

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background and Significance of the Research Problem

In view of rapidly changing social environment for organizations, it is no longer enough for employees only to react and adapt to various changes. Without doubt, the employees have to plan ahead and prepare in advance for potential threats and dangers by taking proactivity to achieve long term goals within changing and uncertain working contexts (Belschak & Hartog, 2010). In addition, nowadays, the employees are often in the face of rapid changes in their jobs. For example, they need to deal with innovations and new technologies, and to work in organization with decentralized management (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Campbell, 2000; Thatcher & Zhu, 2006). The pressure of innovation and the growth of decentralized organizational structures increase demands of the employees' initiation and self-starting (Campbell, 2000; Parker, 2000). Especially, in health context, nurses have responsibility to provide high standard nursing care to meet the needs of their patients. Nurses can make efforts to optimize work tasks or processes, and manage problems to provide higher quality of care to their patients while working by taking a proactive approach (Farrell, 2012). Thus, proactive work behavior is important for nurses.

Proactive work behavior is defined by Parker and Collins (2010) as self-initiated and anticipatory action to improve the internal organization by transforming and optimizing oneself condition or environment. Proactive work behavior contains four sub-dimensions, namely, problem prevention, individual innovation, voice and taking charge. Problem prevention refers to the action which the individual makes efforts to explore the essence of problems, and optimizes procedures to prevent future reoccurrence of such problem. Individual innovation refers to the action which the individual is aware of new and emerging opportunities, generates new ideas and seeks those ideas into force. Voice refers to the action which the individual expresses constructive challenge to improve the

standard of procedures in their work environment. Taking charge refers to the action which the individual attempts to improve the approach work that was conducted such as work structures, practices and procedures.

Proactive work behavior has been proved to bring positive organizational, team, and individual outcomes. At the organizational level, proactive behavior contributed to financial performances (Aragón-Correa, Hurtado-Torres, Sharma, & García-Morales, 2008), organizational commitment and organizational efficiency (Belschak & Hartog, 2010). At the team level, proactive work behavior was positive associated with team job satisfaction, overall team effectiveness (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999), team learning (Druskat & Kayes, 2000) and team cohesion (Tesluk & Mathieu, 1999). At the individual level, proactive work behavior was important to individual's career success (Prabhu, 2013) and entrepreneurial behaviors (Becherer & Maurer, 1999). Meanwhile, proactive work behavior significantly brought job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and job performance (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). In health context, proactive work behavior leads to good patient outcomes. Proactive work behavior was regarded as an important aspect for healthcare organizations to obtain patient satisfaction (Gillet, Fouquereau, & Bonnaud-Antignac, 2013). Farrell (2012) revealed that individual proactive work behavior promoted quality of care. That is to say, high level of individual proactive work behavior implies safe, effective, timely, efficient, equitable and patient-centered nursing care (Mitchell, 2008). Additionally, proactive nurses can make efforts to avoid problems before they occur, address and solve problems when they arise, and initiate the way of their work which is carried out (Farrell, 2012; Mitchell, 2008).

It is well recognized that head nurses are important in achieving the nursing management objectives and hospital's goals. Head nurses always act as intermediaries between executives and staff nurses, physicians and staff nurses, and staff nurses and patients and so on. Besides, head nurses have to efficiently use all kinds of resources provided by the hospital to motivate and train nurses to make more efforts in their daily work (Wang & Liu, 2015). In addition, head nurses should have autonomy in their work and hold accountable for the subordinate professional development and quality of care in their departments. Moreover, head nurses are expected to proactively identify and prevent

problems in unit operations before patients are adversely affected (Chinese Hospital Association, 2011). Therefore, head nurses are significant persons who have to display the proactive work behavior to achieve the hospital goals and improve the quality of care.

There were some studies of proactive work behavior among nurses. Farrell (2012) found that proactive work behavior among staff nurses in Ireland was at a moderate level ($\bar{X}=3.10$, $SD=1.02$). Wade (2012) revealed that proactive work behavior among registered nurses in North Carolina did not achieve high standard ($\bar{X}=69.36$, $SD=9.64$). Additionally, in 2016, a study among nurses in Thailand revealed that 63% of nurses scored a moderate level of proactive work behavior (Sanghon, 2016). For nurse managers, Warshawsky, Havens, and Knafl (2012) found that proactive work behavior among 290 nurse managers in North Carolina was at a slightly high level ($\bar{X}=4.10$, $SD=0.48$). These studies indicated that results of proactive work behavior among nurses were from moderate to slightly high level, and only one study about proactive work behavior was conducted among nurse managers.

