



ความยุติธรรมในองค์กรและความแปลกแยกจากงานของพยาบาลในโรงพยาบาล
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Organizational Justice and Work Alienation Among Nurses in University
Hospitals, Yunnan Province, the People's Republic of China

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บทคัดย่อ

ความยุติธรรมในองค์กรมีความสัมพันธ์กับการลดความแปลกแยกจากงาน แต่ยังมีการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับความยุติธรรมในองค์กรและความแปลกแยกจากงานของพยาบาลในประเทศจีนน้อยมาก วัตถุประสงค์ของการศึกษาเชิงพรรณนาแบบหาความสัมพันธ์นี้เพื่อศึกษาระดับของความยุติธรรมในองค์กรและความแปลกแยกจากงาน รวมทั้งศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความยุติธรรมในองค์กรรายด้านกับความแปลกแยกจากงานรายด้าน กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นพยาบาลจำนวน 415 คนซึ่งกำลังทำงานในโรงพยาบาลมหาวิทยาลัย 5 แห่ง ของมณฑลยูนนาน ประเทศสาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน เครื่องมือวิจัยประกอบด้วย 1) แบบวัดความยุติธรรมในองค์กรฉบับภาษาจีน (Chinese Organizational Justice Scale, COJS) ซึ่งพัฒนาโดยโพดซัค (2009) และ 2) แบบวัดความแปลกแยกจากงาน พัฒนาโดยมอทแพช (1981) ค่าสัมประสิทธิ์แอลฟาของครอนบาค ของ COJS และแบบวัดความแปลกแยกจากงาน อยู่ระหว่าง 0.64 ถึง 0.98 วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้สถิติเชิงพรรณนา และสถิติความสัมพันธ์แบบลำดับของสเปียร์แมน

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า

พยาบาลรับรู้ความยุติธรรมด้านความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคลอยู่ในระดับสูง ขณะที่ความยุติธรรมด้านผลตอบแทนตามแนวตะวันตก ความยุติธรรมด้านผลตอบแทนตามแนวตะวันออก ความยุติธรรมด้านกระบวนการ และความยุติธรรมด้านข้อมูลข่าวสารอยู่ในระดับปานกลาง

พยาบาลรับรู้ความแปลกแยกจากงานทั้ง 3 ด้าน ได้แก่ ความรู้สึกไร้อำนาจ ความรู้สึกไร้คุณค่า และความรู้สึกแปลกแยกจากตนเอง อยู่ในระดับปานกลาง

ความยุติธรรมในองค์กรรายด้านมีความสัมพันธ์เชิงลบกับแต่ละด้านของความแปลกแยกจากงาน นอกจากนี้ผลการศึกษายังแสดงว่าความยุติธรรมด้านผลตอบแทนและความยุติธรรมด้านกระบวนการมีความสัมพันธ์เชิงลบในระดับสูงกับความรู้สึกแปลกแยกต่อตนเอง

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ผลการศึกษานี้เป็นข้อมูลสำคัญสำหรับผู้บริหารทางการแพทย์และผู้บริหารโรงพยาบาลเพื่อให้เข้าใจความสำคัญของความยุติธรรมในองค์กรที่มีต่อความรู้สึกแปลกแยกในงานของพยาบาล มีข้อเสนอแนะให้ผู้บริหารการพยาบาลและผู้บริหารโรงพยาบาลควรจัดให้มีความยุติธรรมในการจ่ายค่าตอบแทน ยุติธรรมในการให้โอกาสความก้าวหน้าในงาน และควรให้ข้อมูลที่เป็ความจริง ทันเหตุการณ์ และสมเหตุสมผล เพื่อลดการรับรู้ความแปลกแยกจากงานของพยาบาลจีน

Abstract

Organizational justice is related to a decrease in work alienation. However, little is known about organizational justice and work alienation among Chinese nurses. The purpose of this descriptive correlational study was to examine the levels of organizational justice and work alienation, and to explore the relationships between subscales of organizational justice and a subscale of work alienation among nurses in university hospitals. The sample consisted of 415 nurses who were working in 5 university hospitals in Yunnan Province, The People's Republic of China. Research instruments included: 1) Chinese Organizational Justice Scale (COJS) developed by Fodchuk (2009); and 2) the Work Alienation Scale developed by Mottaz (1981). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of COJS and Work Alienation Scale ranged from 0.64 to 0.98. Data were analyzed by descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank-order correlation.

