



Retention of Nurses: An Empirical Study

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Abstract:

Nurses are an important element in the health care system. Their services are priceless and incomparable to any services provided to mankind. Retention or engagement of nurses is a widely recognized issue and many studies, research works, investigations and reports have already been prepared in the area. An effective nurse retention policy is a matter of high concern for the hospital administrators since without them the whole health care system will get paralysed. Retaining the nurses is a matter of headache for the administrators since there is no dearth of opportunities in the market and the attributes of the nursing job is so complicated that finding out and retaining the efficient nursing profession to provide high-quality health care services is difficult. The present study aims at finding out the critical factors which play a role in nurse retention and understanding the perception of the nurses towards the retention initiative by the employers. The investigation also makes an honest attempt to examine if the factors of retention have any relationship with job satisfaction. Factors of retention have been identified with the help of literature review. Primary data have been collected with the help of field survey and analysis of the same has been done using the SPSS software.

Keywords: Nurse, retention, retention policy, administration, health care, job satisfaction

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I. Introduction

Nursing is a noble profession. Helping and comforting people ailing from various diseases is one of the most treasured services to the human race. As the number of hospitals or health care organizations is increasing everywhere, demands for nurses are growing at a rapid pace. Patients as well as hospitals will suffer drastically if there is a shortage of nurses. As the nursing profession has abundant opportunities in the market, it is essential on the part of the employers to retain and engage them and provide them with all the facilities essential to keep them engaged in the jobs. Satisfaction at work place is one of the important elements very in the retention of nurses. Nurses' job is very challenging and difficult and demands a high level of dedication, working in a stressful environment and critical conditions and working overtime as well. These conditions which are part of the job are enough to make the work environment unfavourable. Therefore, it is essential that these service givers are taken care of and are provided with all the facilities that are essential to maintain a healthy job and a good working environment are provided. Retention as well as satisfaction of the nurses is affected by many common factors. An investigator observed some major challenges facing the health care industries in retention of nurses. The researcher pointed out factors such as universal shortage of nurses, poor working conditions, long working hours, below standard salaries, work pressure; etc are some of the elements contributing towards difficulty in retention [1]. The investigator also put forward certain suggestions such as well-planned strategies, policies and legislations which can help resolve the issue of employee retention. A number of research studies recognized factors such as proper supervision and good work environment as important in retaining and engaging nurses in organizations [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8].

II. Literature Review

Retaining the valuable staff members is becoming difficult due to the highly competitive work environment and increasing opportunities in the market. Employee retention has become a biggest challenge facing human resource management today. Organizations whether it is a profit making or non-profit-making organization, the focus has shifted from 'numbers' to 'quality' and from 'recruitment' to 'retention'. In an investigation it has been observed that an organization's competitive advantage gets diminished if the

organization loses its top talent to its competitors [9] Thus, the HR department has the responsibility for talent management and in addition understand, the importance of retention policies to its employees. An examiner found that 60% of undesirable turnover in organizations takes place due to inappropriate hiring policy on the part of the employer [10]. Other investigation concluded that information about the job proclaimed during the recruitment and selection process is directly connected with positive work execution, job satisfaction and low employee turnover [11] [12]

A researcher opined that 70% enhancement in employee retention rates are related with good training programmes available to the employees [13]. It is a widely supported notion that employee's access to regular and up to date training programs assist in the growth, prosperity and retention of employees. One research study has affirmed that employees' commitment and intention to leave has positive relationship with the leadership style [14]. An investigator that observed incompetent leadership can result into poor employee performance, high stress among employees, low job commitment, low job satisfaction and intention to leave [15]. Another researcher forwarded the meaning of work-life balance as the satisfaction and functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict [16].

A research study tried to define the work-life balance (WLB) strategies as ways which increase the independence of employees in bringing coordination between work and non-work aspects of their lives. Bringing integration between work and family domains is a major source of high stress among many employees. [17]

One researcher observed that compensation is a vital factor for attracting and retaining the talent [18]. Another investigator also concluded in their research that in retention and recruitment process wages are indeed the most important factor [19].