Through reviewing the literature, there are many factors positive related to proactive work behavior at an individual level such as proactive personality ($r=0.1$, $p<0.05$) (Wade, 2012), role breadth self-efficacy ($r=0.13$, $p<0.01$) (Wade, 2012), flexible role orientation ($r=0.33$, $p<0.01$), job autonomy ($r=0.38$, $p<0.01$), change orientation ($r=0.22$, $p<0.01$) (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006), and hope ($r=0.30$, $p<0.01$) (Farrell, 2012). Psychological empowerment was positive related to four sub-dimensions of proactive work behavior, namely, problem prevention ($r=0.30$, $p<0.01$), individual innovation ($r=0.25$, $p<0.01$), voice ($r=0.22$, $p<0.01$), and taking charge ($r=0.29$, $p<0.01$) (Searle, 2011). At the organizational level, factors that were positive related to proactive work behavior include quality of work life ($r=0.17$, $p<0.01$) (Kanten, 2014) and psychological safety climate ($r=0.33$, $p<0.01$) (Farrell, 2012). Especially, Warshawsky et al. (2012) found among nurses managers that work engagement was positive related to proactive work behavior ($r=0.43$, $p<0.001$). This study showed that work engagement had the strongest relationship with proactive work behavior.

Work engagement is defined by Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) as a positive, fulfilling, and work-related state of mind, rather than a momentary

and specific state. It is a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior. Work engagement includes three sub-dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor refers to high level of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to involve efforts in one's work, and persist even in the presence of difficulties. Dedication refers to strong involvement in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption refers to fully concentrating and happily engrossing in one's work, whereby time passes quickly, individual has difficulties with detaching oneself from work.

Work engagement is becoming strategically important in nursing field due to nurses shortage, controlling healthcare cost and adverse patients' outcomes. Meanwhile, it contributes to a distinctive body of nursing knowledge because it theoretically underpins the actions of nurses and nurse managers in order to create a practice environment to support safe and effective nursing care (Bargagliotti, 2012). Nevertheless, Bamford, Wong, and Laschinger (2013) found among registered nurses from acute care hospitals in Ontario that work engagement was at a moderate level ($\bar{X}=4.01$, $SD=0.97$). Veitamana (2014) found among nurses working in the three divisional hospitals, the Republic of the Fiji Islands that work engagement was at a moderate level ($\bar{X}=4.51$, $SD=0.92$). Warshawsky et al. (2012) revealed among 290 nurse managers in North Carolina that work engagement was at a very high level ($\bar{X}=6.01$, $SD=0.84$). In the People's Republic of China, Yang (2013) found among male staff nurses in the first Affiliated Hospital of Xiamen University that work engagement was at a low level ($\bar{X}=2.58$, $SD=1.12$). Zhou and Zhao (2010) found among nurses in tertiary A general hospital, Chengdu that work engagement was at a moderate level ($\bar{X}=3.21$, $SD=1.09$). Zhang and Zhen (2015) found among registered nurses in tertiary A general hospitals, Beijing that work engagement was at a moderate level ($\bar{X}=3.58$, $SD=1.17$). Work engagement among nurses in the Affiliated Hospitals of Kunming Medical University, Yunnan province was at a moderate level ($\bar{X}=3.64$, $SD=1.07$) (Feng, Akkadechanunts, & Chontawan, 2012). Many studies had been done to explore the levels of work engagement among nurses, and the results of work engagement were from low to high levels. However, only one study was conducted among nurse managers.

Work engagement was considered as intrinsic motivation to carry out high level of proactivity at work (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008) that contributed to manifest good attitudes of the work (Zhang, 2014), positively complete the job (Kim, Cable, Kim, & Jie, 2009), and provide higher quality of care to their patients (Farrell, 2012). Work engagement ensures goal oriented behavior, persistence in attaining objectives, high level of proactivity, feeling enthusiastic for, identifying with and being proud of one's job (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008), and drives energy into work (Kim et al., 200). Since work engagement refers to high levels of energy, persistence, identification and goal-directness, it can be considered that high level of work engagement can increase the likelihood of displaying proactive behavior at work (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008). That is to say, when individuals experience a heightened sense of energy towards and identification with their work tasks, they are more likely to take proactive work behavior (Farrell, 2012).

