Core Self-evaluation and Subjective Career Success of Nurses in the People's Hospitals of Dali, the People's Republic of China*
การประเมินแก่นแท้ของตนเองและความสำเร็จในวิชาชีพเชิงจิตวิสัยของพยาบาลในโรงพยาบาลแห่งประชาชนต้าหลี่ สาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน*

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Abstract

The subjective career success of nurses is important for improving quality of care and patient safety in hospitals. This descriptive correlational study aimed to examine core self-evaluation and subjective career success, and to identify the relationship between core self-evaluation and subjective career success among nurses. The sample consisted of 288 nurses working in the People's Hospitals of Dali, the People's Republic of China. A questionnaire used for data collection consisted of three parts: 1) demographic data; 2) the Modified Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES) and 3) the Modified Subjective Career Success Scale (SCSS). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients' reliability of the modified CSES and the modified SCSS from this study were 0.80 and 0.88, respectively. Descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient analysis were used for data analysis.

The results of this study showed that core self-evaluation of nurses was at a high level; the overall subjective career success, financial success and hierarchical success subscales of nurses were at a moderate level while job success, inter-personal success and life success subscales of nurses were at a high level. There was a moderate positive correlation between core self-evaluation and overall subjective career success; job success; inter-personal success; and life success. It showed that core self-evaluation had a weak significant positive relation to hierarchical success, while there was no significant relationship between core self-evaluation and financial success.

The results of this study provide valuable information for hospital managers, human resource managers, and nursing administrators to maintain core self-evaluation and subjective career success for improving quality of nursing care and hospitals' effectiveness.

Keywords: Core self-evaluation; Subjective career success; Nurse; Dali; P.R. China

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การประเมินแก่นแท้ของตนเองและความสำเร็จในวิชาชีพเชิงจิตวิสัยของพยาบาลในโรงพยาบาลแห่งประชาชนต้าหลี่ สาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน

บทคัดย่อ

ความสำเร็จในวิชาชีพเชิงจิตวิสัยของพยาบาลมีความสำคัญต่อการปรับปรุงคุณภาพการดูแล และความปลอดภัยของผู้ป่วยในโรงพยาบาล การวิจัยเชิงพรรณนาแบบหาความสัมพันธ์ครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาระดับของการประเมินแก่นแท้ของตนเอง และความสำเร็จในวิชาชีพเชิงจิตวิสัย และเพื่อศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ของการประเมินแก่นแท้ของตนเอง และความสำเร็จในวิชาชีพเชิงจิตวิสัยของพยาบาล กลุ่มตัวอย่าง ประกอบด้วยพยาบาล จำนวน 288 รายที่ปฏิบัติงานในโรงพยาบาลแห่งประชาชนต้าหลี่ สาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน แบบสอบถามที่ใช้ในการรวบรวมข้อมูล ประกอบด้วย 3 ส่วน ได้แก่ 1) ข้อมูลส่วนบุคคล 2) แบบวัดการประเมินแก่นแท้ ฉบับปรับปรุง และ 3) แบบวัดความสำเร็จในวิชาชีพเชิงจิตวิสัยฉบับปรับปรุง ค่า Cronbach's alpha coefficient ของแบบวัดการประเมินแก่นแท้ฉบับปรับปรุง และแบบวัดความสำเร็จใน วิชาชีพเชิงจิตวิสัยฉบับปรับปรุง เท่ากับ 0.80 และ 0.88 ตามลำดับ วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้สถิติพรรณนา วิเคราะห์ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างตัวแปรที่ศึกษาโดยใช้สถิติ Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า พยาบาลมีการรับรู้การประเมินแก่นแท้ของตนเองอยู่ในระดับสูง มีการรับรู้ความสำเร็จในวิชาชีพเชิงจิตวิสัยโดยรวมอยู่ในระดับปานกลาง สำหรับองค์ประกอบของความสำเร็จในวิชาชีพเชิงจิตวิสัยพบว่า พยาบาลมีการรับรู้ความสำเร็จด้านการเงิน และความสำเร็จด้านความก้าวหน้าในการเลื่อนตำแหน่งอยู่ในระดับปานกลาง ในขณะที่พยาบาลมีการรับรู้ความสำเร็จด้านการทำงาน ความสำเร็จด้านความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคล และความสำเร็จด้านชีวิตอยู่ในระดับสูง ในส่วนของการประเมินแก่นแท้ของตนเองพบมีความสัมพันธ์กับความสำเร็จในวิชาชีพเชิงจิตวิสัยอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ โดยการประเมินแก่นแท้ของตนเองในด้านความสำเร็จด้านการทำงาน ความสำเร็จด้านความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคล ความสำเร็จด้านชีวิต และการประเมินแก่นแท้ของตนเองมีความสัมพันธ์ทางบวกระดับต่ำกับความสำเร็จด้านความก้าวหน้าในการเลื่อนตำแหน่ง แต่ไม่พบความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการประเมินแก่นแท้ของตนเองกับความสำเร็จด้านการเงิน

