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FROM JOB SATISFACTION TO ETHICAL CONDUCT: HOW PUBLIC SERVICE MOTIVATION SHAPES NURSES' ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the association among Job Satisfaction and ethical behavior of nurses in Public Sector Hospital. Additionally, the current study also sought to examine the mediation of public service motivation between the association of job satisfaction and ethical behavior of nurses. This study use cross sectional research strategy, and used self-administered questionnaire to gather the data from defendants. Due to source restrictions continence sampling technique was used. This study has a sample size of 314. In order to test the hypotheses, variance based (SEM) technique by using the Warp PLS was employed. The results showed that public service motivation and ethical behavior of nurses had positive and significant relationships with job satisfaction. Public service motivation was also positively and significantly related to ethical behavior. Furthermore, public service motivation mediated the association among job satisfaction and ethical behavior. Therefore, all the hypotheses were supported.

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Introduction

Background

Nursing ethics is one of the key components of the healthcare system as it determines the quality of care that patients receive and the degree of professionalism of the nursing staff (Abd-Elmoghith et al., 2024). Ethical issues are present in nursing practice and particularly when the nurse is dealing with the patients' autonomy, privacy, and non-maleficence. Professional conduct of nurses entails following the set codes of ethics for the profession with help of premier bodies like the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and other national nursing organizations that offer guidelines for practice and decision making in cases of ethical dilemmas (International Council of Nurses, 2012). These ethical codes provide a starting ground for nurses when it comes to the moral dilemmas which are inevitable in the health care sector, and which do not divert the nurses from the core focus of their practice, which is patient care (Wati et al., 2023). This paper will firstly discuss how historical progression of health care, the society and technology have affected ethical behavior in nursing (Guo, et al., 2023). This paper will argue that due to the growth in the complexity of the healthcare delivery systems, and the heterogeneity of patients' needs, there is a need for a more refined perception of ethical practice among nurses. These all show that as the practice of nursing expands, it is equally important that the nurse must be capable of making ethical choices in most field of practice (Grace, et al., 2024).

Many nursing ethical issues occur when there is a conflict between various ethical principles or personal values and professional obligation (Fiester & Yuan, 2023).For instance, between patient autonomy and the duty to keep the patient safe, or competing resource limitations and provision of best possible care. Nurses are required to make decisions quickly in many demanding situations, and are faced with ethical questions most of the time. If this good patient outcome is to be realised, and the confidence and trust of the public in the system is to be preserved, it is for the nurses to manoeuvre through these challenges well. (Kim, Kang, & Lee, 2023).

Results of the studies on the ethical behavior of nurses have revealed differences in the factors influencing the ethical decision making process at the individual, organizational and larger health care environment level. Moreover, organizational ethical climate leadership support and availability of resources regarding ethics in the organization greatly contribute to the formulation of the ethical behavior of a nurse. Being able to figure out these factors would, therefore, be an anchor in the development of interventions and policies that uphold the practice of ethical nursing per se (Mostafa, et al., 2020).

Given the above, greater attention should be paid to the need for further studies to be undertaken on the ethical behavior of nurses, particularly in the public service in health care. In an environment that is faced with challenges such as limited resources, high patient loads, and bureaucratic restrictions, one must consider the implications of those challenges on ethical behavior and decision making and how they impact the nurse's work. making (Aloustani, et al., 2020). In addressing these gaps in research, the present study offers insights that can usefully inform policy and practice in the enhancement of healthcare organizations' ethical climate and

the subsequent improvement of patient care Perry & Wise, (1990) lead to following objectives, to investigate the impact of job satisfaction on public service motivation of nurses, to investigate the impact of public service motivation on ethical behavior of nurses to investigate the impact of job satisfaction on ethical behavior of nurses, to investigate the mediating role of public service motivation between the link between job satisfaction and ethical behavior of nurses.

Literature Review

Social Determination Theory

Perhaps most relevant to workplace behavior, Self-Determination Theory is a mature theory of human motivation, proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000). The theory postulates that if the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met, then individuals will be most highly motivated. Within the context of nursing, the theory provides a unique lens with which to examine the ways in which job satisfaction may impact proper ethical conduct. Thus, such nurses will feel self-determination and autonomy to their job, believe that they can do their job well, and have a feeling of relatedness to colleagues and patients. The SDT postulates these conditions to foster intrinsic motivation, which going by the words of Deci and Ryan, (2000), is closely linked to ethical behavior.

