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Personality Traits of Float Pool Nurses at King Fahad Hospital in Medina, Saudi Arabia

Ayman Ateq Al Amri*, Glezzeelyne Pascual Pascua*, Yasir Omar Ashour, Mohammed Munawer Abu Ruhaylah**, Fadzrina Bibih Alih***
*Nursing Education and Research Department, King Fahad Hospital Medina, Ministry of Health, Medina, Saudi Arabia
**Nursing Department, King Fahad Hospital Medina, Ministry of Health, Medina, Saudi Arabia
Email: aymax2017@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Nurses play an essential role in providing optimal patient care. However, issues such as nursing shortage, increasing rate of absenteeism affects the quality of nursing care. Creating a solution to address these issues is of paramount importance. Hence, float pool nurses is one of strategies viewed to be used to face these challenges. Furthermore, this research aimed to delve on the personality traits of float pool nurses and unit-based nurses at work and determine if the float pool nurses have different personality traits than unit-based nurses. A quantitative, descriptive design was employed in this study wherein data were collected through a self-administered 56-item questionnaire distributed to 80 registered nurses (40 float pool nurses and 40 unit-based nurses) in King Fahad Hospital in Medina, Saudi Arabia and the results were: Majority of the responses of both respondents shows a consistent preference of neither accurate nor inaccurate of personality factors (Mean = 2.91), sixty-eight percent or 34 out of 50 personality traits items revealed to be significant. Findings indicate that float pool nurses were open to change, creating new ideas, interested to work in new environment. However, they need more support to understand the new situation.

Keywords: Float pool, Float nurses, Floating, Staffing shortage, Alternative staffing

INTRODUCTION

"Nursing is not just a job, it is a specialized profession, in which nurses care for others as well as for patients", according to Ootim (2002). Nurses play an significant role in providing patient care. The demand of quality nursing care and patient outcomes are vital in healthcare organizations. By meeting these demands, addressing the problem that leads to poor quality of nursing care and patient outcomes should be solved. There are different reasons that lead to these issues, one of these is nursing shortage which is an issue faced by many healthcare organizations around the world (Boswell et al., 2008).

Nursing staffing crisis in the US is well known. However, the international shortage is often unrecognized (Trossman, 2003). Nursing shortage has been a concurrent issue experienced by several countries like United States and the United Kingdom in healthcare systems. In a study conducted by Chandra and Willis (2005), the viable solution in combating the nursing shortage and providing quality care is by using Foreign-Educated Nurses (FENs). At the same point, to be a valuable member in any healthcare force, it is imperative that healthcare organizations treat FENs in a way they treat individuals from their native country. Conversely, American Nurses Association believes that hiring a foreign nurse doesn't address the underlying problem of shortage.

Saudi Arabia has a chronic shortage of local nurses, both public and private healthcare sectors, which leads to increasing demand for foreign nurses. Expatriate nurses cover vast number of the nursing workforce in healthcare facilities (Almalki, FitzGerald, & Clark, 2011). Data from Ministry of Health (2016) reveals that, out of 180, 821 nurses across healthcare sectors, only 36.5% of them are Saudis. Saudi Arabia has been expanding its healthcare organizations, thus, additional nursing recruitment is needed to meet the desired nursing services and effective patient quality nursing care.

In addition, increasing rate of absenteeism due to sick leave, maternity leave, and vacation time is also an issue (Hemann & Davidson, 2012). Likewise, burdensome workloads, job-related burnout and job dissatisfaction lead to nursing shortage (Aiken et al., 2002). Inadequate nurse staffing affects patients, their loved ones, future and current staff nurses, and the hospital itself in which they are working (Martin, 2015). Nurses are the frontline in clinical area. If another colleague got absent, an alternative staffing from the same

unit is utilized to fill the gap which, in turn, leads to additional workload. And when the overworked nurse gets sick due to overwork and exhaustion, it leaves others to work harder (Ootim, 2002).

Therefore, creating a solution to meet nursing shortages, workloads and absenteeism is important for nursing administration. Float pool of registered nurses (RNs) is one strategy that can be used to address these challenges challenges and control the cost (Linzer, Trilley & Williamson, 2011, Dziuba-Ellis, 2006). A float pool nurses consists of supplemental RNs available for assignment in each shift to specific nursing unit to meet daily staffing demands and depending on the organizational need. Floating pool can be used to overcome some staffing issues such as nursing shortage, staff burnout as well as improving in staff retention (Linzer et al, 2011). Establishing a float pool RNs is a common ground to make the most effective use of staff in providing good patient quality care. There are few published studies to support the effectiveness of float pool RNs.