ผลการศึกษาครั้งนี้สามารถใช้เป็นข้อมูลสำหรับผู้บริหารโรงพยาบาล ผู้จัดการฝ่ายทรัพยากรบุคคล และฝ่ายการพยาบาลในการประเมินแก่นแท้ของตนเองเพื่อเป็นกลยุทธ์ในการพัฒนาความสำเร็จในวิชาชีพเชิงจิตวิสัยที่มีประสิทธิผล ทำให้เกิดการพัฒนาคุณภาพในการพยาบาลและประสิทธิผลของโรงพยาบาลต่อไป

คำสำคัญ: การประเมินแก่นแท้ของตนเอง ความสำเร็จในวิชาชีพเชิงจิตวิสัย พยาบาล ต้าหลี่ สาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน

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Background and Significance

The biggest challenge for the global healthcare system is the shortage of skilled human resources for health at all levels (Sinha & Sigamani, 2016). A deficient nursing workforce and nursing shortage could decrease quality of care and patient safety (Aiken, Sloane, Bruyneel, & McHugh, 2014). Enhancing employees' subjective career success levels has great significance for individuals and organizations (Judge, Higgin, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999). Subjective career success is the individual's evaluation of achievements in his/her work experiences, which includes job success, inter-personal success, financial success, hierarchical success, and life success (Gattiker & Larwood, 1986). Nurses who meet their job's expectations or career standards will be satisfied, leading to a higher engagement with nursing work thus improving the quality of nursing care (Yin, 2012). However, in China there are some barriers to nurses achieving subjective career success. In 2010, there were nearly 88% hospitals facing nursing shortages (Chen & Li, 2010). Nurses must do rotating shift work and have heavy workloads which means they have less time to think and tend to do their work in a hurry. In addition, they have fewer opportunities for advancement and career success (Lu, 2007). Most nurses were dissatisfied with their income or bonus distribution (Yin, 2012).

In order to find a way to obtain subjective career success, previous studies have found that core self-evaluation is a successful strategy to manage subjective career success individually (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997). Core self-evaluation is a basic assessment that a person makes about her/his ability, overall value, and competence (Judge et al., 1997). Individuals who have high scores on core self-evaluation are well adjusted, positive, self-confident, efficacious, and believe in his or her own agency, and for this reason, perceive their careers as more successful. Nurses' core self-evaluation level has been measured widely by researchers in foreign countries and in China. In studies in Canada and Iran, researchers found that nurses' core self-evaluation was at a moderate level (Spence, Laschinger, Wong, & Macdonald, 2013; Karatepe, Keshavarz, & Nejati, 2010). In China, the results of research studies in Wenling, Harbin, Guangzhou City, and Zhejiang Province showed that the nurses' core self-evaluation was at a moderate level (Wu, Tong, Liang, & Jiang, 2014; Xu, Qi, Chen, & Hou, 2011; Cai, Zhao, & Chen, 2012; Zhong, Guo, & Guo, 2012). However, in Guangxi and Xi'an, researchers found that the nurses' core self-evaluation was at a high level (Peng, Li, Zhang, & Zhang, 2016; Zhou, Cao, Jiang, & Xiao, 2014). Thus, the inconsistent findings by country and location in China present a gap in knowledge regarding exploration of core self-evaluation among nurses in Yunnan province.