Ethical Behavior of Nurses

Ethics behavior in nursing is very foundational to healthcare practice, for it is the delivery of patient care with integrity, compassion, and respect for human dignity. What it means is that standards and codes of conduct guide a nurse to make decisions in any case to ensure the wellbeing of the patient (Noh & Kim, 2024). The role of ethics in nursing cannot be understated. Ethics in nursing is what informs direct patient outcomes, builds trust between providers and patients, and shapes a positive reputation of the nursing profession. Beauchamp and Childress, 2013. It is for this reason that nurses in their practice have to develop a strong background in ethical principles and guidelines which can guide actions effectively since they have to deal with a myriad of ethical dilemmas on a daily basis (Burkhardt & Nathaniel, 2024).

The literature points to a significant body indicating the enabling factors of ethical behavior amongst nurses (Jaastad, Ueland, & Koskinen, 2024). One major determinant is education and training; a nurse with good ethics education is better equipped to manage complex ethical dilemmas (Lin, Liao, Wang, & Chang, 2024).. Ongoing professional development and training in ethics and professional conduct reinforces the ethical standards of practice and helps nurses to remain current with best practice and emerging ethical standards. Specifically supportive cultures in organizations that communicate ethical priorities, provide clear guidance, and offer resources for nurses to seek advice or support, such as by using ethics committees or counselling services are among the most important factors that shape the ethical behaviour of nurses (Epstein & Hamric, 2009).

Other evidence of the role of leadership in support of ethical behavior is also available (Labrague, 2024). Ethical leadership sets the tone for an ethically responsible culture, and makes clear the

expectation of ethical behavior to everyone (Gallagher & Tschudin, 2010). The ethical climate would be favorable and enhance the ethical decision-making skills of nurses when the organization is in line with the ethical norms shared by people, which would lead to a decrease of moral distress (Jaarsma, Gelhaus, & Eklund Saksberg, 2024).

Public Service Motivation

It has been defined as involving a variety of sources of motivational factors, including altruism, civic duty, and a desire to contribute to the community (Fernandes, Santinha, & Forte, 2022). PSM applied to public sector work is relevant because in this sector, employees are generally motivated by everything else other than money or the career itself. The understanding of this concept, therefore, is crucial to examine the ways PSM drives job satisfaction, performance, and ethical behavior in nursing (Jiang, et al., 2021). It was found that PSM leads to an increase in organizational citizenship behavior, which refers to discretionary actions outside of the formal job requirements that help in organizational effectiveness. Wang, et al., 2024; Tu, et al., 2024). The essence is that other than its direct effect on job satisfaction, PSM also amplifies the quality of care given by nurses to their patients (Lee & Na, 2024). In this regard, contextual research is required to see how PSM works under different environmental scenarios and to start building strategies that will tap into PSM effectively to support improved public service outcomes (Das, 2023; Kohnen, et al., 2023).The general tone of the literature on Public Service Motivation is, therefore, that it is a significant determinant of desirable outcomes in public sector work, such as high job satisfaction and ethical behavior (Peretz, 2023).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction among nurses is an element that affects their performance and the quality of care the patients get. Satisfaction is defined as the level of contentment and fulfillment a nurse derives from his or her working environment, roles, and professional responsibilities (Mamić et al., 2024). Since satisfaction plays a big role in sustaining standard quality care and health amongst health workers, job satisfaction among nurses is important for this very end (Huang, et al., 2024). These all relate to working conditions, relations with colleagues and supervisors, salary and professional development—like, which have an impact on job satisfaction in nursing. The understanding of these factors and their connection to job satisfaction are what help to address issues of nurse turnover, nurse burnout, and quality of care (Saliya et al., 2024). Additionally, the levels of resources and support within the workplace including access to continuing education and professional development would further influence job satisfaction by boosting confidence and career growth opportunities of nurses (Akinwale, & George, 2020). In contrast, job satisfaction of Pakistan nurses is contextualized with regard to the organizational structure, hierarchical nature, patient to nurse ratio, and resource constrained management. These factors have also been found to be contributing to job dissatisfaction and burnout amongst Pakistanist nurses, based on some research. (Hassan et al., 2019). Identification of specific influences of job satisfaction in the Pakistani context is important in devising strategic ways on how to support the nursing workforce in provision of quality care (Suprapto, et al., 2023).

Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Public Service Motivation

SDT, put forward by Deci and Ryan (2000), provides a very useful framework through which the intrinsic motivations driving individuals in their professional roles can be understood.It would be a logical expectation that high job satisfaction, as an indicator of the fulfillment of these needs, would have a higher level of PSM among nurses (Stefurak, et al., 2020; Vuong, 2023). According to this theoretical framework, two hypotheses can be developed: first, there is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and Public Service Motivation of nurses. When the nurses have been recording high levels of job satisfaction, they will be highly motivated to serve due to the fulfillment of psychological needs. The second hypothesis is that Public Service Motivation mediates the relationship between job satisfaction and ethical behavior. In turn, job satisfaction enhances PSM and exerts a positive effect on ethical behavior in nursing. This also underlines the need for developing a work environment that can provide the necessary support to the job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation of employees for maintaining ethical conduct within healthcare Mehmood, et al., 2024; Chaudhary, et al., 2024). Hence, following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and public service motivation

Public Service Motivation and Ethical Behavior

PSM is an abbreviation for Public Service Motivation, a concept by which prompts individuals to serve the public, finding satisfaction in contributing to the efficiency and welfare of society. Ethical behavior involves the performance of duties in line with set moral principles and profession standards that ensure public service professionals, including nurses, work with integrity, fairness, and respect for others (Schwarz, Eva, & Newman, 2020; Gnankob, Ansong, & Issau, 2022). PSM not only enhances ethical conduct in service delivery but also fosters a culture of integrity in healthcare institutions where the ethical considerations become fundamental in all decision-making processes (Malik & Danish, 2020; Ripoll & Schott, 2023; Piatak & Holt, 2023). It is, thus, summarized that Public Service Motivation has a huge role in promoting good ethical behavior among nurses. Strong commitment to the values of public service in nursing enhances integrity and recognizes paramount well-being for the patients. This relationship, therefore, calls for developing PSM within healthcare institutions to promote good ethical standards and bring about better health outcomes for patients (Tavares, Lima, & Michener, 2024). It can help healthcare organizations create an environment wherein ethical conduct is built-in, meaning the creation of a setting where PSM understanding and utilization take the lead, to eventually lead to better healthcare delivery and enhanced trust by the public toward this profession. Based on this, the following hypothesis is postulated:

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between public service motivation and ethical behavior

Relationship between Public Service Motivation and Ethical Behavior

PSM is an inherent desire to help people and to make a difference in the common good. Often described as values of altruism, compassion and civic duty, these are values that are highly likely to be associated with Public Service Motivation as described by Perry and Wise (1990). The connection between PSM and moral behavior is especially significant for professions that directly impact others, like nursing (Lim Choi, 2004; Wright, Hassan & Park, 2016). PSM will be a significant motive that will propel nurses and other public service workers to act ethically. PSM will help engender public interest and people's well-being values in them that will give them a strong motivation to act with integrity and to follow ethical standards even in challenging situations. (Oliveira, et al., 2024). This information about the PSM-ethical behavior relationship can be used by health care organizations as a means of enhancing quality of care and maintaining good ethical practice.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and ethical behavior

Mediating role of Public Service Motivation

PSM is a significant mediating factor linking job satisfaction to ethical behavior. This is true for professions such as nursing, where care and adhering to ethical principles are extremely crucial. Job satisfaction is the level at which individuals feel pleasured and satisfied with other positive feelings regarding the work. Therefore, it stands as one of the most important predictors for various job outcomes, including ethical behavior. Job satisfaction would therefore make them more motivated, involved, and dedicated to their jobs and be able to better adhere to ethical standards, on the other hand. The pathway through which job satisfaction does influence ethical behavior is complex, and PSM has an important mediating role in this pathway (Fareed & Su, 2022). The mediating role of PSM suggests that, while important, job satisfaction by itself is not enough in ensuring ethical behavior; rather, enhancement of PSM is what drives nurses toward behaving in ways that meet the standard of ethics consistently. For example, whereas a more satisfied nurse may feel more empowered and motivated, it is their strong PSM that urges them to appreciate the welfare and confidentiality of the patients and be just in their decisions. To that end, both satisfaction and PSM should be socialized in health care contexts to achieve ethical behavior (Abdelmotaleb, 2020). There is empirical evidence that, indeed, there exists a mediating role for PSM in this relationship. Studies have shown that there is a positive effect of job satisfaction on PSM, while in turn, PSM enhances ethical behavior; for example, In this paper, this intervening effect shows the need for work environments that are supportive to the worker, enhancing not only job satisfaction but also the fostering of PSM, hence leading to better ethical outcomes in healthcare. Alamri, 2023; Molines & Perrier, 2024).

