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The Three E's of Occupational Wellbeing:
A study of New Zealand Veterinary Nurse's Workplace Engagement, Exchange, and Exhaustion

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand.

Stafford W Kimber
2014

Declaration

I declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

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Stafford W. Kimber

Abstract

Occupational wellbeing is an ongoing concern for most employees and their organisations. Occupational stress research has been conducted for more than three decades, however its antipode, occupational eustress, has been present for half the time. Commonly researched manifestations of occupational distress and eustress are burnout and workplace engagement respectively, and both have been shown to occur in a range of roles and professions. Therefore, the goal of this research was to investigate work–related wellbeing among veterinary nurses, a relatively un–researched group, using the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model.

A cross–sectional approach was used. Structural equation modelling was used to ascertain the JD-R model's motivational and health pathways among veterinary nurses. Data were collected by online survey, with the help of eight New Zealand tertiary providers and the New Zealand Veterinary Nurses Association. One hundred and eighty–two participants provided data.

The results show that a large proportion of participants displayed high levels of workplace engagement and high quality relationships among team members. In addition, most also saw their work as being of benefit to their family life, and reported feeling engaged with their work. However, the relatively high levels of reported job demands could be of concern, as high demands can lead to emotional exhaustion over time. This research identified reasons to expand the JD-R conceptualisation of job resources and provided a guide towards healthier workplace practices such as identifying ways to increase work–family balance, build solid team–member relationships, and provide adequate job resources to address times of high demand.

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