Effect of Nurses' Role Conflict and Emotional Intelligence on Job Satisfaction

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Abstract. This study aimed to understand the relationship between nurses' role conflict, emotional intelligence, and job satisfaction, and to provide basic data that may be useful in efficient role conflict intervention and planning of human resource management. Nurses experience role conflict associated with their nursing duties during their job performance, and this role conflict is related to nurses' emotional intelligence. Additionally, nursing job satisfaction was negative correlated with nurses' role conflict and positively correlated with nurses' emotional intelligence. Therefore, to improve nurses' job satisfaction, planning should be implemented to manage nurses' role conflict and allow them to achieve a positive resolution through their emotional intelligence.

Keywords: Role Conflict, Emotional Intelligence, Job Satisfaction, Nurse

1 Introduction

Recently, hospitals have implemented a variety of management strategies to provide high quality patient-centered healthcare services. Consequently, nursing job performance has become more complex and ever expanding, and nurses experience various conflict situations among themselves and with whom they work, because there is a gap between expected and actual role behavior. Conflicts should be appropriately managed because when role conflict is severe, job-related stress increases, and professional achievement and organizational efficiency decrease (Lambert & Lambert, 2001).

Since the ultimate purpose of nursing is to help patients keep optimal status, a nurse's job satisfaction is very important. Low job satisfaction of nurses is directly related to a high level of job turnover (Cowin, Johnson, Craven & Marsh, 2008). Moreover, it is also linked with low morale (Callaghan, 2003), low quality of care for patients (Twigg, Duffield, Thompson & Raoley, 2010), and increased financial expenses (De Gieter, Hofmans & Pepermans, 2011).

Emotional intelligence plays an important part in regulating the emotions induced by fatigue or stress, and is critically required in nurses who work in a dynamic hospital

environment (Freshwater & Stickley, 2004). Therefore, we expect emotional intelligence to have a correlation with nurses' role conflict and job satisfaction. Therefore, this study aimed to understand the relationship between nurses' role conflict, emotional intelligence, and job satisfaction.

2 Methods

This is a descriptive study conducted to investigate the relationship between role conflict, emotional intelligence, and nurses' job satisfaction.

Participants were drawn from a pool of nurses who had worked for 6 months or longer at one of 3 tertiary referral hospitals and 1 general hospital located in Seoul and the Gyeonggi province. Nursing managers, including a position of head nurse and above, were excluded from the study.

Data were collected from April 8, 2013 through May 31, 2013. A structured survey was distributed to the nurses who had worked at one of 3 tertiary referral hospitals and 1 general hospital in Seoul and the Gyeonggi province. The nurses were asked to complete the survey individually.

Prior to data collection, the study was approved by the C Institute Life Ethics Committee (1041078-201307-HR-0050-02). A consent form was included with the survey. Three-hundred twentysurveys were returned. However, 23 were excluded due to incomplete responses. Therefore, 297 surveys were analyzed. Data were analyzed using SPSS/WIN 21.0.

3 Results

The mean score of emotional intelligence was 4.79 (SD = 0.72) out of a maximum score of 7. Among the subareas of emotional intelligence, self-emotional assessment (SEA) had the highest mean score (mean = 5.11, SD = 0.79), and regulation of emotions (ROE) had the lowest mean score (mean = 4.39, SD = 0.98). The mean score of role conflict was 3.81 (SD = 0.49) out of a maximum score of 5, and among the subareas, role conflict was the highest in environmental obstacles (mean = 3.93, SD = 0.62) and the lowest in lack of cooperation (mean = 3.72, SD = 0.55). Job satisfaction had a mean score of 2.93 (SD = 0.34) out of a maximum score of 5. The highest job satisfaction was observed in the subarea of interpersonal interactions (mean = 3.19, SD = 0.39) and the lowest in the subarea of wages (mean = 2.35, SD = 0.65).

Emotional intelligence was positive correlated with role conflict ($r = .22$, $p < .001$) and job satisfaction ($r = .24$, $p < .001$). Role conflict and job satisfaction were negatively correlated ($r = -.19$, $p = .001$). Of the job satisfaction subareas, wages ($r = -.282$, $p < .001$), organizational needs ($r = -.282$, $p < .001$), interpersonal interactions ($r = -.282$, $p < .001$), autonomy ($p < .001$), and job professionalism ($r = .354$, $p < .001$) were positively correlated with emotional intelligence (see Table 1).

