



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

BA BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Assessment 2 - Essay

Module: Managing People

Code: LCBB5004

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SUBMITTED ON 24 August 2023

An examination of the causes and consequences of staff attrition in the UK nursing industry

The shortage of nurses in the NHS was also emphasized in the study of Nuffieldtrust (2022), where the authors highlighted the fact that the target of the Government to employ 50,000 more nurses by the end of March 2024, is somehow impossible to meet. The findings of the study analysed that approximately 40,365 nurses in the NHS resigned from the active service in June 2022. Comparing the available data across the decade, that was the peak in absolute terms and relative to the workforce size. It is calculated that the leaver rate was around 11.5%. Scotland is the major sufferer of the high rate of leaving of the nurses in the NHS. According to the study, the leaver rate was 10.6% up to March 2022 in Scotland. The data vary from one part of the country to the other. The available data reveals that the leaver rate was 12.3% in the South-west of England, whereas 10.9% was observed in the North-East, North-West, and Yorkshire. The data obtained from Nuffieldtrust (2022), the maximum leaver rate was found in the community provider trust (16.8%), then care trust where services are delivered majorly to the elderly people (14.7%), next, non-specialized acute trusts. The study analysed the causes of leaving the nurses and it suggested that the major causes of leaving are **retirement, poor work-life balance, extreme pressure, health issues of the staff, and leaving for further training**. Another major cause that increases the rate of turnover of nurses is **nurse burnout** which can be amplified by low level of staff. The study emphasized **negative workplace culture** that promotes bullying, harassment, and discrimination as one of the major issues that led to an increased rate of attrition of nurses.

The causes of attrition of the nurses in the UK are identified by the findings of the study of Ocean and Meyer, (2023) where the author suggested that **poor work-life balance** is the major contributory factor. The participants said that there was a persistent decrease in enjoyment of their leisure time in comparison with their counterparts. This condition leads to dissatisfaction of the nurses in their profession and results in an increased rate of turnover. In the review on the contributory factors regarding turnover of the nurses in the healthcare settings conducted by Bae, (2023), poor work environment, and health status of the nurses were the major factors of attrition of the nurses. According to the opinion of Senek et al. (2020), continuous feelings of demoralization in healthcare settings elevated the level of job dissatisfaction of the nurses and this factor was augmented by **a lack of support** in the workplace. Other contributory factors that are mentioned in this study as having adverse

impacts on the health and well-being of the nurses are **long work hours, understaffing, work overtime**, and others.

Shortage of staff in the healthcare settings adversely affects the wellbeing of the outcome of the condition resulting in a further increase in nurse turnover. The findings of the study of Nurses (2023), a shortage of staff in the NHS leads to 40000 vacancies in nursing. This condition results in excessive pressure on the remaining staff, deterioration of the mental and physical health of the nurses, nurse burnout, and further attrition. Therefore, it can be stated that persistent attrition of the NHS nurses and the move to the independent sectors led to a huge shortage of nurses in this sector. The consequence of high turnover of nurses therefore paves the way for understaffing, increased work pressure, fatigue, burnout, and job dissatisfaction of the nurses. Nurse turnover not only has an impact on the nurses' well-being, but it also has an impact on the quality of care provided to patients in healthcare settings. This condition increases the societal illness burden, decreases patient satisfaction, and increases mortality. According to the conclusions of the NHS (2023e) research, a higher level of turnover is connected with lower patient care quality and higher hospital expenses. Therefore, in the UK, retention of nurses become a major issue that not only hampers the health and well-being of the nurses and creates an environment to forces them to leave the profession, but also deteriorates the quality of delivered care and keeps the life of the patient at stake and increases financial burden of the healthcare sector in the society (Marufu et al. 2021).

Identification of five existing monetary and non-monetary retention programmes for nurses utilised by the NHS

The finding of the study of NHS (2023a), attrition of the healthcare staff is a major concern in the UK. The National Retention Program focuses on the interventions that support the retention of nurses and ensure the health and well-being of the nurses, patients, and the healthcare system. Some NHS trusts have launched their schemes to improve the retention of nurses in the phase of a critical shortage of nurses and an increased burden of disease in society. One of the monetary existing retention schemes for nurses in the UK is **the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership** (NHS, 2023c). This NHS foundation trust provides incentives to the nurses to stay and deliver services to the people in the north-west. According to the findings of the study, approximately £4500 bonus is delivered to the nurses for joining the mental health services. Along with Band 5 and 6 inpatient mental health nursing, the recruitment and

retention package of Cheshire and Wirral Partnership is applicable for the nurses in health visiting and pharmacy posts. The initial payment that is offered to the nurses who are eligible for the posts is £1500 which is counted as the welcome payment, then £1500 after 12 months, and last £1500 after 2 years. There are some conditions in the schemes that can limit the nurses to resign as it needs full repayment of the value after leaving the organization within 6 months of getting the retention payment and payment of 50% of the retention amount after 6 months.

