction with the health care system work environment (Hernandez, Rondon, Ariza &Manrrique, 2010). Finally, some studies claim that gender has no effect on job satisfaction (Ruzafa,

Madrigal, Velandrino & Lopez, 2008).Safarpour, Sabzevari, and Delpisheh (2018) stated in their study thus "considering the fact that medical laboratory attendants is a demanding occupation and regarding the physiological systems of women in such a stressful environments, thereby the level of satisfaction is lower among women. Besides, the lower satisfaction in women also stems from low fringe benefits, working at night shift and being away from family and children for long hours".

Medical laboratory attendants are generally perceived as demanding profession. Along with the increased demand and progress in the medical profession, stress among the medical laboratory attendants has also increased. Stress is experienced when demands made on individuals outweigh our resources (Shinde &Anjum, 2014). When the person is subjected to a stressor, a characteristic syndrome of physical reactions will occur. The stress concept can also be seen as active in a holistic view of the person. The stress response can be physical, psychological, emotional or spiritual in nature and is usually a combination of these dimensions. Stress, similarly, can arise from one or more dimensions and can be either internal or external (Potdar & Shinde, 2014). A moderate level of distress or "Eustress" is an important motivating factor and is considered normal and necessary. If stress is intense, continuous, and repeated, it becomes a negative phenomenon or "distress," which can lead to physical illness and psychological disorders (Kane, 2009). It is usually observed that medical laboratory attendants undergo tremendous stress which has an effect on their work performances and ultimately affects the patient care (Mohanty, 2006). Chronic stress takes a toll when there are additional stress factors like home stress, conflict at work, inadequate

staffing, poor teamwork, inadequate training, and poor supervision. Stress is known to cause emotional exhaustion in medical laboratory attendants and lead to negative feelings toward those in their care (Shinde & Mane, 2014).

Studies on stress in medical laboratory attendants have identified a variety of stressors include poor working relationships between medical laboratory attendants and doctors and other health care professionals, demanding communication and relationships with patients and relatives, emergency cases, high workload, under-staffing, lack of support or positive feedback from senior staff, role conflict and home-work imbalance Occupational stressors and low job control lead to poor job performance, decreased quality of medical laboratory attendants care and concern about the safety of patients (Sveinsdottir, Biering&Ramel, 2006). Occupational stress has been considered as an important element on job satisfaction. Studies have identified the sources of stress in medical laboratory attendants as workload, leadership or management incapability, professional conflicts and emotional demands of caring (McVicar, 2003). Bratt, Broome, Kelber, and Lostocco (2000) studied the influence of stress and nursing leadership on job satisfaction in a sample of 1973 paediatric nurses in intensive care units. The results showed that there was a significant negative correlation between occupational stress and job satisfaction of these workers. The stress received by medical laboratory attendants would decrease the job satisfaction affecting their performance. Shortage of workforce in one hand and high workload on the other hand cause occupational stress which may affect work performance and job satisfaction (Nakasis & Ouzouni, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Medical laboratory attendants play significant roles for any successful medical exercise. Their works and the dimensions have increased tremendously with the ravaging pandemic in the world now. The quality of their services directly affects successful medical operations. This is because its shortage could lead to a serious health problem resulting to adverse effect on health and well-being of the population. Unfortunately, the crises in the health sector in Nigeria are not immune to medical laboratory attendants, thus, this to critically x-ray the current issues in their work.

Relatedly, studies have shown a direct correlation between staff satisfaction and patient satisfaction in health care settings (Al-Aameri, 2000). Understanding of job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants and the determinants will help managements of hospitals to set and develop appropriate strategies and programmes that would not only lead to better job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants work force, but would also increase productivity, efficiency and quality of care, and will increase patient satisfaction with care in hospitals. Furthermore, studies on job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in hospitals in Owerr iwill improve on the existing literature, hence the need to undertake this study.

Finally, this research will provide better information, knowledge and proper understanding of the roles of work schedule, gender and occupational stress on job satisfaction especially in a pandemic period.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose the study is to examine the influence of work schedule, gender and on job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in hospitals in Owerri. The specific purpose includes;

1. To determine whether work schedule will significantly influence job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in hospital in Owerri.
2. To ascertain if gender will significantly influence job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in hospitals in Owerri.
3. To determine if occupational stress will significantly influence job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in hospital in Owerri.

Hypotheses

1. Work schedule will not significantly influence job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in hospitals in Owerri.
2. Gender will not significantly influence job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in hospitals in Owerri.
3. Occupational stress will not significantly influence job satisfaction among medical Laboratory attendants in hospitals in Owerri.

Participants

A total of 200 participants were used for the research, comprising of 120 females and 80 male medical laboratory attendants in hospitals in Owerri .They were drawn from 7 hospitals and laboratory centers in Owerri using simple random sampling technique.. The hospitals include Federal Medical Center Owerri, Imo State Specialist Hospital Owerri, Everright Laboratory center Owerri. Austin Graces Hospital Owerri, Ezem Hospital Owerri, Aladinma Hospital Owerri and Ikenegbu Hospital Owerri. The participants were however, selected using purposive sampling technique. Their age range is between 23 and 50 with a mean age of 32.

Instruments

Two questionnaires used for this study include; Job - Related Tension Scale (JTS) and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ).

Job - Related Tension Scale (JTS): This questionnaire was developed by Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoekand Rosenthal (1964).It was used to measure occupational stress. It is a 5 point Likert scale format ranging from never (1) to nearly all the time (5) response pattern, The 15-item scale was designed to assess the nature, causes and consequences of two aspects of occupational stress which are role conflict and role ambiguity.. The scale has a reliability alpha of 0.87. Oseghare, (1988) obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.39 and a concurrent validity of .46.

