The correlation between nurses’ moral distress, ethical climate and nurses’ job satisfaction in selected educational hospitals of Tehran University of Medical Sciences

Abstract

Introduction: Nurses constitute one of the largest service providing groups in the healthcare system of all societies, engaging in a continuous activity in the first line of healthcare. They encounter different types of mental distresses in their workplace on a daily basis. Their persistent activity renders them prone to moral challenges of the work environment more than any other healthcare personnel. This is the reason why nurses experience physical and mental distress as part of their daily job. One factor influencing the experience of moral distress by nurses is the ethical climate of clinical environments. Considering the large population of nurses, their satisfaction and efficiency affects organizational success significantly. The present study aims to determine the relationship between moral distress, ethical climate of work environment and job satisfaction of nurses employed in selected departments of Educational Healthcare Centers supervised by Tehran University of Medical Sciences in 2002.

Method and Materials: This is a correlation cross-sectional study on nurses employed in selected departments of Educational Healthcare Centers supervised by Tehran University of Medical Sciences in 2002. Data was collected using a questionnaire of demographic characteristics, Corley’s moral distress questionnaire and Olson’s ethical climate questionnaire. Data were analyzed using SPSS software version 11 and descriptive statistics as well as Kruskal-Wallis, one way analysis of variance, independent t-test, Scheffé’s test, and Pearson’s correlation coefficient.

Findings: The findings indicate that the nurses in our study encounter an intermediate intensity of distress, while in their opinion, the frequency of encounter with distress is not high. There was not a significant relationship between nurses’ perception of moral distress and ethical climate of work environment. Of the five factors influencing ethical climate, only the managers factor had a significant, inverse relationship with the frequency of distress (p<0.05) and the patients factor had a significant, inverse relationship with frequency and intensity of distress (p=0.001). In addition, significant relationships were observed between moral distress and job satisfaction (p=0.001), as well as between ethical climate and job satisfaction (p=0.001).

Conclusion: Moral distress is an issue encountered by nurses on a daily basis. Persistent encounter with moral distresses may render nurses subject to burnout and dissatisfaction, jeopardizing their professional environment. On the other hand, although nurses’ job satisfaction is related to numerous factors, identifying and restricting the factors influencing distress may attenuate improve job satisfaction in nurses. Therefore, our findings emphasize the need for greater attention paid by authorities to the Iranian healthcare centers in order to adopt strategies for improvement of ethical climate in nurses’ work environment so that they may provide service in a calmer environment with less distress.

Keywords: ethics, moral distress, ethical climate, job satisfaction, nurse