

Investigation of Organizational Factors for Achieving Nurse Retention: Literature Review

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Abstract Aim : In order to identify the organizational factors which influence leaving intention of nurses, this study aims to review literature and prior research from two major perspectives 1) job satisfaction and 2) organizational commitment.

Review method: Literature review of articles which focus on relationships between various factors and employee retention. A special emphasis is given on employees' behavior in health sector. A literature search was undertaken using two major healthcare related databases PubMed and Google scholar. The keywords a) organizational factor b) nursing turnover c) organizational commitment d) organizational satisfaction and e) nursing management were used for the search. English language materials published in the last 10 years were considered in this study.

Results : Four papers were found to have reported a strong positive relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment. There were two papers which reported job satisfaction resulting in organizational commitment. Eight studies, on the other hand, revealed the presence of a significant relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intention. In addition, four research papers indicated that among the three components of the organizational commitment, affective commitment had the strongest positive relationship with the turnover intention.

Conclusions : The study has revealed that organizational commitment is a stronger predictor of nursing turnover than job satisfaction. Several factors are found to be essential for a) increasing employees' affective commitment to their organization b) reducing their intention to leave and c) increasing their job performance.

Keywords : Nurse, Organizational commitment, Organizational Factor, Turnover

Background

According to Watson's theory (1979)¹⁾, expressive behavior and instrumental activities are two equally important aspects of nursing care. As far as nursing care behavior is concerned, many researchers have asserted that these two aspects, 1) instrumental activities (curing) and 2) expressive behaviors (caring) are compatible and complimentary^{2,3)}. Although the Government of Nepal has mandatorily set the ratio of a nurse

to the number of patients in general ward as 1:4, in practice, a greater number of patients are served by a single nurse. Due to the shortage of nurses, nurses' duties are often limited to technical tasks in hospitals of Nepal. In such cases, it is the family caregivers who are obliged to bear the responsibilities of taking care of the patients and giving them emotional support. In the previous study conducted by the authors, the patients and the family caregivers were found to be satisfied

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with the nurses' technical tasks at the hospitals in Nepal. However, the study also revealed that they naturally anticipate additional services from nurses such as 1) providing emotional support and 2) giving professional advices about caring a patient⁴⁾. These results show that patients and family caregivers, who seek for usual medical treatment, also expect emotional support which is normally provided by professional nurses. Several studies show that a shortage of nurses not only may result in the decline of quality in patients' care, but also may become a leading cause for low employee morale, which ultimately may have an adverse effect on nurse retention⁵⁾.

In order for a health system to function properly, a sufficient number of human resources is as important as other components such as medical equipment, medication, system stewardship and health financing. Hospital service policy makers and managers must have a thorough understanding about taking appropriate measures to attract hospital employee and retain them. However, development of appropriate strategies first requires identification of those factors which largely influence employees' decision to stay in the hospital. The antecedents of nurse turnover have been studied by several researchers and these studies can be categorized into the following three groups based on the factors taken into consideration: 1) personal characteristics 2) environmental factors and 3) organizational factors.

Although personal characteristics such as age, sex, marital status, nursing experience, qualification are related to turnover intention of nurses, these characteristics are usually not regarded as explanatory variables in turnover behavior⁶⁾. Studies in the second group consider environmental factors such as salary, work environment, size and structure of the hospital as the possible variables that influence nurse retention⁷⁻⁸⁾. These studies reveal that

environmental factors have no direct relationships with turnover intention. In this study, the effect of the variables that could intervene between their predictors and dependent variables was not reviewed. In the third category, the focus is largely placed on organizational factors. Studies in this category have revealed that factors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment not only reduce nurses' turnover intention and absenteeism but also heighten their job performances⁹⁻¹⁰⁾. On the other hand, factors such as burnout and job stress increase absenteeism and turnover intention¹¹⁾.

The objective of this study is to identify those organizational factors which may assist in reducing turnover intention of nurses so that the hospitals in Nepal can develop strategies for achieving a higher rate of nurse retention.

Methods

A literature search was conducted using two major healthcare related databases: PubMed and Google scholar. The following search keywords were used: organizational factor, nursing turnover, organizational commitment, and organizational satisfaction, nursing management. English language materials published in the last 10 years were considered for this study. Altogether the abstracts of 42 articles were reviewed. Out of them, 6 articles which compare job satisfaction and organizational commitment were reviewed in detail. In addition, 12 articles which reported relation between organizational commitment and leave intention were also reviewed.

