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Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention Among Nurses in a Government Hospital in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Job satisfaction and turnover intention of nurses remain a major challenge in healthcare systems, especially in Saudi Arabia in light of the reforms under the Vision 2030. The objective of this study was to examine the determinants of job satisfaction and intention to quit among nurses in a government hospital. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was used in the study. The study gathered data using a standardized questionnaire on job satisfaction in different areas and turnover intention. The data were analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation; Mann Whitney U Test and Kruskal Wallis Test and Spearman Correlation

Results indicated that nurses had moderate levels of job satisfaction in work environment, professional development, and leadership support, while the turnover intention was relatively high. The demographics results showed that the workforce was mainly young, female and expatriates with a large number in early career stages. The statistical analysis showed significant differences in job satisfaction according to some demographic factors. There was a moderate correlation between job satisfaction and turnover intention, which means that the lower the job satisfaction, the higher the probability of leaving.

The results suggest the need for targeted organizational strategies such as improving staffing levels, leadership support, work-life balance and expanding career development opportunities. Capacity building in these areas is vital to enhancing nurse retention and workforce stability and supporting the delivery of high-quality patient care consistent with the goals of national health care.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, turnover intention, nurses, Saudi Arabia, work environment, nurse retention

Introduction

In healthcare systems across the world, especially in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), job satisfaction and nurses' intents to leave are still major issues. Almansour et al. (2023) claim that the distinctive characteristics of a certain healthcare system make staff

retention even more challenging. As the largest professional group in the healthcare sector, nurses constitute an essential workforce (Tadesse et al., 2023). The Ministry of Health (MOH) was crucial to the delivery of healthcare in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, hospital

services, nursing care, and patient care could not be enhanced in quality without the involvement of this workforce (Salahat & Al-Hamdan, 2022). Improving patient outcomes, workforce sustainability, and service quality have been given top priority in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's (KSA) ongoing healthcare reform under Vision 2030. Researchers found that improved patient outcomes, increased productivity, and lower staff turnover rates were associated with high work satisfaction (Kosters J et al. 2023).

Despite the significant growth of the nursing workforce, high turnover rates remain a major issue that affects treatment quality, raises costs, and strains healthcare systems.

Job satisfaction, which includes elements like work environment, workload, autonomy, professional connections, and organizational support, is a crucial factor determining nurse retention. On the other hand, turnover intention describes nurses' propensity to quit, which is frequently motivated by discontent, burnout, and a lack of support. This can have a detrimental effect on patient outcomes, increase workload, and cause instability in the workforce (Andel et al., 2022). Previous research has demonstrated that elements associated to the workplace, such as job demand, autonomy, support from peers and supervisors, and general job satisfaction, have a substantial impact on nurses' desire to leave (Gebregziabher et al., 2020). In order to maintain healthcare systems and keep a skilled nursing staff, it is crucial to improve working conditions, bolster managerial support, and expand career development possibilities (Martinez et al., 2022).

The goal of this study is to determine the variables affecting nurses' job satisfaction and plans to leave a Saudi government hospital. The research attempts to offer evidence-based insights to help focused retention initiatives by looking at working environment, demographic traits, and organizational effects. In the end, strengthening the healthcare system, boosting patient care quality, and accomplishing Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 goals all depend on increasing nurse retention and satisfaction.

Methods

This study evaluated nurses' work satisfaction and intention to leave using a quantitative descriptive-correlational research approach. Nurses from different units who fit the inclusion criteria participated in the study, which was carried out in a particular government hospital.

A standardized questionnaire that measured job satisfaction in a number of areas, including social interactions, professional growth, leadership support, staffing, and work-life balance, as well as demographic information, was used to gather data. A standardized scale was also used to measure turnover intention.

The data was summarized using descriptive statistics, such as weighted mean, frequency and percentage distribution; Test and Kruskal Wallis Test to test significant difference in the assessment of the respondents of their level of job satisfaction and their turnover intentions when grouped according to their profile. Spearman Correlation was used to test the relationship between the respondent's self-assessed job satisfaction and their turnover intentions.

The study was conducted with rigorous adherence to ethical principles, such as informed consent and confidentiality.

