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Career goals of a private hospital nurses and career opportunities offered to them

Selda Toygar [a], Yasemin Akbal Ergün [b*]

[a] *M.Sc., Memorial Hospital, Pediatrics Nurse, İstanbul, Turkey*

[b] *Assist. Prof., .Marmara University, Health Sciences Faculty,Nursing Dept., Management in Nursing İstanbul, Turkey*

Abstract

Nurses' career goals align with career aims of the organization is extremely important. And also it is very important to prepare for career changes to achieve their career goals. Career progress of nurses and increasing the satisfactions levels of their profession provide retention skilled personnel and a high in service quality of the organization. The aim of the study was to determine career goals of nurses and career opportunities offered to them. This descriptive study was carried out between December 2008 and January 2009. Population of the study consisted of a total of 187 voluntary nurses working in a private hospital in Istanbul. Data was collected using questionnaire form. Descriptive statistical methods, parametric and non-parametric tests were used for evaluation of data. Statistically significant differences found between the defines such as having career goals and age, education, being single and being childless of nurses. It was found that the nurses had career goals; they needed training in terms of career planning; the organization they worked offered managerial arrangements for career development, however these managerial and organizational supports were not adequately shared with the employees. Many proposals which will guide career planning are improved by these outcome.

Keywords: Nurse, Career, Career Goals, Career Opportunities;

1. Introduction

In today's global competitive environment, the success of organizations is considered to be possible by training, developing human resources and preparing this resource for the future in addition to the changes in structure, process and technology(14). Keeping up with the rapidly changing working life is only possible by managing human resources, which is the most valuable treasure of enterprises, in the best manner and to create professional autonomous, performance evaluation, positive relationships between professionals, sufficient personnel and happy, satisfied workforce in the working environment (2,4,9). To achieve this, available possibilities should be developed and the opportunity for development should be provided by establishing coordination between the goals of the individual and organizational (9). This points out to the concepts of career, career planning, development and management.

Career refers to the series of life-long continuing works equipped with the behavioral motives of the individual (1,8). While this concept is traditionally used only to refer to the appointment to higher positions, today it involves horizontal shifts, assignment in projects and similar shifts (6,7,13).

* Corresponding author name. Tel.: +90 0505 796 03 94
E-mail address: yasemin300@0mynet.com, yergun@marmara.edu.tr

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According to Dessler, in a study carried out by Edgar Schein it was found that certain behavior types, values and attitudes which manage many people during the course of their careers formed in early years of life (5). These behavior types consist of the combination of needs and motives. Edgar Schein reports that career planning continues with the process of career exploration (5).

The better the individuals know where they stand in their work life, what they can do and what can they do in future, the more they can understand what they should do to fulfill their aims. Career planning provides the individuals with this opportunity (17).

Career planning is a dynamic process which creates a change in nurses and adapts them to these changes. It is a long-term, continuous process which involves determination of aims and goals; combining the opportunities a person encounters with his/her aims and self-change and development. Career planning and development helps nurses to develop necessary knowledge, skills and behaviors to create a vivid, efficient and satisfying work environment (3,7,12,13). However, Nooney (2010) and Hayes (2011) suggested that career development was influenced by the capability of individuals to form their career preferences, organizational limitations and familial responsibilities(8,11).

Career management refers to the process of planning goals, enabling opportunities for the managers, strategy arrangement and application to satisfy the needs of workforce and to ensure individuals to fulfill their career goals (1,9). Environment, organizational structure and characteristics of job influence career management in different aspects (3,10).

Rapid changes experienced in health in the second half of 20th century led to profound changes in nursing and increased efforts for the recognition of nursing as an autonomous profession. With the changes experiences in health care system and nursing, high unemployment and personnel deficit which became widespread in field of health emerged the necessity of new professional fields and new roles for the nurses to take control of their individual careers (15,16).

2. Material and Method

The study was carried out in a 191-bed private hospital based in Istanbul province. This descriptive study was conducted between December 2008-January 2009 after taking necessary permissions from the hospital.

Population of the study consisted of a total of 247 nurses. Although we planned to contact all of the population, a total of 60 nurses who were unwilling to participate in the study, who were on maternity leave and annual leave were not included in the study. The study was performed on 187 nurses.

