

ILOCANO NURSE ACADEMICIANS' POSITIVE MINDSET: A KEY TO MOVE FORWARD

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ABSTRACT: *This study explored and described the work environment of Ilocano nurses in the academe. A qualitative research design using descriptive phenomenology was employed to explore the work environment of Ilocano Nurses working in the academe. The study included seven (7) participants, and data were gathered using semi-structured individual in-depth interviews. Data analysis was done utilizing the HyperResearch software. Four central themes and nine subthemes emerged from this study, exploring the work environment of Ilocano Nurses working in the academe. These four main themes include: (1) satisfaction, (2) work attitude, (3) secured environment, and (4) moving ahead. These central themes were the conceptual representations of the environment, attitudes, and steps taken towards progress working as a nurse academician. As every nurse academician shared their unique stories, this study found that working as a nurse academician entails so much passion, dedication, and a positive attitude to succeed in their teaching career. Happiness and satisfaction were evident in their narratives. Also, working in the academe has helped them grow personally and professionally. Furthermore, a good working relationship and attitude toward supervisors and workmates are the keys to rising above the challenges of working in the academe. The study recommends possible ways to build a stronger foundation and quality education, to help nurse academicians grow professionally, improve effective teaching styles, and help increase their work morale. The following recommendations are offered as possible ways to improve this study: a)The University and College should provide continues faculty development programs to build a stronger foundation and quality education; b)The College should organize and initiate activities to strengthen the faculty relationship; c)The University and College should work together to improve the internet connectivity needed for online learning; d)Nurse educators should maintain and improve effective teaching styles to produce equally knowledgeable and skilled student nurses; and, e)Work on a new system of incentives, increasing interest in incentives and encouraging nurse educators to innovate in work and appreciate their efforts to provide moral rewards for outstanding employees.*

Keywords: Work environment, academe, satisfaction, growth, development

1. INTRODUCTION

Work environments are settings that support excellence and decent work. It strives to ensure the health, safety, and personal well-being of staff and improve the motivation, productivity, and performance of an individual in the organization. Positive changes in the work environment result in a higher employee retention rate, which leads to better teamwork and demonstrates a commitment to safety in the workplace, leading to overall job satisfaction. An important first step in evaluating the components of a healthy work environment is to establish a baseline measure of the satisfaction of faculty members.

Consequently, universities will be in dire need of more instructors. Due to faculty shortages and increasing enrollments, the workload may be increasing. These issues can impact the flexibility and autonomy seen as benefits in the nurse educators' role. Also, faculty shortages may increase faculty-to-student ratios. While nursing education policies limit these ratios in the clinical setting, the number of students in the program relative to the faculty available may increase, thus increasing the workload.

Healthy work environments in the nursing academic setting are essential for faculty recruitment and retention and promote excellence in nursing education. Although the early efforts addressing healthy work environments focused on the clinical practice setting, more recent efforts have also considered the work environment in an academic setting [1]. However, despite the love for work, internal and external factors may affect the performance of nurse educators like the load assignments, cases, type of coworkers, salary, safety, demands from work and family, personalities of clients and coworkers, and many more. Tendencies are: nurses still cope,

find remedies to stand still in their work, some others battle over personal interest, file their resignation, or leave, or retire in order to breathe, get away from the burdens, relax, and or find a better place, better work, better people to serve and work with, better pay, in short, better work environment. When the workplace becomes stressful, perhaps nurses transfer or change jobs because they no longer find their present job challenging. A stressful environment for nurses could be physically and emotionally harmful, especially when conflicts with the required job or responsibilities attached do not match their capabilities. For as long as supervisors apply the principles of good supervision, then employees most likely develop high motivation, high morale, high satisfaction, and high performance. Nurses face several daunting challenges at the workplace, leaving them less efficient in rendering quality care to patients, thereby hoisting an unhealthy reputation in that healthcare setting. Nevertheless, these challenges are arguably the primary motivators for nurses to leave their profession, with fewer students opting for nursing, thereby contributing to personnel shortage [2].

