A Systematic Study on Nurses' Job Burnout and Human Resource Management Strategies

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the issue of nurses' job burnout and conducts an in-depth analysis of its contributing factors from multiple dimensions, including organizational management, job characteristics, and individual attributes. These factors include shortages in nursing human resources, lack of management support, excessive workload, and differences in coping strategies. Based on this analysis, targeted human resource management strategies are proposed, covering aspects such as optimizing human resource allocation, leadership development and organizational support, humanized management practices, and competency development with supporting systems. The aim is to alleviate nurses' job burnout, improve the quality of nursing work and nurses' professional well-being, and provide theoretical reference and practical guidance for human resource management in the nursing industry.

Keywords: Nurses' job burnout; Human resource management; Systematic study

1. Introduction

As a key group in the medical system, nurses assume important responsibilities such as patient care and assisting in medical work. Their work status directly affects the quality of medical services and patient rehabilitation outcomes [1]. However, job burnout is prevalent among nurses, manifested by symptoms such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. This not only harms nurses' physical and mental health but may also lead to increased nursing errors and staff turnover, posing challenges to the stable development of the medical industry. Human resource management plays a core role in alleviating nurses' job burnout. Through scientific and reasonable management strategies, it can effectively improve the working environment for nurses, reduce work pressure, and enhance their professional identity and sense of

belonging. Therefore, in-depth research on the factors of nurses' job burnout and corresponding human resource management strategies holds significant practical significance.

2. Analysis of factors causing nurses' job burnout

2.1. Organizational management factors

2.1.1. Shortage of nursing human resources

The shortage of nursing human resources is the structural root cause of nurses' job burnout. With the intensification of social aging and the growth of medical service demand, the number of hospital patients has been rising continuously, but the increase in nurse staffing has lagged behind relatively, resulting in a heavy workload for nurses [2]. Being in a high-intensity work state for a long time, nurses are physically and mentally exhausted, unable to get sufficient rest and recovery, which in turn leads to job burnout. For example, in some large general hospitals, the ratio of nurses to patients is seriously imbalanced. Nurses have to take care of multiple patients at the same time, shuttling between wards frequently to complete various nursing operations, resulting in enormous work pressure.

2.1.2. Lack of management support and absence of organizational fairness mechanisms

Management support has an important impact on nurses' job satisfaction and job burnout. When nurses encounter difficulties or pressure at work, if they cannot get understanding, support, and guidance from their superiors, they are prone to feelings of helplessness and frustration, which aggravates job burnout [3]. At the same time, the absence of organizational fairness mechanisms is also an important factor. Nurses expect to be treated fairly at work, including in terms of salary distribution, promotion opportunities, and work evaluation. If there are unfair phenomena within the organization, such as some nurses undertaking too many work tasks without getting corresponding rewards, it is easy to arouse nurses' dissatisfaction, reduce work enthusiasm and professional identity.

2.1.3. Role pressure

Role pressure is another key inducement of nurses' job burnout, and its core lies in the dual dilemma of role ambiguity and role conflict. Nurses play multiple roles at work, such as caregivers, educators, coordinators, etc. Different roles have different requirements and expectations for nurses [4]. When nurses are not clear about their own role positioning, and are not sure about the responsibilities and work priorities of each role, they are prone to role ambiguity, leading to work confusion and inefficiency. At the same time, there may be conflicts between different roles, such as the contradiction between taking care of patients' needs and following hospital rules and regulations, which puts nurses in a dilemma, increases their psychological pressure, and then leads to job burnout.

2.2. Job characteristic factors

Work overload is an important job characteristic factor contributing to nurses' job burnout [5]. Nursing work is characterized by high intensity, high risk, and high responsibility. Nurses need to work continuously for long hours and often face emergencies and unexpected situations. In addition to completing daily nursing operations such as infusion, injection, and measuring vital signs, nurses also need to participate in patient rescue, medical record writing, and communication with family members, resulting in heavy workloads. Prolonged work overload makes

nurses physically exhausted and mentally highly stressed. They lack sufficient time for rest and relaxation, which easily leads to job burnout. For example, in departments such as the emergency department and intensive care unit, nurses work at a fast pace and under great pressure. They need to stay alert at all times to deal with various complex situations, so the incidence of job burnout is relatively higher.