A research study pointed out that for long lasting impression upon employees and support their expectations reward acts as an important determinant of employee retention [20]. Researchers also established a linkage between rewards and employee retention [21] [22]

Ashford et.al, (1989) [23] revealed that job security is directly related with job satisfaction whereas job insecurity is related with job dissatisfaction. MacNeil (1994) [24] supported the view that job security is an important element that affects job satisfaction among workers.

It has also been observed that when an employee is mentally and emotionally involved in decision-making process, they are more motivated and productive [25].

III. Objectives of the Study

The research has been carried out in order to fulfil the following objectives.

- i) To examine if any association exist between the perception of the importance of the retention effort put by the organization and the factors of retention under consideration.
- ii) To find if any relationship exists between the rating given by the respondents to the retention efforts put by their employers and the various identified retention factors under investigation.
- iii) To understand if the identified factors of retention have any link with the job satisfaction level of the nurses.

IV. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been framed based on the objectives of the investigation.

H₀: Significant association exist between the perception of the importance of the retention effort put by the organization and all the factors of retention under consideration.

H₀₁: No significant association exist between the perception of the importance of the retention effort put by the organization and the factors of retention under consideration.

H₀: Significant relationship exists between the rating given by the respondents to the retention efforts put by their employers and the various identified retention factors under investigation.

H₀₂: No significant relationship exists between the rating given by the respondents to the retention efforts put by their employers and the various identified retention factors under investigation.

H₀: All the identified factors of retention have significant relationship with the job satisfaction level of the nurses.

H₀₃: The identified factors of retention have no significant relationship with the job satisfaction level of the nurses.

V. Research Methodology

The present investigation is an empirical study and is based on survey method. For the purpose of investigation, the whole population have been divided into two strata i.e., private hospitals and government hospitals in the city of Guwahati. Stratified sampling technique have been used for selecting the respondents from the population. For collecting primary data, a structured questionnaire has been framed consisting of both open and close ended questions. The questionnaire has been framed based on the principles of simplicity and

understandability. A total of 150 questionnaires have been distributed out of which 106 fully completed and usable questionnaires have been used for analysis. The primary data collected have been analysed with the help of the SPSS software and statistical tools such as coefficient of correlation, regression analysis, mean and median have been used. A reliability test has been conducted to examine the consistency, accuracy and predictability of the scales in the questionnaire. The factors of employee retention have been identified after an extensive literature review.

VI. Results and Discussion

6.1 Respondents' Profile

A brief overview of the respondents' demographic profile and other job-related profile working in various hospitals is depicted with the help of the tables given below.

Table 6.1.1: Gender of Respondents

Particulars	Gender of Respondents				Total	
	Male		Female			
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
Govt.Hospitals	0	0	55	52.0	55	52.0
Private Hospitals	1	1.0	50	47.0	51	48.0
Total	1	1.0	105	99.0	106	100

Source: Field Survey

The above table shows the number of male and female respondents in the hospitals surveyed. Out of 106 nurses surveyed, 52% of them belong to the public sector, i.e., government hospitals and 48% belong to the private sector. 52% respondents in government hospitals are all female and out of 48% of the respondents in the private sector only 1% is male and rests 47% are female. Thus, from the above table it can be inferred that females are more attracted towards the nursing profession than their male counterparts.

Table 6.1.2: Age of Respondents

Particulars	Age of the respondent								Total	
	18yrs-29yrs		30yrs-39yrs		40yrs-55yrs		55yrs above			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Govt. Hospitals	3	2.8	19	17.9	22	20.8	11	10.4	55	52.0
Private Hospitals	38	35.8	10	9.4	3	2.8	0	0	51	48.0
Total	41	38.6	29	27.3	25	23.6	11	10.4	106	100

Source: Field Survey

The table depicts the age of the respondent nurses working in various hospitals surveyed in the city. 38.6% of the respondents fall in the age group of 18 years to 29 years, 27.3% belong to 29 years to 39 years age group, 23.6% belong to 39 years to 55 years age group and only 10.4% of the respondents belong to the age group of 55 years above. Thus, from the data it can be inferred that the young people are attracted to this profession.

