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Enhancing the job performance of professional nurses

The role of perceived organizational support in working environment including job engagement and job satisfaction

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Abstract

Nowadays, the performance of all employees is considered to be an indispensable factor for organizations to develop. In this regard, enhancing the performance of professional nurses in the workplace is a necessity for all hospitals. This study aims to examine influences of perceived organizational support (POS) and the working environment on job performance amongst professional nurses. In addition, this study looks at the importance of job satisfaction, job engagement and role of a mediator. To empirically validate the conceptual model and test the hypothesis relationships, the authors collected data by using a questionnaire from 220 professional nurses working in a private hospital in Bangkok. For statistical analysis, the authors conducted analysis by using structural equation modeling to test the interrelationships among the study constructs. The results are based on analysis from the structural equation modeling. Structural equation model was fit to the data. The analysis revealed that there were intercorrelations amongst the constructs. Job engagement play the role as a key mediator in the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and job performance, and the relationship between the work environment and job performance. The model posits that when the professional nurses perceiving an organizational support and a positive work environment, they improved their job performance by the effects of psychological mechanisms such as satisfaction and engagement. Therefore, HR practitioners and nurse managers can help to develop more job satisfaction and job engagement. It is also important to continue improving the nurses' performance as this will enhance the service quality and productivity of the hospital. This study is valuable to the hospital executives and management levels that interested in developing policy which encouraging professional nurses to satisfy and engage in their job. This study not only enriches the existing literature, but also provides valuable assistance and guidance for strategic of HR practices by enhancing the nurses' job performance on basis of human nature.

Keywords: Perceived Organizational Support, Work Environment, Job Engagement, Job Satisfaction, Job Performance, Professional Nurse

Introduction

In recent years, Thai economic growth has been enhanced and stimulated by the continuity of Government policies. Increasingly, the new era of business and economic has made, both Manufacturers and Service Providers, to develop themselves to ensure they are continuously updating their activities to react to the ever-changing market place. The Human Resources department of all businesses (Manufacturers and Service Providers) is a key

department for ensuring all business continually adapt to the changing market. However, driving the recent Thai economy under the new economic development model "Thailand 4.0", under vision stated that "Stable, Wealth, and Sustainable Economy" is the plan for developing Thailand further. The idea of the model is to shift from industry to a Service Provider economy. This will mean less manufacturing products and a resultant increase services (The Prime Minister's Office, 2017).

Medical Services and Health Care Services growth has risen due to the trend of world population concerns about health and the ways to maintain a better health service although shifting in elderly tenor causes continuity growth in Wellness Economy of Thailand. Thai Government has implemented many government policies. One of the important policies is to develop the country to be the center for International Health or Medical Hub policy. The policy has been in operation since 2004 (medicalhub.org, n.d.). Also, there is a strategy planning on the development of the Medical Hub project from 2017-2026. The aforementioned strategy is to promote the quality of public health and residential health including becoming a regional center as an International Health Provider. As the result, developing and manipulating a Medical Hub policy has resulted in medical tourist seeking for treatments in Thailand and generating income for the country. It has been reported that Thailand is now rated as one of the world's highest for foreigners traveling for medical tourism (oxfordbusinessgroup.com, 2017).

Healthcare Providers, particularly the nursing profession and doctors is considered a major national health resource. The hospitals will be featured no less than doctors. However, stepping into the ASEAN Economic Community. Nursing is a profession that can be moved in eight workers to operate freely operation to support the liberalization of trade and international health at the center of Thailand. Recognizing the need to strengthen and improve the performance of the nursing profession to a higher standard continuously. As well as maintaining the nurses working in the hospitals of Thailand efficiently. Conducive to competition Health business both regionally and internationally.

However, despite there being many previous researches which have added to the performance of registered nurses, it has been established the most direct factor in the studies has been perceived as organizational support and environment at work that affect performance. In addition, there is small number of studies focused psychological mechanism such as engagement in work and job satisfaction as mediator and Exogenous variables in performance as the dependent variable.