"Floating is both difficult for the floaters and unit-based nurse. The float pool nurse may feel intimidated due to no control over the situation, insecure because of being unsure of the technical aspects of a particular new floor, lonely because of the feeling of no support, and unwelcome, whether the feeling is based on misperception or reality. On the other hand, unit-based nurses are unsure and in doubt about the float pool nurses' skills. They may also be upset if the float pool nurse is going to be acting as an aid rather than receiving a full patient care" (Kidner, 1999). They also appeared to be ungrateful to the float pool nurse who helped them during the shift (Roberts, 2004).

Some nurses may feel unsatisfied due to increase in occupational stress. However, others may consider the floating is a good opportunity to experience a variety of patient situations with various medical conditions (Hemann & Davidson, 2012). A nurse being floated to unfamiliar areas, for instance oncology nurse to neuro-surgical unit, general medical-surgical unit to ICU, increases their liability (Robert, 2004); thence, to create a successful floating experience remains the mutual responsibility of all stakeholders (Shinners et al., 2016).

In addition, a float nurse should have adequate knowledge and skills in a variety of clinical settings. They should be aware of their limitations to provide appropriate performance of practice. In addition, float nurses should express their feelings of their new assignment to be able to provide effective nurse care (Hemann & Davidson, 2012). Nevertheless, it is better to ask the float pool nurse what type of patients she is more comfortable and competent caring for, as float pool nurse sometimes will accept the assignment even she is unsure whether she is qualified for it, because of fears for her job or simply reluctant to admit that she can't handle such case (Kidner, 1999).

Furthermore, float pools have been effective in reducing staff costs in inpatient settings (Dziuba-Ellis, 2006; Linzer, Trilley & Williamson, 2011) Thence, the method was viewed that it can have similar benefits in ambulatory settings wherein float nurses work as generalists, using their broad knowledge of nursing to address the needs of patients across all ages (Hemann & Davidson, 2012). The float pool model was also adopted by other disciplines apart from nursing. For instance, the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian, New Jersey had created an efficient staffing plan that uses a nursing model that floats laboratory professionals among departments and locations (Rodriques, 2015).

In King Fahad Hospital Madina, the nursing department is suffering from a shortage of nursing staff. The total numbers of nurses are approximately 700 and the desired number is 1200 nurses. Hence, the hospital requires approximately 500 nurses to be distributed in more than 15 clinical units with total capacity of 500 beds. Another issue is the increasing rate of absenteeism among nursing staff. Hence, the nursing administration initiated a Float Pool Nurse Program to ensure a balance staffing, maintaining continuity of work and to ascertain patient safety. The proposal to implement the program is preceded by concurrent staff absences and rampant need for pull-out across the units. The float nurses report to the staffing department and are utilized or are assigned in units where additional staff is needed.

The researchers seeks to increase the understanding of nursing management about nurses' personality traits of those who are involved on the float pool project. Hence, nursing administration could plan for nurse retention and recruitment. In addition, nursing management may be able to formulate policies and standards regarding float pool nurses. Moreover, future researches may benefit from the results as bases in designing future studies aimed to study float nurses.

METHODS

The research utilized a quantitative, descriptive design. The design was used because the study aim is to gather information from nurses working in float pool and in the units at King Fahad Hospital in Medina regarding their response of personality factors during their work.

The setting of this study was in King Fahad Hospital in Medina city, Saudi Arabia. A sample (n=80) questionnaires were distributed for registered nurses in the float pool and unit-based nurses. In this study, all nurses working in float pool nurses during the period of the study (March to May, 2017) were included to the sample. The total number of float pool nurses during the data collection was 40 nurses. Another 40 questionnaires were distributed to unit-based nurses.

