Original Research Article

The role of work engagement and work meaningfulness on turnover intention of nurses in Rundu, Namibia

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Turnover, in the nursing profession seems to have negative consequences that could jeopardize the mandate of the Ministry of Health to deliver safe and effective care. Globally, the nursing sector is known to have a high turnover intention, resulting in actual turnover. The study investigated the role of work engagement and work meaningfulness on turnover intention of nurses in Rundu, Namibia. A quantitative, correlational research design was used. A convenience sampling technique was used to select the sample, and in the end, n=168 nurses formed the sample of the study. Correlation and regression analysis using SPSS was used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that there is a negative statistically significant relationship between turnover intention and work-engagement (r=-0.173; p=0.026) of nurses in Rundu, Namibia. Findings also revealed that there is no statistically significant relationship between turnover intention and work-meaningfulness (r=-0.126; p=0.103) of nurses in Rundu, Namibia. A positive and statistically significant relationship between work-engagement and work-meaningfulness (r=0.587**; p=<.0001) was confirmed. Additionally, work meaningfulness was statistically found to moderate the relationship between turnover intention and work engagement (F = 43.589; df = 2; P = <.000; R2 = 0.589). Stakeholders concerned (.i.e. Ministry of Health and Social Services in Namibia) should devise strategies to enhance employees' level of engagement and work meaningfulness as engaged employees and those who find meaning in their work will have reduced chances of leaving the profession. The profession is facing a shortage of nurses and efforts should be diverted to reducing turnover intention.

1. Introduction

The health sector is considered important in contributing to a productive and healthy workforce in any country. Funds are reportedly being pumped into the health sector to upgrade and maintain the provision of equitable health services to citizens (Herholdt, 2015). Health and social well-being are considered fundamental pre-requisites to the socio-economic development strategies of any country (Mokoka, Ehlers, & Oosthuizen, 2011).

In a developing country such as Namibia, nurses are known to provide essential health care services to individuals, societies and communities. The services provided by nurses, amongst others, are preventative services, curative services and rehabilitative services (Mokoka et al. 2011). According to Herholdt (2015), nurses are considered to be "frontline" workers, whose key services are essential for meeting societal and national development goals. Nurses, on a daily basis, "need to make life-and-death decisions and many nurses need to deliver negative reports to families" (Herholdt, 2015, p. 5).

Demanding and inflexible working hours, as well as overtime, are synonymous with the job description of nurses (Mokoka et al., 2011). As a result, the nature of nursing work is characterised by high workloads and stress (Levert, Lucas, & Ortlepp, 2000). This is even more critical for public sector hospitals as they need to cope with brain drain and must remain competitive without compromising on quality healthcare (Zweifel, 2016). In the developed world, the health sector is characterised by gross underfunding, yet the sector caters for a high quantity of patients (De Simone, et al., 2018).

Vesgund (2014), identified high turnover as a huge problem among nurses, which inevitably could be detrimental to the delivery of equitable health care in any

country. Nurses turnover is a rapidly-growing human resource problem currently affecting the health sector world-wide (Vesgund, 2014). De Simone et al. (2018) declares that the turnover in the profession is worrying. The rate of turnover among nurses across the world is considered high, ranking from 4%-68% (De Simone et al., 2018). This shortage could inevitably pose a threat to the delivery of health services across the globe.

Work engagement and meaningfulness are factors internal to an employee and could, at individual level play a huge role in reducing turnover intentions, which if high, might result in actual turnover. The ideal situation is to have nurses who are engaged and who find meaning in their work, in efforts to curb turnover intention among nurses. The study, sought to contribute to the already limited literature on turnover amongst health care professionals, with specific reference to Namibia.

1.1 Definition of key terms
1.1.1 Turnover intention

According to Sousa-Poza & Henneberger, (2004), turnover intention refers to an intent, by the individual employee to change his or her job. Literature asserts that turnover intention is a prerequisite for turnover (Sousa-Poza & Henneberger, 2004). Kitura (2015) defines turnover to be the rate at which an employer gains and loses employees. This in turn implies the percentage of employees who within a particular period of time opt to leave the company or business for other companies. When employees leave, the company is forced to replace them with new employees which could present additional costs to the organisation and thus cripple the organisation's production (Tracey & Hinkin, 2008). The additional costs include the cost for hiring new employees, training them, their bonus packages and managing the role when it is not yet filled.