Table 6.1.3: Job Experience

Particulars	Job Experience										Total	
	>1yr		1yr-5yrs		5yrs-10yrs		10yrs-15yrs		<15yrs			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Govt. Hospitals	1	1.0	11	10.4	7	6.6	13	12.3	23	21.7	55	52.0
Private Hospitals	11	10.4	28	26.4	7	6.6	3	2.8	2	1.9	51	48.0
Total	12	11.4	39	36.8	14	13.2	16	15.1	25	23.6	106	100

Source: Field Survey

The above table tries to highlight the job experience of the nurses surveyed, working in various hospitals in city. The table reveals that 11.4% of the respondents have an experience of less than a year in their job, out of which 1% belongs to Government hospitals and 10.4% belong to private hospitals. 36.8% have an experience of 1 years to 5 years out of which 10.4% are from Government hospitals and 26.4% are employed in Private hospitals. 13.2% nurses have 5 years to 10 years of job experience and 15.1% and 23.6% of the nurses have an experience of 10 years to 15 years and above 15 years respectively in this profession. It can also be observed in the table that 21.7% of the nurses in the Government hospitals have a work experience of more than 15 years.

6.2 Association Between Importance of Employee Retention Effort and Factors of Retention

In this analysis the researcher tried to find out if any association exist between the perception of the importance of the retention effort put by the organization and the factors under consideration. The results are shown below.

Table 6.2.1: Correlation Between Perception about the Importance of Employee Retention Effort and Various Retention Factors

Factors	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10
F1 Pearson Correlation	1	.183	.046	.026	.089	.261(**)	.109	.205(*)	.069	.166
Sig (2- tailed)		.061	.641	.792	.366	.007	.265	.035	.482	.089
N	106	106	106	106	106	106	106	106	106	106

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

(F1= Employee retention effort, F2= Compensation, F3= Recognition, F4= Career progression, F5= Participation in Decision making, F6= Work Life Balance, F7= Work Environment, F8= Training and learning, F9= Leadership/ Supervision, F10= Job Security)

The above table represents the correlation if any between the perception of employee retention efforts put by the hospitals to retain the nurses and the various factors of employee retention. The table clearly reveals that except for two factors, no correlation exists between the other factors of retention under investigation. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis H_0 and accept the alternative hypothesis H_{01} . The factor work life balance (F6) has a positive correlation $r = .261(**)$ at 1% level of significance with employee retention effort. A research study tried to investigate if any relationship exists between employee turnover intention and support from the organization such as work life balance, supervisory support etc and found a reverse relationship between the two, i.e., organization support helps in reducing turnover intention [26]. Similarly for the factor training and learning (F8) a positive correlation of $r = .205(*)$ at 5% level of significance is found with employee retention effort. An investigator established training as an important element in retaining its employees [27].

6.3 Relationship Between Performance of the Employee Retention Effort and Factors of Retention

The researcher tried to find out how the respondents rate the employee retention efforts put by their employers and the various identified retention factors under investigation.

Table 6.3.1: Correlation Between Performance Rating Given to Employee Retention Effort and Various Retention Factors

Factors	R1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10
R1 Pearson Correlation	1	.357(**)	.477(**)	.463(**)	.441(**)	.138	.431(**)	.420(**)	.481(**)	.102
Sig (2- tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.159	.000	.000	.000	.298
N	106	106	106	106	106	106	106	106	106	106

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

(R1= Rating given to employee retention effort, F2= Compensation, F3= Recognition, F4= Career progression, F5= Participation in Decision making, F6= Work Life Balance, F7= Work Environment, F8= Training and Learning, F9= Leadership/ Supervision, F10= Job Security)