The results of this study are as follows

1. The nurses perceived that interpersonal justice was at a high level. Distributive justice according to western concepts, distributive justice according to eastern concepts, procedural justice, and informational justice were at moderate levels.
2. The nurses perceived that the work alienation subscales of powerlessness, meaninglessness and self-estrangement were at moderate levels.
3. There were negative relationships between subscales of organizational justice and the subscale of work alienation. Results also showed that distributive and procedural justices negatively related to self-estrangement. The relationship was highly significant. These results could be seen as valuable information for nurse managers and hospital administrators in understanding the importance of organizational justice in relation to perception of work alienation among nurses. It is recommended that nurse managers and hospital administrators should provide fair pay, equal opportunities for promotion, and truthful, timely and reasonable information to nurses to reduce the perception of work alienation among Chinese nurses.

Key words: Organizational Justice, Work Alienation, Nurses, University Hospitals



Background and Significance

Today, healthcare organizations are attempting to improve efficiency and high quality of care. Within this challenging healthcare environment, nurses constitute the largest number of health professionals, providing the majority of health services (International Council of Nurses, 2007), and receiving the impact of these alterations in the work setting intensely (Phillips, 2001). Many studies have addressed the issue of nursing job satisfaction during these changes on professional nurses in the health care industry (Leveck & Jones, 1996). Of the many reactions to nursing work discussed in nursing literature, work alienation is often overlooked (Phillips, 2001).

Work alienation refers to the state of psychological disconnection from work when employee feels that there is discrepancy between perception and expectations regarding work conditions. Work alienation has many impacts on employees in organizations, such as isolation, as well as decreases in organizational leadership, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction (Banai & Reisel, 2007). Therefore, study related to work alienation is necessary for the organizations to understand the factors related to work alienation, and create strategies to reduce the perception of work alienation among employees.

Work alienation is a negative outcome that depends on many factors. From the literature review, when employees experience organizational injustice, they may feel disappointment, perception of work alienation (Ceylan & Sulu, 2011). Organizational justice

refers to employee's perception of fairness in how an organization treats him/her in terms of distributive justice according to the western and eastern concepts, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice (Fodchuk, 2009). According to the literature, there is only one study that has explored the relationships between organizational justice and work alienation, conducted among 383 healthcare professionals (nurses and physicians) in Istanbul by Ceylan and Sulu (2010). Although this study indicated negative correlation between perceived organizational justice and work alienation, no study has been conducted in Chinese organizations. Haidt, Koller and Dias (1993) found that prevalent norms of fairness that influence justice perceptions vary across societies or cultures. They also mentioned that Chinese culture is very different from Western culture, so perception of justice by Chinese and Western people may have many differences. Thus, a study to address the relationships between organizational justice and work alienation within the Chinese context is needed. The results could provide information to help nurse managers and hospital administrators to identify the potential problems in their organizations, and be aware of the importance of organizational justice in relation to work alienation.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were to examine organizational justice and work alienation, and to explore the relationship between organizational justice and work alienation among nurses in university hospitals,



Yunnan Province, the People's Republic of China.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was based on the concept of work alienation by Mottaz (1981) and the concept of organizational justice by Fodchuk (2009). Work alienation refers to the state of psychological disconnection from work when employee feels that there is discrepancy between perception and expectations regarding work conditions. This includes feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement (Mottaz, 1981). Organizational justice refers to employee's perception of fairness in how an organization treats him/her in terms of distributive justice according to the western and eastern concepts, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice (Fodchuk, 2009). According to the literature review, when employees experience organizational injustice in the organizations they may feel disappointment, perception of powerlessness, meaninglessness and self-estrangement. Therefore, organizational justice may be negatively correlated to work alienation. The relationships between subscales of organizational justice and each dimension of work alienation were tested in the present study.

