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## **Workforce management in nursing: Strategies for retention and recruitment in healthcare settings**

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**Abstract--Background:** The nursing workforce faces significant challenges related to recruitment and retention, exacerbated by an aging population and maldistribution of healthcare professionals. Job satisfaction is a crucial factor influencing nurse turnover and retention, necessitating an in-depth understanding of its determinants. **Methods:** This review systematically analyzed peer-reviewed articles published between 2000 and 2016, focusing on the job satisfaction and career intentions of registered nurses in primary healthcare settings. Databases searched included CINAHL, MEDLINE, Scopus, and Web of Science. Key search terms encompassed "nursing," "primary health care," "community care," "job satisfaction," and "career intentions." **Results:** Findings indicate that various factors significantly impact nurse job satisfaction, including workplace environment, organizational support, compensation, and opportunities for professional growth. The review revealed that primary healthcare nurses experience unique challenges compared to their acute care counterparts, leading to higher turnover intentions. Notably, factors such as inadequate compensation, administrative burdens, and lack of recognition were frequently reported as detrimental to job satisfaction. **Conclusion:** Addressing the identified

factors influencing job satisfaction is essential for improving nurse retention in primary healthcare. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions by healthcare administrators and policymakers to enhance the work environment, support professional development, and improve compensation structures. Fostering a supportive organizational culture may mitigate turnover intentions and strengthen the nursing workforce.

**Keywords**---Nurse retention, job satisfaction, primary healthcare, workforce management, recruitment strategies.

## 1. Introduction

The global recruitment and retention of nurses presents significant challenges. There exists a maldistribution of healthcare human resources, a deficiency in the total number of trained nurses, and an aging nursing workforce [1]. Job satisfaction is recognized as a significant element influencing nurse turnover and as a precursor to nursing retention [2-4]. Consequently, understanding the elements that influence work satisfaction is essential for guiding recruiting and retention tactics.

The notion of occupational happiness is intricate and multidimensional. Job satisfaction has been the subject of much study in organizational behavior. Lu et al. [5] characterize work satisfaction as including both an individual's emotional response to their employment and the intrinsic qualities of the job, together with the individual's expectations on the benefits their job should provide. Job satisfaction consists of several components, including job conditions, communication, the nature of the work, organizational policies and procedures, remuneration and benefits, opportunities for promotion and advancement, recognition and appreciation, security, and supervision and relationships. Although work satisfaction levels differ, several similar characteristics are identified across research [6, 7]. These include working circumstances, the organizational environment, stress levels, role conflict and ambiguity, role perceptions and content, as well as organizational and professional dedication [5-8]. Considering these characteristics, it is evident that research on work satisfaction cannot be conducted across the whole nursing profession; instead, it must account for diverse locations and organizational contexts to comprehend the challenges encountered by distinct nursing groups.

Career ambitions refer to the intention to willingly resign from one's employment. This process may start with a psychological reaction to adverse circumstances in the workplace or unfavorable job elements [9]. A cognitive choice is then formed to resign, leading to withdrawal behaviors when the individual exits the job [10]. Similar to work satisfaction, many prevalent predictors of career intention have been recognized. These include organizational variables, management style, workload and stress, role perceptions, empowerment, compensation, job circumstances, and prospects for promotion [10]. Numerous research have shown that work satisfaction influences career intentions [11, 12].

Notwithstanding the prevalent themes in workforce literature, the majority of existing research on job satisfaction and career plans has been on acute care nurses [2, 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14]. Considering the influence of organizational characteristics, duties, and job circumstances, it is essential to examine distinct groups of nurses, particularly those working in primary healthcare, who operate in environments dissimilar to their acute care counterparts. Primary Health Care nurses operate in many environments, such as general practices, educational institutions, refugee health services, penal facilities, non-governmental organizations, and community health centers [15]. Their job terms and work surroundings differ significantly from those of acute care nurses employed by big healthcare providers or government-funded health services [16, 17]. The small business characteristics of primary care in several nations, together with the prevalence of charitable and non-governmental health providers, make employment in the primary health care context distinctive [18].