The table above depicts the correlation between the rating or ranking given by the nurses to the employee retention effort put by the hospitals and the various factors under research. Except for factors work life balance (F6) and job security (F10), all the factors of retention have significant correlation with ranking given to the employee retention effort. For the factor's compensation, recognition, career progression, participation in decision making, work environment, training and learning and leadership and supervision a positive correlation $r = .357(**)$, $.477(**)$, $.463(**)$, $.441(**)$, $.431(**)$, $.420(**)$ and $.481(**)$ respectively which can be interpreted as the surveyed respondents are satisfied with the retention effort put by the organizations. Thus, we accept the null hypothesis H_0 and reject H_{02} . Many researchers concluded in their studies that human resource management practices such as good compensation and rewards, proper training and development programme, supervisor support, good work environment and organization justice can help reduce employee absenteeism, employee retention and better-quality work. [28] [29] [30] [31] [32] [33] [34] [35]

6.4 Impact of Various Factors on Employee Retention

This section tries to find out the impact or effect of the various factors of retention on the employee retention effort put by the hospitals.

Table 6.4.1: Regression Analysis

Variables Entered/ Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Compensation, Recognition, Career progression, Participation in Decision making, Work Life Balance, Work Environment, Training and Learning, Leadership/ Supervision, Job Security	.	Enter

a. All requested variables entered

b. Dependent Variable: Rating given to the employee retention policy/ practices

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.569(a)	.324	.261	.590

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Job Security, Work life Balance, Career progression, Leadership, Compensation, Work environment, Involvement, Training, Recognition

Model	Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1(Constant)	.441	.669		659	.511
Compensation	.069	.033	.328	2.057	.042
Recognition	.029	.043	.143	.673	.503
Career progression	.064	.042	.244	1.505	.136
Involvement in Decision	-.043	.051	-.181	-.842	.402
Work Life Balance	.052	.042	.128	1.228	.222
Work Environment	.055	.034	.214	1.620	.108
Training and Learning	-.045	.039	-.224	-1.165	.247
Leadership/ Supervision	.058	.040	.237	1.435	.155
Job Security	-.163	.077	-.235	-2.105	.038

- a. Dependent Variable: Rating given to the employee retention policy/practices of the org

The regression analysis of the data collected from the nurses working in private as well as government hospitals in Guwahati city tried to examine the impact of the various identified factors of retention on nurses' retention in the city. The above table clearly reveals that the identified factors under investigation had a combined effect of 26.1% on employee retention. If we observe the impact of individual factors, it can be seen from the above table that compensation and job security have the highest impact on employee retention, the significant value being .042 and .038 respectively among nurses working in both public and private sector in the city.

6.5 Association Between Job Satisfaction and Factors of Retention

This section shows the association or the relationship between the various identified factors of employee retention with that of the job satisfaction among the nurses working in various hospitals in the city.

Table 6.5.1: Correlation Between Job Satisfaction and Various Factors

Factors	JS	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10
JS	1									
F2	.103	1								
F3	.014	.651(**)	1							
F4	-.147	.436(**)	.679(**)	1						
F5	-.023	.684(**)	.899(**)	.657(**)	1					
F6	.188	.278(**)	.249(**)	.135	.230(*)	1				
F7	-.112	.445(**)	.654(**)	.674(**)	.655(**)	.177	1			
F8	-.044	.686(**)	.684(**)	.763(**)	.669(**)	.397(**)	.657(**)	1		
F9	-.178	.436(**)	.803(**)	.715(**)	.787(**)	.148	.634(**)	.627(**)	1	
F10	.012	.538(**)	.389(**)	.262(**)	.413(**)	.391(**)	.398(**)	.353(**)	.254(**)	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

(Q1=Quitting the present job will give satisfaction, F2= Compensation, F3= Recognition, F4= career progression, F5= Involvement in Decision making, F6= Work Life Balance, F7= Work Environment, F8= Training and Learning, F9= Leadership/ Supervision, F10= Job Security)