In this study, the instrument tool that was used is modified and adapted from Cattell's 16PF Personality questionnaire (Cattell et al, 2008) and Goldberg's lexical factor markers (Goldberg, 1992). It is a self-report assessment tool that measures personality traits such as extraversion, independence, and the like. Notwithstanding, the questionnaire used by the researchers was modified that comprised 56 questions to examine the personality factors of float pool nurses. This questionnaire consists of two parts: 6 questions of personal and work-related characteristics (to examine the demographic data of the respondents) and 50 questions of personality traits or about the respondent's self wherein each is marked using likert scale from very inaccurate to very accurate.

The first step to conduct the study was to obtain written approval from the nursing administration at King Fahad Hospital. Then, a letter of approval from research ethical committee and institutional review board (IRB) were obtained. Nurses who participated in this research were received an explanation of the purpose of this study. The participants were informed that they have the right to choose not to complete and to exit from the study if they decide to. In addition, nurses involved in this study were provided an official consent and the anonymity and confidentiality was ensured for all the participants.

The questionnaires were distributed to all float pool nurses (n= 40) during the period of the study from March to May 2017. Another 40 questionnaires were also distributed to the unit-based nurses using a convenience sample technique. The survey was provided to the nurses during their work hours. Of the 80 questionnaires distributed, 70 were returned. Float pool nurses (30 survey) and unit-based nurses (40 survey). Hence, the response rate was 87.5%. Upon the collection of all questionnaires were collected, the data entry stage began. The researcher checked all questions on the questionnaire and coded the data in numerical order. Questionnaires that were coded and entered were verified by the researchers before analysis phase.

Data were coded and entered by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). A descriptive statistic was used to analyze the data that obtained from the participants about their demographic information (age, gender, nationality, education background, years of experience, work of place). Another descriptive statistic was used to examine the personality factors of the nurses who will participate to this study. Inferential statistics was used to determine if there are significant differences in personality factors between float nurses and unit-based nurses (Schneider, Whitehead & Elliott, 2008).

This research answers the following questions: 1. What are the personal and work-related characteristics (age, gender, nationality, education background, years of experience, work of place) of the float nurses and unit-based nurses working in King Fahad Hospitals in Medina, Saudi Arabia? 2. How nurses describe themselves about the personality factors? 3. Are there differences in personality traits between float nurses and unit-based nurses?