Methodology

This is a correlational descriptive study that collected data for 3 months between January and March 2013.

Population and Sample

The target population of this study included

6,166 nurses working in five Level-A tertiary general hospitals, Yunnan Province, the People's Republic of China. The inclusion criteria included staff nurses who were willing to participate in this study, working at medical, surgical, pediatric, gynecology, and obstetrics departments to provide 24-hour service in the unit/ward, and had at least one year of practice experience. Nursing administrators and nurses working at OPD and ICU were not included in this study. The sample size needed in the study was 376 according to the formula of Yamane (1973). Considering the loss of the subjects, 20% of the sample size (75 subjects) was added into the sample, therefore, 451 questionnaires were distributed to collect data. The sample was selected by using stratified random sampling method.

Research Instruments

The instrument used in this study was a set of questionnaires, consisting of three parts: the demographic data form, Chinese Organizational Justice Scale (COJS), and Work Alienation Scale.

The demographic data form consisted of 9 items related to variables including gender, age, marital status, educational level, years of working as a nurse, working department, professional title, short training, and personal income.

The Chinese version of COJS is a tool developed by Fodchuk (2009). It consists of 32 items that measure 5 subscales of organizational justice including distributive justice according to western concept (4 items), distributive justice according to eastern concept (10 items),



procedural justice (9 items), interpersonal justice (4 items), and informational justice (5 items). Each item required responses on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5. The scores for each subscale was considered separately. The higher the score the greater perception of organizational justice. The mean scores of each subscale ranged from 1 to 5, and they were classified into three levels: low level (mean score 1.00--2.33), moderate level (mean score 2.34--3.67) and high level (mean score 3.68--5.00). The internal reliability of COJS was tested within 15 registered nurses who had similar characteristics to the subjects using Cronbach's Coefficient alpha. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the subscales of distributive justice according to western concept, distributive justice according to eastern concept, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice was 0.94, 0.86, 0.83, 0.98, and 0.96 respectively.

The Work Alienation Scale was originally developed by Mottaz (1981). It was translated into Chinese version using translation and back-translation methods without any modification. Mottaz's Work Alienation Scale consisted of 21 items with 7 items for each of 3 dimensions including powerlessness, meaninglessness, and self-estrangement. The responses were obtained on a 4-point Likert Scale that measured the frequency of feelings and was scored from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). In each dimension there were 3 negative guidelines, so the scores for these 9 negative guidelines were reversed before computing. The author did not sum all scores for each dimension to obtain a single score. Thus, the scores for each dimension was considered separately. The higher the score

the greater perception of work alienation. The mean scores of each dimension of work alienation ranged from 1 to 4, and they were classified into three levels: low level (mean score 1.00-2.00), moderate level (mean score 2.01-3.00) and high level (mean score 3.01-4.00). The internal reliability of Work Alienation Scale was tested within 15 registered nurses who had similar characteristics to the subjects using Cronbach's Coefficient alpha. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the dimensions of powerlessness, meaninglessness and self-estrangement was 0.70, 0.66, and 0.64 respectively.

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Research Ethics Review Committee in the Faculty of Nursing, Chiang Mai University, Thailand. Permission for data collection was obtained from the five university hospitals in Yunnan Province, the People's Republic of China. Furthermore, before the data collection, an informed consent was obtained from the nurses who participated in the study and after being informed about the purpose, benefits and method of research. Moreover, anonymity and confidentiality of all the information was maintained by using numerical codes in the questionnaires instead of using subjects' names.