To address this issue, we build on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and by investigating the process through which professional nurses' job engagement and job satisfaction are influenced by perceived organizational support and, in turn, related to job performance. Job engagement and job satisfaction, however, may also be affected by the work environment. We make three important contributions to the job performance literature by using structural equation modeling to investigate the psychological antecedents of professional nurses' job and its consequences. First, our research extends previous studies on the antecedents of job performance by examining how POS and work environment combine to impact job satisfaction and job engagement. Second, this research is the first study by exploring indirect effect of POS and work environment on the job performance in Thai professional nursing context, especially in private hospitals. This is a very important element of the international Medical Hub strategy.

Review of the literature and proposed hypotheses

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

The concept of POS was introduced more than two decades as the global catch tends to talk a sense of support in a variety of situations, rather than creating a separate belief about treatment of a specific organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986). It defines the perception between organization commitment and welfare of employees (Suazo and Turnley, 2010). POS is an exchange between an organization and its employees (Ahmed et al., 2013), which is the commitment of the organization towards the staff promotes a sense of support from the organization (Baran et al., 2012). Recent studied shown that POS is very important for both the corporate and individual well-being (Gaëtane, Florence and Marc, 2016).

Employee awareness of corporate support is reduced when companies do not consistently recognize the value of employee benefits and contributions (Eisenberger et al., 1997). In Healthcare industry, especially in relation to the nurses they require a positive support working conditions from the hospital as wanted and satisfied. In this environment, it is important to the Nurse Managers and General Hospital Managements to be fully understand the need for corporate support to ensure the well-being of their employees, so that the performance of medical help will improve the performance of hospitals.

Job Satisfaction (JS)

Job satisfaction can be defined as the perceptions an employee has about the job in general as well as satisfaction with specific aspects, such as supervision, pay, opportunity for advancement, and morale (McNeese-Smith, 1997; Kangas et al., 1999). Many researchers have theorized that job satisfaction is the first priority of both job performance and intention to leave. In the healthcare industry, many studies have shown that job satisfaction and retention are correlated to job performance. (Christen et al., 2006). Job satisfaction of nurses is the main factor for healthcare quality and brings patient satisfaction. According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) stated that whenever employees noticed about how their organization emphasized on workplace and pay attention with their well-being. They would reflect in behaviors that are advantageous to their organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Consequently, professional nurses who perceive higher levels of POS are more satisfied in their jobs.

H1. POS will positively related to nurses' job satisfaction.

Job Performance (JP)

Job performance is a multidimensional theory containing of in-role and extra-role performance (Rotundo and Sackett, 2002; Demerouti and Cropanzano, 2010). Employee attitudes and behavior are significant influencers for delivering positive performance in the service industry (Jyoti S. & Rajib L.D., 2016). In addition, Empirical evidence from research on nurses found that job satisfaction were linked to several aspects of job performance, including: patient satisfaction (Krugman and Preheim, 1999) and overall job performance (Judge et al., 2001). However, there has been minimal research done on the psychological variables such as job sat as a pass variable between POS and JP in the context of nursing. On the basis of the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Job Satisfaction mediates the relationship between POS and job performance.

Job Engagement (JE)

Kahn (1990) has introduced job engagement in order to explain how employees are engaged or disengaged to the workplace individually. Inconclusive, there is an energetic connection existing between employees and their jobs called as Job engagement or work engagement (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2003). An employee who effectively performed their tasks and can cope with various situations in the workplace is more likely to has Job engagement. Job engagement clearly differs from job satisfaction and involvement in terms of personal fulfillment (Maslach et al., 2001). According to social exchange theory, POS creates a direct impact on job engagement, the following hypothesis is offered:

H3: POS is positively related to nurses' job engagement.

Research also indicated the positive relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. However, some research has been performed on job involvement variables as variables between POS and JP in the context of nursing. Based on the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Job Engagement mediates the relationship between POS and job performance.

Engagement refers to working interest in individuals and satisfaction (James K. H., Frank L. S. and Theodore L.H., 2002). Describing work satisfaction as measures of nurses' job engagement. In other words, job engagement is adequately captured by the existing measures of job involvement, job satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation (Bruce L. R., 2006). It is predicted that job satisfaction will be associated positively with job engagement between a nurse and a job.

H5: Job satisfaction is positively related to nurses' job engagement.

Work Environment (WE)

The Work Environment is classified as the most important factor that impact individual's performance also referred to the configuration of the working environment such as space, physical layout, noise, tools, materials, and co-workers' relationship. Previous studies showed that Work Environment is able to bring positive or negative effects employees to perform their activities to achieve its results (Suharno P., Purwanto K.S., Rachmad G., 2016). Also it can influence the emotions of the employee to perform their job as Work environment delivers security, satisfaction and allows employees to work to their best.