Results from previous studies (Stumpp, Muck, Hülsheger, Judge, & Maier, 2010; Ng & Feldman, 2014; Wang & Sun, 2012) showed that there was a positive correlation between core self-evaluation and subjective career success in Germany, the USA, and China. However, it was found that there was no significant relationship between core self-evaluation and subjective career success in a study conducted by Ganzach and Pazy (2014) in Israel. No study which we could find has been conducted among nurses. Thus, it is necessary to conduct this study to

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explain the correlation between core self-evaluation and subjective career success among nurses in China.

Objectives

The purpose of this descriptive correlational study was to examine core self-evaluation and subjective career success, and to investigate the relationship between core self-evaluation and subjective career success among nurses in People's hospitals of Dali, in China.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Judge, Locke, and Durham's the theory of core self-evaluation (1997) as a basic assessment that a nurse makes about her/his ability, overall value, and competence. The subjective career success concept of Gattiker and Larwood (1986) is used as the individual's evaluation of achievements in his/her work experiences, and is categorized into five dimensions, including job success, inter-personal success, financial success, hierarchical success, and life success. Gattiker and Larwood (1986) suggested that job features and occupational self-concept (self-esteem and self-evaluated job quali-fications) were positively correlated with subjective career success. Individuals with high occupa-tional self-concept will have positive attitudes and beliefs about themselves, which makes future subjective career success more likely.

Methodology

A descriptive correlation research design was used in this study.

Population and Sample

The population were 719 staff nurses who have worked for at least one year providing direct nursing care to patients in any of the hospitals of Dali, the People's Republic of China.

The sample size of 308 (Yamane, 1973) was selected by using the proportional stratified random sampling method.

Research Instruments

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire consisting of three parts as follows:

1. The Demographic Data Form was used to collect information about gender, age, marital status, educational level, professional title, employment status, working department, and years of work experience.

2. Core self-evaluation was measured using the Modified Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES) (Judge et al., 2003), which was modified and translated into Chinese by Du et al. (2012). There were 10 items with 4 subscales including generalized self-efficacy, self-esteem, neuroticism, and locus of control. Items are rated from 1 to 5 with 6 of 10 items having reversed scores. The mean score range was from 1 to 5. Higher scores indicate a higher level of core self-evaluation. There was acceptable construct validity and internal consistency reliability in Du et al.'s (2012) study while in this study, it was 0.80.

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3. The subjective career success instrument was the Subjective Career Success Scale (SCSS) which was developed by Gattiker and Larwood (1986) and modified and translated into Chinese by Yin (2012). The modified SCCS had 21 items with five subscales including job success (8 items), inter-personal success (4 items), financial success (2 items), hierarchical success (4 items), and life success (3 items). It uses a 5-point Likert scale from 1 to 5. The mean score range is from 1 to 5, and higher scores demonstrate higher subjective career success. In this study, the internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.88, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the subscales of job success, inter-personal success, financial success, life success, and hierarchical success were 0.70, 0.87, 0.89, 0.94, and 0.88, respectively.

Ethical considerations

The research proposal and data collection were approved by the Research Ethics Review Committee, Faculty of Nursing, Chiang Mai University, Thailand. Before data collection, a consent form was sent to the participants to assure them of protection of their human rights. The participants in the study were voluntary and they had the right to refuse, stop or withdraw from the study at any time without being punished or losing any benefits.

