Organizational Politics in the Workplace

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Abstract

Organizational politics (OP) is a phenomenon common in almost all institutions and is linked with undesirable consequences in employees. Although there has been a plethora of research around the world on this topic, studies describing organizational politics in nursing remain underexplored. Five standardized tools were used.

Nurses employed both in private and government – owned hospitals perceived moderate levels of OP. Positive correlations were identified between perceived OP and job stress, turnover intention, and job burnout.

Negative strong correlations were found between perceived OP and job satisfaction.

Perceptions of workplace politics in Filipino nurses were lower when compared to findings in international studies. A strong link between OP perceptions and the four job outcomes (stress and burnout levels, turnover intention, and job satisfaction) were found.

This included the use of a self-report questionnaire and exclusion of nurses from other provinces.

Perceived OP predicted nurses' stress and burnout levels, turnover intention, and job satisfaction.

Introduction

Organizational Politics is broadly defined as deliberate actions by an individual which are directed towards achievement of one's own self-interests while disregarding the welfare of others or their organization (Kapoutsis, 2016). Such actions are often hidden or may not be a part of the organizational rules and regulations, but influences directly or indirectly upon the organizations' functions and processes (Drory & Vigoda – Gadot 2010; Cacciattolo 2015; Landells & Albrecht, 2015). Organizational Politics is used to achieve personal goals and interests, protect or enhance one's own professional career, and gains resources or advantages from the organization (Butt et al. 2013; Landells & Albrecht, 2015; Kapoutsis, 2016). Research has linked OP with various negative consequences in employees such as a decrease in performance (Atinga et al. 2014), decrease job satisfaction (Meisler & Vigoda-Gadot 2014; Atinga et al. 2014), decrease organizational commitment (Atinga et al. 2014), low attendance (Atinga et al. 2014), low morale (Danish et al. 2014), negative attitudes and negligent behaviors, intent to leave the job (Basar & Basim, 2016) and neglect of duty (Javed et al. 2014).
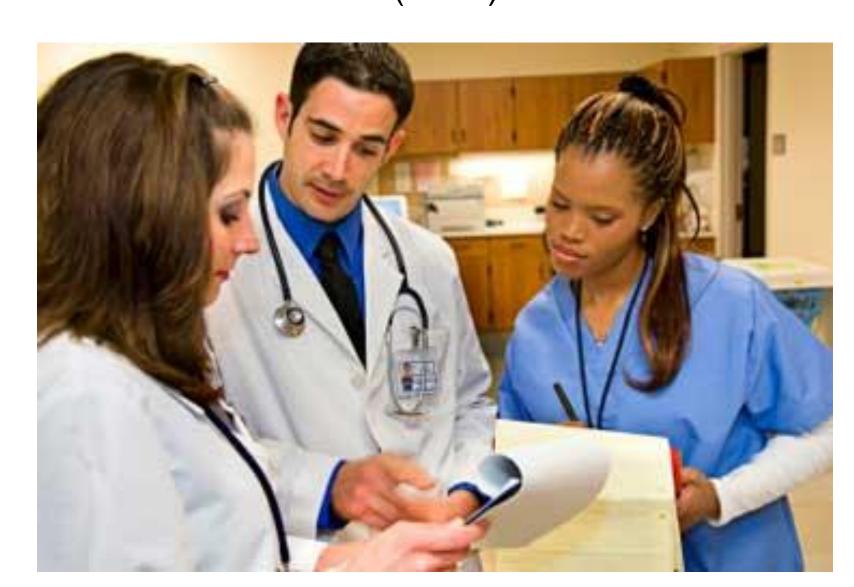
Methods

Research Design
This study utilized a descriptive, cross – sectional research design.
Samples and Settings
This study was conducted in 9 hospitals in the Central Philippines with 166 nurses that responded. Respondents were chosen using the following criteria: (1) a licensed registered nurse, (2) employed as a hospital nurse for more than 3 months, (3) could either be a permanent, casual or contractual, (4) and consented to participate in the study.
Instrumentation
✓ Self – report questionnaires were used in data collection.
✓ **Perception of Organizational Politics Scale (POPs)** using a Likert scale by Kacmar and Ferris (1991). A 9 – item questionnaire designed to capture the degree to which individuals assessed their workplace as political. The POPS measured 3 aspects of OP: "general political behavior" (2 items), "go along to get ahead" (3 items), and "pay and promotion policies" (4 items). A high score representing high perceptions of OP.
✓ Nurses' satisfaction with their current work were assessed using the tool developed by Schriesheim and Tsui (1980), the **Job Satisfaction Index (JSI)**. This tool using a Likert scale, is a 6 – item questionnaire which was designed to measure nurses' satisfaction with his/her present work. This tool contains items identical to the satisfaction facets: nature of the work, supervision, coworkers, pay, and opportunities for promotion.
✓ To measure job stress in nurses, the **Job Stress Scale (JSS)** (House & Rizzo 1972) with a Likert scale was used and assisted with capturing nurses' experiences of distress as a product of their job along with the psycho – physiological symptoms of it.
✓ The nurses' state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion or burnout was quantified using the **Burnout Measure Scale (BMS)** which was developed by Malach – Pines (2005). This tool, using the Likert scale, was designed to capture and assess an individual's level of emotional exhaustion.
✓ The intent to leave by nurses were measured using the **Turnover Intention Inventory Scale (TIIS),** a scale which used the Likert scale and was tested by Farrell and Rusbult (1992).

