

A Literature Review on Turnover Intention among Healthcare Professionals: Influencing Factors and Management Strategies

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Abstract

The problem of leaving the jobs planned by healthcare professionals has become healthcare organizations' headache all over the world and so is this problem it has had very negative consequences for the service delivery, patient care, and organizational performance. Comprehensively, this literature review discusses the main factors that influence turnover intention, the theoretical frameworks used for understanding it, and strategies of management by which organizations can lessen it. The review of empirical work done to date helps to identify a host of determinants, among which are job satisfaction, work stress, leadership, compensation, and career development. Moreover, the present work provides a synopsis of major theoretical models such as Social Exchange Theory, Organizational Support Theory, and Equity Theory along with practical, evidence-based suggestions for organizations willing to retain employees and lessen turnover intention. Hence, this review serves as a tool in the transition towards a stable healthcare workforce which, in turn, leads to better organizational outcomes in healthcare settings.

Keywords: Turnover Intention, Healthcare Professionals, Influencing Factors, Theoretical Frameworks, Management Strategies

Introduction

Retention of skilled healthcare professionals has become a major problem for the healthcare sector that has a negative effect on the quality of patient care and the performance of organizations over time. The rise in the rate of staff leaving healthcare organizations, particularly among nurses, doctors, and allied health professionals, poses a threat to the stability of these organizations, leading to an increase in operating costs and a decrease in patient satisfaction (Aiken et al., 2014).

Turnover intention or the state of mind in which employees think of leaving their current job is the strongest predictor of actual turnover. It is an essential indicator in workforce planning and the implementation of retention strategies (Mobley, 1977). As the cost of turnover in terms of recruitment and training is very high, healthcare organizations must pay attention to the factors that lead to turnover intention if they want to reduce it.

Through studies, the main factors leading to turnover intention have been identified, such as job dissatisfaction, work-related stress, leadership practices, compensation, and lack of career development opportunities (Stone et al., 2006). The present work reviews the respective literature sources to this issue, identifies the theoretical frameworks for these factors, and offers healthcare organizations practical strategies to handle turnover intention efficiently.

Research Background

One of the most serious problems of healthcare worldwide, has been the high rate of employees leaving their jobs. Since the quality of patient care depends on the stability of healthcare workers, the problem of turnover intention is of utmost importance. In patient care, healthcare professionals play a very crucial role, so the issue of their turnover is the most important one. Many studies have dug into the problem and found that job satisfaction, work-related stress, and pay are some of the major reasons affecting staff' turnover inside an organization (Stone, et al, 2006). To understand employees' leaving or staying in their positions better, several theoretical frameworks, such as Social Exchange Theory, Organizational Support Theory, and Equity Theory, have been employed (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Adams, 1965).

Nevertheless, these papers have done a lot to deepen our knowledge of turnover intention but have limited their focus mainly on certain groups of healthcare workers (e.g., nurses or doctors) or specific regions. The question of a thorough theoretical framework that unites these studies and serves as a guide for different healthcare environments and different parts of the world still exists. Our review intends to bridge this gap by analyzing the literature on turnover intention, identifying the decisive factors for turnover from a broad perspective, and then suggesting the management practices that can tackle this problem at the organizational level.

In the healthcare sector, a plethora of research works has pinpointed the major contributors leading to the employees' intention to quit their jobs. Nevertheless, they have failed to agree on the relative importance of these contributors across various healthcare settings. The emergence of challenges like COVID-19 has had a significant effect on the workforce's stability, thereby increasing the turnover rate in regions that were stable before the pandemic. Researchers in the future should take into consideration the upcoming challenges to give a more vivid and current picture of turnover intentions.

Research Methodology

This literature review takes a systematic stance in recognizing, assessing, and combining the already available studies about the problem of turnover intention among healthcare workers. The pertinent terms like 'turnover intention,' 'healthcare professionals,' 'job satisfaction,'

'work stress,' and 'organizational support' were used to carry out an extensive search in the academic databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar.

The articles considered for the review were chosen based on the following criteria:

Research based on data concerning the issue of turnover intention among healthcare professionals. The papers that reveal the factors affecting the turnover intention and/or the strategies for the management of the turnover to be softened. Research works that have chosen different methodologies like quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and mixed methods to have a thorough understanding of the problem.