2.3. Individual factors

Coping strategies play a key mediating role in the development of nurses' job burnout. When faced with work pressure and job burnout, different nurses adopt different coping strategies [6]. Positive coping strategies, such as actively seeking social support, adjusting one's mindset, and reasonably balancing work and life, help nurses relieve pressure and reduce the degree of job burnout. On the contrary, negative coping strategies, such as evading problems, excessive self-blame, and complaining, not only fail to solve problems but also increase psychological burdens and accelerate the development of job burnout. For example, some nurses, when encountering work pressure, choose to communicate with colleagues, share experiences, and seek help and support, which can effectively alleviate negative emotions; while others choose to bear the pressure alone, keep problems to themselves, and long-term accumulation leads to increasingly severe job burnout.

Job competency serves as a critical protective factor for nurses against job burnout [7]. Nurses with higher job competency are able to master professional knowledge and skills proficiently, complete various tasks efficiently, and derive a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction from their work. Meanwhile, strong communication skills, teamwork abilities, and problem-solving capabilities enable nurses to better navigate workplace challenges and pressures, foster positive interpersonal relationships, and enhance work adaptability. For instance, an experienced nurse with solid professional skills can quickly make accurate judgments and interventions when handling patients with complex conditions. Such competence earns recognition from patients and their families, thereby strengthening the nurse's professional confidence and sense of belonging, and reducing the risk of job burnout.

3. Human resource management strategies

3.1. Optimizing human resource allocation

(1) Scientific calculation of nursing workload: Scientific calculation of nursing workload is the basis for rational allocation of nursing human resources [8]. By establishing a scientific workload calculation model, comprehensively considering factors such as the severity of patients' conditions, the complexity of nursing operations, and nursing time, we can accurately assess the nursing workload in different departments and at different time periods, providing a basis for nurse staffing and scheduling. For example, using the workload statistics method, detailed records are kept of the quantity and time of various nursing operations completed by nurses every day. Combined with the patients' nursing levels and needs, the standard workload is calculated to determine the number of nurses needed, ensuring that the allocation of human resources matches the actual work needs.

(2) Dynamic adjustment of nurse-patient ratio: The number and condition of patients change at any time, so dynamic adjustment of the nurse-patient ratio is a key strategy to cope with fluctuations in workload [9]. Hospitals should establish a flexible mechanism for adjusting the nurse-patient ratio according to the characteristics of different departments and changes in patient flow. During periods when the number of patients is large and their conditions are severe, the number of nurses should be appropriately increased

to reduce their workload; during periods when the number of patients is small and their conditions are mild, the number of nurses should be reasonably reduced to improve the efficiency of human resource utilization. For example, during the flu season, the number of patients in the respiratory department increases significantly, and the hospital can promptly deploy nurses from other departments to support, ensuring that the nurse-patient ratio in the respiratory department remains at a reasonable level and reducing the work pressure on nurses.

(3) Stratified use of nursing human resources: Stratified use of nursing human resources can maximize the professional value of nurses [10]. Nurses are divided into different levels based on their educational background, professional title, work experience, and professional skills, with clear job responsibilities and authorities for each level. Nurses with senior titles and rich experience are responsible for nursing patients with complex conditions, monitoring nursing quality, teaching and guiding, etc.; junior nurses, under the leadership of senior nurses, are responsible for basic nursing work and routine patient care. Through stratified use of nursing human resources, we can realize the full utilization of talents, improve the efficiency and quality of nursing work, and at the same time provide nurses with room for career development and enhance their sense of professional achievement.

3.2. Leadership training and organizational support

(1) Servant leadership training

Servant leadership training is an effective intervention to improve management support [11]. By carrying out servant leadership training courses, the service awareness and leadership ability of managers, such as head nurses, can be enhanced and enable them to pay attention to nurses' needs and provide necessary support and help for nurses. Servant leaders focus on establishing good communication with nurses, listening to their opinions and suggestions, respecting their individual differences, encouraging them to participate in the decision-making process, and creating a harmonious working atmosphere. For example, regularly organize head nurses to participate in servant leadership training lectures and workshops, through case analysis, role-playing, and other methods, let head nurses deeply understand the concept of servant leadership and apply it to actual management work.