Lorenz and De Brito Guirardello [19] characterize the primary healthcare work environment as “not always conducive to the professional practice of nurses” (p. 927), identifying insufficient equipment, unsuitable physical conditions, and occupational hazards as significant factors contributing to discontent. Moreover, there are substantial distinctions in the duties, responsibilities, and work situations of acute and primary healthcare nurses [20]. The disparities and the influence of these characteristics on job satisfaction and career aspirations indicate that acute care nurse workforce studies cannot be readily generalized to the primary healthcare context. Given the expansion of the primary healthcare nursing workforce and the need for a robust nursing presence in this environment, it is opportune to investigate the job satisfaction and career aspirations of primary healthcare nurses. This study aimed to critically synthesize the research on job satisfaction and career goals of registered nurses in primary health care.

## **2. Methods**

A systematic search approach was developed to direct the exploration of electronic databases: CINAHL, MEDLINE, Scopus, and Web of Science. Essential search criteria encompassed: nurs\*, primary health care, community care, and work satisfaction or career purpose. The search was limited to peer-reviewed articles in English that presented novel research. Due to the substantial changes in primary healthcare systems globally, only articles published from 2000 to 2016 were included. The reference lists of articles were examined to locate further material.

## **3. Determinants of work happiness**

Studies investigated the correlation between work satisfaction and demographic or professional characteristics showed considerable variability [2, 19, 20-27]. While two studies indicated that age did not significantly affect work satisfaction [2, 28], three others revealed that older nurses had greater satisfaction than their younger counterparts [29-31]. Correspondingly, the findings regarding the influence of education were inconsistent; three studies indicated no correlation with job satisfaction or yielded inconclusive results [2, 32,33], while two studies revealed that nurses possessing higher educational qualifications reported greater

work satisfaction [34, 35]. Conversely, Delobelle et al. [2] discovered that Nursing Assistants and Enrolled Nurses exhibited more satisfaction than Registered Nurses.

Curtis and Glacken [36] indicated that nurses with over 10 years of employment had a much greater degree of work satisfaction compared to their counterparts. Conversely, some research indicated an inverse correlation between years of employment in primary health care and satisfaction, as well as no significant differences between contentment and years of nursing experience [2]. Additional elements that enhanced satisfaction were autonomy in clinical practice and decision-making [19, 34, 37, 38], community contentment, organizational support, compensation, and workload [39-41].

There was considerable consensus across research on the characteristics that positively influenced work satisfaction. The factors included the professional role, esteem and acknowledgment from clients and supervisors, workplace relationships, autonomy, resource accessibility, and job flexibility [2, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37, 42].

#### **4. Determinants adversely affecting job satisfaction**

The included studies showed a strong consensus about issues that adversely affected respondents' satisfaction levels. Seven research indicated apprehensions about sufficient compensation [2, 28, 29, 34, 35, 37, 43]. Campbell et al. [34] found that hospital nurses were far more likely than community nurses to express satisfaction with their compensation. Another significant aspect noted in several research is the time constraints and substantial administrative burdens that affect patient treatment [2, 26, 30, 33, 37]. Additional characteristics identified as detrimental to work satisfaction were a lack of recognition [2, 28, 33, 34], insufficient position definition [30, 34, 37], and inadequate organizational communication [29, 34].

#### **5. Professional aspirations**

The presented research provides significant insights into career intentions. However, care must be used in interpreting these findings, given the majority of research includes an aging workforce that will inevitably retire soon. Six studies investigated the variables influencing retention [2, 32, 34, 41, 42, 43]. Delobelle et al. [2] observed the greatest career intention, with 51.1% of nurse participants ( $n = 69$ ) contemplating departure from primary healthcare over the following two years. Both Betkus and MacLeod [43] and Almalki et al. [42] found that around 48% and 40%, respectively, expected to resign from their present primary healthcare positions within the following year. Royer [32] similarly found that almost 46% of those aged 35–45 years were contemplating departure, while over 40% of those aged 56–65 was also considering leaving. The last two investigations indicated that a limited number of participants planned to depart from their existing roles [34, 41].