Table 1. Correlations between Emotional Intelligence, Role Conflict and Job Satisfaction

(*N*=297)

	RC	RA (RC)	LC (RC)	EO (RC)	LA (RC)	EI	SEA (EI)	OEA (EI)	UOE (EI)	ROE (EI)
	r(*p*)	r(*p*)	r(*p*)	r(*p*)	r(*p*)	r(*p*)	r(*p*)	r(*p*)	r(*p*)	r(*p*)
EI	.22 (<.001)	.19* (.001)	.20 (<.001)	.19* (.001)	.19* (.001)					
SEA (EI)	.25 (<.001)	.22 (<.001)	.21 (<.001)	.23 (<.001)	.21 (<.001)					
OEA (EI)	.25 (<.001)	.21 (<.001)	.20 (<.001)	.27 (<.001)	.21 (<.001)					
UOE (EI)	.23 (<.001)	.21 (<.001)	.20 (<.001)	.19* (.001)	.20 (<.001)					
ROE (EI)	.04 (.460)	.02 (.623)	.09 (.109)	.00 (.961)	.04 (.468)					
JS	-.19* (.001)	-.21 (<.001)	-.13* (.020)	-.23 (<.001)	-.07 (.186)	.24 (<.001)	.17* (.002)	.07 (.174)	.26 (<.001)	.26 (<.001)
PAY (JS)	-.22 (<.001)	-.23 (<.001)	-.16* (.003)	-.27 (<.001)	-.12* (.031)	.13* (.017)	.04 (.429)	.02 (.635)	.14* (.011)	.22 (<.001)
OR (JS)	-.27 (<.001)	-.30 (<.001)	-.16* (.004)	-.25 (<.001)	-.18* (.001)	.14* (.016)	.06 (.248)	.04 (.458)	.13* (.018)	.20 (<.001)
IA (JS)	.00 (.953)	-.01 (.778)	.03 (.561)	-.04 (.405)	.05 (.390)	.22 (<.001)	.18* (.001)	.05 (.313)	.26 (<.001)	.22 (<.001)
AN (JS)	-.11* (.045)	-.13* (.020)	-.12* (.036)	-.13* (.016)	-.01 (.793)	.14* (.015)	.14* (.015)	.00 (.996)	.19* (.001)	.13* (.021)
TR (JS)	-.15* (.006)	-.13* (.026)	-.14* (.010)	-.23 (<.001)	-.08 (.147)	-.01 (.861)	.05 (.327)	-.00 (.978)	-.05 (.309)	-.02 (.675)
JP (JS)	-.03 (.573)	-.05 (.392)	-.05 (.383)	-.07 (.187)	.05 (.381)	.32 (<.001)	.24 (<.001)	.18* (.001)	.37 (<.001)	.28 (<.001)

EI=Emotional intelligence; SEA=Self emotion appraisal; OEA=Other emotion appraisal; UOE=Use of emotion; ROE=Regulation of emotion

RC=Role conflict; RA=Role ambiguity; LC=Lack of cooperation; EO=Environmental obstacles; LA=Lack of ability

JS=Job Satisfaction; OR=Organizational requirement; IA=Interaction; AN=Autonomy; TR=Task requirement; JP=Job prestige/status

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the explanatory power of emotional intelligence and role conflict in nurses' job satisfaction. The results revealed that emotional intelligence had an explanatory power of 5.5% (F = 18.18, p < .001), and when role conflict was added in the regression model, the two in combination had an explanatory power of 11.5% (F = 20.26, p < .001) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Multiple Regression of Emotional Intelligence and Role Conflict on Job Satisfaction

(N=297)

	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	2.39	.13		18.43	<.001
Emotional intelligence	.11	.02	.24	4.26	<.001
Adj R^2 = .05, F=18.18, p= <.001					
Constant	2.93	.17		16.96	<.001
Emotional intelligence	.14	.02	.29	5.32	<.001
Role conflict	-.17	.03	-.25	-4.59	<.001
Adj R^2 = .11, F=20.26, p= <.001, DW=1.71					

4 Conclusion and Suggestion

To summarize the findings reported above, nurses experience role conflict associated with their nursing duties during their job performance, and this role conflict is related to nurses' emotional intelligence. Additionally, nursing job satisfaction was negative correlated with nurses' conflict and positively correlated with nurses' emotional intelligence. Therefore, to improve nurses' job satisfaction, planning should be implemented to manage nurses' role conflict and allow them to achieve a positive resolution through their emotional intelligence.

Nurses experience role conflict for a variety of reasons, such as when they feel a lack of resources or cooperation during their job performance, when they are unsure of their role and in a difficult position because of role ambiguity, when they sense there is an insufficient number of people needed for the job performance, etc. Therefore, it is suggested that future research should develop programs to enhance emotional intelligence and ascertain the application of the programs, in addition to support plans that reduce nurses' role conflict.

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