RESULTS

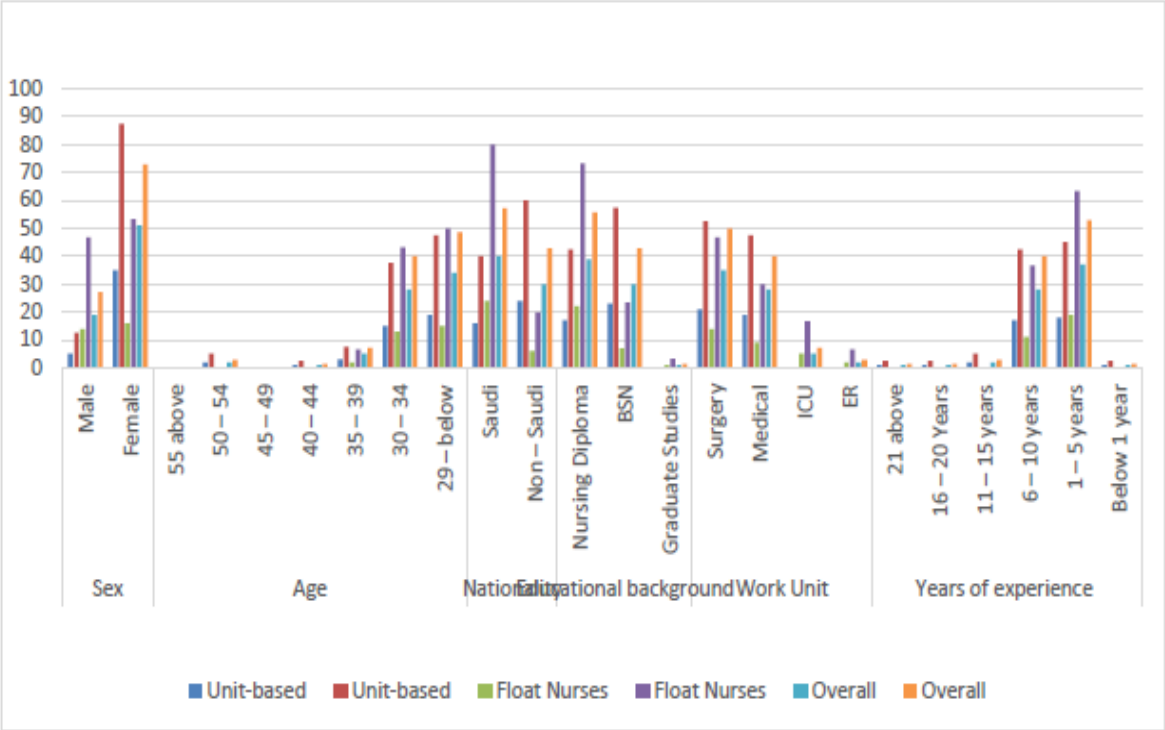

Figure 1. Personal and work-related Characteristics

The profile (Figure 1) revealed that most of the respondents are female dominated aging from 29 below. It has also been noted that majority of the float pool nurses are Saudi nationality which accounts 80 percent. Conversely, most of unit-based nurses are Non-Saudi which accounts 60 percent. In terms of educational background, majority of the respondents of float pool nurses (73.33%) are diploma in nursing, while 42.5 percent of unit-based nurses are nursing diploma. on the other hand, 57.5 percent of unit-based nurses are BSN degree holder while only 1 float nurse has an MSN degree. In terms of unit work, 52.5 percent of unit-based nurses are working in Surgery ward, and 47.5 percent in Medical ward. For float pool nurses, 46.66 percent are nurses assigned at surgery unit; 30 percent are in the medical unit; 16.66 percent ICU and 6.66 percent are assigned at ER. Furthermore, in term of work experience, it is noted that 63.33 percent of the float pool nurses have been exposed in the unit for almost 1 to 5 years.

Table 1. Total mean score of the personality traits factors

Personality Traits	Float Nurses		Unit-based Nurses		Overall	
	Mean	Description	Mean	Description	Mean	Description
Total mean score	2.76	Neither Accurate nor Inaccurate	3.05	Neither Accurate nor Inaccurate	2.91	Neither Accurate nor Inaccurate

Figure 2. Mean values of Personality Traits

The Assessment tool measures 50 personality traits of float pool nurses and unit-based nurses. Majority of the responses of both respondents shows a consistent preference of neither accurate nor inaccurate with total mean (2.91) (See table No. 1). On the other hand, the Unit-based nurses perceived some of the traits such as; Interested in people (Mean = 3.65), paying attention to details (Mean = 3.90), sympathized with other feelings (Mean = 3.73), making a mess of things (Mean = 2.58), having an excellent idea (Mean = 3.43), having a soft heart (Mean = 3.63) and quick to understand things (Mean = 3.43) are scored as moderately accurate. Contrarily, float pool nurses perceived some of the items such as life of the party (Mean = 2.43), leaving his or her belongings around (Mean = 2.40), insult people (Mean = 2.50), putting things back in their proper place (Mean = 2.50), talk to a lot of different people at parties (Mean = 2.37), like order (Mean = 2.50), using difficult words (Mean = 2.37) and getting irritated easily (Mean = 2.17) are scored as moderately inaccurate (See Figure No. 2).