The study's main objective is to describe the work environment of Ilocano nurses in the academe. It sought to determine the opportunities and benefits provided to the participants; to determine feedback and recommendations of the participants on their working environment, and to propose a plan to address the concerns of Ilocano nurses in the academe.

2. METHODS

A qualitative research design using descriptive phenomenology on the work environment of Ilocano Nurses

in the academe was used. The participants of the study were seven Ilocano nurse-instructors from the University of Northern Philippines (College of Nursing and College of Health Sciences) and Ilocos Sur Community College, holding permanent positions, who have served at least ten years in the College of Nursing and College of Health Sciences in the University of Northern Philippines and Ilocos Sur Community College. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were the most appropriate technique for data collection. The interviews were conducted using a pre-prepared interview guide. Participants were encouraged to talk freely and tell stories using their own words. The study was reviewed and approved by the University Ethics Review Committee (A-2020-137). The participants are also given informed consent and their anonymity was given utmost consideration in compliance with the Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012 of the Philippines.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The central themes and subthemes from the data are presented in the conceptual map below.

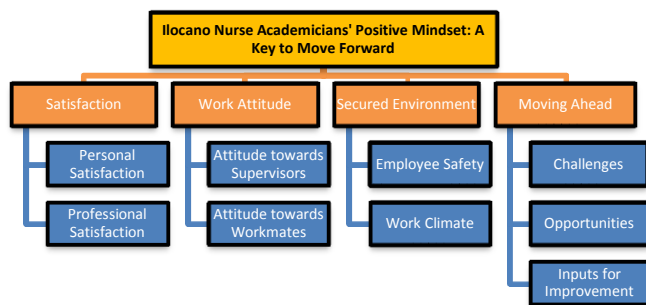


Figure 1: Conceptual Map

Figure 1 shows the main themes and sub-themes emerged from the study.

This study that dealt with the work environment of Ilocano Nurses in the academe described their experiences and attitudes as nurse academicians. Four (4) main themes and nine (9) subthemes emerged based on their subjective narrations. These themes include: (1) satisfaction (subthemes: personal satisfaction, professional satisfaction), (2) work attitude (subthemes: attitude towards supervisors, attitude towards workmates), (3) secured environment (subthemes: employee safety, work climate), and (4) moving ahead (subthemes: challenges, opportunities, inputs for improvement).

Theme 1: Satisfaction

The central theme "satisfaction" represents the things that motivate employees to do good with their work. The happiness and satisfaction they get from the management and the work environment help them put in their best effort to make the organization successful.

According to a study on job satisfaction and the factors affecting satisfaction in nurse educators conducted by Arian et al. [3], the lack of positive steps toward job satisfaction leads to destructive behaviors and turnover intentions; meanwhile, it is satisfied educators who can train competent

nurses.

Ilocano nurse educators feel fulfillment in their personal and professional development.

Personal Satisfaction. Self-satisfaction is vital in leading a balanced, happy, and healthy life.

Satisfaction from seeing the students graduate with flying colors and seeing them become registered nurses is already a fulfillment to the participant.

It was evident in the participants' statements that they feel self-motivated and satisfied from seeing the students grow and develop and become registered nurses. When satisfied, they strive to find more efficient ways of getting things done.

Professional satisfaction. Professional satisfaction is a very complex feeling and attitude of an employee toward his/her professional role and work, giving a unique sense of pleasure, happiness, and fulfillment.

Every person has a need for contentment, whether it is with one's self, one's career or line of work, the environment, one's life, or others. This happiness might result in a more beneficial environment and performance [4].

Nurse educators get a sense of satisfaction when they are given opportunities and benefits to attend training and seminars and pursue higher education which helps them grow professionally. This gives Participant B a feeling of satisfaction by saying,

When employees realize they have a tailored strategy, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. A path for professional growth and development, in addition to the formal aspect of assessments, might encourage employees to stay happier for longer.

Theme 2: Work Attitude

Work attitudes refer to the feelings towards many aspects of the workplace. Two essential attitudes most connected to critical outcomes are job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Attitudes provide the basis of a person's intention to act in a given way and can also predict actual conduct under certain circumstances. People create positive work attitudes due to their personality, fit with their environment, stress levels, relationships, perceived pay justice, business rules, interpersonal treatment, whether their psychological contract is breached, and the presence of work-life conflict regulations. People with more favorable work attitudes may be more likely to perform better, exhibit citizenship behaviors, be absent less frequently and for shorter periods, and be more productive [5].