Hypothesis 4: Public service motivation mediates the relationship between job satisfaction and ethical behavior

Theoretical Framework

Following is the theoretical framework of this thesis.

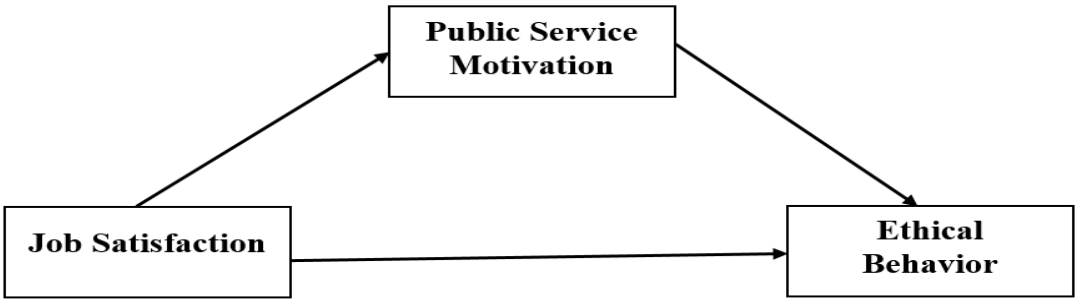


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Methods

Study Participants and Procedures

Preliminary examination of the research topic emphasizes the need to assess the validity of the theory, which in turn informs this study's hypothesis-testing method . Though other forms of data collection like the face-to-face interviews, online surveys may be expensive and time-consuming, advantages of internet surveys are that they are convenient. The target population for this study is all the nurses who are practicing in public health facilities in the country. In sampling process, (convenience sampling) total 350 questionnaires were distributed among nurses working in different public sector hospitals. Out of these distributed questionnaires, 314 completely filled questionnaire were received back. These questionnaires were then used for data analysis.

Measures

Job satisfaction was measure by 8 items scale developed by Brayfield and Rothe, (1951). Public service motivation was measure by 5 items scale developed by Perry (1996). Ethical behavior was measure by 16 items scale developed by Ferrell, Fraedrich, and Ferrell, (2000). Ethical behavior was measure by 16 items scale developed by Ferrell, Fraedrich, and Ferrell, (2000). Five-point Likert scale was used.

Results

Demographic Analysis

This table presents the demographic analysis of the study's respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Analysis

Age of Respondents					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25	35	11.1	11.1	11.1
	26-35	104	33.1	33.1	44.3
	36-45	125	39.8	39.8	84.1
	45 and Above	50	15.9	15.9	100.0
	Total	314	100.0	100.0	
Tenure of Respondents					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 5 years	49	15.6	15.6	15.6
	6-10 years	127	40.4	40.4	56.1
	11-15 years	120	38.2	38.2	94.3
	More than 15 yeas	18	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	314	100.0	100.0	
Marital Status					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Divorced	11	3.5	3.5	3.5
	Married	289	92.0	92.0	95.5
	Single	10	3.2	3.2	98.7
	Widow	4	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	314	100.0	100.0	

Reliability Analysis

Table 2 Results of the Reliability Analysis for Three Constructs: Job Satisfaction, Public Service Motivation, and Ethical Behavior These high Cronbach's Alpha values confirm that the items under each construct are highly correlated and consistently measure concepts. Generally, these results show measures for all three constructs to be highly reliable and consistent.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Construct	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Job Satisfaction	0.944	0.932
Public Service Motivation	0.944	0.926
Ethical Behavior	0.923	0.911

Validity Analysis

Table 3 Average Variance Extracted Values for the Measures of Job Satisfaction, Public Service Motivation, and Ethical Behavior. The results confirm that there is strong convergent validity for

Job Satisfaction and Public Service Motivation and acceptable though less robust validity for Ethical Behavior.