The results of the three-research examining job satisfaction and quality of work life [2, 42, 43] exhibited inconsistency. Almalki et al. [42] established a

substantial correlation between quality of worklife and turnover intention ( $p < 0.001$ ); however, this factor accounted for only 26% of the variance and was excluded from the final model. Betkus and MacLeod [43] observed no association between work satisfaction and retention, however, Delobelle et al. [2] identified that turnover intent was strongly influenced by job satisfaction, age, and education ( $p < 0.001$ ). Additional characteristics identified as influencing career ambitions were gender, work environment, compensation, education, happiness with supervision [2], feelings of isolation, and tenure in position/years of experience [2, 32, 41, 42].

## 6. Discussion

This review presents the first synthesis of information about job satisfaction and career ambitions of registered nurses in primary health care. Considering the variations in organizational context, employment circumstances, and practice environment that may influence job satisfaction and career intentions, it is essential to examine this group independently from the larger nursing workforce. Given the need to expand the workforce in primary healthcare settings to address community needs, comprehending this literature is essential for guiding both practice and policy. The larger nurse workforce literature indicates dissatisfaction with nursing employment. Aiken et al. [44] conducted a study of 33,659 medical-surgical nurses across 12 European nations and reported that over 20% of nurses expressed dissatisfaction with their work. This review's findings on job satisfaction underscore the need for extensive, well-structured longitudinal studies of the primary healthcare nursing workforce to track workforce concerns, including satisfaction and career aspirations, across time. Considering the correlation between nurse satisfaction and retention as well as patient outcomes [44], this matter should be prioritized.

Our research indicated consensus among studies on the beneficial effects of professional roles, respect, recognition, workplace relationships, and autonomy on job satisfaction. This aligns with the acute care nursing literature, which indicates that modifiable workplace characteristics affect both job and career satisfaction [45]. Nantsupawat et al. [46] revealed that job unhappiness and desire to quit were markedly reduced among nurses in superior work environments. In their comprehensive study, Cicolini et al. [14] identified a strong correlation between nurse empowerment and job satisfaction. The crucial importance of these changeable characteristics presents an opportunity for managers, employers, and policymakers to adopt policies that might improve the workplace and, therefore, increase satisfaction.

A significant finding of this study was the detrimental effect of inadequate compensation on work satisfaction. Although problems about compensation have been previously noted in the acute sector [44, 47], the issue of reduced remuneration in primary healthcare relative to the acute sector has been extensively documented [17, 48]. This study contributes to the evidence base about the effects of this inequality on the primary healthcare nurse workforce and underscores the substantial consequences of failing to address this problem.

Our study indicated that several studies found a significant percentage of nurses planning to leave PHC work in the foreseeable future [2, 42, 43]. This undoubtedly has substantial ramifications for the labor force and service provision. Nevertheless, the metrics assessing the variables influencing career goals varied across the research included, as did the results. The challenges in synthesizing such diverse data have been previously recognized in the acute care literature [13]. Notwithstanding this, evident parallels existed between our research and the extensive literature about nurse turnover and the desire to go. In their systematic study of nurses' intentions to resign, Chan et al. [13] determined that such intentions were influenced by a complex interplay of organizational and interpersonal variables. Organizational variables included the work environment, culture, dedication, job expectations, and social support. Conversely, individual characteristics associated with work satisfaction, burnout, and demographic variables. The intricate interaction of several elements influencing retention likely accounts for its peak when interventions like mentorship and comprehensive orientations are used to assist staff [49].

Galletta et al. [50] find in their research of acute care nurses that the quality of interpersonal interactions among staff significantly influences nurses' choices to depart. Interprofessional interactions in primary healthcare have often been recognized as posing distinct problems [48, 51]. The intricate landscape of primary healthcare, whereby services are financed by small enterprises or non-governmental organizations, along with the rapid transition towards multidisciplinary treatment, presents obstacles for personnel in fostering constructive partnerships. The significance of strong relationships, respect for positions, and acknowledgment of worth among colleagues, as seen in our study, underscores the need for further efforts to improve interprofessional cooperation.

## **7. Constraints**

This study synthesized the existing research; nevertheless, the variability in measuring equipment and sample sizes complicated comparisons. Given that not all studies disclosed the reliability or validity of the measures used, it is plausible that these instruments have validity concerns. The data provided, however, constitutes the most reliable evidence to tackle the research subject.