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ): This questionnaire was developed by Weiss, Dawis, England and lofquist (1967). It is a 5-point Likert scale format ranging from very dissatisfied (I) to very satisfied (5) response pattern. The 20-item inventory

was designed to assess job satisfactoriness. The three components of the inventory are; intrinsic satisfaction (I); extrinsic satisfaction (E); and general satisfaction (G). The items are scored directly by adding together the values of the numbers shaded in the relevant items that constitute each of the three components. The scale has a one-week interval test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.89 and a one year interval coefficient of 0.70. The 72-day interval test-retest reliability coefficients provided for Nigerian samples are, for I 0.69, E 0.82 and G 0.94, with norms for both male and female according to the three components of the scale.

Procedures

On obtaining permission to carry out this study, the researcher employed simple random sampling technique in selecting seven hospitals and laboratory centers in Owerri, Imo state where the samples for the study were drawn. The researcher introduced himself to the participants, created rapport with the participants, and briefly informed them about the aim of the study. The participants were also encouraged to sign a consent form for those who choose to take part in the study, and they were assured their response confidentiality.

Design and Statistics

The data acquired were analyzed using Descriptive Statistics and Hierarchical Multiple Regression Statistics. It was used because the researcher wants to predict relationship between variable of interest.

RESULTS

Table 1: Means, Standard and Correlations among the Study Variables

Note: N = 210, ** = P<.01, * = p<.05

The above table clearly shows that gender positively and significantly correlate with job satisfaction (r = .170, p<.05). Also, it can be deduced that there was a significant negative correlation between age and gender (r = -.237, p<.01). The correlation between occupational stress and Job satisfaction was negative and significant (r=-.566, p<.01). This implies that there was a strong negative correlation with high level of occupational stress associated with low level of job satisfaction.

Table 2: Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Predictor of Job Satisfaction

Discussion

This study examined work schedule, gender and occupational stress as predictors of job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in hospitals in Owerri, Imo state. In the study the first hypothesis stated that work schedule will not significantly predict job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in Owerri, Imo state. However, the result obtained showed that work schedule did predict job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants. Hence, the hypothesis was confirmed. This study is in constrast with the works of Sundari and Kathiravan, (2016) who found no significant relationship between shift time and job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants. This result could be possible given the fact that each employee both those on shift and non-shift had an equal time to work and rest. Therefore, one should not expect a change on how satisfied the employees' are on their work.

Gender significantly predicted job satisfaction among participants. Hence, the second hypothesis which states that gender that gender will not significantly predict job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in Owerri, was not confirmed. This study finding is in line with the works of Marasinghe and Wijayaratne (2018), Miao and Bian (2017) and Carrillo - Garcia, et al. (2013), who found higher levels of job satisfaction among women than men and significant differences in job satisfaction between male and female. medical laboratory attendants jobs are mostly undertaken by females based on the believe that they are more caring than their male counterparts.

In addition the study found that occupational stress negatively predicted job satisfaction among participants. The third hypothesis which states that occupational stress will not significantly predict job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants in Owerri, was not confirmed. This study finding is in line with Safarpour, Sabzevari and Delpisheh (2018) who found out that there was a significant relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants. This study is in contrary to Gulavani and Shinde (2014) who found out that there was no significant association found between occupational stress and job satisfaction.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have the following implications; the hospitals management should put into consideration working hours and shifts of medical laboratory attendants to avoid them from working too long so as to reduce stress and increase performance. The human resources management in hospitals should avoid gender bias as regards to salary payments of medical laboratory attendants, promotion, working hours, discrimination, and employment opportunities as this will help encourage both males and females to perform better with high job satisfaction. Also, hospital management should make adequate facilities available for shift workers especially all night medical laboratory attendants so they can get work done with ease. This will increase motivation and job satisfaction. The management of hospitals should understand that job satisfaction if improved is a component of medical laboratory attendants lives and can impact on patients safety, staff morale, productivity and performance; as such provide hospitals with adequate hospital facilities and equipment. More so, understanding of job satisfaction among medical laboratory attendants and its determinants will help managements of hospitals to set and develop

appropriate strategies and programmes that would not only lead to better job satisfaction among nursing work force, but would also increase productivity, efficiency and quality of care.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher wished to have conducted the study using a larger population but time was not enough to do so. Also one of the difficulties faced was getting the participants attention at work as most of them where often busy.

Recommendations

The management of hospitals should provide adequate hospital facilities and equipment as this will go a long way towards increasing patients' safety, staff morale, productivity and performance. Also human resources management in hospitals should be cautious and be gender sensitive during employment, promotion and assignment of working hours to promote satisfaction among the workers.

1. Managements and organizational psychologist of private hospitals should set up and develop appropriate strategies and programmes that would not only lead to better job satisfaction among nursing but would increase productivity and performance.
2. Management of hospitals should learn to reduce work load/occupational stress by employing more nurses and other hospital labor force, so as a nurse can concentrate solely on his or her job.
3. Adequate strategies and orientation programs should be introduced in hospitals to help nurses reduce occupational stress.

Conclusion

The study examined work schedule, gender and occupational stress as predictors of job satisfaction among nurses in private hospitals in Owerri, Imo state. Findings of this study showed that work schedule did not significantly predict job satisfaction among nurses in private hospitals in Owerri, Imo state; meanwhile, gender and occupational stress significantly predicted job satisfaction among nurses in private hospitals in Owerri. The researcher therefore recommends that adequate strategies and orientation programs should be introduced in hospitals to help nurses reduce occupational stress. The state government and federal government should aid hospital administrators through enacting policies and support health care development in both rural and urban regions to help promote better job satisfaction among health care professionals.

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