In Recent, The changes created an impact on the Work Environment for employees in the healthcare industry which are physicians, nurses and all others healthcare staff (David Bergman et. al., 2007), The Work Environments that have imaginative is able to bring out willingness of one's efforts and abilities to perform the task (Meijman and Mulder, 1998). As it has been explained above, working environment is a place to perform a job and bring job satisfaction (Suharno P., Purwanto K.S., Rachmad G., 2016) and job engagement. Based on these information, we formed the following two hypotheses:

H6: Work Environment is positively related to nurses' job satisfaction.

H7: Work Environment is positively related to nurses' job engagement.

Work Environment and Job Performance.

Nurses' Perception on their work environment reflects many of these structural issues (Mitchell and Shortell, 1997; Jane McCusker, 2004). Additionally, there is evidence that Job Performance and Job Satisfaction affected by physical environment where employees work. (Jacqueline C. Vischer, 2007. In many cases, studies referring to work environment factors tend to refer to the physical parameters of the tasks being performed. Previous studies of the antecedents of Thai nurses' performance have focused on the role of work environment on job performance and have ignored the role of comprehensive and dynamic relationships in their mind that is psychological mechanism especially job satisfaction and job engagement. Based on this assumption, we formed the following two hypotheses:

H8: Job Satisfaction mediates the relationship between work environment and job performance.

H9: Job Engagement mediates the relationship between work environment and job performance.

Research Methods

The research method of this study was a quantitative research method. This study used a survey as a data collection tool and implemented structural equation modeling for empirically testing the proposed research model.

Sample and procedures

The research was conducted in SEM modeling. The ransom sampling method was recommended by Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010: 100) for a size ranging between 10 and 20 per one parameter. The model consists of observed variables 13 parameters. The 260 questionnaires were sent out to the full-time professional nurses from a large private hospital in Bangkok. Simple random sampling was used with the permission of the senior management and the help of human resource (HR) department in the hospital, self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the target samples. The traditional paper-and-pencil data collection process was used to maintain high levels of response rates and data reliability (Hays and McCallum, 2005) 228 completed questionnaires were returned (87.69 percent response rate). Of those 228, after cleaning the missing and outlying data, 220 responses were included in the final analysis. Completed surveys were returned directly to the researchers, and the data were kept anonymous and confidential then entered the data into the Linear Structural Relations Program: LISREL 9.30 student version to analyze the data which including frequency, means and standard deviation.

Research instrument

A quantitative questionnaire, combining five-point Likert scales measuring POS, Work Engagement, Job Satisfaction, Job Engagement and Job Performance was distributed to the sampled professional nurses. The scale used in the study was derived from the reviewed literature and designed in six parts.

Measures

The hypothesized model consists of five constructs, namely, POS, WE, JS, JE and JP. For each of these five constructs, reliable and valid constructs effectively used in previous studies were adopted in the current study. All of constructs measurement scales was originally constructed in English. In this study, the instruments were translated to Thai through the steps of

translations via a standard translation and back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1986) based on the criteria of the clarity, common language, and cultural adequacy (Presser et al., 2004). All items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale. We conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to reduce and categorize all of the items in each constructs with eigenvalues greater than 1. Factor loading of each items ranged from 0.42 to 0.84. All of factors explained 56.15 - 63.87 percent of the covariance of the variables. The reliability of the construct was analyzed by Cronbach's alpha with 0.78-0.86 reliability rate of all items. The reliability rate was more than 0.70 (Jump N., 1978) means all items were acceptable according to Hair. et. al (2010).

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) was tested by 36-items scale adapted from Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) which constructed by Eisenberger, et. al. (1986). The result showed on the commitment process was strongly supported social exchange. The scale was measured employees' global belief regarding to the level of organization value their contribution and well-being. The scale has established acceptable levels of internal reliability (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002) and construct validity (Lynn M. S. & Lois E. T., 1991). Respondents indicated their agreement with each item on 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Sample items include: "The hospital really cares about my well-being", "The hospital cares about my general satisfaction at work", and "The hospital wishes to give me the best possible job for which I am qualified".

