

Factors influencing satisfaction of non-medical healthcare personnel

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Abstract

Introduction: At present, monitoring of employee satisfaction is one of the standards of quality management in accredited hospitals. Assessment of satisfaction and finding incentives for greater engagement of employees should be a standard tool of personnel management. In healthcare organizations it is necessary to monitor employee satisfaction not only to ensure greater engagement, but also to prevent burnout syndrome, which also strongly affects the quality of provided health care.

Aim: The aim of this paper is to present part of the results of a satisfaction survey, focusing on the significance of factors influencing satisfaction of non-medical healthcare personnel in an acute care hospital.

Method: The data were collected in a satisfaction survey in an acute care hospital. The survey used anonymous online questionnaires, which were constructed on the basis of standardized questionnaires of the Gallup agency, surveys implemented in the project TNS AISA (Engagement of employees in the Czech Republic) and specific requirements of the hospital quality manager.

Results: 1 178 non-medical healthcare employees included in the research sample mention as the most important factors influencing their perception of the social climate the following: good cooperation in the department, friendly interpersonal relationships and good relations with the immediate supervisor.

Conclusion: The survey results lead to recommendations aimed particularly at improvement of internal communication and personnel management, which contribute to the creation of the desired social climate and organization culture. To stabilize the employees and improve their relationship with the organization it is necessary to build greater confidence in the top-level management through more transparent communication, focusing on the common goals and vision of the organization.

Keywords: engagement, non-medical healthcare personnel, organizational culture, professional satisfaction, social climate

Introduction

Recently, the interest in the issue of job satisfaction of healthcare professionals has been increasing, especially in the context of the continuing shortage of physicians and nurses. Medical facilities are facing the problem of how to recruit and retain qualified and motivated staff (Bártlová, 2006). Employee satisfaction affects the functioning of healthcare organizations and their results. The path leads from satisfied employees to satisfied patients, who are the main subject of interest of medical facilities. Monitoring employee satisfaction is the basis for successful human resources management; it is an important source of information and feedback to the management.

Job satisfaction is related to the content of one's work. It is a positive emotional state that results from the job evaluation or work experience (Locke, 1976 in Arnold, 2007). Employee satisfaction is reflected in their own engagement. However, engagement does not mean satisfaction (Gallup, 2008). A satisfied employee may not have the motivation to serve the organization for the best performance. According to Armstrong (2007), it is possible to talk about engagement when people are devoted to their work and if they are interested in what they do. Engaged behavior shows faith in the organization, spreading its good name, focus on their own work, working effort to make things better, close cooperation with colleagues in order to improve work performance, etc. (Gallup, 2008).

As reported by Holá (2011), engagement is a matter of quality management and effective internal communication. Employees should know what is happening in the organization, what the goal is, where the organization is going and what role the employees play in it. Satisfaction and employee engagement affect the quality of their work, reduce the probability of errors and influence attitudes to the medical profession. Dissatisfied and disengaged employees may have a tendency to a higher rate of absenteeism, lower productivity, poor morale, higher fluctuation etc., which ultimately have an impact on poorer results of the whole healthcare organization.

Organizational culture and social climate in the organization also have a significant influence on employee satisfaction and engagement. Organizational culture is presented by a complex of ethical norms, values and their fulfillment, a set of beliefs, attitudes, expectations and behavior patterns that form the behavior of employees (Denison, 1990). Organizational culture expresses the character, the spirit of the organization, the informal rules of the game that affect thinking and behavior of employees and the overall atmosphere in the institution (Bedrnová, Jarošová, & Nový, 2012).

Besides job satisfaction and engagement, organizational culture has an effect on mutual relations between managers and staff, on productivity, willingness to work and devotion of employees. A healthy organizational culture facilitates the process of managing an organization, helps to manage changes, and clarifies the development and orientation in the organization. It creates conditions for clear communication, enables quick decision-making, increases motivation (Armstrong, 1999; Bedrnová et al., 2012). The epiphenomenon of a healthy organizational culture in a medical facility is the loyalty of employees, their low fluctuation and joyful approach to work (Škrla & Škrlová, 2003). Management and communication play an important role in the creation, strengthening and maintaining of organizational culture (Holá & Pikart, 2014).