Data Collection

After receiving the application letter for permission to collect data, the researcher met the directors of the hospital and nursing department of each hospital to explain the purpose, method and the benefits of this study to get their permission and obtain the name list of nurses' from the nursing departments. The researcher trained coordinator in each hospital about research objectives, questionnaires, participant's right, data collection method and process. The researcher and coordinator distributed 308 questionnaires along with the information sheet and consent form to all the participants. they were requested to complete the questionnaires in their private time and required to return the questionnaires, and consent forms within two weeks in sealed envelopes.

There were 294 questionnaires returned with the total response rate of 95.46% and incomplete questionnaires were excluded of the calculated number. Among the returned questionnaires, 288 (93.51%) questionnaires were completed for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to perform data analysis using the SPSS program (13.0 version). The significance level (α) was set at 0.05. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze the demographic data. Core self-evaluation and subjective career success were tested by the Kolmogorov-Smirov statistic command. The results showed that the data of core self-evaluation was not a normal distribution; thus, Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficients were used to examine the relationship between core self-evaluation and each dimension of subjective career success among nurses.

Results

Demographic data

The following results describe the frequency and percentage of the nurses categorized by demographic data (n = 288). The majority of the sample (99.31%) were female; the ages ranged from 21 to 55 with an average age of 30.35 years old (SD = 8.47) while more than half of the sample (67.36%) were in the 20-30-year old age group and were married (59.72%). Most of the sample (42.71%) held an associate degree and were in the group of junior nurses (60.42%). Most nurses (68.40%) were working in a temporary position. The majority of nurses were from the medical department (28.13%). Most of the nurses (73.26%) had worked for 1-10 years with a range 1-38 years and a mean of 9.66 years (SD = 8.76).

Core self-evaluation

The level of core self-evaluation of participants was at a high level (Table 1).

Table 1 Level of core self-evaluation as perceived by participants (n = 288)

	Range	$\overline{X}$	SD	Level
Core self-evaluation	2.00-5.00	3.71	0.52	High

Subjective career success

The overall subjective career success scores of nurses were at a moderate level ($\overline{X}$ = 3.48, SD = 0.58). Financial success ($\overline{X}$ = 2.39, SD = 1.10) and hierarchical success ($\overline{X}$ = 3.18, SD = 0.82), which are subscales of subjective career success perceived by nurses, were at a moderate level, while job success ($\overline{X}$ = 3.81, SD = 0.59), inter-personal success ($\overline{X}$ = 3.93, SD = 0.71) and life success ($\overline{X}$ = 4.12, SD = 0.82) perceived by nurses were at a high level (Table 2).

Table 2 Level of each factor and overall subjective career success of participants (n = 288)

Subjective career success	Range	$\overline{X}$	SD	Level
Job success	1.88-5.00	3.81	0.59	High
Inter-personal success	2.00-5.00	3.93	0.71	High
Financial success	1.00-5.00	2.39	1.10	Moderate
Hierarchical success	1.00-5.00	3.18	0.82	Moderate
Life success	100-5.00	4.12	0.82	High
Overall subjective career success	1.78-5.00	3.48	0.58	Moderate

Relationships between core self-evaluation and subjective career success

The results of Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient showed that there was a moderate positive correlation between core self-evaluation and overall subjective career success (r = .32, p < 0.01); job success (r = .38, p < 0.01); inter-personal success (r = .36, p < 0.01); and life success (r = .42, p < 0.01) while also showing that core self-evaluation had a weak significant

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positive relation to hierarchical success (r = . 17, p < 0.01), while there was no significant relationship between core self-evaluation and financial success (r = .03, p > 0.05) of nurses from two People's Hospitals in Dali (Table 3).

Table 3 The relationships between core self-evaluation and subjective career success
among nurses in two People's Hospitals in Dali

	Core self-evaluation		Level of relationship between CSE & SCS
	r	p	
Job success	.38	.000	Moderate
Inter-personal success	.36	.000	Moderate
Financial success	.03	.564	No relationship
Hierarchical success	.17	.000	Weak
Life success	.42	.000	Moderate
Overall subjective career success	.32	.000	Moderate

p < 0.01

Discussion

1. Core Self-evaluation

In this study, the results showed that the mean score of core self-evaluation of the nurse sample was at a high level ($\overline{X}$ = 3.71, SD = 0.52) (Table 1).