Results and Discussion

Two factors which have been viewed by several studies as major determinants of organizational effectiveness are employees' satisfaction with their jobs and commitment to their organization. Consequently, these two factors should be considered as essential predictors for attracting and retaining well-qualified persons.

Literature Review

The following section provides the major findings of prior studies which primarily focus on two essential factors which largely influence employee retention. A) Job satisfaction and B) organizational commitment. A special emphasis has been given on papers related to employees' behavior in nursing sectors.

A) Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as “the extent to which people like or dislike their jobs”¹²⁾. Job satisfaction is affected by intrinsic elements such as the job itself and the opportunities for personal growth and accomplishment. According to Holtom and O'Neill (2004)¹³⁾, when two factors “job satisfaction” and “organizational commitment” are taken into consideration, the former has a slightly stronger correlation with employee turnover. Lynn and Redman (2005)¹⁴⁾ indicated that there are various factors such as financial status, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, each of which has a predictive relationship with leave intention. Tourangeau and Cranelly (2006)⁶⁾ determined that while organizational commitment is statistically significant in determining intention to stay, job satisfaction is found to be a slightly stronger predictor. According to the Sabine et al (2006)¹⁵⁾, presence of a good relationship with nursing management is a key factor among nurses to find hospitals attractive for employment. In addition, workability and satisfaction with working time, handover shifts, and schedules are some of the decisive factors that influence nurses when evaluating hospitals. Those hospitals, which are rated high by their nursing employees, usually have employees who possess high job satisfaction and employee commitment, which in turn result in attracting and retaining competitive nursing personnel.

According to Ali Mohammad et al (2008)¹⁶⁾, there is a positive correlation between job

satisfaction and organizational commitment indicating that those employees, who are more satisfied with their job, are also more committed to the organization. Similarly, the positive correlation between intention to leave and each of the two variables (organizational commitment and job satisfaction) indicates that those who are less satisfied with their job are less committed to their organization. Guleryuz et al (2008)¹⁷⁾ also found that emotional intelligence is significantly and positively related to both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The study shows that job satisfaction, which is significantly related to organizational commitment, serves as a mediator between emotional intelligence and organizational commitment.

B) Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment has been numerously studied in the field of organizational psychology. As the employees' attitude to their organization, organizational commitment is taken as the core predictor of turnover intention, absenteeism, and job performance. The concept of organizational commitment has been described in terms of various theories and approaches such as: a) one side bet theory, Becker (1960) b) an affective dependence theory, Porter (1974) c) a multi-dimensional approach by O'Reilly and Chatman (1986) & Meyer & Allen (1984, 1990). The concept has been further explored in terms of 1) a two dimensional approach by Cohen (2007)) and 2) a combined theory by Somers (2009). Amongst all these proposals, the one described by Meyer and Allen has been the most emphatic one by far. According to Meyer and Allen, organizational commitment shows multidimensional psychological attachment of an individual to the organization, which plays a positive role to improve motivation, performance and creativeness. It also has a key role in reducing absenteeism and turnover¹⁸⁻²⁰⁾. In this study, organizational commitment is defined as “a psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationships with the organization

and has implications for the decision to continue membership in the organizations"⁹⁾.

The issue of nurse shortage is a major concern in the world healthcare sector. Since the task of replacing nurses is cumbersome and costly, hospitals have become very keen on training programs for nurses and employee retention. Studies show that organizational commitment is a psychological state which assists in linking an employee to the organization. This in turn is related to retention, productive behavior and psychological well-being of the employees. Several researchers have taken the approach of the organizational commitment to tackle the issues in nursing sector. Chang et al (2007)²¹⁾ found that the gap between career needs and career programs make significant contribution to organizational commitment and turnover intention. Organizational commitment makes significant negative contribution to turnover intention. According to Hsu, (2011)²²⁾, factors such as social interaction, trust among nurses, and shared vision impact organizational commitment positively and significantly. They appear to influence greatly on the behavior of service providers towards their organizations and other individuals.

Dyk & Coetzee, 2012²³⁾ found that organizational variables contribute significantly and positively to the variance in affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. Job characteristic is positively significant with affective commitment whereas supervisor support is significant but negatively related to the normative commitment. Takase et al 2007²⁴⁾ found that even in the cases of challenging clinical practices, when correctly chosen nurses are assigned to those jobs, there was a drop in leave intention of the nurses. It shows that, regardless of the difficulty of the jobs, nurses in general are motivated to perform the jobs that are suitable to them. It was also revealed in the study that under circumstances when there are mismatches between the

nurses' skills and the types of jobs that they are assigned, nurses' intention to quit the job becomes stronger. The study concludes that whenever nurses find their jobs too challenging and their intentions to leave become stronger, organizational commitment appears to intervene. Siew et al, 2011²⁵⁾ reported that in Malaysian State hospitals, nurses' organizational commitment is significant and positively influenced by professional status, autonomy and interaction.