The provision of health care and improving its quality are influenced by a specific social climate of the workplace. The terms of social climate and organizational culture are sometimes used in the same sense, but their contents are different. While the term climate concerns mainly the atmosphere and it determines the relationship between employees and organizations, the term organizational culture describes the character of the institution, refers to the values and standards that members of the organization share and that influence their behavior (Arnold, 2007). A healthy social climate, according to Cejthamr and Dědina (2010), is characterized by good interpersonal relations, mutual trust and open discussion about issues, appropriate managerial behavior and appropriate managing style, opportunities for personal and career development, identification with the organization, loyalty of employees etc. Managerial communication and creating the desired communication environment play an important role in creating a social climate that is as a positive stimulant (D'Aprix, 2006).

It is then the management's duty to constantly cultivate and protect the social climate so as not to endanger the quality of the provided healthcare. According to Bedrnová (2012), an adverse social climate can make it difficult to meet the goals of the organization, lead to poor staff engagement, negatively affect workplace relationships and lead to conflicts; it may also intensify job dissatisfaction and subsequently increase employee fluctuation.

It is clear from the above-mentioned that a healthy social climate and organizational culture are important factors in the development and perspectives of medical facilities and it is necessary to accept satisfaction in the workplace as one of the preconditions for creating a positive attitude to work, and providing high-quality health care.

Aim

The aim of this paper is to uncover factors that influence satisfaction of a specific professional group of employees - non-medical healthcare personnel - in a selected regional acute care hospital.

Method

Data was obtained in a satisfaction survey, conducted in December 2015 and January 2016, in a selected acute care hospital. Anonymous online questionnaires were used in the survey. The questionnaires were designed on the basis of standardized questionnaires of the Gallup agency and surveys implemented in the project TNS AISA (Engagement of employees in the Czech Republic) and a discussion with the hospital quality team.

The questionnaire contained the following selected domains of stimulants involved in the creation of job satisfaction: *1. level of the formal setting of work, 2. education, professional and career development, 3. quality of the management, 4. level of engagement and the potential for innovation and cooperation, 5. level of self-realization, satisfaction with personal and professional development, 6. level of belonging to the organization.* The last part of the questionnaire contained the seventh domain: *verification of importance of selected factors for satisfaction and improvement of organizational culture.*

The entire population of the hospital employees was involved in the survey. The sample was created by those who completed the whole questionnaire properly. The sample included all employee groups according to the selected criteria: *professional occupation, membership to a department, job title and length of employment.* Employees anonymously completed the online version of the questionnaire. Anonymity was assured by one-time approach under an anonymously assigned password. Employees assessed their own satisfaction by the degree of agreement with the individual items, on a scale from 1 (definitely agree) to 5 (definitely disagree). In the last part of the questionnaire, they evaluated the importance of selected factors relevant to their work performance and influencing their satisfaction. The evaluation scale from 1 (very important) to 5 (unimportant) was used again. Ratings 1 and 2 are considered as the positive zone for evaluation of the satisfaction level. There was an option to express comments or other suggestions at the end of the questionnaire.

Results

In the survey, the entire population (physicians, non-medical healthcare personnel and other employees) of the selected acute care hospital, i.e. a total of 4 595 employees, were

approached. The proportions of individual professional groups in reality and in the sample are shown in Table 1. The sample consisted of 34% of all the employees working in the selected hospital. The proportion of respondents in the sample approximately corresponds to the distribution in the basic employee population. The largest group consists of non-medical healthcare personnel followed by other employees and physicians. This order also corresponds to the representation of individual professional groups in the hospital. The group of non-medical healthcare personnel includes nurses, midwives, radiologic assistants, paramedics, health and social workers, medical laboratory employees, nutritional therapists, pharmaceutical assistants, physiotherapists, clinical speech therapists and clinical psychologists, medical assistants, orderlies, and patient attendants. The largest group consists of nurses. The survey involved 1 178 non-medical healthcare personnel, i.e. 39% of the entire population of non-medical healthcare personnel in the selected hospital.

Tab. 1 A comparison of proportions of professional groups in reality and in the sample

Professional group	The number in the sample	Percentage	The number in reality	Percentage
Physicians	174	11.13%	756	16.45%
Non-medical healthcare personnel	1 178	75.32%	3 017	65.66%
Other employees	212	13.55%	822	17.89%
Total	1 564	100.00%	4 595	100.00%

Table 2 shows an evaluation of individual domains (1–7) of satisfaction assessment in the group of non-medical healthcare personnel. Positive evaluation (i.e. 1 and 2) by non-medical healthcare personnel is presented only in the domains 1 - *level of the formal setting of work* and 7 - *factors influencing satisfaction and improvement of organizational culture* (average rating 1.75 and 1.52, respectively). All other domains reached average values greater than 2 in the evaluation. The weakest rating is in the domain 6 - *level of belonging to the organization*. It uncovers instability of the staff, which could disrupt the functioning of the whole organization in the future because an employee as the most important source of information in the organization spreads its reputation towards patients and potential employees and significantly affects public relations of the organization and its image.