According to the literature review, many studies confirmed the relationship between work engagement and proactive work behavior (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008; Xu, Xi, & Zhao, 2015). In healthcare context, Warshawsky et al. (2012) found among acute care nurse managers in North Carolina that work engagement was associated with proactive work behavior ($r=0.43$, $p<0.001$) and Farrell (2012) found among nurses in Ireland that work engagement was correlated with individual proactive work behavior ($r=0.12$, $p<0.05$). However, few studies had been done to explore the relationship between work engagement and proactive work behavior, and the relationships were from weak to moderate levels. No any study was conducted to examine the relationship between work engagement and proactive work behavior among the head nurses in the People's Republic of China.

The People's Republic of China, a developing country with a population of 1.374 billion and a land area of 9.6 million square kilometers, locates in Eastern Asia. Chinese government indicated basic medical and health services which were established to serve for all urban and rural residents, make everyone access to basic medical and health services up to 2020, and improve the level of everyone's health (Ministry of Health of China, 2012). In the People's Republic of China, the university affiliated hospitals are public hospitals that affiliated with universities. They provide high level specialized

subject medical and health services for several areas, carry out research tasks and high degree education. In Yunnan province, there are 7 university affiliated hospitals which provide three-level general medical services (Chinese Hospital Association, 2011; Health and Family planning Commission, 2016), one is in Dali, five ones are in Kunming and the remaining one is in Yuxi.

The head nurses in the university affiliated hospitals are responsible for ensuring the patients' safety and satisfaction, increasing financial performance (Chase, 2010), supervising and inspecting the quality of nursing work, identifying and timely solving problems (Shu Tong Network, 2013), preventing the adverse event occurrence (Medical Education Network, 2015), guiding the rescue of critically ill patients, soliciting opinions from staff nurses (Hua, Chen, & Li, 2014), and improving nursing procedures (Huang & Feng, 2016). To be appointed as a head nurse, the hospital managers not only focus on the experiences of nurses, but also focus on the competency of improving work approaches and innovation. At the same time, the nurses who are adept at innovation or have been innovative at work will be preferred to be head nurses. The head nurses have autonomy in their work, get more opportunities for developing themselves, and have post allowance (University Affiliated Hospitals, 2015). Therefore, proactive work behavior is important and full of challenges for nurses and head nurses in the People's Republic of China.

In the university affiliated hospitals, the nursing management objectives are to endlessly improve quality of care (Chinese Hospital Association, 2011) by taking many actions such as implementing holistic nursing, sterilizing, drug administrating, improving primary care, ensuring patient safety, writing nursing documents, and improving patient satisfaction and so on (Yu, 2011). In addition, in 2010, Ministry of Health of China pulsed "High Quality Nursing Service Demonstration Project" which aimed to reform clinical nursing pattern, enhance clinical nursing service, and improve nursing management in national health system (Ma, 2011). Moreover, Chinese Hospital Association (2011) launched the nursing core system which was the primary system to ensure the quality and safety of nursing care. Quality of care management, patients' safety management, nurse-patient communication, nursing deficit reports, discussion, analysis and management were highlighted (Chinese Hospital Association, 2016). Furthermore, in the People's

Republic of China, there are many severe incidents such as hospital acquired infection (HAI) (Zhang, 2012), pressure ulcers (Tao, Qian, Li, Wu, & Ruan, 2014), medical errors (Zhang, 2012), and adverse drug events (ADEs) (Cui et al., 2013; Hu, Zhu, Chen, & Xu, 2009). These factors force head nurses to display more proactive work behaviors to meet the needs of nursing services and management, prevention problems, and optimizing nursing procedures in order to ensure quality of nursing care and safety of the patients.