A significant restriction is the disparity of primary healthcare settings and worldwide primary healthcare systems, which complicates comparability. This review encompasses all worldwide studies on PHC nurses; nonetheless, local variances need caution when generalizing results to different settings, even within PHC.

## **8. Conclusion**

This research has found many critical parameters influencing work satisfaction and career ambitions among PHC nurses. The significance of the work environment and interpersonal connections necessitates the use of techniques to improve adjustable workplace characteristics. The prevalence of nurses expressing a desire to quit, as shown by many research, is a considerable worry at a time when there is a pressing need to develop the primary healthcare

workforce globally. This review's findings underscore the need for intervention by managers, educators, employers, and policymakers to bolster support for nurses in primary healthcare.

## 9. Consequences for implementation and investigation

There is an urgent need to enhance the capability of the global primary healthcare nurse workforce to address service demands. This analysis has identified many problems related to work satisfaction and career intentions that affect nurse retention in primary healthcare. Investigating measures to mitigate the changeable factors contributing to nurse work discontent may enhance retention rates. Retaining satisfied and proficient nurses in the profession may augment workforce capacity and improve patient outcomes.

This study has shown existing gaps in our understanding of work satisfaction and career intentions among registered nurses in primary healthcare. Additional meticulously structured longitudinal studies are necessary to investigate the progression of careers in primary health care. Furthermore, mixed methods techniques are essential to investigate not just quantitative work satisfaction but also to elucidate how the elements of satisfaction affect PHC nurses.

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## إدارة القوى العاملة في التمريض: استراتيجيات الاحتفاظ والتوظيف في بيئات الرعاية الصحية الملخص

**الخلفية:** تواجه القوى العاملة في التمريض تحديات كبيرة تتعلق بالتوظيف والاحتفاظ، والتي تفاقت بسبب شيخوخة السكان وسوء توزيع المهنيين الصحيين. يُعد الرضا الوظيفي عاملاً حاسماً يؤثر على دوران الممرضات والاحتفاظ بهن، مما يستدعي فهماً متعمقاً للعوامل المؤثرة فيه.

**الطرق:** تم تحليل المقالات المحكمة المنشورة بين عامي 2000 و2016 بشكل منهجي، مع التركيز على الرضا الوظيفي ونوايا المهنة للممرضات المسجلات في بيئات الرعاية الصحية الأولية. شملت قواعد البيانات التي تم البحث فيها CINAHL و MEDLINE و Scopus و Web of Science. تضمنت مصطلحات البحث الرئيسية "التمريض"، "الرعاية الصحية الأولية"، "الرعاية المجتمعية"، "الرضا الوظيفي"، و"نوايا المهنة".

**النتائج:** تشير النتائج إلى أن عدة عوامل تؤثر بشكل كبير على الرضا الوظيفي للممرضات، بما في ذلك بيئة العمل، الدعم التنظيمي، التعويضات، وفرص النمو المهني. وكشفت المراجعة أن ممرضات الرعاية الصحية الأولية يواجهن تحديات فريدة مقارنة بنظرائهن في الرعاية الحادة، مما يؤدي إلى ارتفاع نوايا ترك الوظيفة. ومن بين العوامل الأكثر تأثيراً التي تم الإبلاغ عنها، ضعف التعويضات، الأعباء الإدارية، ونقص التقدير، والتي كانت لها آثار سلبية على الرضا الوظيفي.

**الاستنتاج:** يُعد معالجة العوامل المؤثرة في الرضا الوظيفي ضرورياً لتحسين الاحتفاظ بالممرضات في الرعاية الصحية الأولية. تؤكد النتائج الحاجة إلى تدخلات مستهدفة من قبل مديري الرعاية الصحية وصانعي السياسات لتعزيز بيئة العمل، ودعم التطوير المهني، وتحسين هياكل التعويضات. قد يساعد تعزيز ثقافة تنظيمية داعمة في الحد من نوايا ترك الوظيفة وتعزيز القوى العاملة في التمريض.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الاحتفاظ بالممرضات، الرضا الوظيفي، الرعاية الصحية الأولية، إدارة القوى العاملة، استراتيجيات التوظيف.