The figures in the above table are interesting because although a significant correlation exist among almost all the factors of retention and performance rating given by the employees to the retention effort as revealed in the above table, but a very poor and in some cases no correlation exist between the various factors of retention under investigation and job satisfaction among the nurses working in the city. It is quite an alarming situation which need attention of the employers as the nurses under investigation does not seem to be happy with their jobs. Thus, the reject null hypothesis H_0 and accept the alternative hypothesis H_{03} . An investigator

found a relation between job satisfaction and retention and of the view that low satisfaction in a job may result in lower staff retention [36].

6.6 Comparison Between Public and Private Hospitals with Respect to Various Retention Factors

This section examines, if any difference exists between the public and private hospitals with respect to the various retention factors under investigation.

Table 6.6.1: Public/Private Comparison with Respect to Various Factors of Retention

Factors	Sector	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Compensation	Public	55	18.96	3.150	1.431	104	.156
	Private	51	18.06	3.361			
Recognition	Public	55	22.05	3.076	-1.687	104	.095
	Private	51	23.16	3.646			
Career progression	Public	55	13.47	2.441	-4.566	104	.000
	Private	51	15.61	2.367			
Involvement	Public	55	18.78	2.872	-1.556	104	.123
	Private	51	19.65	2.848			
Work life Balance	Public	55	11.55	1.951	1.373	104	.173
	Private	51	11.10	1.315			
Work environment	Public	55	23.33	2.510	-2.038	104	.044
	Private	51	24.37	2.771			
Training	Public	55	20.64	3.674	-2.331	104	.022
	Private	51	22.14	2.871			
Leadership	Public	55	18.71	2.629	-3.742	104	.000
	Private	51	20.63	2.645			
Job Security	Public	55	8.84	1.102	1.814	104	.073
	Private	51	8.49	.834			

If we observe the table, it clearly depicts that for the factors promotion, work environment, training and development and leadership a significant difference exist between the nurses of public and private sector hospitals. For the factor career progression, if we observe the average mean value, we find that the mean score of private sectors, $M= 15.61$ is higher than that of the public sector, $M= 13.47$. So, it can be said that the nurses working in private hospitals get more promotional opportunities, than that of the nurses working in government hospitals. Similarly for the factor work environment we can find a significant difference between the public and the private sector and the significant value is $.044 < p < .05$. If we take into consideration the average mean values, we find that the average mean of private hospitals ($M= 24.37$) is higher than that of government hospitals ($M= 23.33$). Thus, the working environment of private hospitals is more suitable than that of government hospitals. Again, in case of training and development a difference exists between the private and the government hospitals with p value being $.022 < .05$. If we observe the average mean scores, we find that the average mean of government hospitals ($M= 20.64$) is less than that of private hospitals ($M= 22.14$). So, it can be concluded that the nurses in private hospitals get more opportunities for skill upgradation than that of nurses working in the government hospitals in the city. Again, for the factor leadership and supervision also significant difference exist between the private and the public sector, value being $.000 < p < .05$. Here also the average mean of public sector ($M= 18.71$) which is less than private sector ($M= 20.63$). Thus, it can be concluded that the nurses working in private hospitals enjoy better leadership and supervision than that of nurses working in the government hospitals.

VII. Conclusion

The issue of retention is always a complex area of study as identifying the factors of retention and analysing which factor can help in maintaining the work place standard is quite a difficult task. Understanding and finding out a balanced mixture of all the factors which not only helps in formulating an effective retention policy but also satisfies the nurses is a matter which requires a lot of brain storming by the hospital administration. As already discussed above there is a vast difference about the way nurses perceive the factors of retention and the actual satisfaction they extract from the factors. The analysis highlights the area of job satisfaction which needs immediate attention of the hospital administration. The research investigation also opens up scope for other researchers to do a broader analysis with more factors of retention.

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