

ABSTRACT

FACTORS INFLUENCING NURSING AS A CAREER CHOICE AND THE RETENTION OF NURSES IN THE PROFESSION IN JAMAICA

Brenda Lois Christian Hope Scarlett

Introduction

Jamaica has been in the throes of a Nursing shortage for over a decade. Fifty-five percent of the posts for registered nurses and fifty percent of midwifery posts remained unfulfilled in 1995.

Where the quantity and quality of nurses are insufficient, the prompt and appropriate delivery of health care is greatly compromised. The shortage of nurses in the public sector in particular, is a combination of the efflux of nurses from the profession in Jamaica as well as a failure to attract and retain new persons.

This study therefore seeks to examine the factors that led individuals to select nursing as a career choice and suggest methods for maintaining the cadre of nurses in Jamaica.

Methods

A sample of one hundred and twenty registered nurses was selected by use of a random sampling technique to obtain quantitative data. A purposive sampling technique was employed to procure qualitative data through a focus

group discussion. A fifty two item questionnaire was administered. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programme.

Results

One hundred and eighteen questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 98%. All respondents were female; fifty-four percent were in the age group, 25-30 years. While thirty-two percent were in the thirty-five and older age group. Eleven percent was in the 20-25 years age group. Sixty-six percent of the respondents were from the rural area and thirty-five percent from the urban area.

Sixty-four percent reported nursing school as their highest level of education, and twenty-four percent indicated university or college as their highest level. Eight-two percent of the respondents desire to help people personally influenced their choice of nursing as a career.

Seventy-two percent of respondents worked prior to entering nursing school however only nineteen percent had worked in health care settings.

Satisfaction with their nursing jobs was noted by sixty-five percent of respondents and seventy-four percent agreed that the working environment significantly affected their morale. Similarly seventy-two percent agreed that interpersonal relationship among staff members influenced job performance and retention.

Families played a pivotal role in respondents' choice of careers as ninety-two percent of respondents indicated that family members were satisfied with

their career choice; however sixty-one percent had thoughts of leaving the profession at some point in time.

Salary was perceived as being average by forty-one percent of respondents. Despite the effects of salary, work conditions and other related factors, eighty-one percent of respondents were satisfied with nursing as a career. Eighty-five percent would recommend nursing as a career choice.

Conclusion

A concerted effort must be made to address the factors impacting negatively on nursing practice.

The study revealed that nurses in the main are dedicated and motivated individuals who at times may have expressed feelings of dissatisfaction but are satisfied with the level of care given to clients. Retention of nurses in Jamaica augers well for the Public Health System.