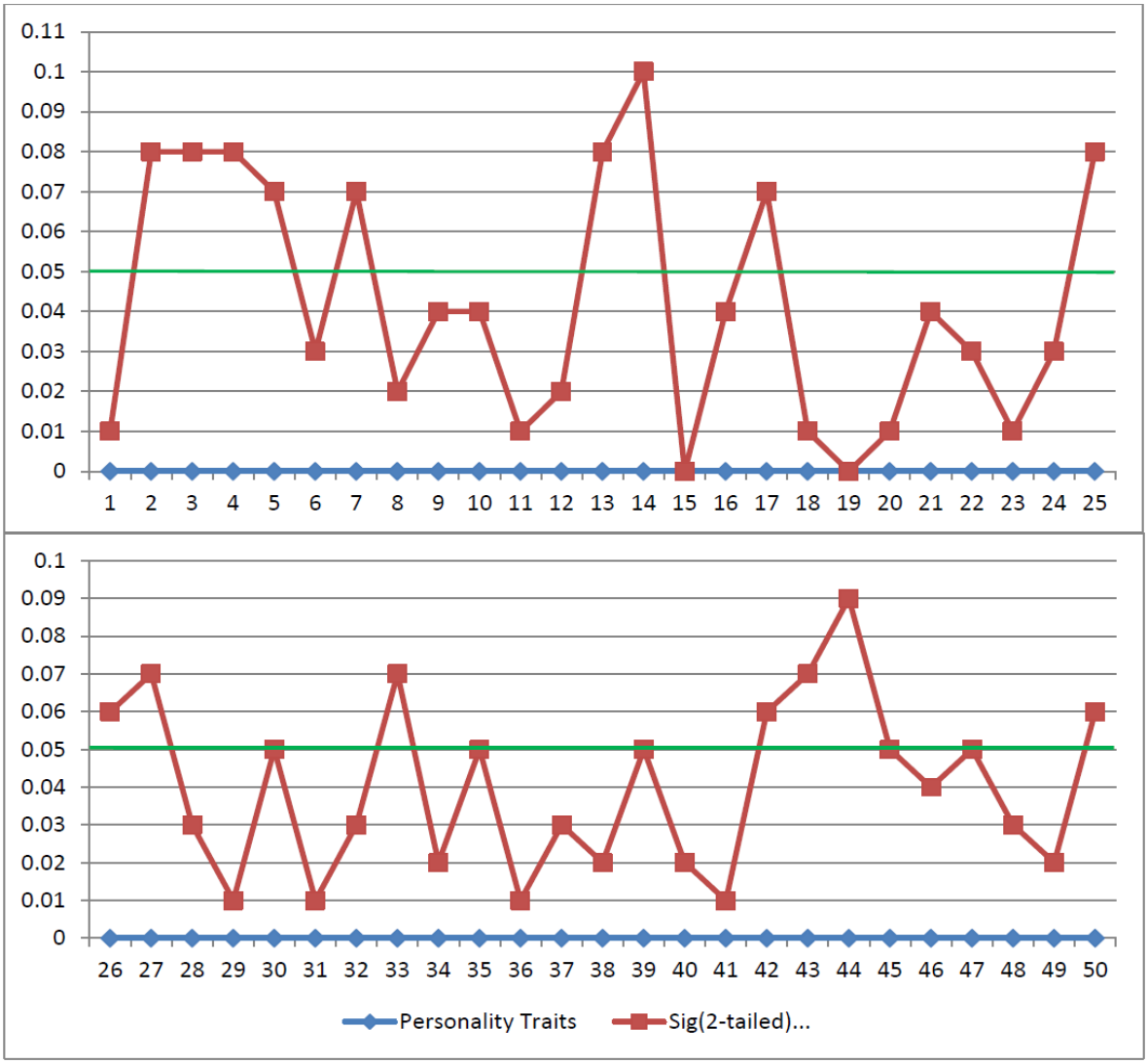

Figure 3. Significant Differences of Personality Traits between Unit-based and Float Nurses

Figure 3 shows the results of t-test on personality traits factors between float pool nurses and unit-based nurses. The difference in the personalities of the two groups of respondents were notably observed. Of the Sixty-eight percent or 34 out of 50 personality traits items revealed to be significant, the top ten items most noted were as follows: “I have a vivid imagination”; “I seldom feel blue”, “I am the life of the party”; “I feel comfortable around people”; “I make a mess of things”, “I am not interested in abstract ideas”, “I get chores done right away”; “I get upset easily”; “I talk to a lot of different people at parties”; and “I don’t like to draw attention to myself”.

However, when subjected to further statistical analysis using the One Sample Statistics at 5 % level of significance; 16 of the 50 items or 32 percent with differences have a level of significance that is greater than the given value of 0.05 indicating that the differences are not significant. The items that the two groups have

differences but not significant were as follows: 1. I worry about things; 2. I get irritated easily; 3. I feel little concerns with others; 4. I am always prepared; 5. I get stressed out easily; 6. I pay attention to the details; 7. I have excellent ideas; 8. I have rich vocabulary; 9. I am interested in people; 10. I sympathize with other's feelings; 11. I have a soft heart; 12. I like order; 13. I follow a schedule; 14. I have little to say; 15. I feel others' emotions; and, 16. I am full of ideas.

Generally, there is a significant difference in the personality traits between the float pool nurses and the unit-based nurses as indicated by the significant value of 0.03 which is less than the level of significant of 0.05.

