



Summary of national study on recruitment and retention with nurses

Introduction

This summary presents an overview of the findings of a nationally representative study on the recruitment and retention of nurses in the public sector. A scoping review of the literature identified a wide range of factors that influence decisions to stay in or leave a job, profession or organisation. These issues, which include factors relevant to the job, the organisation and the individual nurse working in the Irish health services are taken into account in this study.

Methodology

The study adopted a mixed methods sequential explanatory design and both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analysed in accordance with their respective paradigms. A total of 3,769 nurses took part in an online survey and 44 nurses as well as 6 individuals working in HR in the HSE participated in telephone interviews. Descriptive, bivariate and regression analyses were conducted on the quantitative data and thematic analysis on the qualitative data.

Key findings from nurses' study

The results show that:

- 36% of nurses intend to leave their job in the next two years.
- Nurses are highly engaged in their work, perceive their work to have a significant impact on the lives of others, and have positive views of their co-workers.
- Nurses perceive a significant increase in workload and work demands arising from patient complexity and numbers, along with increased administrative and regulatory demands. This is coupled with inadequacies in staffing.
- The consequences of increased workload and inadequate staffing for nurses are burnout, responsibility overload, negative working relationships, being fearful of making mistakes, working long hours, sometimes unpaid, and limited flexibility in working time. Consequences for patients reported by nurses include a lower level of service quality and of safety.
- There is evidence that workload and staffing issues are influencing nurses' career intentions. Among nurses who indicated an intention to leave their current job over the next two years (36%), problematic staffing levels (66%) and demandingness of the work environment (52.5%) were the most frequently cited reasons for this intention.
- Satisfaction with pay has the lowest index score of all questionnaire measures (23%) and was also the most prominent issue arising in the qualitative data. This has four components: overall pay levels, inequities in pay, payment of nurse managers, and unpaid working time. Work location exacerbates negative views on pay in some instances.
- Not being valued, involved, listened to or having issues responded to as well as not having sufficient supports were identified in the qualitative data as sources of dissatisfaction. These are also reflected in the quantitative data where information sharing (index mean 29%) and perceptions of manager (index mean 44%) account for two of the four lowest index scores in the study.
- Nurses feel that work demands override training opportunities with just over half (54%) of nurses agreeing they received the training they needed to do their job well.
- Promotional opportunities are not embraced due to concerns over increased workload that is not matched by financial gain, and perceptions that the promotion process is not as fair or transparent as it could be.

Findings from the regression analysis

A total of 25 individual, employment, structural and perceptual / attitudinal characteristics were examined simultaneously in multiple regression models to establish which were the most important predictors of three outcomes – intent to stay or leave current job, organisation or nursing profession.



Figure 1: Factors of key importance in understanding nurses' job and career intentions

Further analysis that focused on perceptions of the job and the organisation confirmed the importance of global job satisfaction, organisational commitment and burnout in predicting nurses' job intentions, and showed that different aspects of the work and the organisation underpin or drive these three elements.

- global job satisfaction is driven by: satisfaction with pay, autonomy, impact, effort-reward ratio and responsibility overload
- organisational commitment is driven by: training and promotion opportunities, autonomy, impact, perceptions of co-workers and information sharing
- burnout is driven by: satisfaction with pay, responsibility overload, effort-reward ratio and autonomy.

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