The results of this study are consistent with the previous studies such as Peng et al. (2016). However, they were also inconsistent with previous studies which found that nurses' core self-evaluation was at a moderate level (Spence Laschinger et al., 2013). This result of inconsistency indicated that nurses who participated in this study were optimistic when evaluating themselves and may get a high level of core self-evaluation because nurses could receive adequate support from their coworkers. As findings of this study showed, the nurses perceived inter-personal success at a high level. The rights of nurses are clearly defined, including enhanced night shift wages, maternity insurance and healthcare services, and improved personal development opportunities (Hospitals report, 2016) which help hospitals to acquire and retain frontline nurse with positive core self-evaluation to enable them to adapt to various challenging work situations.

2. Subjective career success

The nurses in this study had overall subjective career success scores at a moderate level ($\overline{X}$ = 3.48, SD = 0.58) (Table 2). The result was consistent with previous studies including Jeenkool (2004), Yin (2012) and Ji, Zhang, and Gong (2012). The possible reasons for the findings of this study include the following. First, in recent years, the Chinese health care system has been improving, and this includes the nursing work environment. More investment has been made for sustainable development in nursing education and for improving the image of the nursing

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occupation (Yun, Jie, & Anli, 2010). Secondly, the Chinese nursing work environment was characterized by a heavy workload and a sizeable shortage among nurses (Yin, 2012). Most Chinese nurses feel unhappy in their career, they are facing a lot of difficult situations, which indicates that there may be some obstacles to achieving subjective career success. A third reason may be related to the demographic factors: gender, age, years of experience, and employment status. In this study, 99.31% nurses were female, 67.36% of nurses were in the age group of 20-30 years and had 1-10 years' work experience with a mean of 9.66 years (SD = 8.76), and 68.40% of nurses were working in a temporary position and they had lower subjective career success (Asegid, Belachew, & Yimam, 2014). Accordingly, nurses perceived subjective career success at a moderate level.

Regarding each dimension of subjective career success, the results of this study showed that nurses perceived job success, inter-personal success, and life success at a high level ($\overline{X}$ = 3.81, SD = 0.59; $\overline{X}$ = 3.93, SD = 0.71; $\overline{X}$ = 4.12, SD = 0.82, respectively) (Table 2). The results were higher than Yin (2012) which revealed that nurses perceived a moderate level of job success, inter-personal success, and life success. One possible explanation may be that nurses have a good interpersonal relationship with others, as this study showed that the inter-personal success was at a high level. Individuals who have good interpersonal relationships would have high levels of life satisfaction (Gilman & Huebner, 2003). Secondly, nurses received more support and benefits from work, such as complete medical insurance and generous maternity leave. In addition, the trade union organizes extracurricular activities to enrich nurses' lives. Therefore, there was a high level of job success perceived by nurses in this study. Finally, nurses received more support from their families. In China, most parents are willing to take care of their grandchildren while the mother is working. In conclusion, because of all the different kinds of support that nurses receive, they can obtain a high level of job success, inter-personal success, and life success.

Regarding other dimensions of subjective career success, the results of this study showed that nurses perceived financial success and hierarchical success at a moderate level ($\overline{X}$ = 2.39, SD = 1.10; $\overline{X}$ = 3.18, SD = 0.82, respectively) (Table 2). The result for financial success was better than Yin's (2012) results which showed that financial success was at a low level. However, the result for hierarchical success was similar to Yin's study in Kunming (2012) which showed a moderate level. These results indicate that the nurses were dissatisfied with their income or bonus distribution and the lack of promotions in hospitals. In this study, 68.40% of the nurses were working in a temporary position and received less pay for equal work when compared to permanent nurses (Yun et al., 2010). Thus, the perception of financial success was at a moderate level. That nurses lack opportunities to be promoted can explain the moderate level of hierarchical success. In this study, the percentage of professional titles was more limited; thus, nurses had a perception of hierarchical success at a moderate level.