1.1.2 Work engagement

Kahn (1990, p. 694) defines work engagement as "the harnessing of organisational members to their work roles, where the organisation's members employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance ". The nature of nursing work is demanding and exhaustive. It could therefore, be argued that nurses who are engaged in their work will opt to remain in work, rather than have intentions to leave (turnover intention) or leave (turnover).

1.1.3 Work meaningfulness
Work meaningfulness refers to the experience of positive emotion at work, and refers to the feeling of self-worth accompanied by self-fulfilment and experiencing contentment in what one does (Morrison, Burke, & Greene, 2007). When an employee experiences meaning in their work, they tend to feel more valuable and fulfilled by the values and purposes at work (Morrison et al., 2007; Pattakos, 2004; Lee, 2015). Thus, meaning spell out why work is important to employees in relation to how they feel, thrive and still remain intact with authenticity (Rothmann & Hamukang'andu, 2013). It could therefore be argued that employees who find their work meaningful, will rather opt to stay than have intent to leave (turnover intention) or leave their work (turnover).

1.2 The relationship between work engagement and turnover intention

Research by Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006); Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) reveals that employees who possess high level engagement are less likely to leave the organisation in comparison to those with low levels of engagement. Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, (2002); Robyn & Du Preez, (2013) argue that engaged workers are reported to be more committed to their organisations and thus less likely to feel the need to leave the organisation in search of other employment opportunities.

Smola and Sutton (2002), suggests that in order to lower the levels of turnover intention, employers have to increase employee engagement, which will consequently weaken the feeling of intention to quit. In addition, Mangi and Jalbani (2013) in their study of occupational psychology in higher educational institutions found that work engagement is significantly and negatively related to turnover intention. Based on the aforementioned literature discussions, it is hypothesised that turnover intention has a negative relationship with work engagement.

1.3 The relationship between work meaningfulness and turnover intention

Rothmann and Hamukang'andu (2013) in their study of callings, work role fit, psychological meaningfulness and work engagement among teachers, explain that employee's sense of work meaningfulness is driven by how they feel about their production (output) after spending their time and effort on a task (input). This could be attributed to being intrinsically motivated. Intrinsically motivated employees are said to have less intentions of leaving their organization (Cho & Lewis, 2012; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Wright and Bonett (1992) conducted a study on the effect of turnover intention on work satisfaction and mental health among social welfare employees and confirmed that employees who found their work meaningful had less

turnover intentions. In addition, Steger, Dik and Duffy (2012) confirmed that there is a relationship between work meaningfulness and turnover intention, which implies that a high turnover intention, will negatively tax on employees' level of meaningfulness in their work role and will eventually lead to turnover (Scroggins, 2015).

Based on the aforementioned literature discussions, it is hypothesised that work meaningfulness has a negative relationship with turnover intention.

1.4 The relationship between work engagement and work meaningfulness

May, Gilson and Harter (2004) in their study on work meaningfulness and engagement found that there is a significant positive relationship between the two constructs. Kock (2010) identified seven key drivers of employee engagement (i.e. meaningfulness, resourcefulness, self-awareness, teamwork and co-workers, organization connectivity, job identity and supervisor relations), of which meaningfulness was the most significant. Several other research studies (Van der Westhuizen, 2014 ; Vuori, San & Kira, 2012; May et al.2004), show consensus on the fact that when an employee perceives his/her work as meaningful he or she remains engaged and vice versa. These authors conclude that there is a positive relationship between work meaningfulness and work engagement. Based on the aforementioned, it is hypothesised that work meaningfulness has a positive relationship with work engagement.

Using the Social Exchange Theory (SET) as a theoretical framework, Redmond (2015) explains that social behaviour involves social exchanges, through which people get motivated to attain a reward. When rewards are greater than the costs, people are most likely to be motivated to engage in certain actions. Where there is no balance in the exchange relationship, there is no interest in performing a certain act. Consequently, if risks weigh more than benefits the social relationships are terminated and if the benefits weigh more than risks the social relationships are kept intact and they are reinforced (Redmond, 2015).

Linking this theory to turnover intention among nurses, it could be argued that nurses who are beneficial to the organisation because of their skills and knowledge, and who in turn also enjoy the benefits they get from the organisation tend to stay and their desire to continue to work for the organisation is reinforced accordingly. These nurses tend to stay in the organisation for longer, primarily because behaviour is fostered by how the organisation takes care of them and in turn, how the organisation benefits from them. The nurses who seem to not perform well by effectively delivering their knowledge and skills, it is

likely that the organisation will neglect them, thus creating more reason for employees to have turnover intention and turnover.