Data Collection

After got the permission of data collection, the researcher prepared packages for all subjects selected to participate. The package included a information sheet, a consent form, the questionnaires in an envelope with researcher's



name and email address. The researcher selected a nurse from each hospital to be research coordinators. The completed questionnaires were in sealed envelopes and returned to the coordinator by dropping into the mailbox within 2 weeks, then the coordinator sent the questionnaires to the researcher. The returned questionnaires were checked by the researcher for completion before data analysis. The response rate was 95% ($429 \div 451 \times 100\%$), and the valid response rate was 92% ($415 \div 451 \times 100\%$).

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed by using SPSS version 13.0 for Windows (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the subjects and the levels of each subscale of organizational justice and each dimension of work alienation. The data of organizational justice and work alienation showed a non-normal distribution. Therefore, the Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to examine the relationships between subscales of organizational justice and each dimension of work alienation.

Results

Demographic Data of the Subjects

The subjects consisted of 415 staff nurses from

five university hospitals. All of the subjects were female with age ranging from 20 to 54, with an average age of 30.67 years old ($SD = 7.41$). Most of the subjects (61.20%) were in the age group of 20-30 years old. The majority of subjects were married (60.48%). Nearly half of the subjects held an associate degree (47.47%), and the largest group of subjects (46.75%) were junior nurses. The majority of them worked in medical (43.37%) and surgical (41.69%) departments. Over one third of the subjects had been working between 1-5 years (39.28%) while 26.75% of subjects had been working for 6-10 years, with a range from 1 to 36, and an average of 9.75 years ($SD = 7.96$). Nearly half of the subjects (48.19%) had received short training 1-3 times in the last 1 year. Concerning the monthly salary and job compensation of subjects, 45.30% of them earned 3,001-4,000 Yuan/month.

Organizational Justice

The subjects perceived the subscales of distributive justice according to western concept ($\bar{X} = 2.44$, $SD = 1.02$), distributive justice according to eastern concept ($\bar{X} = 2.35$, $SD = 0.84$), procedural justice ($\bar{X} = 2.56$, $SD = 0.88$), and informational justice ($\bar{X} = 3.27$, $SD = 1.02$) at moderate levels whereas interpersonal justice ($\bar{X} = 3.75$, $SD = 1.02$) was at a high level (Table 1).



Table 1 Mean, Standard Deviation and Levels of Organizational Justice as Perceived by Subjects (n =415)

Organizational Justice	Mean	SD	Level
Distributive justice according to western concept	2.44	1.02	Moderate
Distributive justice according to eastern concept	2.35	0.84	Moderate
Procedural justice	2.56	0.88	Moderate
Interpersonal justice	3.75	1.02	High
Informational justice	3.27	1.02	Moderate

Work Alienation

The subjects perceived the dimension of powerlessness ($\bar{X} = 2.18$, SD = 0.46),

meaninglessness ($\bar{X} = 2.29$, SD = 0.44), and self-estrangement ($\bar{X} = 2.48$, SD = 0.55) at moderate levels (Table 2).

Table 3 Mean, Standard Deviation and Levels of Work Alienation as Perceived by Subjects (n = 415)

Work Alienation	Mean	SD	Level
Powerlessness	2.18	0.46	Moderate
Meaninglessness	2.29	0.44	Moderate
Self-estrangement	2.48	0.55	Moderate

Relationships between Subscales of Organizational Justice and Dimension of Work Alienation

Negative relationships were found between subscales of organizational justice and powerlessness. It also found negative

relationships between subscales of organizational justice and meaninglessness. There were negative relationships between subscales of organizational justice and self-estrangement (Table 3).