DISCUSSION

In the clinical setting, personality traits as well as demographic profile could be used to select potential float pool nurses recruits. In this study, the findings related to personal and work-related characteristics was that the female nurses where the majority in the both groups (float pool nurses and unit-based nurses). This confirms the general observation in any institution, public or private, that there is more female working as nurses than male (Landivar, 2013).

Personality traits for both pool nurses and unit-based nurses was investigated in this study. The findings indicate that unit-based nurses perceived some of the traits such as interested in people, paying attention to details, sympathized with other feelings, making a mess of things, possess an excellent idea, have a soft heart and fast learner which are scored as moderately accurate than the float pool nurses. On the other hand, float pool nurses perceived some of the traits such as life of the party, leaving with his or her belongings around, putting things back in their proper place, talk with different people, like order and getting irritated easily which are scored as moderately accurate than the unit-based nurses. This finding indicates that unit-based nurses were more confident when working in their units whereas float pool nurses are somehow disorganized as they are working in new units and trying to adjust with the new situation.

These results are congruent with that of Linzer, Tilley and Williamson (2011), who examined the personality factors between float pool nurses and unit-based nurses. The findings showed that unit-based nurses prefer to work on a specific unit with designated rules and to be more concrete thinkers and proven method, whereas float pool nurses were more likely to be open and receptive to new ideas.

Furthermore, in the current study, sixty-eight percent or 34 out of 50 personality traits items revealed to be significant. The interpretation is validated by the significant differences found in the personality traits between the float pool nurses and the unit-based nurses as indicated by the significant value of 0.03 which is less than the level of significant of 0.05.

It is noted that float pool nurses have a vivid imagination, they seldom feel blue, they perceived they are the life of the party, they feel comfortable around people and make a mess of things, they are not interested in abstract ideas, getting chores done right away, they get upset easily, they talk to a lot of different people at parties, and they don't like to draw attention of their self. This result indicates that float pool nurses were interested to work at new units. However, they need to be guided to understand the new work.

These results are consistent with those of Linzer, Tilley and Williamson (2011), who found significant differences between float pool nurses and unit-based nurses. Their findings showed that float pool nurses were more open-minded, question authority, open to change and using critical thinking more than unit-based nurses.

Finally, it is apparent that float pool nurses have different personality traits in clinical settings than unit-based nurses. Float pool nurses tend to work in new environment and more interested than unit-based nurses to create new ideas and to change and adapt to the new situation. However, they may get upset easily which require support by effective orientation and education to achieve positive outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Nurses are the front lines of the health care team which is perceived to have a direct 24 hours contact with the clients. According to Latham, Hogan, and Ringl, (2008), work environment in the hospital or health care facilities has been recognized as an important factor in recruiting and retaining nurses, thus, personality assessment tools could also be used to promote a conducive workplace by maintaining a good camaraderie or collegial working relationship.

The current study examined the personality traits for float pool nurses and unit-based nurses in King Fahad Hospital in Medina, Saudi Arabia. It is noticed that there were significant differences between both group of nurses. Float pool nurses appears to be interested to work in new unit but they feel unorganized and trying to adapt to the new work environment.

Furthermore, although the results of this study were generally statistically significant, a trend was shown of float pool nurses receiving more difficult assignments since they have no unit that could be considered a home. As hospitals and other health care organizations adjust and adapt their practices to remain viable in the changing health care environment, flexible resources such as float pools will be paramount to their success. Addressing and monitoring the equality of patient care assignments of float pool nurses versus unit staff nurses

may increase float pool recruitment and retention and assist health care organizations to adapt to changes in health care demand. Moreover, nursing administration should consider and address any issue that may affect the effectiveness of float pool nurses.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were formulated and advanced in answer to the problem and issues raised.

1. Float pool nurses need to have a successful hospital orientation that involves education and training activities to help them working effectively and thus achieve positive outcomes.
2. The major expenditure in health care organizations is human resources. Hence, creative staffing solutions to meet nursing shortages and constrained institutional budgets are a top priority for every hospital. It is noted that the special areas such as Intensive Care Unit and Emergency Room does not have a float pool nurse because of the special requirements for these units. The administration should provide nurses able to work to these units to address this concern.
3. The hospital administration should develop a strategic plan that will promote job retention and recruitment in the face of a nursing shortage as revealed from the result of this research.
4. Interested future researchers may initiate other similar studies and investigate or discover other variables possibly related.

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