Questionnaire form developed by the researchers based on literature data was used for data collection. Data were collected using a questionnaire form which included socio-demographic characteristics and career goals of the nurses, and career opportunities offered by the organization. Statistical analysis software was used for the evaluation of findings obtained from the study. In addition to descriptive statistical method (mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage) used in evaluation of data, chi-square test was used to compare qualified data. The results were evaluated in 95% reliability interval at the significances level of $p<0.05$.

3. Findings

Mean age of the nurses who participated in the study (N=187) was 27, mean service period was 5 years. Mean service period in the organization of the nurses was 3 years. The majority of the nurses had graduate and post-graduate education (85.6%); were single (78.6%) worked as service nurses (76.5%). It was found that 58.8% of the nurses were appointed to the service they currently worked upon their own will.

Approximately half of the nurses (44.9%) stated that *nursing services conducted career development applications together with human resources management*; 65%2 stated that *the employees were informed about the qualifications required for vacant positions;* the majority (69%) of the nurses stated that *head nurse supported them to determine their career goals*; 78.6% stated that *manager nurses supported them to achieve their goals and to receive further education* (71.1%). Of the participants, 52.9% reported that *appointments to vacant positions were performed in parallel to career goals of the employee* while 55% reported that *performance evaluation was performed in parallel to career goals of the employee* (Table 1).

Table 1: Career Goals of Nurses and Distribution of their Opinions according to Career Opportunities offered by the Organization

Career Goals of Nurses		n	%	Career Management Applications of the Organization	n	%
Yes		144	77	The Organization Runs Career Applications with NSM HRM Department	84	44,9
No		43	23	Information about Vacant Positions	122	65,2
Career Goals				**Career Planning Training**		
Taking a Master's Degree		56	38.9	Yes	34	18,2
Working as an Educator/Academician		37	25.7	No	153	81,8
Being a Manager		51	35.4	**Determining Career Goals***		
				Support of Head / Training Nurse	129	69
Attainability of Career Goals in the Organization		108	57.8			
				Support of Manager in Attaining the Goals	147	78,6
The Factors which Facilitate Attainment of Goals*						
Supporting the Employees with Continuing Education		81	43.3	Support of Manager Nurse in Receiving Further Education	133	71,1
Giving Importance to Career Development						
Promotion Opportunities		75	40.1			
Providing Attendance to Scientific Activities		64	34.2	**Factors which make Attaining the Goals Difficult***		
		93	49.7	Long Working Hours	39	20.9
			49.7	Economic Problems	28	15
				Low Number of Nurses	25	13,4
Priorities in Determining Career Goals *	**Order of Priority**	**nn n n**	**%**	**Expectations from the Organization***		
				Benefitting from Education/Scientific Opportunities	110	58,8
Self-Development in the Field	1	63	33.7	Career Consultancy / Orientation	95	50,8
				Informing about Career Opportunities	82	43,9
Promotion	2	56	29.9	**Appointment to Vacant Positions according to Career Goals**	99	52,9

Having Authority at Work	3	52	27.8	**Taking Career Goals into account in Performance Evaluation**	103	55,1
Working in the Desired Unit	4	61	32.6	**Criteria for Appointment to the Assignment ***		
				Educational Level	115	61.5
				Inadequate Number of Nurses	92	49.
				Decision of Top Management	63	33.7
				Seniority	43	23
Regulating Working Hours	5	78	41.7	Individual Performance	38	20,3
				Promotion Criteria*	140	74.9
				Individual Performance	132	70.6
				Educational Level		

* More than one choice was selected. **NSM:** Nursing Services Management **HRM:** Human Resources Management

Of the nurses, 61.5% reported that education, 49.2% reported that inadequate number of nurses, 23% reported that decision of top management, 23% reported that seniority, 20.3% reported that individual performance was taken into account in appointment to a position. As for promotions, 74.9% reported that individual performance, 70.6% reported that education was taken into account in promotions. On the other hand, it was found that 81.8% of the participants did not receive any training on career planning (Table 1).

It was found that 77% of the participants had career goals and that of the nurses with career goals, 38.9% wanted to receive postgraduate education, 35.4% to be a manager and 25.7% to be academician and educators. When the nurses were asked to list their career priorities it was observed that *self-development in the field they work* ranked 1.; *increasing status in the organization* ranked 2.; *having authority related to the work* ranked 3.; *working in the desired unit* ranked 4.; *flexible working hours* ranked 5. Of the nurses 57.8% reported that they could attain their career goals in the organization they worked. As the organizational factors which facilitate their attainment of goals, 43.3% of the participants states that continuing education of the employees were supported; 40.1% stated that the organization paid attention to career development; 34.2% stated that they had the opportunity of getting a promotion in the clinic and 49.7% stated that they attended scientific activities outside the organization (Table 1).