With the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative research, the review is open to the different viewpoints regarding the issue of turnover intention. The data was brought together on the basis of themes, with the main emphasis put on finding the leading themes and the factors which give rise to the turnover intention, as well as the management strategies that are effective.

Definition and Measurement of Turnover Intention

Definition of Turnover Intention

Turnover intention is most typically characterized as the mental and emotional condition whereby employees contemplate quitting their current job (Mobley, 1977).

Usually, the identification of turnover intention is through self-reported surveys. These surveys ask participants to provide their likelihood of leaving the organization within a specific period. One of the most famous tools for measuring the turnover intention is the Turnover Intention Scale (TIS). The TIS covers the points which evaluate the intensity of the employees' readiness to leave, their degree of satisfaction with the job, and perception of job alternatives (Cammann et al., 1983).

In spite of the fact that self-reported turnover intention is a popular method, it is limited in some respects. The limitations refer to the possibilities of social desirability bias when respondents may provide answers that correspond to what they think socially acceptable rather than their true intentions. Though self-reported surveys are still the most conventional way of measuring turnover intention, studies have implied that other measurement tools such as behavioral indicators can provide further insights. Behavioral indicators such as absenteeism, tardiness, and declining productivity can reveal underlying aspects of turnover when integrated with subjective measures.

The main point of introducing mixed-method approaches in the assessment of turnover intention is to increase the validity of the results. The mixed-method approach combines quantitative data from surveys with qualitative data from interviews or focus groups (Chen et al., 2008). Such an approach sheds light on not only the causes of turnover but also the possibilities that the standardized surveys do not detect.

Validity of Measurement

It is very important that the validity of turnover intention measurement instruments should contribute to maintaining the overall accuracy of the results. Since turnover intention is a complicated concept, it is very important that the measurement tools reflect both the

cognitive and emotional aspects that lead a person to decide to leave. Various scholars have pointed out the necessity of multidimensional models that, besides job dissatisfaction, would also include such factors as organizational support, career development opportunities, and external labor market conditions (Hom et al., 2012).

Also, the research community is calling for such studies which are longitudinal in nature, thereby keeping a record of turnover intention over time, thus providing a much clearer picture of its course and the factors impacting it (Lee et al., 2008).

Influencing Factors of Turnover Intention Among Healthcare Professionals

Job Satisfaction

One of the major factors that contribute to employees' intention to leave a job is job satisfaction. In a variety of studies, it has been found that people working in an environment that is not satisfying and who express their dissatisfaction loud and clear, are the ones to most likely talk about quitting the company they work for (Locke, 1976).

Within healthcare settings, job satisfaction depends on the combination of factors like the work environment, leadership, salary, and opportunities for professional growth (Laschinger et al., 2001). For instance, healthcare workers who are in a supportive setting where they have access to adequate resources and good leadership, usually feel satisfied with their job, thus turnover intention becomes less likely (Judge et al., 2001).

On the other hand, job dissatisfaction in healthcare can be traced back to poor interpersonal relationships, lack of professional development, and absence of recognition (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). The extent of the negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention is such that healthcare organizations should regard employee satisfaction as the main factor in their retention strategy.

Work Stress and Workload

Stress at work has been identified as one of the main reasons that healthcare professionals are willing to leave their jobs, and it is especially true for those working in hospitals and emergency departments, which are usually high-pressure environments. Such workers are exposed to both emotional and physical strains that include, among others, long working hours, heavy workloads, and the care of severely ill or injured patients. In their seminal paper, Maslach and Leiter (1997) pointed out that burnout is a major consequence of chronic stress and one that is most closely linked to turnover intention.

First, a meta-analysis by Griffeth et al. (2000) found that work stress and workload are the main factors that can predict turnover intention. As a result, employees who report experiencing a high level of work stress are more likely to quit their jobs. The health care staff's emotional needs cannot be met while the problem of under-staffing, generally in health care settings, continues to exist, thus the workplace becomes the source of burnout and hence, a higher probability of staff leaving their positions.