Tab. 2 Average values of individual evaluated domains in the professional group of non-medical healthcare personnel

Professional group	Domain number						
	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7
Non-medical healthcare personnel	1.75	2.21	2.38	2.47	2.22	2.68	1.52

Table 3 shows selected factors that have the greatest impact on the social climate in the workplace, organizational culture and that create a subjective feeling of employee satisfaction, which is reflected in their own engagement. The factors are listed by the frequency of the obtained evaluation 1 (very important) and 2 (important). They are arranged by rating 1 (very important), from the highest to the lowest values. The third column is a summary of the

frequency of evaluation 1 and 2. The difference to 100% is represented by those respondents for whom the given factor is insignificant (i.e. ratings 3, 4, 5).

Tab. 3 Evaluation of the importance of selected satisfaction factors by non-medical healthcare personnel

Selected factors	Very important (1)	Important (2)	Total (Important)
1. Good cooperation in my department	84.47%	10.27%	94.74%
2. Friendly interpersonal relationships in my department	79.88%	12.99%	92.87%
3. Correct relations with an immediate superior	74.87%	16.21%	91.08%
4. Respecting ethical standards and rules of conduct in the hospital	74.36%	18.25%	92.61%
5. Sufficient staff in my department	71.90%	13.41%	85.31%
6. Showing respect for my work	69.19%	18.42%	87.61%
7. My adequate financial remuneration	69.10%	10.44%	79.54%
8. Sufficient equipment in the department	68.34%	19.10%	87.44%
9. My job security in the hospital	62.39%	22.92%	85.31%
10. Stability of employees in my department	61.71%	24.79%	86.50%
11. Good cooperation between departments in the hospital	59.17%	27.76%	86.93%

Non-medical healthcare personnel perceive as the most important (first three ranks in the assessment of the importance) the following factors: *good cooperation in the department*, *friendly interpersonal relationships* and *correct relations with the immediate superior* that directly relate to the social climate and organizational culture. *Good cooperation in the department* and *friendly interpersonal relationships* indicate the importance of the social climate (especially interpersonal relationships) that must be constantly cultivated and protected particularly by a good managerial leadership.

The factor *respecting ethical standards and rules of conduct in the hospital* is in the fourth position in the evaluation of significance. This factor is strongly influenced by the organizational culture, by setting, respecting and enforcement of the code of ethics and other written and unwritten rules. Not following the rules and their difficult enforcement are the main demotivators that strongly disrupt the social climate and employee engagement. It is therefore appropriate here to focus the attention on the implementation and compliance with the new code of ethics.

The factor *sufficient staff in the department*, which appears in the fifth position, is significant due to the current unfavorable situation related to a lack of medical personnel in Czech health care organizations.

Non-medical healthcare personnel evaluate *showing respect for work* as being more significant (6th ranking) than *adequate financial remuneration* (7th ranking). The factors which follow are *sufficient equipment in the department* (8th ranking), *job security in the hospital* (9th ranking, it also corresponds to the present situation), and *stability of employees in the department* (10th ranking). The factor *good cooperation between departments in the hospital* ranked last in the ranking of significance. This factor is unimportant for about 13% of the non-medical healthcare personnel.

Discussion

The relatively low participation in the satisfaction survey (34%) may be due to a lack of interest and weak confidence in the top-level management, inadequate identification of employees with the vision and objectives of the hospital (which proves the worst average rating of the domain no. 6 - *level of belonging to the organization*: 2.68) and inadequate communication (the assessment of communication was part of the domain no. 4 - *level of engagement and the potential for innovation and cooperation*, which was considered by the non-medical healthcare personnel as the second worst: 2.47). It is evident from the above-mentioned facts that recommendations are aimed in particular at improving management of the personnel (creating and maintaining an organizational culture and background for professional and independent work, ensuring compliance with the code of ethics, implementing a system of regular reviews of employees and management, etc.), internal communication, better and more frequent explanation of the organization's vision or greater openness and a willingness of the management to receive employee comments.

These recommendations, for example, are supported by a model (Fig. 1) that shows the way towards employee engagement through the quality of the communication environment and social climate (D'Aprix, 2006). According to D'Aprix (2006), if there is performance feedback, if employees are aware of their responsibility and if their individual needs are respected, then the identification with the organization, enhanced by the possibility to say their own opinion, is what leads to higher levels of employee engagement. The model represents building of the communication environment, which is important for creating social climate and for functioning of an organization. The survey results clearly indicate that the needs of workers are mostly in the area of good cooperation and fair relations with superiors. D'Aprix's model shows in which way these needs could be met.