Table 3: Analysis of Convergent Validity

Construct	Average Variance Extracted
Job Satisfaction	0.680
Public Service Motivation	0.771
Ethical Behavior	0.533

The discriminant validity would be ensured if the relay of the AVE for each construct was above its correlations with other constructs. The table as a whole suggests that Job Satisfaction and Public Service Motivation have strong discriminant validity, while Ethical Behavior has only adequate but somewhat weaker discriminant validity, especially in relation to Public Service Motivation

Table 4: Correlations among 1.vs with square roots of AVEs

	Job Satisfaction	Public Service Motivation	Ethical Behavior
Job Satisfaction	(0.825)	-	-
Public Service Motivation	0.371	(0.878)	-
Ethical Behavior	0.449	0.811	(0.658)

Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 show the path coefficient between Job Satisfaction and Public Service Motivation was 0.376, thus indicating that Job Satisfaction has a positive moderate effect on Public Service Motivation. The relationship is significant at $p < 0.001$, therefore showing a strong likelihood that the effect is not due to chance. Hence, hypothesis 1 is accepted. The strongest relationship noted is that between public service motivation and ethical behavior, with a path coefficient of 0.748. This manifests the positive high effect of public service motivation on ethical behavior. Its power is supported by a p-value below 0.001 at a significance level. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is accepted. Moreover, the direct effect of job satisfaction on ethical behavior is 0.179, with a positive and statistically significant effect with p-value < 0.001, though weak as compared to the influence of public service motivation on ethical behavior. All things considered, the findings here are that public service motivation plays an important role in evoking ethical behavior, and job satisfaction makes a positive contribution to both public service motivation and ethical behavior, though to a lesser degree. Hence, hypothesis 3 is accepted.

Table 5: Path Coefficient and p-value

Direct Relationship	Beta Coefficient	p-value
Job Satisfaction → Public Service Motivation	0.376	<0.001
Public Service Motivation → Ethical Behavior	0.748	<0.001

Job Satisfaction → Ethical Behavior	0.179	<0.001

Table 6 Indirect path coefficient details and p-value regarding job satisfaction, public service motivation, and ethical behavior. The indirect path coefficient captures the effect of job satisfaction through public service motivation on ethical behavior with respect to the strength and direction of effect. It is worthy of note, in this regard, that a positive coefficient implies an increase in job satisfaction that positively affects public service motivation and thereby positively influences ethical behavior. In this coefficient, the p-value is less than 0.001, making it a case where the indirect effect is extremely statistically significant. The effect will therefore be at least strong enough to not be by chance at this significance level, proving a meaningful impact of job satisfaction on ethical behavior through the mediation of public service motivation. Hence hypothesis 4 is accepted.

Table 6: Indirect Path Coefficient and p-value

Indirect Relationship	Beta Coefficient	p-value
Job Satisfaction → Public Service Motivation → Ethical Behavior	0.281	<0.001

SEM Analysis Output

Figure 2 shows the path analysis of this study.

