Workplace Bullying and Intent to Leave: Measuring the Impact of Horizontal Hostility

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Purpose of research study

- Determine prevalence of Horizontal Hostility in a community hospital in the Southwest
- Examine whether a relationship existed between perceived Horizontal Hostility and intent to leave current position
Horizontal Hostility (HH)

- Bullying, lateral violence, peer incivility, nurses ‘eating their young’
- Behaviors consistent with HH vary; range from overt manifestations (e.g., infighting, passive-aggressive gestures such as eye rolling) to more covert actions including failure to respect confidences
- Apparent when the workplace culture or norm enables dominant individuals to pressure those who are more vulnerable
- Origins of behavior: power vs. powerlessness; oppression by nurses toward other nurses as a characteristic of oppressed group behavior
- Nurses who report greatest degree of perceived hostility also report the highest rate of burnout
- Impaired personal relationships in the healthcare workplace lead to diminished work performance and higher rates of absenteeism
Impact of Horizontal Hostility

In healthcare, HH can lead to:

- Diminished productivity and increased absenteeism (Bartholomew, 2006)
- Burnout (Thomas, 2003)
- Anxiety (Rowell, 2005)
- Depression (Rowell, 2005)
- Post traumatic stress disorder (Rowell, 2005)
- Suicide (Hastie, 1995)
Methods

- 28-item survey
- Modeled after 3 validated survey tools
  - AACN and National Association of Children's Hospitals and related Institutes study
  - “Lateral Violence in Nursing Survey” study (Stanley, 2007)
  - “Civility of the work place environment” (Longo, 2007; Vessey et al, 2009)
Process

- IRB approved survey November 2010
- Research Council members assigned to hand out surveys to all hospital RNs
- Nurses asked to complete survey and return to locked survey boxes located throughout hospital
- Surveys collected Dec, 1 2010 – Jan 31, 2011
- 130 completed surveys returned (28%)
Current Age

Participant responses n = 130

*DNA = Did Not Answer
Years experience in current role

Participant demographics (n = 130)
Participant demographics (n = 130)
How frequently do you see someone demonstrate HH or bullying behaviors?

Participant Responses (n = 124)  
Note: 6 did not answer this question
How difficult is it to confront someone who is demonstrating hostile behavior?

Participant responses (n = 98)
Are you considering leaving your position due to Horizontal Hostility?

Participant responses (n = 121)

*Note: 9 respondents chose not to answer this question
Potential impact of HH on nursing turnover
Organizational costs of Horizontal Hostility
Cost of RN turnover

- Pendry (2007) estimates that the cost to recruit, hire, and orient a medical / surgical nurse is $92,000; and up to $145,000 for a specialty nurse.

- The costs associated with a typical RN turnover rate of 19% (Jones, 2008) in a hospital with 500 nurses will cost the organization between 7.8 and 9 million per year.

- In addition to financial costs, RN turnover is associated with higher nurse-to-patient rations and compromised patient care (Bae et al., 2010; Boyle & Miller, 2008; Kane et al., 2007).

- Previous studies have found intent to leave is a strong predictor of employment turnover (Kovner et al., 2009; Hayes et al., 2006; Shader et al., 2001).
Study Conclusions

Next steps . . . .
The effect of HH in the acute care setting

- Influences job satisfaction and well being
- Contributes to high turnover rates
- Leaders at all levels should be alert to the potential for HH in their workplace
- The effect of HH on the financial viability of the organization can be underestimated
- Assessment of hospital work environment should include nurse perception of hostile / intimidating behaviors
- Steps must be taken to educate staff, managers, and leaders, and effective systems and processes must be implemented
Questions?
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