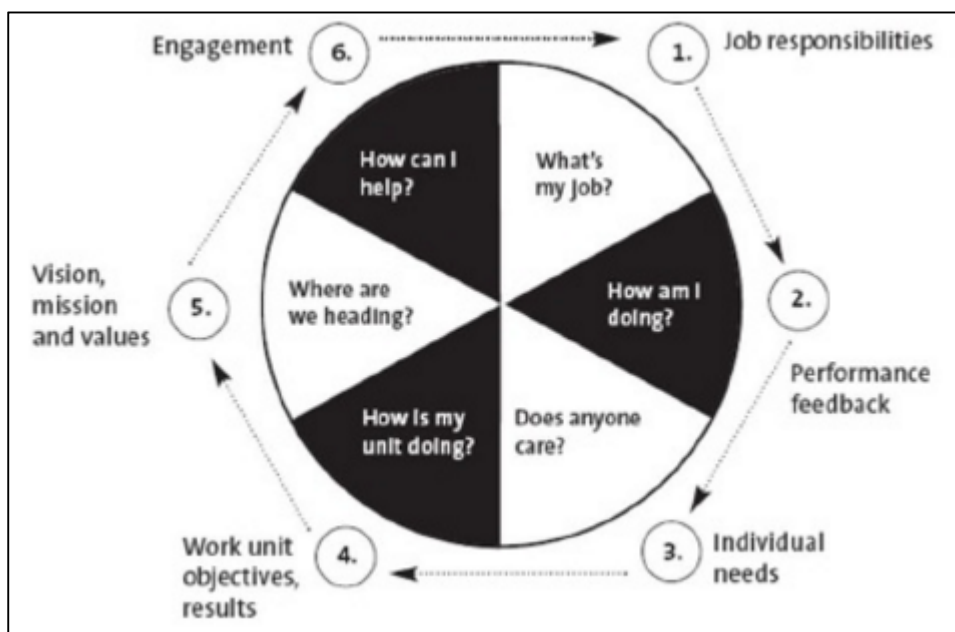


Fig. 1 **The quality of the communication environment for increasing employee engagement**
Source: D'Aprix, R. (2006).

The survey results can significantly help the management to improve specific stimulants for their employee satisfaction and to improve the quality of health care and gradually improve the image of the hospital. Engaged employees who are satisfied with their jobs and leadership,

identify with the goals of the organization and support their implementation, and spread the good name of the institution (Novotný & Pecáková, 2014). Non-engagement and dissatisfaction of employees can negatively affect whether they stay in the organization and they can also endanger the quality of the provided health care, especially if the staff don't recommend their own medical facility to the public, not even as an employer. Employees are the most important source of information about their organization (Holá, 2011) and therefore it is necessary to pay considerable attention to their satisfaction and engagement. It is important to create an appropriate communication environment that enables to discover non-functioning stimulants and change them to positive functioning stimulants.

According to research results of Ivanová and Kurfürst (2006), healthcare organizations do not look after human resources too well. Non-medical healthcare personnel (in this research, namely nurses) are satisfied with their jobs (they especially appreciate the content of their work and the job security), but not with the organization. In their opinion, medical facilities care especially about the quality of patient care, balanced economic budget, quality documentation and they prefer managerial values over care for human resources (Ivanová & Kurfürst, 2006).

The survey results can be compared with the results of Bártlová's research (2006) related to job satisfaction of nurses in the Czech Republic. The author states that half of the nurses in the Czech Republic are satisfied with their jobs. Factors that contribute the most to job satisfaction are good relations in the department, work diversity and good work organization. Financial remuneration contributes to job satisfaction only to a small extent (Bártlová, 2006).

Conclusion

Thanks to the survey the hospital management has received enough incentive for improvement in the area of personnel management. The results are significant especially as a kind of self-reflection for the management and should help to eliminate the weak points and to reorganize management of the personnel. The results also show that underestimating the social climate and the organizational culture in the workplace and insufficient respect for the employees lead to their job dissatisfaction and low engagement.

The assessment of factors influencing employee satisfaction shows that factors generating social climate, organizational culture and their implementation in the functioning of a specific workplace are very important for non-medical healthcare personnel. Non-medical healthcare personnel evaluate as the most significant the following factors: good cooperation in the department, friendly interpersonal relationships and good relations with their immediate superiors. These are the major challenges for the management.

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