(2) Organizational justice practices

Organizational justice practices are the basis for enhancing nurses' professional identity [12]. Hospitals should establish a fair and reasonable salary distribution system, promotion mechanism, and work evaluation system to ensure that nurses are treated fairly in terms of work input and return, career development opportunities, etc. In terms of salary distribution, comprehensive consideration is given to factors such as nurses' workload, work quality, and job risks, and the salary gap between nurses at different levels and in different positions is widened, reflecting the principle of more pay for more work and better pay for better work; in terms of promotion, clear promotion standards and procedures are formulated to provide nurses with fair competition opportunities and stimulate their work enthusiasm and creativity.

(3) Psychological contract management

Psychological contract management is a soft strategy to enhance organizational commitment [13]. The psychological contract is the implicit and unspoken mutual expectations and responsibilities between nurses and the organization. Hospitals should establish a clear psychological contract with nurses through

effective communication, so that nurses understand the organizational goals and expectations, and at the same time, the organization should pay attention to nurses' personal needs and career development aspirations, and provide a platform for nurses to realize their personal values. For example, when new nurses join the hospital, carry out induction training and communication activities to introduce the hospital culture, rules and regulations, career development paths and other information to new nurses, and at the same time understand their personal interests and career plans, help them integrate into the organization as soon as possible, and enhance their sense of identity and belonging to the organization.

3.3. Practices of humanized management

(1) Flexible scheduling system: The flexible scheduling system is a core measure to respect the individual needs of nurses [14]. Considering the need for nurses to balance work and life, hospitals should break the traditional fixed scheduling model and establish a flexible scheduling system. Work hours and shifts should be reasonably arranged based on factors such as nurses' personal wishes, family situations, and physical conditions. For example, provide flexible working hours for nurses who need to take care of their children, allowing them to adjust their commuting time within a certain range; offer appropriate subsidies and rest time for nurses on night shifts to ensure their physical and mental health.

(2) Optimization of working environment and strengthening of social support: The optimization of the working environment and the strengthening of social support form the dual guarantee of humanized management. Hospitals should focus on improving the working environment for nurses and provide comfortable, safe, and convenient working facilities and equipment, such as optimizing the layout of wards and updating nursing equipment, to reduce the physical exertion of nurses at work. At the same time, strengthen the construction of the social support system, and provide psychological support and emotional comfort for nurses through activities such as employee care programs, mental health lectures, and team-building activities to relieve work pressure. For example, set up an employee psychological counseling room to provide free psychological counseling services for nurses; regularly organize nurses to participate in outdoor development activities to enhance team cohesion and collaboration capabilities.

3.4. Competency development and support system

(1) Phased training system: The phased training system serves as the cornerstone for enhancing nurses' job competency [15]. Tailored training programs are designed according to the needs of nurses at different career stages. Newly recruited nurses receive intensive training in basic nursing knowledge and skills to help them adapt to the clinical practice environment quickly. Nurses with moderate work experience participate in specialized nursing training to deepen their expertise in specific clinical areas. Senior nurses focus on developing management and research capabilities, cultivating talent for the advancement of nursing science. Through this phased approach, nurses can achieve continuous professional growth across all career stages and improve their overall job competency.

(2) Positive coping strategy training: Positive coping strategy training is a psychological tool to alleviate job burnout among nurses. By offering mental health workshops and training courses, nurses learn evidence-based stress management techniques, including emotional regulation, time management, and problem-solving. These interventions aim to foster a proactive mindset toward stress, enhance psychological resilience, and empower nurses to navigate professional challenges effectively. For example, inviting

mental health professionals to conduct stress management seminars—featuring theoretical explanations, case studies, and interactive exercises—equips nurses with practical coping strategies.

(3) Resilience development program: Resilience development should be integrated throughout nurses' careers. Resilience, defined as the ability to recover and adapt swiftly to stress and setbacks, can be cultivated through multiple approaches. Hospitals may assign challenging tasks to strengthen nurses' problem-solving abilities in real-world scenarios. Encouraging participation in interdepartmental collaboration projects broadens their perspectives and enhances adaptability. Implementing a mentor system, where experienced nurses guide junior colleagues, builds confidence and fosters resilience by providing personalized support and career guidance.

4. Conclusion

Nurse burnout is the result of the combined effect of multiple factors, involving various levels such as organizational management, job characteristics, and individuals. Effective human resource management strategies play a crucial role in alleviating nurse burnout. Measures such as optimizing human resource allocation, cultivating leadership and providing organizational support, implementing humanized management practices, and building a competency development and support system can improve the working environment for nurses, reduce work pressure, enhance their sense of professional identity and belonging, and lower the incidence of burnout.

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Disclosure statement

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