Leadership Style

The leadership style of the healthcare organizations has a very important influence on the employees' mindset and their intentions to leave the job. One of the studies that have looked

into the impact of transformational leadership on the employees' turnover intentions can be found in: Bass (1990). The study has found the connection between this style of the leadership and reduced employees' turnover intentions as well as increased job satisfaction. Healthcare professionals' stay decision is such an important thing that leaders who are empathetic, give a clear direction, and create the internal positive climate can be the change agents who influence them to stay.

On the contrary, transactional leadership which solely focuses on the use of rewards and sanctions has often been found to be less effective in bringing about the reduction of turnover intention (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Communication that is open between the management and the staff, the latter being empowered, and the provision of professional development opportunities are some of the most vital leadership practices through which healthcare professionals can be retained even in the most challenging environments.

Compensation and Benefits

Competitive and fair pay is one of the primary factors that determines whether someone is thinking of leaving their job. According to the findings of the study, a healthcare professional who feels that his/her pay is not fair or sufficient compared to the work will be the first to think of leaving the organization (Harrison et al., 2006). Besides the salary, benefits like health care coverage, retirement plans, and paid time off make a significant contribution to job satisfaction and retention as well.

Research has also drawn attention to the significance of pay equity in the healthcare sector. Medical professionals who notice differences in pay and particularly when they compare themselves to the standards of the industry, will most probably show that they intend to leave (Zurn et al., 2004). Therefore, enterprises that provide fair compensation packages in line with the market rates will be able to retain their workforce better.

Career Development and Promotion Opportunities

The presence of career progression and promotion opportunities is one of the major factors that affect turnover intention. A study by Eisenberger et al. (1986) pointed out that healthcare professionals feeling no or few opportunities for their professional development within their organization are more likely to look for a job elsewhere. So, it is very important to have on-boarding programs, mentoring and motivating the employees and giving them opportunities to acquire new skills.

Macey and Schneider (2008) through their research came to the conclusion that healthcare organizations which internally promote their employees have a lower rate of staff turnover. The statement emphasizes the significance of employee professional development as a strategy to retain the required workforce in the healthcare sector.

Composite Factors

An important point to note is that these factors are not independent of each other. As an illustration, the adverse effect of work stress could be lessened by robust leadership practices that promote job satisfaction. In the same way, pay and career growth possibilities are usually seen as elements of the overall organizational culture and, therefore, are affected by the

leadership styles. The interconnections between these elements emphasize the existence of a deliberate approach in dealing with the desire to quit the job problem.

Theoretical Frameworks for Turnover Intention

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) suggests that employees' relationships with their organizations are the result of a mutual exchange of benefits. In this way, employees are obliged to give their times, exertions, and skills in return for some benefits such as money, acknowledgment, and development of the career. When employees see that the exchange is unbalanced, for example, they do not receive enough rewards for their efforts, then it is very likely that they will express their turnover intentions. The theory claims that turnover intention happens when the employee feels that the company has failed to satisfy his/her needs or give the right compensation (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Social Exchange Theory sees the significance of fairness and reciprocity in the relationships between employees and employers. In the healthcare sector, where the staff is emotionally drained, and the employees are heavily burdened, the feeling of unfairness can double the turnover intentions exponentially.

Even though Social Exchange Theory is an excellent stepping stone for the comprehension of turnover intention, this theory has some limitations when applied to the healthcare industry. E.g. nurses may be more influenced by social exchange dynamics while administrative staff may be more affected by organizational policies and structural factors. Thus, the future research is to find out how different healthcare professionals' roles relate to these theoretical models.

Organizational Support Theory

According to Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), employees' perceptions of the extent to which their organization values and supports them significantly impact their turnover intentions. Those workers, who receive support from their organization, not only on the emotional but also on the professional side, will most likely stay loyal to their job and be less inclined to leave. In such healthcare environments that are emotionally taxing, perceived organizational support becomes the main factor in a burnout decrease as well as in the intention to quit reduction.

Those employees who see their organization providing support at a high level will be more likely to consider themselves as valued and appreciated, which in turn will lead to their higher commitment to the organization. Since healthcare professionals are frequently subjected to stressful situations, giving them support in the form of necessary resources, providing emotional comfort, and arranging for their professional development can, indeed, become a key to the sector's employee retention.