Results

The demographic profile of nurses in the selected government hospital in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia indicates a workforce largely composed of early- to mid-career professionals; with 48.6% aged 30–39 and 25.9% aged 20–29, reflecting a relatively young workforce. These results emphasize how crucial demographic variables like age, education level, and career stage are for creating focused retention strategies (Presley et al., 2023). There was a notable gender disparity, with 96.0% of the sample being female, which is in line with regional and cultural norms that indicate nursing is still primarily a female profession (Alreshidi et al., 2021; WHO, 2021). A diverse workforce with a range of personal responsibilities is indicated by the fact that 51.4% of nurses were married and 43.7% were single. During staffing shortages, single nurses may offer more scheduling flexibility, highlighting the need for flexible workplace policies (Rahman & Alotaibi, 2023). Saudi nationals made up only 17.4% of the workforce, indicating the continued reliance on foreign nurses despite localisation efforts under Vision 2030 (Alshammari et al., 2021; Alzahrani & Alotaibi, 2023). Filipino (44.1%) and Indian (26.7%) nurses made up the majority of the workforce. Furthermore, over half of the nurses (51.0%) had one to five years of experience, suggesting that early-career professionals predominate. This tendency is linked to increased turnover and career mobility (Alqahtani & Alabdulaziz, 2022). The majority of nurses (87.9%) have bachelor's degrees, which is in line with continuous attempts to professionalize nursing education (Alotaibi & Hassan, 2021). However, low postgraduate achievement indicates that more institutional support for further education is required. They were mostly assigned to high-demand units like the Operating Theatre (17.4%), Emergency Department (15.0%), and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (13.8%), which require complex and intensive care (Alshammari et al., 2022). The majority were nurse specialists (77.7%), reflecting the growing demand for specialised roles to improve healthcare quality (Alsubaie & Salem, 2021; Mohammed & Alqarni, 2022).

According to Alsharari et al. (2022) and Khan & Felemban (2023), structured nursing practices have a positive impact on perceived competence and care quality. Overall, nurses reported moderate job satisfaction across key domains, including resources, interpersonal relationships, professional development, workload, work-life balance, and leadership support (WM range: 2.83–3.08). Despite this, emotional tiredness, a lack of possibilities for career growth, and unfulfilled professional expectations were the main causes of the high turnover intention (WM = 3.76) (Salem & Dabbagh, 2024; Khalil et al., 2023). While turnover intention showed little change across the majority of demographic characteristics, statistical analysis indicated that work satisfaction differed considerably by age, country, and unit assignment. Crucially, a moderately significant correlation was discovered between turnover intention and work satisfaction ($r = 0.442$, $p = 0.046$), suggesting that a higher chance of leaving is linked to a lower level of job satisfaction. Job Embeddedness Theory, the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model, and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory support these findings. These findings highlight that while high job demands and inadequate organizational support lead to dissatisfaction and turnover, supportive work environments, sufficient resources, recognition, and career development enhance retention. As a result, the study suggests multi-level interventions, such as bolstering leadership support, enhancing work-life balance and staffing, increasing professional development possibilities,

putting recognition programs into place, and creating national retention plans that are in line with.

As a result, the study suggests multi-level interventions, such as bolstering leadership support, enhancing work-life balance and staffing, increasing career development opportunities, putting recognition programs into place, and creating national retention strategies in line with continuing healthcare reforms.

Discussion

The findings highlight a critical concern in nurse retention, where moderate job satisfaction coexists with high turnover intention. Despite their happiness with professional growth and interpersonal interactions, nurses' discontent with staffing levels and work-life balance points to persistent organizational issues. These findings align with other research highlighting the impact of workplace circumstances on turnover intention (Gebregziabher et al., 2020).

The high turnover intention is consistent with previous research showing that fatigue, discontent, and a lack of support play a major role in nurses' decisions to quit (Shin et al., 2020; Andel et al., 2022). Improving job happiness is crucial for lowering turnover and boosting worker stability, as demonstrated by the strong correlation between job satisfaction and turnover intention (Woo et al., 2020).

Furthermore, while the modest demographic effect on turnover intention shows that organizational characteristics may be more important, the variance in job satisfaction across demographic variables underscores the need for customized treatments. As a result, healthcare organizations should concentrate on increasing professional development opportunities, enhancing leadership support, encouraging work-life balance, and increasing workforce numbers. These tactics are essential for preserving a skilled nursing staff and guaranteeing top-notch patient care (Martinez et al., 2022).

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