It was found that more than half of the nurses (63.1%) *worked in shifts*; 46.2% perceived that *turnover rate in their organization was high*. Of the nurses 23.5% complained that *working in shifts had a negative impact on attaining their career goals*; while 38.5% complained that *high turnover rate had a negative impact on attaining their career goals*. As for the organizational factors which prevented attainment of career goals; 20.9% of the participants mentioned about *long working hours* and *the effects of this on private life*; 15% mentioned about *economic difficulties* and 13.4% mentioned about *low number of nurses* (Table 1).

Analysis of expectations from the organization in terms of career development; 58.8% of the nurses wanted to benefit from educational and scientific opportunities, 50.8% wanted orientation and career consultancy; 43.9% wanted to be informed about career opportunities (Table 1).

Table 2: Comparison of Descriptive Characteristics of Nurses and Presence of Career Goals for the Job

		Career Goal for the Job		$\chi^{2*};df^{**};p^{***}$
		Yes	No	
		n (%)	n (%)	
Age	**< 25 and below**	87 (85.3%)	15 (14.7%)	χ^2*16.78; df:2; p:0.001******
	26-30	37 (78.7%)	10 (21.3%)	
	> 31 and above	20 (52.6%)	18 (47.4%)	
Marital Status	**Single**	118 (80.3%)	29 (19.7%)	χ^2*:4.14; df:1; p:0.042*****
	Married	26 (65.0%)	14 (35.0%)	

Children	**Yes**	15 (83.3%)	3 (16.7%)	χ^2:*7.40; df:1; p:0.007******
	No	11 (42.3%)	15 (57.7%)	
Educational Status	**Vocational School of Health**	9 (56.3%)	7 (43.8%)	χ^2:*21.98; df:2; p:0.001******
	Associate Degree	3 (27.3%)	8 (72.7%)	
	Bachelor's and postgraduate	132 (82.5%)	28 (17.5%)	
Position	**Service Nurse**	113 (79.0%)	20 (21.0%)	χ^2:*1.39; df:1; p:0.238 N.S.*
	Manager Nurse	31 (70.5%)	13 (29,5%)	
Working period	**< 1 year and below**	31 (91.2%)	3 (8.8%)	χ^2:*24.89; df:3; p:0.001******
	1.1 – 5 year	79 (84.9%)	14 (15.1%)	
	6 – 10 years	19 (67.9%)	9 (32.1%)	
	> 11 year and above	15 (46.9%)	17 (53.1%)	
Assignment in the Department	**Upon My Own Will**	84 (76.4%)	26 (23.6%)	χ^2:*0.06; df:1; p:0.803 N.S.*
	Decision of Managers	60 (77.9%)	17 (22.1%)	

*χ^2: chi-square test **df: Degree of freedom ***p: significance level **** p<0.05 significant relationship
***** p<0.001 highly significant relationship N .S. Not Significant

There was a highly significant relationship between age (p<0.01), marital status (p<0.05), having children(p<0.01), education status(p<0.01) and working period(p<0.01) of nurses and having career goals presence of career goal for the profession. Although there was no statistically significant relationship between the position(p>0.05) and assignment status to the department of the participants and presence of career goals. (Table 2).

4. Discussion

The fact that the majority of the nurses who were included in the study had bachelor's or postgraduate degrees might suggest that the organization gives importance to education of the nurses in assignment and that it was a result of personnel employment policy of the organization. Since the mean age of the nurses was below 30; professional working time was 5 years; average working period of the organization was 3 years, it can be stated that the nurses were included in young age group. In this period, which is considered as a transition time in life periods, an individual completes his/her education and starts to seek a future; he/she try to seek satisfaction in his/her social and professional life. An individual evaluates development of life according to career goals in previous periods and personal development (4,6,12). As a result of this evaluation, if an individual reaches satisfaction, he/she continues life and enriches career goals. Similarly, it was found that the nurses below the age of 25 wanted more support (58.8%) in career orientation and consultancy when compared to other groups. This result is consistent with literature data(3,5,7,11,12,13,17).