Work Environment

The work environment was measured by the scale which adapted from the Nursing Work Index-Revised (NWI-R), of which 21-items scale proposed by Lake (2002) as cited in Jane McCusker, et. al. (2004). Nurses were asked to be performed a five-point scale on the scope of presenting on the current job in each statement. (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Sample items include: "Opportunity for nurses to participate in policy decisions", "A nurse manager is a good manager and leader", and "Collaboration (joint practice) between nurses and physicians".

Job Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction was measured by the scale which adapted from Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) which formulated by Spector (1985) consisted of 36-items scale, measuring nine facets of job satisfaction with four questions each. Nurses were asked to be performed a five-point scale on the scope of presenting on the current job in each statement. (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Sample items include: "I feel recognized and appreciated at work.", "I feel a sense of pride in doing my job.", "I feel my job is meaningful.", and "I like the people I work with."

Job Engagement

Job engagement was conducted by using Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Nurses were asked to be performed a five-point scale on the scope of presenting on the current job in each statement. (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Sample items include: "I am enthusiastic about my job.", "My job inspires me.", "I get carried away when I'm working."

Job Performance

The self-rated in-role job performance was evaluated by adapting the scale developed by Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1989). This measure consisted of 10-items measured which respondents rate their own performance using a Likert-type scale with five responses (1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = good, 4 = very good, and 5 = excellent). Sample items include: "I fulfil all responsibilities required by my job."

Data Analysis & Results

Descriptive Statistics of Sample Demographics

The demographic has shown that the variables included patient ward, age, tenure, professional tenure, education, and approximate salary. The breakdown of respondents was: - medicine ward (20.50 percent), surgery ward (20 percent) and pediatric ward (16.4 percent), respectively. The ages of the respondents were: - between 35-39 years (30.9 percent) and above 40 years (27.7 percent). Tenures of experience in current hospital was between 1-9 years (69.5 percent) and tenures of experience in professional nursing was between 10-14 years (48.2 percent). Regarding education, 70.9 percent of the respondents graduated from four-year college or university and 26.4 percent are master degree graduates. The salary range was between 30,000 – 39,000 Baht per month (43.2 percent).

The descriptive analysis of model' observed variables was described as follows; POS consisted of 2 observed variables, including Compensation & Benefit (CB) and Organizational Attentiveness (OT), with the means between 4.12 – 4.17 and Standard Deviation between 0.43 – 0.57. The OT had higher means than the CB. Work Environment consisted of 3 observed variables that were Autonomy (AU), Working Relationship (WR) and System Maintenance (SM). The observed variables' means were between 4.08 – 4.30 with the Standard Deviation of 0.42 – 0.58. The WR had the highest means in contrast of the AU which had the lowest one. Job Satisfaction has 3 observed variables, including Work Passion (WP), Coworker (CW) and Job Fulfillment (JF) with the means between 4.10 – 4.26 and Standard Deviation between 0.43 – 0.50. The CW had the highest means. Job Engagement consisted of 2 observed variables, including Absorption (AS) and Vigor (VG), the means between 3.99 - 4.21 and Standard Deviation between 0.47 – 0.53. The VG had higher means than the AS. Job Performance consisted of 3 observed variables which were Extra-role Performance (EX), Skills (SK) and In-role Performance (IN). The means of observed variables were in between 4.06 – 4.28 with the Standard Deviation of 0.45 – 0.54. The IN had the highest means meanwhile the EX had the lowest.

The Influences on Observed Variables

This analysis focuses on the influences of perceived organizational support and work environment on professional nurses' performance which mediated by psychological mechanism including job satisfaction and job engagement. It was found that the model was consistent of the model values; p-value = 0.065, Chi – square = 57.81, df = 43, RMSEA = 0.040 according to Schermelleh – Engel et. al., (2003).

