

Chinese Nurses' Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions in the Context of Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: COVID-19 has been evidenced to increase nurses experiences of low job dissatisfaction, augmenting their intentions for leaving the role. During epidemics time, the working environment for nurses is usually very stressful. In a study pertaining specifically to the COVID-19 pandemic, Said and El-Shafei (2020) found that the nurses investigated have been subject to major stressors. There has been a renewed interest in deepening scholarly understanding of the relationship between job satisfaction and employees' turnover intentions.

Keywords: Chinese Nurses; Job Satisfaction; Turnover Intention

1. Foreword

1.1 Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 has brought about negative effects not only for the healthcare industry but also other industries, significantly affecting livelihoods, work experiences and personal lives. Chen et al. (2020) and Lin et al. (2020) claim that the economic and financial losses brought about by COVID-19 have crippled the healthcare industry, with the most notable effects being on the working capacities and experiences of nurses. This trend is despite the fact that medical staff, especially nurses, play a crucial role on the nursing sector. Even though nurses remain committed to their role's purpose and mission, the impacts of COVID-19 have visibly presented a challenge to the effective execution of key tasks (Yan et al., 2019). As identified by Yan et al. (2019), nurse job satisfaction has dramatically declined because of the added pressure and intense demand generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and this has translated into increased intentions to leave the job. Mo et al. (2020) argue for nurses to continue to play their core role in the provision of medical care, it is vital that their mental and psychological health remains a major priority. McVicar (2016) has evidenced that the working environment for medical staff, including nurses, is invariably very stressful, but especially so during pandemics. Nurses, alongside other healthcare workers, are the first line of defence in protecting and caring for the patients. Nurses become the important force in the fight against COVID-19. Said and El-Shafei (2020) have found, however, that the COVID-19 pandemic has subjected nurses to increased stress levels. This increase in nurses' stress levels has direct negative effects on patient care. Against this context of the impacts on COVID-19 on nurses' stress levels, it is vital to explore the consequent effects on job satisfaction and on the turnover intentions of individuals.

1.2 Background

In terms of nursing practice, job satisfaction is critical in ensuring nurses continue to engage in their work, not least to fight deadly outbreaks such as COVID-19. Given that nurses act as front line agents in the healthcare system, Soto-Rubio et al. (2020) claim that as a workforce sector they are especially vulnerable to the dangers and associated stressors of COVID-19. Fears of contracting the virus drive psychological stress in the workforces, impeding the effective execution of tasks in clinical settings. Notably, psychological stress means that individuals often have a reduced capacity in their professionalism and experience an unwillingness to engage in core professional activities. Sarwar and Abugre (2013) highlight that job satisfaction is significantly linked to endeavours by organisations to retain and value their employees. Job satisfaction levels are, Hoboubi et al. (2017) claim, significantly linked to employee desires to continue working in respective

professions.

2. Theories

2.1 Maslow's Hierarchical Needs Theory

Job satisfaction has been elucidated by Maslow's hierarchical needs theory. Rouse (2004) claims that Maslow's hierarchical needs theory makes the case that individuals seek to gratify five key basic types of needs: belongingness needs, safety needs, self-actualisation needs, esteem needs, as well as psychological needs. These five needs come out as key determinants

Influencing the levels of satisfaction of employees. Abulof (2017) claims that psychological needs relate to satisfaction arising from payments that allow individuals to meet their basic needs. As such, employees must have sufficiency in terms of having clothing, food, and adequate housing. In terms of safety, Kaur (2013) argues that job security, safe working, and adequate medical benefits are key aspects of job satisfaction. Thus, nurses are able to continue with their engagement with less stress. King-Hill (2015) explains that belongingness needs are met through promotions. In this case, workplace interpersonal relations outline are critical in the use of Maslow's hierarchical needs theory. As per the theory, esteem needs are met through the recognition of accomplishments (Abulof, 2017). In this case, employees feel contented when their efforts for an organisation are recognised. Taormina and Gao (2013) note that self-actualisation needs arise when employees get the chance to utilise their abilities and skills. Maslow's hierarchical needs theory relates to this study by flagging up the key elements that are needed for nurses to continue experiencing satisfaction in their jobs.