Another monetary scheme that provides incentives to the nurses enrolled in the inpatient team of older people is the **Leeds and York Partnership**. The study suggests that this NHS foundation trust offers £1000 to the nurses for the purpose of retention of the nurses in the healthcare sector (NHS, 2023b). According to the findings of the study of NHS (2023d), **Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust** supports the band 5 nurse with £1000 annually as the retention payment. The scheme that is provided by the **West London NHS Trust** includes Band 5 nurses recruited as registered mental health nurses, and around £6000 recruitment and retention money is offered to them in addition to £38,720 to £45,769 annually. **Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust** offers retention payments to nurses to improve the healthcare industry in the UK. The scheme pays 10% of the salary of the nurse at 6 months of engagement and another bonus after 2 years of completion. There is term and condition about reclamation of the payment if the nurse resigns within 1 year of getting the retention payment (Nursing Times 2023).

Retention bonuses may improve the financial satisfaction of the nurses; however, psychological and physical satisfaction cannot be majorly influenced by the bonus payment. It sometimes makes the nurses forced to stay at an organization in the fear of repayment. Persistent unhealthy work environment, work pressure, and incapability to maintain the work-life balance increase the burnout of the nurses and turnover. Therefore, a non-monetary retention scheme is also important in this context. **Improving joy at work** can be achieved by electronic self-rostering of the nurses is the focus of the **Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust** (NHS 2023a) to decrease the turnover of the nurses in the ICU. Flexibility in the workforce can enhance the satisfaction of the nurses (Ray and Pana-Cryan 2021). **Working for longer** is another initiative for the nurses to decrease the risk of nurse shortage in the healthcare sector. This is organized by the **University Hospitals of Debry and Burton NHS Foundation Trust**. However, retention of the older staff in the workplace is not only the solution to understaffing, the development of skills and knowledge are required that can help them to cope with the adverse environment and ever-changing technologies.

Workplace Wellbeing Offer is supported by University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust which promotes the health and wellbeing of the nurses via promoting the strategies of coping and accessibility of resources for better health (NHS 2023a). **Nottingham University Hospital NHS Trust** initiates the Talent management strategy and encourages the involvement of the nurses that improve their self-morale (NHS 2023a). Another scheme of **the University Hospital of South Manchester NHS Foundation Trust** helps the Band 5 nurses to discuss career options and movement within the organization that can decrease the rate of turnover of the nurses via promoting internal transfer.

Short-term and long-term recommendations to improve nurse retention

The findings of the study of The Health Foundation (2023), a shortage of nurses is a major factor that leads to a shortage of the NHS workforce. The Health Foundation (2023) provided evidence that in 2021-22, the nurses who reigned for the post of NHS registered nursing opted for other posts in health and social care. It was found that approximately 38% of the nurses opted for a nursing profession that was outside the NHS and adult social care like agencies and charities, private hospitals, and others. Therefore, recommendations are required for the effective retention of nurses in healthcare settings. It is essential to improve the interventions promoted by the **Workplace Wellbeing Offer**, supported by **University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust** to develop the skills of the nurses in coping and self-management and the outcome of the condition is improved work-life balance and satisfaction. Improved accessibility of the nurses to wellness resources is required (Collard et al. 2020). Wellness resources will include discounted or free counselling sessions for the nurses, gym membership for regular physical activities, access to meditation training sessions, and other relaxation techniques that can bring relief on a stressful day.

No doubt, the autonomy of the nurses in self-rostering, and interventions to promote enjoyment in the workplace develop self-morale and satisfaction of the nurses, however, major recommendations are required regarding the implementation of the strategies that can decrease the workload issue in the workplace. Persistent workload in a flexible and friendly environment can hamper the mental and physical health of the nurses and increase dissatisfaction (Diehl et al. 2021). It is the responsibility of the organization to address the issue of workload. There must be sufficient trained support staff like aides and assistants to decrease the work pressure on the nurses. It is the responsibility of the organization to ensure the accessibility and availability of the resources that can help the nurses deliver quality care to the nurses in this critical period. Effective communication channel is useful to promote better engagement of the

nurses in the well-being of the patient and ensure effective collaboration (Mabona et al. 2022). The outcome of the condition will be addressing workload issues and delivery of safe care via active engagement with the members of the healthcare team that leads to satisfaction.

Lack of skills and knowledge of the nurses that are required to deliver evidence-based care to a patient can decrease the self-confidence of the nurses and increase stress and the intention of leaving. Therefore, the arrangement of training sessions is required that can help in continuous professional development of the nurses (Mlambo et al. 2021). Sometimes lack of communication with the higher authority, limits the assessment of the needs of the nurses in the workplace (Alsadaan et al. 2021). Therefore, an active support system is required in the workplace that get the view of concerns of the nurses via regular feedback with the help of meetings, surveys, and discussions. In this context, nurses feel empowered and can actively engage in the betterment of the situation.

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