2. Research Methodology

The relationships between turnover intention and work engagement; turnover intention and work meaningfulness have been studied widely in several other work sectors. To study the three constructs among nurses, the following hypothesis were formulated:

H_1: Work engagement has a negative relationship with turnover intention among nurses in Rundu, Namibia.

H_2 Work meaningfulness has a negative relationship with turnover intention among nurses in Rundu, Namibia.

H_3 Work engagement has a positive relationship with work meaningfulness among nurses in Rundu, Namibia.

H_4 Work meaningfulness acts as a moderator in the relationship between work engagement and turnover intention among nurses in Rundu, Namibia.

A cross sectional correlation survey design was used, employing a questionnaire to collect data on the biographical details of employees, turnover intention, work meaningfulness and work engagement. A survey battery consisting of the biographical, turnover intention, work meaningfulness and work engagement questionnaires was administered to the participants. The participants were from the hospitals and clinics spread out in Rundu, Namibia. Through the use of convenience sampling, a total of n=168 nurses participated in the study, although 250 questionnaires were distributed. Nurses participated voluntarily and had the choice to opt out of the study at any point during the research process, without any negative consequences.

The Turnover Intention Scale developed by Sjoberg and Sverke (2000) was used to measure intention to leave work. The items were measured on a 5point Likert scale with 1 representing 'never' and 5 'always'. An example of an item is "To what extent is your current job satisfying your personal needs". The Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.831, indicating acceptable reliability.

The Employee Engagement Scale developed by May et al. (2004) was used. A sample item is "I exert a lot of energy performing my job". A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree". The Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.90, also indicating acceptable reliability.

The Work and Meaning Inventory by Steger et al. (2012) was used to measure work meaningfulness. The

scale has five items that are measured on a 5-point Likert scale. An example of the item is, "I know my work makes a positive difference in the world". The measurement properties of the scale was assessed using item analysis with the use of SPSS version 23. The Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.70, which shows the scale is reliable for use in the Namibian context.

3. Results

The following socio-demographic data were collected: age, gender, qualification and number of years worked. A total of (52%, n= 87) are female respondents, while male respondents comprised 48% of the study sample (n = 80). The majority of the respondents (39%, n = 65)

are in the age group 20-30 years, while 33% (n=55) are between the ages of 31 – 40 years. Ages 41-50 years contain n=40 respondents (24%) and ages 51-60 years has n=5 people in total which is (3%). The age category of 61+ years has no respondents. The majority of employees (41%; n=69) had work experience that ranged from 1-5 years, 35% (n=59) and from 6-10 years, 17.2% (n=29) had work experience that ranged from 11-15 years, 4.6% (n=6) had work experience that ranged from 16-20 years.

From the Table 1, it can be observed that Turnover intention (SD=4.3; mean=17.28); work engagement (SD= 6.58 mean=17.58); work meaningfulness (SD= 3.12 mean= 8.15).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Turnover Intention	17.2798	4.27067	168
Work Engagement	17.5868	6.58242	168
Work meaningfulness	8.1548	3.12032	168

Table 2: Correlation

		Turnover	Work engagement	Work meaningfulness
Turnover	Pearson Correlation	1	-.173*	-.126
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.026	.103
	N	168	167	168
Work engagement	Pearson Correlation	-.173*	1	.587**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026		.000
	N	167	167	167
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).				
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

As shown in Table 2, Pearson correlation coefficient found that turnover intention negatively and significantly correlated to work engagement (r=-0.173; p=0.026); there is a negative relationship between turnover intention and work meaningfulness (r=-0.126; p=0.103); work engagement is significantly and

positively related to work meaningfulness (r=0.587**; p=<.0000). The linear regression model (Table 3) yielded a significant level of F statistics (F = 43.589; df = 2; P = <.000). Table 2 shows, that the overall R^2 is 0.589, revealing that the resultant model can explain 58.9% of the variation on dependent variable

Table 3 Coefficients[a]

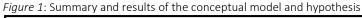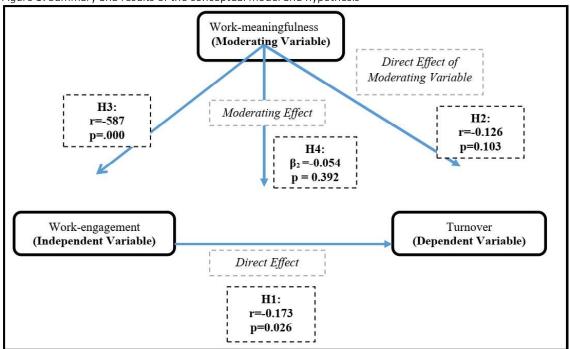| Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.173	.196		41.639	.000
	Z-score(work-engagement)	1.846	.198	.592	9.337	.000
	Z-score(turnover)	-.169	.198	-.054	-.858	.392