2.2 Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory

Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory is another framework that highlights the relationship between satisfaction and motivation. Tesavrita and Suryadi (2012) assert that the Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory creates a distinction between motivator needs and hygiene needs but also argues that motivator needs ought to be met as a basis for actualising motivation as well as job satisfaction. Evidence so far (Malik and Naeem, 2013; Costello and Welch, 2014) shows that hygiene needs can be gratified by comfortable and pleasant working conditions. Hence, job security, better pay, and improved relationship with co-workers are means of enhancing motivation. Nurses feel satisfied when hygiene needs are met and they become dissatisfied when these needs are not effectively met. As argued by Khalid (2013), Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory distinguishes between extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. As such, the theory outlines the need for employers to draw a distinction between what relates to hygiene needs and what relates to motivator needs. For this reason, the theory flags up a marked relationship between job satisfiers and turnover intentions that arise from nurses' engagement with their work. Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory thus forms a foundation for identifying a relationship between job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction, linking these to turnover intentions among nurses.

3. Research Aims, Objectives and Problem Statement

3.1 Problem Statement

Workers are vital in organisations and their satisfaction in their jobs is of utmost importance. Said and El-Shafei (2020) make the case that nurses' turnover rates have become a global concern that harms the effectiveness of organisations within the healthcare industry. This has been made worse by the impacts that COVID-19 has brought to the health system, more so in countries that have limited resources needed to cope with emergencies and epidemics. As argued by Hoboubi et al. (2017), job satisfaction is the product of a range of factors, including financial rewards, interpersonal relationships at work, and employee well-being. There is thus a need for organisations to ensure that employees' turnover intentions are minimised by addressing these factors. It is, therefore, vital for organisations to make use of satisfaction levels as a predictor and determinant of turnover intentions. In the realm of the current competitive business dynamics, it is imperative that businesses ensure that their workforces do not shift to other organisations. To create a system that engenders engagement and

satisfaction among workers, Mostert et al. (2018) and Yang et al. (2019) suggest that businesses must come up with better ways of removing stress from workforce, improving organisational support, and enhancing work engagement. It is necessary that organisations provide an environment that supports and actualities job satisfaction to bring about an enhanced rate of retention. Increased retention rates means reduced expenditure on training, development and internal corporate functions. In the field of nursing practice, specifically, hospitals and nursing departments can improve nurse job satisfaction by reducing the pressure, increasing the support of the organization, and increasing the participation of nurses, thus reducing nurse turnover rate. The reduction of turnover rate is conducive to better care for patients and long-term and stable development of nurses. For hospitals and nursing departments, it is beneficial to reduce repeated training of nurses, reduce the expense of nursing recruitment and facilitate the dissemination of nursing talents' experience.

3.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of the research is to identify the factors influencing Chinese nurses' job satisfaction and turnover intentions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specific objectives are:

- 1) To identify levels of Chinese nurses' job satisfaction during the pandemic.
- 2) To examine different factors influencing Chinese nurses' job satisfaction during the pandemic.
- 3) To determine the link between job satisfaction of Chinese nurses' turnover intentions during the pandemic.

3.3 Summary

A strong relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions has been evidenced. Three aspects that affect job satisfaction have been outlined: job stress, perceived organisational support, and work engagement. Two theories have been identified to explicate the discussions: Maslow's hierarchical needs theory and Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory. Job satisfaction is hugely determined by these factors within the organisation. As such, it is important for organisations to understand these different factors that inform job satisfaction and affect the productivity of workers. These are also linked to turnover intentions, so four hypotheses have been generated as followings:

One is perceived job stress reduces Chinese nurses' job satisfaction in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

Two is perceived organisational support increases Chinese nurses' job satisfaction in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

Three is work engagement is positively associated with Chinese nurses' job satisfaction in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

Four is Job satisfaction reduces Chinese nurses' turnover intention in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

These hypotheses provide the basis of the conceptual framework.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Job satisfaction is a key component for the success of organisations (Mafini and Dlodlo, 2014). Hunjra et al (2010), Waqas et al. (2014) and Pham (2020) note that job satisfaction is determined by other aspects of work such as stress levels, organisational support, and work engagement, all having an impact on turnover intentions. During pandemics such as COVID-19, job satisfaction levels among nurses are heavily affected by these factors. This has an implication for turnover intentions.

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