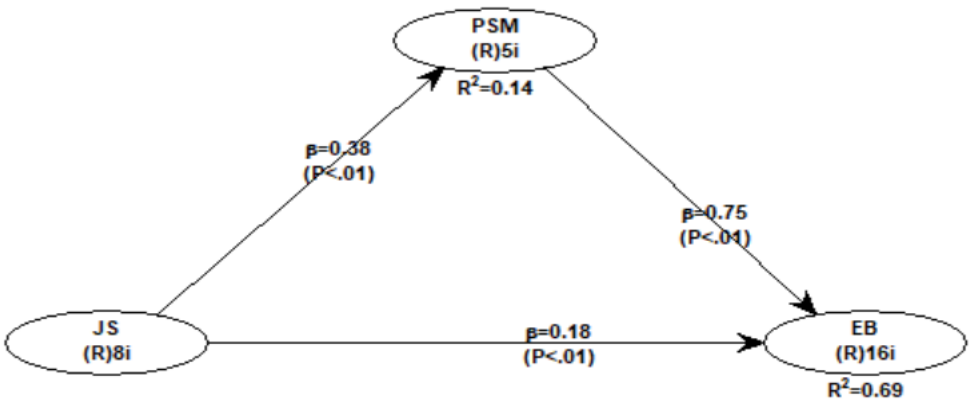


Figure 2: SEM Analysis Output

Standard errors for path coefficients

	JS	PSM	EB
JS			
PSM	0.043		
EB	0.044	0.041	

Effect sizes for path coefficients

	JS	PSM	EB
JS			
PSM	0.141		
EB	0.081	0.608	

Figure 3: Standard error

	JS	PSM	EB
R-squared		0.141	0.690
Adj. R-squared		0.139	0.688
Composite reliab.	0.944	0.944	0.923
Cronbach's alpha	0.932	0.926	0.911
Avg. var. extrac.	0.680	0.771	0.433
Full collin. VIF	1.253	2.922	3.158
Q-squared		0.141	0.689
(No. diff. vals.)	200.000	146.000	213.000
(No. diff. vals./N)	0.402	0.293	0.428
Min	-2.158	-1.993	-2.136
Max	2.086	1.722	2.250
Median	-0.020	0.050	-0.072
Mode	-2.158	1.722	-1.548
Skewness	-0.090	-0.186	0.120
Exc. kurtosis	-0.568	-0.670	-0.535
Unimodal-RS	Yes	Yes	Yes
Unimodal-KMV	Yes	Yes	Yes
Normal-JB	No	No	No
Normal-RJB	Yes	No	Yes
Histogram	View	View	View

Notes: Unimodal-RS = Rohatgi-Székely test of unimodality; Unimodal-KMV = Klaassen-Mokveld-van Es test of unimodality; Normal-JB = Jarque-Bera test of normality; Normal-RJB = robust Jarque-Bera test of normality; click on "View" cell to see corresponding histogram.

Discussion & Conclusion

The findings of the hypotheses in this study give an integrated picture of the relationship among the constructs Job Satisfaction, Public Service Motivation and Ethical Behavior and gives insight into the mechanisms of these constructs. The support of Hypothesis 1 validates the existence of a positive relationship between job satisfaction and public service motivation that is significant. This is corroborated by other studies that demonstrated that it is indeed associated with increased employee motivation to contribute to public service. The second hypothesis that public service motivation is positively correlated with ethical behavior was also accepted. This finding is consistent with Perry and Wise (1990) who suggested that high public service motivation people would be more ethical. The hypothesis that is related to the direct positive link between job satisfaction and ethical behavior is accepted (H3). Hypothesis 4: Job satisfaction plays an intervening role between public service motivation and ethical behavior. It explains that public service motivation is a very important reason why job satisfaction impacts on ethical behavior. Kim and Lee, (2012), have also found public service motivation to be a significant mediator between job satisfaction and ethical behavior. The results have implications for nursing practice that are important. They say that to make nurses more likely to provide service to the public and act ethically would have to improve their job satisfaction. It has been specifically demonstrated by Perry and Wise (1990) that job satisfaction and public service motivation are strongly related to ethical conduct. This study also provides some insights regarding the possible process through which these relationships happen by examining the mediating role of public service motivation.

Theoretical Implications

This study results have implications for the explanation of job satisfaction, public service motives, and ethical behaviors in several important ways. This research is a confirmation of the theoretical model of the study that investigates the relationship between job satisfaction and PSM. This indicates that when an employee is content, then he or she is more likely to be motivated from the intrinsic reasons of public service as hypothesized by Wright and Pandey (2008) in the theoretical framework. The acceptance of the results in this study supports the positive relationship between public service motivation and ethical behavior in a theoretical model, as reported in the literature. Thirdly, a direct positive relationship between job satisfaction and ethical behavior was found, enriching the theoretical knowledge of the connection between job satisfaction and ethical behavior. In their establishing this direct link, the researchers provide evidence that a positive work environment – defined as high job satisfaction – will directly benefit ethical behavior among employees. Hence, this finding is in line with the theories regarding job satisfaction and ethical behavior that state that satisfaction with one's job results in higher ethical standards. Finally, public service motivation as a mediating variable between job satisfaction and ethical behavior will have important theoretical implications. It explains the moderating role of motivational factors between job satisfaction and ethical behavior.

Conclusion of the Study

This paper explores the effects of job satisfaction on nurses' ethical behavior, with public service motivation as a mediating variable. The results of this research suggest that if a nurse's work satisfaction is high, then the promotion of PSM will also be successful and ultimately improve the ethical behavior of a nurse. Moreover, job satisfaction can also directly enhance the ethical performance of nurses. To a certain extent, the results corroborated theoretical models based on a relationship between job satisfaction and public service motivation and a connection between these two and ethical behavior and provide some clarity in relation to relationship between these variables in the context of nursing. In practice, the main concern of health care organizations should be to improve the job satisfaction and instill public service motivation among the nursing personnel to encourage ethical behavior. Policy, professional development and public service focus can play a role in developing a supportive context for ethical practices to flourish in this context. Given these results, the cross sectional study and reliance on self-reported data provided a clear agenda for future studies. Further studies should, therefore, adopt longitudinal designs with objective measures that help further confirm and extend these findings to have a full understanding of these dynamics in nursing.

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