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3. Relationships between core self-evaluation and subjective career success

There are six correlations between core self-evaluation and overall subjective career success and each dimension (Table 3):

1) There was a positive correlation between core self-evaluation and overall subjective career success ($r = .32$, $p < 0.01$). This result was consistent with many previous studies, including Stumpp et al. (2010), Ng and Feldman (2014), and Wang and Sun (2012) in Germany, the United States of America, and Beijing, China, respectively. Core self-evaluation plays an important role in enhancing employee's subjective career success.

2) The results showed that there was a moderately positive relationship between core self-evaluation and job success ($r = .38$, $p < 0.1$) which is similar to previous studies which found higher core self-evaluation predicted higher job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and job performance (Grant & Wrzesniewski, 2010). Nurses who have high scores on core self-evaluation, are well adjusted, positive, self-confident, and believe in their own agency, perceiving their careers as more successful (Erez & Judge, 2001).

3) There was a moderate positive relationship between core self-evaluation and inter-personal success ($r = .36$, $p < 0.01$) which is similar to a study that found that people with high self-esteem have better relationships with others (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). Communication is important for forging good relationships with others. People with high self-esteem claim to be more likable and attractive, and they are more willing to share information in order to have better relationships with others (Baumeister et al., 2003).

4) There was no significant relationship between core self-evaluation and financial success ($r = .03$, $p > 0.05$). This result is similar to that of a previous study (Gattiker & Larwood, 1986) which found that there was no significant predictive effect of occupational self-concept on financial success which is extended rewards. That may not relate to core self-evaluation. The amount of the award and the method of distribution of the reward significantly impacts the financial success of an employee (Gursoy & Swanger, 2007). The limited budget of Dali hospitals leads to less rewards being given to nurses, even those who had high core self-evaluation. Therefore, there was no significant relationship between core self-evaluation and financial success.

5) There was a weak significant positive relationship between core self-evaluation and hierarchical success ($r = .17$, $p < 0.01$) meaning that nurses would get few opportunities to be promoted when they have higher core self-evaluation. A possible explanation may be related to "career plateau" (Ference, Stoner, & Warren, 1977) in China. Career plateau is a state in which people have a very small opportunity for further promotion. In China, the traditional mode of nursing organizational structures, current professional title promotion standards, and hospital policies lead to situations in which most nurses can't be promoted (Hu, 2015).

6) The results showed that there was a moderate positive significant relationship between core self-evaluation and life success ($r = .42$, $p < 0.01$). This was consistent with an earlier study

(Stumpp et al., 2010). However, the result was inconsistent with another study (Wang & Sun, 2012) which indicated that core self-evaluation was weakly positively correlated with life satisfaction. These studies' results indicate that, despite the inconsistencies, there was a significant interaction between core self-evaluation and life success.

Conclusion

The core self-evaluation of nurses was at a high level; overall subjective career success, financial success, and hierarchical success, which are subscales of subjective career success of nurses, were at a moderate level, while the subscales of job success, inter-personal success, and life success of nurses were at a high level.

Implications and recommendations

The results of this study can provide information for the hospitals and nursing directors for developing strategies to maintain a high level of core self-evaluation which will increase the sense of subjective career success among nurses in the People's Hospitals of Dali. The recommendations of this study are as follows:

1. Further studies should be conducted involving behavioral, physiological, and psychological indicators, as well as a broader range of influencing factors and other factors, such as predictors and interventions.

2. This study should be replicated with different types of hospitals and in other regions of China. Comparative studies should be conducted between governmental hospitals and private hospitals, between nurses and nurse managers, and between temporary and permanent nurses. This would provide more comprehensive information in order to enhance the database in the research streams of core self-evaluation and subjective career success for further generalizations.

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