Attitude towards Supervisors. Respect in the workplace is not limited to how employees interact with their bosses. People with self-respect do not blindly follow their bosses' orders; they think for themselves and sometimes express alternative ideas respectfully. When interacting with clients and customers, as well as coworkers, employees should maintain a respectful demeanor. Those with this mentality are willing to treat others with respect and professionalism, even if they disagree with their viewpoint.

Nurse educators are very happy with the non-biased management practices of their supervisors and their good working relationship with his supervisors.

Attitude towards Workmates. Maintaining a positive attitude at work encourages people to change their negative

habits and adopt more positive ones. They will likely notice how optimism benefits them and begin working on creating a good attitude for themselves due to their example. A participant stated that a positive attitude towards workmates and a strong support system could help deal with a stressful working environment. Furthermore, Participant D said that, like any other family or organization, there are misunderstandings, but they treat each other as family and that they are happy.

Theme 3: Secured Environment

The factors that make up the work environment and impact employees are called the work environment. While some aspects of it are evident, such as the wall treatment or the number of indoor plants, others are less obvious, such as company politics or a coworker with personality traits incompatible with the company culture. Because professionals in both full-time and part-time professions must perform their duties within it, their office environment greatly impacts them. Workers are usually forced to adjust to this workplace aspect. A work environment is typically made up of various variables related to corporate and job-specific conditions, such as the employer's employee programs, physical characteristics, leadership style, company policies and protocols, company values, employee perspectives, and social behaviors [6].

Employee Safety. According to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) [7], safety refers to workplace physical and environmental conditions that meet specified Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Standards and allow workers to execute their duties without or within an acceptable exposure limit to hazards. Occupational safety also applies to production and labor process practices. Workers' health refers to their physical and mental well-being, which allows them to execute their jobs regularly.

Participant B expressed that work-from-home arrangements during the pandemic and sanitation station made her feel safer. Furthermore, following basic health protocols and getting vaccinated against Covid-19 made Participant G feel safer at work.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed people to a sudden threat of death, increasing fear and anxiety. Workplace safety and health should be prioritized to cope with these unpleasant sentiments. They are necessary for both employers' and employees' well-being. More important than anything else is the feeling of security that comes with knowing that one will return home safely after work.

Work Climate. The environment of an office is directly affected by employee involvement. The atmosphere in the office differs from the culture. An employee's view of the work environment is called the climate. How employees feel at work and how motivated they are to accomplish well are directly related to how they feel. Culture, on the other hand, is about values and traditions. How a manager treats his or her staff has a big impact on the workplace atmosphere, and it may make or break a team's morale and productivity. An effective manager pays close attention to the working climate and constantly strives to improve it for employees [8].

Participant E shared that being friendly and having a good attitude made working easy and happy. On the other hand,

managing multiple tasks and misunderstandings with workmates are both learning experiences for Participant G in dealing with workloads and developing a good relationship with workmates. Furthermore, Participant B shared that despite the stressful work and struggles, they try their best to support each other. Nonetheless, they are happy and satisfied. It can be depicted from the participants' statements that positive communication in the workplace contributes to a healthy climate. A positive attitude is contagious. It is important to offer help to a colleague, notice when someone is having a bad day and ask if they need anything, and contribute ideas that will help them.

Theme 4: Moving Ahead

The central theme "moving ahead" is a conceptual representation of the challenges and difficulties that must be dealt with, opportunities, and positive changes that must be taken into action to step forward.

Challenges. A study conducted by Cacayan et al. [9] on the challenges in nursing education in the new normal: basis for faculty enhancement program. The study found insufficient instructor training for new normal education; limited time for the development of modules, tests, and other instructional materials is due to the university administrators' or concerned authorities' limited time to conduct because the summer class has already begun. Due to the implementation of community quarantines, the interventions above made it more challenging to conduct. Furthermore, there are numerous nursing-related experiences/activities but limited time for implementation; students struggle to understand some activities due to the absence of physical contact from the instructor/s; faculty experience physical problems (e.g., eye strain and frontal headache) due to long hours of exposure on a computer monitor or gadget are noted concerns about the delivery of instructions).

