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Research article

The ‘magnetic forces’ of Swiss acute care hospitals: A secondary data analysis on nurses' job satisfaction and their intention to leave their current job



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ABSTRACT

Aims: (1) To describe nurses' job satisfaction and intention to leave their current employer; and (2) to explore the associations between nine aspects of job satisfaction (i.e., motivators and hygiene factors) and nurses' intentions to leave their current employer.

Background: Increasing nurse shortages and accelerating personnel turnover are global healthcare issues. Improving nurses' job satisfaction and reducing their intentions to leave are crucial to nurse workforce stability.

Methods: Secondary analysis of nurse survey data from the Swiss arm of the Nurse Forecasting in Europe (2009/2010) study. Associations between aspects of nurses' job satisfaction and intentions to leave were analyzed via multiple logistic regression analyses.

Results: Overall, nurses reported being very satisfied with their jobs and with 'independence at work', but less satisfied with the possibility for 'study leave'. A total of 27.4% intended to leave their current jobs, with lower ratings of 'opportunities for advancement' as the most relevant factor explaining these intentions.

Conclusion: In view of predicted nurse shortages, Swiss acute care hospitals' might improve their success regarding nurse job satisfaction and retention by offering nursing career models with more opportunities for clinical advancement.

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Background

Introduction

Increasing nurse shortages and accelerating personnel turnover are global healthcare issues (Oulton, 2006). In Switzerland, the demand for nurses is expected to increase dramatically until 2030. Despite observed increases in the number of registered nurses working in Swiss hospitals—from 48,000 to 54,000 between 2002 and 2008—this will result in nurse shortages (Jaccard Ruedin, Weaver, Roth, & Widmer, 2010). In fact, Swiss hospitals already rely heavily on foreign-trained nurses. To limit this dependency and provide a nurse workforce sufficient for future demands, the Swiss healthcare system has introduced allied healthcare assistants (Lacher, De Geest, Denhaerynck, Trede, & Ausserhofer, 2015). However, increasing the

number of nurses is only a partial solution. In order to recruit and retain sufficient nursing staff and thus to ensure safe, high quality care, hospital administrators need to recognize and focus on pivotal organizational factors of the nurse work environment, such as adequate staffing and skill-mix levels, the quality of the work environment, and indicators of nurses' well-being (e.g., job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion and intention to leave) (Aiken et al., 2014; Ausserhofer et al., 2014; Schubert et al., 2013).

In the U.S., Magnet[®] designated hospitals are known to be highly successful in attracting and retaining nurses, as they provide nurses excellent work environments, resulting in high job satisfaction, low emotional exhaustion and low intention to leave (Kelly, McHugh, & Aiken, 2011). In Switzerland, after surveying a national sample of 35 Swiss acute-care hospitals, Desmedt, Schubert, Schwendimann and Ausserhofer (2012) observed that nurses appraised the quality of their work environments (e.g., staffing and resource adequacy, collaboration with physicians) nearly as highly as those working in Magnet[®] hospitals in other countries. Still, despite these high ratings, the levels of these nurses' job satisfaction and which aspects of job satisfaction correlated with

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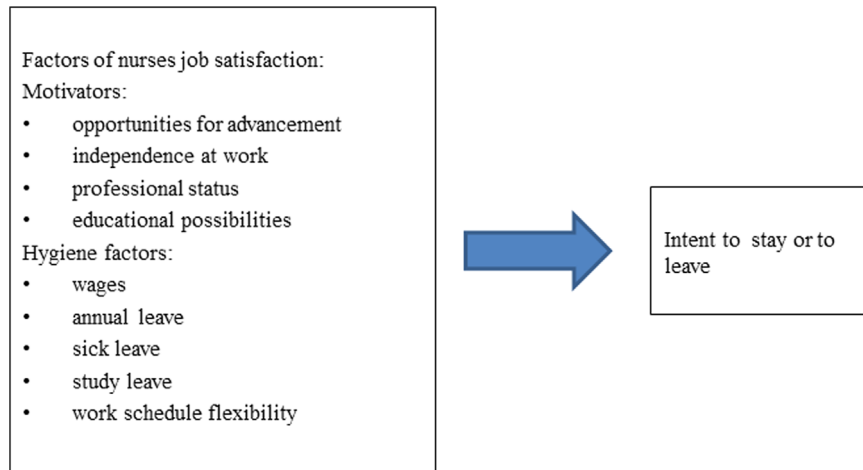


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of our study.

increased intentions to leave their current jobs remained unclear (Desmedt et al., 2012).