Table 3 Relationships Between Each Subscale of Organizational Justice and Dimensions of Work Alienation Among Subjects (n = 415)

Organizational Justice	Work Alienation		
	Powerlessness	Meaninglessness	Self-estrangement
Distributive justice according to western concept	-.23**	-.34**	-.52**
Distributive justice according to eastern concept	-.27**	-.34**	-.54**
Procedural justice	-.26**	-.32**	-.50**
Interpersonal justice	-.33**	-.29**	-.34**
Informational justice	-.26**	-.33**	-.39**

** $p < .01$

Discussion

1. Organizational Justice

Regarding perception of organizational justice among nurses in this study, the results found that Chinese nurses perceived a moderately fair share of pay, promotions, opportunities, transfers, and appraisals in relation to their effort, contributions, needs and expectations about guanxi. Nurses perceived a moderate fair share of procedures and processes used in decision making, and they received moderate levels of fairness of truthful, timely and reasonable explanations. Meanwhile, nurses in university hospitals received a high fair share of interpersonal treatments from their head nurses, supervisors and top managers. A possible reason of this findings is related to dissatisfaction with salary and compensation of nurses. The income of nurses was lower than that of other health professionals, even lower than some social professionals in China (Internet Survey, 2005). In addition, centralized decision-making at the top level of organizations resulted in nurses having little opportunity to participate and express their

thinking in decision-making processes (Cao & Wang, 2008). Moreover, the procedures of decision-making were not explained thoroughly to the nurses because of heavy workload and limited time (First People's Hospital of Yunnan Province, 2011). In addition, the findings in this study support that head nurses, supervisors and hospital managers distributed outcomes based little on principles of guanxi (a Chinese term defined as a manner in which Chinese people build relationship with others), leading nurses in the study to feel that their career outcomes were not proportional to their efforts.

Although inadequate explanation of decision-making procedures was provided to the nurses, the Chinese head nurses, supervisors and top managers treated staff nurses equally in a polite manner, with dignity and respect, and refrained from improper remarks, Chinese persons believe that the capability of getting along with colleagues and understanding others are key success factors in a career field (Wang, Tao, Ellenbecker, & Liu 2011). Moreover, Chinese are considered collectivist with a strong



emphasis on maintaining relationships between superiors and subordinates. Therefore, the Chinese nurses perceived a high level of interpersonal justice.

2. Work Alienation

In this study, the nurses perceived a moderate sense of discrepancy between what they expected to control and what they were able to control, and had a moderate level of individual alienation from themselves when they fail to find self-satisfaction, sense of identity, self-esteem and personal fulfillment. A possible reason to explain this result may be that the value of nursing care in China is not acknowledged and nurses are regarded merely as physicians' assistants and followers (Yu, 1997), and have autonomy in their work at a moderate level (Pu, 2010). This lead nurses to perceive that nursing is a lack of professional recognition and suffer from low self-esteem in the work place (Luo, 2011).

3. Relationship between Subscales of Organizational Justice and Dimension of Work Alienation

The results showed that there were negative correlations between subscales of organizational justice and powerlessness. This results was consistent with several previous studies. When employees experience an injustice related to the distribution of resources, they feel disappointment, and lack of autonomy which then leads them to perceive powerlessness to control their job (Ceylan & Sulu, 2011). Aiken and Hage (1966) also found that when an employee felt a lack of job autonomy in the discharge of their duties and daily tasks, powerlessness was postulated to occur. When

the organization uses fair procedures, employees feel respected by their employer, thus enhancing their pride in membership (Elovainio, Linna, Kivimaki, Ala-Mursula, Pentti & Vahtera, 2005). On the contrary, employees who experience feelings of procedural injustice usually think that they will not be able to affect decisions and not be respected (Elovainio et al, 2005). Especially in the organizations with centralized structures, employees tend to think that decision making is restricted to the upper level of the organization, and thus may perceive little personal control, leading to a perceive sense of powerlessness (Markowitz, 1987). Regarding the relationship to interpersonal justice and informational justice, employees proper contact with his/her superior is the most important aspect when they are facing a problem. If superiors do not express truthful, respectful, honest, and timely explanations, employees will be less able to assert themselves, combined with the uncertainty related to organizational processes, employees will have a sense of powerlessness (Ceylan & Sulu, 2011). As a result, organizational justice had a negative correlation with powerlessness.