The transition of the educational system to online flexible learning brought by the pandemic has caused challenges and difficulties for nursing educators. This is evident from the narratives of Participant A. On the other hand, participant E claimed that difficulty managing time is one of the problems nurse educators encounter in pursuing their continuing education, such as Master's and Doctorate degrees while working in the academe.

Nurses are used to adapting to new situations and thinking critically on the spot. This is also true for nurse educators. We must continue to seek out obstacles and transform them into opportunities. The present pandemic has forced us to move our courses on the internet. Our curriculum has had to be adapted, modified, and relearned. These problems have also given us new experiences with technology, allowing us to reach our learners in new ways and connect with colleagues even when we are not in the same room. These challenges have helped us "grow through" the epidemic and converted us into more accessible nurse educators [10].

Opportunities. Academic life is difficult and can be full of unanticipated pressures, such as competing demands on an educator's time. There are frequently prerequisites for research and publication. Nurse educators are frequently encouraged to join professional organizations and speak at or attend conferences. They may be invited to participate in peer

review and other academic committees or be asked to prepare grant submissions to help the school obtain fresh financing. Despite this, the majority of nurse educators are happy with their jobs. They enjoy interacting with students and are proud of their role in preparing nurses to provide patient care [11].

Participant B shared that they were given opportunities to attend seminars and training, all-expense-paid by the College and University. Furthermore, Participant D was delighted with how the new administration provided support and opportunities to achieve personal and professional development.

In terms of the faculty, it was discovered that there is a tendency for the level of social sensitivity to develop or deepen if faculty members are more involved in various organizations, have attended different seminars, have been exposed to different environments, and have mixed with people with varied expertise [12].

Nurse educators can do a better job if they have broader skills and knowledge. When a company gives training, seminars, and workshops, employees may feel more confident in their ability to execute their jobs and work harder. Employees who are given such opportunities are more productive and satisfied.

Inputs for Improvement. According to Ahtisham [13], nurse educators who are new to the field or want to become educators must constantly reflect on their teaching philosophy, examine their teaching and learning methods, and determine their teaching style. They may recognize their strengths and limits through critical self-analysis and reflect on them regularly. Additionally, novice nurse educators should employ innovative, practical, and student-centered teaching and learning methodologies. She would not have considered conducting a critical self-analysis of her teaching strategy early in her career. As she reflects on her experiences, she becomes more aware of her strengths and flaws as a teacher.

Participant B recommended a once or twice a year team building activities to promote a stronger relationship among workmates. He articulated the need to provide stronger internet connection in the University to facilitate a better virtual class experience among learners and a more often conduct of face-to-face classes since we have improved a lot from our present situation brought by the pandemic.

Nurse academicians believe that activity-based team building can contribute to a sense of camaraderie, fun, and bonding outside the usual work environment. They would develop communication, planning, problem-solving, and conflict resolution skills through a series of enjoyable and stimulating team-building events. These team-building activity ideas can develop true connections, deeper talks, and processing, which aid in long-term team building.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As every nurse academician with different experiences shared their unique stories, this study found that working as a nurse academician entails so much passion, dedication, and a positive attitude to succeed in their teaching career. Happiness and satisfaction were evident in their narratives. Also, working in the academe has helped them grow

personally and professionally. Furthermore, a good working relationship and attitude toward supervisors and workmates are the keys to rising above the challenges of working in the academe.

The following recommendations are offered as possible ways to improve this study: 1) The University and College should provide continues faculty development programs to build a stronger foundation and quality education; 2) The College should organize and initiate activities to strengthen the faculty relationship, such as team-building activities; 3) The University and College should work together to improve the internet connectivity needed for online learning; 4) Nurse educators should maintain and improve effective teaching styles to produce equally knowledgeable and skilled student nurses; 5) Work on a new system of incentives, increasing interest in incentives and encouraging nurse educators to innovate in work and appreciate their efforts to provide moral rewards for outstanding employees.

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