4. Discussion

Firstly, the results indicates that there is a significant negative relationship between turnover intention and work engagement among nurses at Rundu, Namibia (r=-0.173; p=0.026). These results concur with Juhdi, Pa'wan and Hansaram (2013) who found that work engagement is a significant predictor of turnover intention, such that when work engagement is high, it significantly impacts the degree and extent to which

employees experience turnover intention. In addition, Robyn and Du Preez (2013) indicated that engaged employees are more committed to their organizations and are less likely to leave their organizations. Lastly, de Lange et al. (2008) and Harter et al. (2002) found that turnover is a result of unengaged employees. As a result, H1 is supported in the present study.

Secondly, the results of the study showed that there is a negative relationship between turnover and work meaningfulness (r=-0.126; p=0.103). Findings by

Rothmann and Hamukangandu (2013) reveal that employees who find meaning in their work are less likely to think about quitting their jobs. H2 is supported for the present study.

Thirdly, the results of the study showed that there is a positive significant relationship between work meaningfulness and work engagement amongst nurses at Rundu, Namibia. Based on this research finding, it could be concluded that high work meaningfulness is associated with a high level of work engagement and vice-versa (r=0.587**; p=<.0001). Both work meaningfulness and work engagement have a significant influence on the model (β1 = 0.592; p = <.000 and β2 = -0.054; p = 0.392 respectively). The

finding corroborates with May et al. (2004), who found that work meaningfulness affects the degree to which employees are engaged and vice-versa. This resonates with findings by Rothmann and Hamukangandu (2013), Hackman and Oldham (1976); Cho and Lewis (2012) who found that engaged employees experience their work as meaningful. As a result, hypothesis 3 of the study is supported.

Lastly, the results showed that work meaningfulness is a significant moderator of work engagement and turnover among nurses in Rundu, Namibia. Even though no research findings could corroborate with the findings of the present study, hypothesis 4 was supported for the present study.

Figure 1: Summary and results of the conceptual model and hypothesis

As shown in Figure 1 above, the findings of the study suggests that the relationship between work engagement and work meaningfulness can be used as basis for intervention development tailored to enhancing work engagement or work meaningfulness. Literature argues on the importance of having employees who have meaning at work and who are engaged. Even though the hypothesised relationship between turnover intention and work engagement; turnover intention with work meaningfulness was not found to be statistically significant, we can argue from literature that work meaningfulness and work engagement inevitably produces work outcomes that will want to make employees stay rather than leave the organisation. By focusing on nurses' work engagement

and work meaningfulness, turnover intention and actual turnover can possibly be reduced.

The findings of the study suggest that organisations should work on fostering work meaningfulness in their employees because employees with high work meaningfulness are more likely to be engaged, committed and be content with their work (Geldenhuys, Laba & Venter, 2014).

5. Recommendations

Firstly, management should make sure that employees have a good working environment that allows nurses to execute work duties without strain. As such, employees should be afforded opportunities where they are vested with the autonomy they need to

complete their tasks, give employees decision making power, promote work-life balance and provide financial security. Employees who feel taken care of, reciprocate with engagement in their work (de Lange, De Witte & Notelaers, 2008).

It is important that in a work setting such as hospitals, that nurses are reminded of the crucial role they play in any society. This could be done through pamphlets, appreciation workshops etc., to instil meaning in their work and to further motivate them to give their best. It is easy, to get swamped with work, that you forget the value of the work you do.

Fourth, it is vital that nurse's cry for reduced working hours, reduced working load, increased salaries and better working conditions are not only taken note of but becomes implemented. This will show, to nurses, that it is not only the work they do that is seen as important, but also that they are regarded and treated as an extremely important profession.

As such, the creation of meaning and engagement in the nursing profession is reliant on the continuous needs assessments conducted, in efforts to investigate how employees feel as far as their work is concerned, and what they consider meaningful aspects of their work for continuous improvements to ensure that they remain engaged and have meaning in their work.

6. Conclusion

The constructs of meaning at work and work engagement are vital for functioning of employees in any sector. The techniques employed to enhance employees meaning and engagement will be different, depending on the nature of work. In the Namibian context, more factors, that influence turnover intention and turnover of nurses, exist and should be investigated to allow for holistic understanding.

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