The fact that new graduate nurses prefer to work at private hospitals for a certain time until positions in the state are announced and made appointment of nurses. Career orientation, consultancy expectation from organization increased with the increase of educational level.

In the study it was found that education had an effect of 61.5%, seniority had an effect of 23% in assignment of the nurses in the department they worked. In a study carried out by Sönmez (2007) on managers it was suggested that the most effective criteria in assignment to the position they worked were seniority (66.3%) and education (38.6%) (16). In our study, the percentage of assignment of the nurses to the positions they worked according to educational level was quite high. The fact that promotion criteria varied proportionally according to organizations and management approaches is a natural condition (3,9,11). In related organization, written promotion policies are available to the nurses. According to these policies, the nurses can learn promotion opportunities.

Of the nurses, 81.8% reported that they did not receive career planning training in their organizations. In a study carried out to determine career planning of manager nurses, Özçelik (2005) reported that 97.1% of manager nurses did not receive training on career planning (12). This finding is consistent with the findings of our study.

Analysis of the expectations of nurses from the organization in terms of career planning and development showed that 58.8% of them wanted to benefit from educational and scientific opportunities while 50.8% wanted orientation.

It was found that career priorities of nurses were *self-development in the area they work, increasing status in the organization, having authority related to the work, working in the unit they wanted* and *flexible working hours* respectively. As understood from these findings, continuous self-development ranked first among career goals of nurses. Of the nurses, 57.8% reported that they could attain their career goals in the organization they work. As for the organizational factors which facilitate attainment of goals, 43.3% of the participants stated that *continuing education of participants was supported* while 20% stated that *long working hours prevented attainment of career goals* (Table 1).According to Dessler (1998), Edgar Schein reports that career planning continues with the process of career exploration (5).

It was found that more than half of the nurses worked in shifts, 46.2% perceived that labour turnover rate was high. Similarly, 23.5% of the nurses complained that working in shifts had a negative impact on attaining career goals while 38.5% complained that high turnover rate had a negative impact on attaining career goals. The organization should take measures to decrease turnover rate of employee (3,8).

The majority of nurses stated that manager nurses supported individual career goals and provided opportunities for further education. In this case, it can be stated that nursing services were effective in determining career goals of nurses and that a management type supporting the development of nurses was adopted in the organization.

A total of 47.6% of the nurses mentioned about the presence of career planning and development application in the organization.

On the other hand, 52.9% of nurses stated that career goals of individuals were taken into account in hiring personnel for vacant positions while 65.2% stated that employees were informed about these positions. In this case, it can be stated that the organization made use of internal resources in placement of personnel for vacant positions.

A total of 44.29% of nurses reported that written career planning and development process was present in the organization; however, 37.4% reported that it was not shared with the employees. It was reported that career planning was conducted by nursing services and human resources in the organization. However, number of nurses who thought that both services were effective was higher than that of others.

Majority of the nurses stated that skills and performance were effective in promotions of the employees while 70.6% stated that education status was effective in promotions. In this case, it can be stated that performance and education status were given importance in promotions. More than half of the nurses stated that their career goals were taken into account in performance evaluation.

5. **Conclusion**

It was found that majority of nurses did not receive career planning training and that they had individual career goals. Individual career goals of the nurses were found to be receiving further education related to the field they work, being a manager, an academician and educator, having more authority related to the job, working in the desired unit and at hours respectively. It was found that the nurses can attain their career goals in this organization. The reasons which prevented the nurses to attain their individual career goals were listed as working in shifts, low number of nurses, high turnover rate and economic problems.

There was statistically significant relationship between having career goals and age, seniority, educational level, marital status, having children. However there was no difference between position and mood of being assigned in the department

It was found that individual performance was given priority in promotions in the organization. It was observed that despite these organizational supports, the nurses found career consultancy and training services of the hospital inadequate and they demanded to benefit from these opportunities more.

Based on these results, managers can be recommended supporting the nurses to realize individual career goals; taking employees' individual career goals into account in appointment, promotion and performance evaluations; offering intra-organizational and extra-organizational opportunities such as consultancy services, continuing education, career planning training, career; having written, objective appointment and promotion policies and sharing these with the employees allowing the nurses to work with flexible working hours; taking measures to lower turnover rate.

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