Equity Theory

Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) highlights that workers judge the justice of their input-output ratio by comparing it to that of others in the company. Those workers who feel unfairness, for instance, in the case of being underpaid or getting less recognition than their colleagues, will probably be dissatisfied and thus, they might have the intention to leave the company.

The healthcare sector needs to take care of its employees through fair pay, equitable sharing of the work, and proper acknowledgment if it wants to maintain good spirits among the staff and keep the rate of turnover intention low.

Management Strategies for Reducing Turnover Intention

Improving Job Satisfaction

Enhancing employee satisfaction should be the very first move in the healthcare sector if we want to see the turnover intention being lowered. Such organizations can improve the job satisfaction level by creating a more cheerful and friendly atmosphere at work, encouraging the balance between work and private life, and making sure that each staff member is equipped with the required materials. It is also very effective in motivating the employees and in lessening their intention to quit when the management gives them frequent feedback and acknowledge their achievements (Baker et al., 2006).

Reducing Work Stress and Workload

It is very important to handle work stress properly if you want to reduce the desire to quit a job. So, hospitals and other healthcare facilities should keep the staff at a reasonable level and avoid heavy workloads which are the main causes of stress. Giving employees stress management programs, health promotion activities, and access to the psychological services can be a good solution to the problem of burnout and also, it can create a work environment that is emotionally comforting (Shanafelt et al., 2012).

Leadership Development

One of the ways to handle the problem of people leaving their job due to a lack of motivation is by having good leaders. Leaders need to go through the training of transformational leadership methods which specially emphasize on the motivation and the support of employees. If leaders are given the power to emotionally support employees, to stimulate their professional growth and to keep them informed it will surely bring about a great decrease in turnover intention (Avolio et al., 2004).

Competitive Compensation and Benefits

Providing competitive compensation packages that are in line with industry standards and demonstrate the intricacy of the healthcare profession is a must in the lowering of turnover intention. Periodic evaluations of salary and benefits packages contribute to the perception of employees as valuable and that they are being paid in a fair manner (Harrison et al., 2006).

Career Development and Advancement Opportunities

Healthcare companies should fund career development initiatives that give staff members clear career advancement pathways. Providing employees with ongoing education, training, and mentorship opportunities fosters their skill development and increases their sense of loyalty to the company (Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Stress Management Programs

Organizations like the Mayo Clinic, whose frequent wellness programs and mental health resources have helped lower burnout rates among healthcare personnel, have successfully implemented stress management programs in healthcare settings. In a similar vein, it has been demonstrated that mentorship programs at institutions such as Cleveland Clinic

improve career development prospects and lower turnover intention, particularly among younger healthcare professionals.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations that need to be noted, even though this analysis offers a general overview of the factors impacting turnover intention among healthcare workers.

The review may overlook important research published in other languages because it largely concentrates on studies published in English.

Numerous research that are part of this study concentrate on Western nations, including the United States and Europe. Because turnover intention may be impacted by a variety of factors, including resource availability, governmental legislation, and cultural norms, the results may not accurately reflect healthcare systems in low and middle income nations.

Although both quantitative and qualitative studies are included in the study, quantitative studies predominate. This might restrict our ability to fully comprehend the emotional and personal experiences of healthcare workers, which qualitative research may be able to better convey.

A few of the review's research were mainly concerned with physicians or nurses. Other healthcare workers, such as allied health professionals, administrative staff, and support personnel, also undergo turnover, even while turnover intention in these groups is clearly significant. Expanding the scope to include a greater variety of healthcare providers could be beneficial for future study.

Conclusion

Numerous organizational, individual, and environmental factors affect healthcare workers' intentions to leave their jobs. Turnover intention is significantly influenced by a number of factors, including job satisfaction, work stress, leadership style, pay, and career growth. Healthcare companies can gain a better understanding of the elements influencing turnover intention by using pertinent theoretical frameworks, such as Social Exchange Theory, Organizational Support Theory, and Equity Theory. Healthcare companies can lower employee turnover intention and increase staff retention by putting evidence-based management methods into practice, such as enhancing job happiness, controlling work stress, providing competitive compensation, and creating career development opportunities.

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