Proactive work behavior of nurses would be a huge challenge in the People's Republic of China. Liu and Li (2015) presented that innovative behaviors of nurses directly influenced the level of medical care. Ma (2011) reported that, under new situation and new challenges, perfect management and technological innovation can achieve the goals of realizing sustainable and quickly development of the hospitals. Additionally, many hospitals tried to promote innovations, for example, the Second People's Hospital of Changzhou City (2017) carefully planned the first nursing innovation competition; Taiwan Chang Gung Memorial Hospital carried out innovation policy in the people-oriented principle (Zhu, 2012); and some hospitals actively carried out and supported the management of new technologies and new projects, in which head nurses can actively participated innovation of techniques and products by applying project (Zhou & Liu, 2006). However, Bao, Zhang, Zhang, Wang, and Qia (2013) found among nurses in Shanghai that innovative behavior was at a moderate level ($\bar{X}=25.91$, $SD=6.59$). Moreover, taking charge is also important for the nurses to provide nursing care or make decisions in their jobs. However, Zhang (2016) found that only 6.65% of the nurses involved in grading nursing care for the patients, which is the level of nursing made according to the patients' conditions and is a part of nursing practice that represents taking charge of the nurses at work.

Moreover, the People's Republic of China especially Yunnan province is contending with a very serious nurses shortage comparing to other countries (Chinese News Network, 2016). Nurse shortage results in serious high workload in health care professions. In the meantime, on 1st January, 2016, the People's Republic of China fully opened two-child policy (National Health and Family Planning Commission, 2015). Many childbearing-age head nurses are actively preparing for pregnancy. Head nurses are more likely to take care of their babies than engage in work. Moreover, according to

incomplete statistics, nearly 40 health care providers died for medical violence from June of 2001 to October of 2016. Among 60 injury medical incidents in the People's Republic of China from January of 2015 to May of 2016, more than 50% of them occurred in the tertiary hospitals (Qiao, 2016). These crushing workloads, decentralization of energy, and disharmonious working environment may influence on work engagement of head nurses.

Based on the above information, it is crucial to study work engagement and proactive work behavior of the head nurses in the People's Republic of China. However, little is known about proactive work behavior of the head nurses and about the relationship between work engagement and proactive work behavior among the head nurses in university affiliated hospitals in the People's Republic of China. Therefore, this study aims to examine the level of work engagement and proactive work behavior, as well as their relationship among the head nurses in university affiliated hospitals, Yunnan province, the People's Republic of China. The findings of this study could provide basic information about proactive work behavior, work engagement, and its relationship for improving work engagement and proactive work behavior of the head nurses in university affiliated hospitals, Yunnan province, the People's Republic of China. Moreover, the results of this study provided baseline data to develop future nursing research related to work engagement and proactive work behavior in the People's Republic of China.

Research Objectives

1. To explore work engagement among head nurses in university affiliated hospitals, the People's Republic of China.
2. To explore proactive work behavior among head nurses in university affiliated hospitals, the People's Republic of China.
3. To examine the relationship between work engagement and proactive work behavior among head nurses in university affiliated hospitals, the People's Republic of China.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of work engagement among head nurses in university affiliated hospitals, the People's Republic of China?
2. What is the level of proactive work behavior among head nurses in university affiliated hospitals, the People's Republic of China?
3. Is there any relationship between work engagement and proactive work behavior among head nurses in university affiliated hospitals, the People's Republic of China?

Definitions of Terms

Work engagement refers to positive, fulfilling, and work-related state of mind of head nurse. Work engagement was measured by 17-item Chinese Version Utrecht Work Engagement Scale which included three sub-dimensions, namely, vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

Proactive work behavior refers to self-initiated and anticipatory actions of head nurse to improve internal organization by transforming and optimizing him/herself situation or environment. Proactive work behavior was measured by Proactive Work Behavior Scale which included four sub-dimensions, namely, problem prevention, individual innovation, voice, and taking charge (Parker & Collins, 2010). The scale was translated to Chinese by the researcher.

Head nurse refers to registered nurse who graduated from nursing education institutions with a certificate of qualification, held the registered nurse license granted by Ministry of Health of China, and was appointed to be first-line manager more than or equal to 1 year by executives in the university affiliated hospitals, Yunnan province, the People's Republic of China.

University affiliated hospitals refer to hospitals that are branches of three universities in Yunnan province including Dali University, Kunming Medical University and Kunming University of Science and Technology. They are tertiary A general hospitals which have more than 501 beds, provide three-level care, high level specialized

subject medical and health services for several areas, and carry out research tasks and high degree education. There were four hospitals mentioned in this study: the Affiliated Hospital of Dali University, the First Affiliated Hospital of Kunming Medical University, the First People's Hospital of Yunnan Province, and the Second People's Hospital of Yunnan Province.



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