Results

Table 1. Nurses' Demographic Characteristics

Variables	n (%)	mean ± sd (min – max)
Gender		
Male	35 (21.1%)	
Female	131 (78.9%)	
Age (years)		
20 – 24	58 (34.9%)	
25 – 29	54 (32.5%)	
30 – 34	12 (7.2%)	
35 – 39	15 (9.0%)	
40 – 44	12 (7.2%)	
≥ 45	15 (9.0%)	
Educational level		
BS	159 (95.8%)	
MA/MS	7 (4.2%)	
Income (PhP)		
≤ 5000	122 (73.5%)	
5001 – 15000	35 (21.1%)	
15001 – 25000	8 (4.8%)	
25001 – 35000	1 (0.6%)	
Job Tenure (years)		
1 – 5	112 (67.5%)	
6 – 10	27 (16.3%)	
11 – 15	4 (2.4%)	
≥ 16	23 (13.9%)	
Rank		
Job order	51 (30.7%)	
Casual nurse	38 (22.9%)	
Permanent staff	52 (31.3%)	
Senior nurse	13 (7.8%)	
Head nurse	4 (2.4%)	
Supervisor	8 (4.8%)	
Years of employment in the current organization		5.62 ± 8.04 (0 – 39)
0 – 10	144 (86.7%)	
≥ 11	22 (13.3%)	
Hospital Employment		
Public hospital	122 (73.5%)	
Private hospital	44 (26.5%)	

Table 2. Responses on the Perception of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS)

POPS Dimension/Item	(a)	(b)	Mean	SD
Dimension 1: General Political Behavior	3		2.671	0.873
3 People in this organization attempt to build themselves up by tearing others down.		8	2.325	1.022
5 There has always been an influential group in this department that no one ever crosses.		2	3.018	1.023
Dimension 2: Go Along To Get Ahead	2		2.811	0.783
4 If co-workers offer to lend some assistance, it is because they expect to get something out of it, not because they really care.		9	2.156	1.020
7 People here usually don't speak up for fear of retaliation by others.		1	3.289	1.206
8 I have seen changes made in policies here that only serve the purposes of a few individuals, not the work unit or the organization.		3	2.984	1.020
Dimension 3: Pay and Promotion Policies	1		2.858	0.623
1 Favoritism rather than merit determine who gets ahead around here.		7	2.807	1.302
2 Rewards come only to those who work hard in this organization.		4	2.939	1.168
6 Since I have worked in this department, I have never seen the pay and promotion policies applied politically.		6	2.837	1.212
9 Promotions in this department generally go to top performers.		5	2.849	1.076
Total POPS Mean Score			2.801	0.596

(a) = Dimension ranking, (b) = Item ranking

Table 3. Linear Regression Results of Perceived Politics (independent variable) on Nurses Work Outcomes (dependent variables)

Work Outcomes	R^2	Constant α	SE	Coefficient β	(95% CI)	p value
Job Stress	0.038	2.091	0.092	+0.232	(+0.051 to +0.413)	0.012*
Turnover Intention	0.329	0.611	0.072	+0.645	(+0.503 to +0.787)	0.000**
Job Satisfaction	0.183	4.329	0.071	-0.428	(-0.567 to -0.288)	0.000**
Job Burnout	0.117	1.288	0.082	+0.384	(+0.221 to +0.546)	0.000**

*p<0.05 **p<0.001

Conclusions

Conclusion identified perceived OP which predicted nurses' stress and burnout levels, turnover intention and job satisfaction. This study revealed that OP were strongly linked to low job satisfaction, increased stress and burnout level in nurses including intentions to leave their organizations. Implications for nursing included formulating strategies and interventions which could minimize the effects of workplace politics and foster employee efficiency and organizational productivity by policy makers and nurse administrators. Some suggestions that could be implemented would include: individualized nurse directed and additional organizational directed activities of adequate new staff orientation and continued training, offering of courses for specialty certifications, staff mentoring, leadership course and peer support.

The findings of this study may provide a valuable perspective of this critical organizational issue and ultimately assist policy makers and nurse administrators in formulating empirically tested interventions that could impede the development of workplace politics and foster employee efficiency in addition to organizational productivity. Review and revisions of current policies relative to employee salaries and career promotion should be conducted periodically in order to create a workplace environment where work satisfaction is optimized while minimizing politics.

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