Meyer and Allen (1991)²⁶⁾ defined organizational commitment into three distinctive components: 1) affective, 2) continuance, and 3) normative. Affective commitment indicates employees' perception of their emotional attachments to their organizational and its goals²⁷⁾. Furthermore employees, who have high affective attachment to the organization, have strong feelings to contribute to achieve organizations' goals. It is because these employees feel their organizations' goals as their own. Continuance commitment indicates a strong bond between employees and their organizations, which is developed due to the cost associated with leaving the organization²⁷⁾. The level of investment employees have done in the organization so far and a lack of alternative jobs outside the organization are two most important factors, which may increase the continuance commitment of the employees to their organization. Finally, normative commitment indicates the feelings of obligation to remain in the organization²⁷⁾. Normative commitment could be a result of an organization's investment to their employee, which possibly seeds social and cultural norms into employees' minds. These norms may make an employee believe that one should be loyal to their organizations.

Affective commitment leads to a decrease in turnover and absenteeism. It also results in an increase in productivity²⁸⁻³⁰⁾, which is the reason why many researchers have explored the various effects of affective commitment on employees' behavior. Generally, affective commitment

influences normative commitment positively. In addition, both affective and normative commitment has an effect on continuance commitment³¹⁾. With comparison to normative commitment, affective commitment has a stronger impact on the intention of employees to continue working in their organizations. Affective commitment creates emotional bonds that may cause employees to develop a sense of responsibility and duty to their organizations. On the other hand, employees cannot behave as they want to due to a feeling of obligation towards their organizations even though they are not necessarily satisfied with them. In addition, normative commitment also leads to continuance commitment because employees' emotional involvement in their organization may lead to a desire to continue. Identification of the factors, which influence commitment both in a positive and a negative way, is essential for improving organization commitment of the nurses.

Retaining employees with critical skills in medical industry has become a major issue due to skill shortages. In this regard, understanding of the motivational factors of employees that will help increase their organizational commitment may benefit the organizations so that their valuable talents can be retained. Recent research has shown that the issue of affective commitment, or in other words psychological attachment of employees, remains critical among business leaders if they are to attract, motivate and retain key talent³²⁾. According to the reports published in Ria et al 2012³³⁾, as far as the relationship between organizational factor and employee retention is concerned in hospitals in Indonesia, while affective commitment is classified as high, both continuance commitment and normative commitment is classified as sufficient. The study reveals that affective commitment has a dominant negative significance on turnover intention. In summary, the results published in various articles from various countries indicate that organizational commitment is a significant predictor for absenteeism, turnover

and job performances.

In this study, we reviewed literature published in last 10 years, which are mainly concerned with two important factors 1) job satisfaction and 2) organizational commitment. A strong positive relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment has been reported in several literatures^{13-15, 6)}. Several researchers suggest that job satisfaction results in organizational commitment¹⁶⁻¹⁷⁾. Furthermore, numerous studies have shown the presence of a significant relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intention^{18-20, 21-25)}. In addition, study results indicate that among the three components of the organizational commitment, affective commitment has the strongest positive relationship with the turnover intention 28-30, 33). Based on the results of these studies, we identify "organizational commitment" as a better predictor of turnover intention, in comparison to "job satisfaction".

Limitations of the study

Several limitations must be noted in this literature review. As the study is limited to the articles published in English, several valid data published in non-English articles may have been omitted. Important data may also have been overlooked due to the inability to access the publications of several related dissertations.

Conclusions

Based on the results published in the literature reviewed in this study, organizational commitment has been found out to be a statistically significant predictor in the nursing turnover. The literature also revealed that when compared with job satisfaction, organizational commitment is a relatively stronger predictor of nursing turnover. The study has shown that several factors are important for increasing employees' affective commitment to their organization and for reducing their intention to leave and increasing their job

performance. Based on the results of this study, further research will be carried out to identify the relationships among the three components of organizational commitment and various organizational characteristics of the hospitals in Nepal. The outcome is expected to assist hospital authorities in developing appropriate management policies to achieve nurse retention.

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