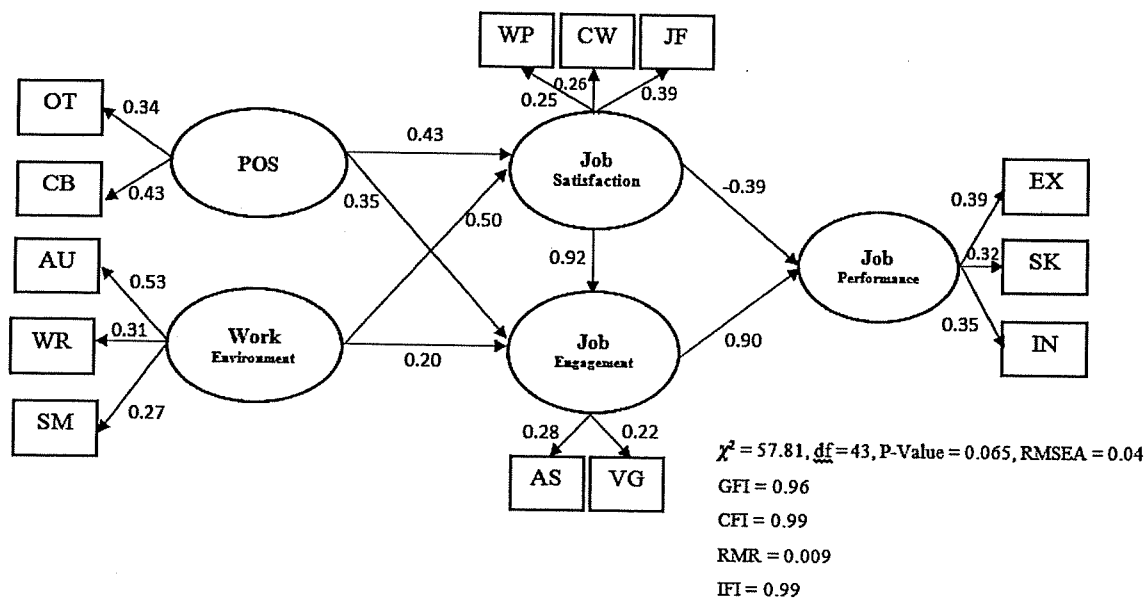


Figure 1 Perceived Organizational Support and Work Environment Model Influences on professional nurses' performance mediating role of job engagement and job satisfaction

Table I The analysis of influence in Structural Equation Model

Antecedents	Consequences								
	JS			JE			JP		
	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
POS	.43*	-	.43*	.35*	.39	.74*	-	.50*	.50*
WE	.50*	-	.50*	.20	.46	.66*	-	.40*	.40*
JS	-	-	-	.92*	-	.92*	-.39	.83	.44*
JE	-	-	-	-	-	-	.90*	-	.90*
Statistical Values: $\chi^2 = 57.81$ $df = 43$ $p = .065$ $GFI = .96$ $AGFI = .92$ $RMR = .00$									
SEM:	JS	JE	JP						
R ²	.72	.87	1.00						
Correlation Matrix of Observed Variables									
	JS	JE	JP						
JS	1.00								
JE	0.92	1.00							
JP	0.84	0.99	1.00						

DE = Direct Effect, IE = Indirect Effect, TE = Total Effect, * $p < .05$

The professional nurses' job performance was directly influenced by job engagement with positive value of .90 at the significance level of .05 and it was non-significant influenced by job satisfaction with negative value of -.39. There are positively indirect effects also found from POS mediated to job engagement which was .50 at the significance level of .05(Hypothesis 4

was supported) but indirect effect from POS mediated to job satisfaction was non-significant (Hypothesis 2 was not supported). Whereas, professional nurses' job performance was indirectly influenced by work environment that mediated to job engagement which was .40 at the significance level of .05 (Hypothesis 9 was supported) but indirect effect from work environment mediated to job satisfaction was non-significant (Hypothesis 8 was not supported).

The positively influences also found from POS to job satisfaction (with positive value equal to .43 at the significance level of .05) (Hypothesis 1 was supported) and job engagement (with positive value equal to .35 at the significance level of .05) (Hypothesis 3 was supported). While the professional nurses' job engagement was also positively influenced by job satisfaction with positive equal to .92 at the significance level of .05 (Hypothesis 5 was supported). Furthermore, work environment also positively influence on job satisfaction with positive value equal to .50 at the significance level of .05 (Hypothesis 6 was supported) but it was also non-significant positively influence on job engagement. (Hypothesis 7 was supported)