The negative relationships between subscales of organizational justice and meaningfulness were found in this study. Organizational justice helps fulfill the human need for sense of belongingness and meaning. On the contrary, injustice threatens basic human psychological needs for belonging, self-esteem, and meaning (Mccardle, 2007). A sense of meaningfulness occurs when workers are unclear as to what they ought to believe, or when the workers' minimal standards in



decision-making are not met (Seeman, 1966), or when workers feel they contribute little to the overall production process and hence do not see the significance of their role in it (Mottaz, 1981). If the workers experience the work as meaningful, they will perform their work well (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

This study demonstrated that there were negative relationships between subscales of organizational justice and self-estrangement. Self-estrangement is a psychological state of lack of sense of identity or personal fulfillment (Blauner, 1964). The sense of self-estrangement occur because of basic needs not being fulfilled by work (Blauner, 1964). Many factors lead to self-estrangement in the workplace, for instance, promotional opportunity and salary distribution (Aiken & Hage, 1966; Bacharach & Aiken, 1979). When the worker feels she/he did not get fair basic needs then she/he might feel self-estrangement. Moreover, interpersonal and informational injustice influences superior subordinate relationships. Superior subordinate relationships are thought to be essential to the role of task accomplishment in the organization (Lee & Jablin, 1995). Attritional conflicts between leader and subordinate has been shown to be related to subordinate turnover intentions and satisfaction (Wilhelm, Herd, & Steiner, 1993). The perceived lack of interpersonal satisfaction has been referred to as loss of interpersonal fulfillment (Lang, 1985), which has been related to self-estrangement (Korman, Wittig, & Lang, 1985). Therefore, poor superior subordinate relations leads to the experience of self-estrangement. Moreover, procedural justice was positively correlated with the degree to which

employees perceive support from their organization (Moorman, Blakely & Niehoff, 1998). Informational justice was also positively related to perceived organizational support (Fodchuk, 2009). Perception of injustice leads nurses to feel that they cannot receive adequate trust and support from their organization. Lack of support from the hospital frustrate nurses' perception of obligation to reciprocate with their organizations (Zuo & Yang, 2009). In that environment, nurses would often fail to connect their individual interests with organizational interests and lose enthusiasm for their work, leading to a sense of self-estrangement.

Conclusions and Implications

As the first study that explores perceived organizational justice, work alienation and the linkage between these two variables among Chinese nurses, this study offers several contributions to the literature. First, this study extended the literature by examining organizational justice in China, which has a different culture from Western countries, and did so by using an instrument developed within Chinese culture. Second, this study adds to the literature by linking subscales of organizational justice and dimensions of work alienation in China as the first study.

The results of this study could provide basic information to nurse managers regarding organizational justice and work alienation of nurses. Hence, nurse managers can take the findings into consideration when designing managerial interventions. They should support nurses and be more concerned with the importance of a fair work environment by



providing fair promotions, opportunities, and expectations about *guanxi*, opportunities for taking part in decision-making, fair interpersonal treatment, truthful, timely and reasonable explanations to reduce the perception of work alienation among nurses.

These results indicate that hospital administrators must pay attention to employees' perceptions of organizational justice. They should allow nurses to express their views and feelings during the procedures of decision-making, provide them autonomous and

empowered behavior, more opportunities to promotion and further study, distribution in relation to nurses' needs. As a result their perception of work alienation may reduce.

A longitudinal study should be conducted to understand the ways to improve organizational justice since this is a cross-sectional study. As a result of the nurses heavy work load, the researcher of this study unable to collect a large number of surveys. Therefore, future study should be conducted on another work environments and among another professionals.

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