



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

An empirical study on the factors influencing the turnover intention of dentists in hospitals in Taiwan



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Abstract *Background/purpose:* The purpose of this study was to explore the factors influencing the turnover intention of dentists in hospitals in Taiwan.

Materials and methods: Nationwide, 175 structured questionnaires were returned from dentists who were working for a hospital of the Bureau of the National Health Insurance, Taipei division, representing a 37% response rate.

Results: The main findings were: (1) the turnover intention of residents was higher than that of visiting staff; (2) the gap between expected income and actual income has an impact on satisfaction with compensation; the larger the gap, the less satisfied the dentists were with their compensation; (3) satisfaction with compensation and job stress have an impact on job satisfaction and the organizational commitment of dentists; and (4) although satisfaction with compensation, job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment were related to the turnover intention of dentists, the most significant predictive factor was the opportunity of working in a clinic. Organizational commitment was associated with the turnover intention of residents, while job satisfaction was related to the turnover intention of visiting staff.

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Conclusion: The findings of this study should provide some insights for hospital managers regarding human resources management strategies.

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Introduction

Owing to the particularity of the healthcare industry, physicians, as human resources, have become one of the greatest factors determining the quality of healthcare services. Having the ability to prevent the loss of intellectual resources is an essential determinant of whether a hospital will survive in a competitive environment. Past research shows that factors such as promotion, compensation, and colleagues may all have an impact on organizational commitment and the decision to stick to or leave a job.

In recent years, many health insurance restricted policies have been implemented that have caused hospitals to transform their human resource strategies. The physician fee, which accounts for the largest part of the cost of medical services, naturally has a great impact, as it indirectly results in an increase in the turnover rate of physicians.

Even though dentistry has always been considered a very good occupation, many researchers point out that in hospitals, dentists form part of a professional group that is under high work pressure and high occupational fatigue.^{1–3} Moreover, dentistry is a department that is most suited for practice in an independent clinic. The consistently high turnover rate of dentists not only impacts the quality of care of hospital patients, but also increases the hospital's costs in training new dentists. Past research seldom analyzed the causes of hospital dentists' intentions to leave their jobs. Based on these reasons, this research uses hospital dentists as the research group to explore the relationship among work pressures, level of satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to leave their jobs, in order to understand the important, influential factors of dentists' turnover. The purpose is to lower the tangible and intangible enterprise costs incurred from loss of employees. It also serves as a reference for departments of human resources in healthcare institutions.

Research framework and variables

Organizational commitment

The idea of organizational commitment was introduced by Becker in 1960. He asserts that organizational commitment can be used to forecast employees' performance, absence, turnover, and organizational efficiency.^{4,5} Organizational behavior scholars used the idea of commitment to explore relevant research on personal career development, organizational revolution, and organizational efficiency. Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982)⁶ proposed that the antecedent variables of organizational commitment include personal features, role features, structural features, and work experience, and that the effect variables include work performance, seniority, attendance, work delay, and turnover.

Research also found that employee turnover tendency has a negative correlation with organizational commitment.^{7–10}

Work satisfaction

Work satisfaction was deemed to be a single concept, without any outer forming process.¹¹ Work satisfaction is a person's subjective awareness and attitude toward work. It is the result of multidimensional interaction between the individual and the environment. Therefore, this research defines work satisfaction of dentists as the individual's subjective value judgment of work.

Seashore and Taber (1975)¹² proposed a theoretical model that affects the level of work satisfaction. The antecedent variables of work satisfaction include environmental and personal factors. The effect variables include personal reaction, organizational reaction, and social reaction. This shows that work satisfaction is influenced by numerous factors. For example, Roth et al (2003)¹³ point out that the aspects affecting a dentist's satisfaction with work include patient relationships, medical service provided, respect, professional relationships, and employee relationships. From the results of research related to dentists' work satisfaction, four factors are the most predictive of dentists' satisfaction with work: compensation, medical service provided, respect, and patient relationships. In particular, the factor of compensation is deemed by many researchers as the most important factor affecting work satisfaction.^{14,15} On the contrary, factors that cause dentists' dissatisfaction include medical malpractice, inadequate compensation, the need to manage administration activities, and a lack of private time. In addition, workload¹⁶ and work pressure^{17–19} are also related to dentists' work satisfaction. Based on a literature review, we use several factors to represent dentists' work satisfaction, which we have divided mainly into personal factors (including age, practice seniority, educational level, marital status, and professional discipline) and work factors (including workload, work pressure, patient relationships, whether respect is received, and whether there are opportunities for promotion).

Work pressure

When people feel pressure, it is often demonstrated through negative experiences about work.²⁰ Pressure not only hurts their health but it also affects their work performance, leading to absences or turnover.²¹ The origin of work pressure is usually various and complicated. Work pressure is the most important factor that affects work satisfaction. Much research has shown that work pressure is negatively correlated to work satisfaction.²² The higher the work pressure, the lower the work satisfaction. Likewise, work pressure and turnover intention are positively

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