Discussion

With the implementation of Thailand 4.0 policy, this aims to transform Thai economic and social behaviors for a sustainable economy together with the projections of an Ageing Society in Thailand and other countries in Asia. With potential professional nurse shortages, retention of professional nurses and enhancing their job performance has become the key factor to the growth of health care industry of Thailand. Consistent with the hypothesis of this study, it was found that there is complicated mechanism among variables which influence the professional nurses' performance. Job Engagement is an essential component which plays the role as mediator in the relationship between both perceived organizational support and work environment on job performance. Although some hypotheses were not supported, a critical factor appeared to be the key that brings enhanced professional nurses' performance. The study result indicated that perceived organizational support and work environment contributed to professional nurses' performance through the mediation process of job satisfaction and job engagement. We founded that perceived organizational support was a strong predictor not only for job satisfaction but also for job engagement. Our findings conform to Chanyeong Kwak et. al. (2010) which claimed that nurses are influenced by a multitude of factors especially job satisfaction which was directly correlated with organizational support. Surprisingly, our research found that the job performance among nurses (e.g., in-role job performance, responsibility and quality of patient's care) was not significantly directly affected from job satisfaction. As a professional career, nursing is a professional career in the service industry where nurses are more likely to commit to their jobs and responsibilities and concentrate as much on a patient's activities of daily life. To do so, satisfaction in their job is not enough to enhance their performance but they should have engage and absorb in the career because of these psychological states. However, we also found that job engagement appears to have an inconclusive relationship with job satisfaction. Refer to this research the researcher has founded that nurses' job performance on behave of professional nurse mostly founded that some of the tasks involved job engagement as an important factor whereas job satisfaction is not the main influence. It seems that an employee who has job engagement tend to perform better task than nurses who have only job satisfaction. Hence, to enhance performance, we should to provide organizational support for the nurses to engage in their job. These findings support the notion within Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), that the higher their POS they are motivated and tend to reciprocate by being more engaged in performance behaviors (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al.,

2010; Saks, 2006). In addition, this study found that work environment was a significant antecedent of job satisfaction, supporting previous research. Abdul R. &, Raheela M., 2015; Ruchi Jain & Surinder Kaur, 2014; Singh Joy & Subhashni D., 2011). In contrast, we found that work environment was not a significant antecedent of job engagement. Thai hospitals have undergone organizational change during the past decade, with the introduction of new service management, technology and working culture caused an impacted the work environment among professional nurses, these can influence nurses feeling either satisfied or dissatisfied in their jobs. Therefore, the results suggested that when nurses perceive that their work environment supports professional practice, they are more likely to be satisfied in their work, thereby ensuring quality patient care. In addition, according to Lake (2002) and Leiter MP & Laschinger HS (2005) the quality of the nursing work environment can prevent nurse burnout, this can be interpreted that whenever the hospital supported their nurses with an appropriate work environment, nurses felt a greater sense of job satisfaction, and in turn this translated into more positive engagement in nursing.

Managerial Implications

The findings of this study shows that both perceived organizational support and work environment can play an important role in augmenting nurses' job satisfaction and job engagement. If organizational support is a key factor in nurses' engagement and performance, then the conscious creation of support, which fosters satisfaction and engagement, would be desirable. Generating job engagement of professional nurses which is the core of job performance requires many approaches. First, formalized support policies and procedures need to underpin nurses' perception of support, the hospital can provide various organizational support such as pay, supervision, promotion, and work conditions which can generate engagement both in career and in organization. Further results show that some aspects of job engagement are more able to predict job performance than others. Second, results of this study show that work environment is positively correlated with job satisfaction, indicating that the higher the support of work environment, the higher job satisfaction of nurses. The Working environment has a positive impact on the Job satisfaction of professional nurses. Bad working conditions restrict nurses to perform to their capabilities and achieve their full potential, so it is imperative that the hospital realize the importance of a good working environment. The hospital can encourage nurses working conditions in a relaxed and free environment without burden or pressure. According to Spector (1997), the hospital should attach great importance to working environment by providing job security, job autonomy, good relations with co-workers, system maintenances, motivation for performing well and participation in the decision-making process of the firm.

Limitations

Some limitations of this study should be addressed. First, we used cross-sectional design and caution is needed in inferring the causal relationships. To overcome this limitation, it is suggested that future studies should empirically test the research model developed in this paper with a longitudinal design. Longitudinal study would allow us to examine the dynamic context of job by following changes in perceptions of organizational support and working conditions over time. Second, all data was collected and analyzed from a single source which were professional nurses only. Self-reports as collected at the moment, may mean the results might be influenced by common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

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