Nurses' job satisfaction

In the Nurse Forecasting in Europe (RN4CAST) study, which surveyed more than 33'000 hospital medical/surgical nurses employed by 488 hospitals in 12 European countries, one in five nurses (11–56%) reported dissatisfaction with his/her job. Varying remarkably across and within European countries (Aiken, Sloane, Bruyneel, Van den Heede, & Sermeus, 2013), job satisfaction is a complex phenomenon depending on the expectations a nurse has on the nature of the job. According to Lu, Barriballb, Zhanga and Whileb (2011), job satisfaction reflects individuals' affective orientation towards the work roles they presently occupy.

In a concept analysis on nursing job satisfaction, Castaneda and Scanlan (2014) concluded that "job satisfaction is an affective reaction to a job that results from the incumbent's comparison of actual outcomes with those that are desired, expected and deserved". This concept comprises the three central attributes for nursing job satisfaction: autonomy, interpersonal relationships, and patient care (Castaneda & Scanlan, 2014). Indeed, a meta-analysis including studies on registered staff nurses in hospital settings only showed that job satisfaction was most strongly associated with job stress, followed by nurse-physician collaboration and job autonomy (Zangaro & Soeken, 2007). Similarly, in Lu et al.'s (2011) systematic review, the factors demonstrating significant relationships with job satisfaction were job stress, organizational commitment, depression, cohesion of the ward nursing team, structural empowerment, organizational citizenship behaviors, job rotation, role stress and respect. A low composite perception of these factors, i.e., job dissatisfaction, has been suggested as important factor for nurses' intention to leave (Ellenbecker, Samia, Cushman, & Porell, 2007; Larrabee et al., 2003; McCarthy, Tyrrell, & Lehane, 2007). This is relevant because high intention to leave predict leads to important consequences for hospital administration and the healthcare environment, including higher turnover, high costs and loss of knowledge (Hayes et al., 2005; O'Brien-Pallas, Murphy, Shamian, Li, & Hayes, 2010).

Nurse intention to leave the job

Thus, in the context of predicted nurse shortages, a deeper understanding of nurses' intentions is critical. In the European RN4CAST study, considerable percentages (19%–49%) of nurses intended to leave their jobs, though the percentage who thought

finding a new job would be easy varied greatly across countries (16–77%) (Aiken et al., 2013).

The literature describes numerous reasons why nurses leave their jobs. Lynn and Redman (2005) found that intention to leave correlated with professional dissatisfaction, dissatisfaction with workload, dissatisfaction with colleagues and dissatisfaction with administrative support. Other factors apparently directly related to intention to leave nursing are individuals' lack of professional socialization, lack of interest in employment, and a need for a higher salary, particularly as the primary earner for a family (Lynn & Redman, 2005).

In a recent study of newly licensed registered nurses in Florida, Lynn and Ning (2014) found that this group's socio-demographic characteristics, expectations of work, and work characteristics influenced their job satisfaction, commitment and intention to stay or leave the job. In summary, overall job dissatisfaction has been confirmed as a precursor to intentions to leave a job; yet it remains unclear which specific aspects of job satisfaction are key regarding the development of these intentions (Lynn & Ning, 2014). In 1959, Herzberg et al. proposed that an employee's motivation to work is best understood when this attitude can be understood. To comprehend this internal concept of attitude, Herzberg et al. developed two list of factors, one causing positive feelings (motivators) and other causing negative feelings (hygiene factors) about one's job.

Conceptual model

To identify how motivators and hygiene factors are linked to nurses' job satisfaction and intention to leave the job (see Fig. 1), this study's conceptual model was based on Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Based on the premise that one set of job characteristics or incentives (motivators/satisfiers/intrinsic factors) leads to job satisfaction, while another, separate set leads to dissatisfaction (hygiene factors/maintenance factors/dissatisfier), Herzberg et al. (1959) proposed a two-factor model of motivation to work. Work-related or intrinsic factors are achievement, recognition, perceptions of the work itself, responsibility, and advancement. Therefore, instilling a lasting increase in satisfaction would involve developing a strong interest in one's work and its value, strengthening one's sense of responsibility, and fostering a reasonable expectation of advancement. In contrast, dissatisfaction factors reflect poor interaction with the work context or environment, e.g., inefficiencies within the organization, inadequate technical supervision, poor working

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