

Turnover & Retention among Nurses employed by the Health Service Executive

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ABSTRACT

In 2008, the global financial crisis started to show its effects and Ireland declined into recession. Growth fell, unemployment rose, the highly inflated property market collapsed and mass emigration began.

It certainly is not breaking news that the health sector is plagued by a critical shortage of nurses. The need for first-class recruitment and retention strategies will not disappear when this current shortages crisis subsides. Management will always need to actively recruit and retain nurses in order for hospitals and health care professions to survive and thrive.

In an attempt to investigate turnover and retention of nurses employed by the HSE, research was carried out in the form of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, to understand the factors that affect turnover and retention.

Data obtained from questionnaires and the responses from interviews were used in conjunction with the literature available to understand the factors that are important when making a decision to stay or leave an employment. The relationship the organisation had with its patients was the most influential factor while the public reputation of the organisation was the least influential.

The author of this study then used the information gathered to provide recommendations on developing a retention strategy to curb employee turnover.

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Finally, to my long suffering family, for the years of encouragement and support, I thank you from the bottom of my heart This dissertation is dedicated to you

DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the information contained in this (my submission) is information pertaining to research conducted for this report. All information other than my own contribution will be fully referenced and listed in the relevant bibliography section at the rear of the dissertation. The research conducted was at all times ethical and the confidentiality promised to questionnaire and interview participants is displayed.

Signed *Marian Cullen*

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1 1 Background and Context of Study

In 2008, the global financial crisis started to show its effects and Ireland declined into recession. Growth fell, unemployment rose, the highly inflated property market collapsed and mass emigration began. The Central Statistics Office has estimated that 262,100 people have emigrated from Ireland between the years 2007 and 2011 (CSO, 2012). The recession has had a profound effect on the labour and the management of human resources (Roche, Teague, Coughlan & Fahy, 2011). The Government announced an embargo on recruitment as a cost cutting measure. This particularly affected the Irish Public Health Care Sector, the Health Service Executive (HSE).

1 2 The Health Service Executive (HSE)

The Health Service Executive is a large organisation of over 100,000 people, 65,000 of which are directly employed by the organisation and 35,000 who are employed by agencies that are funded by the HSE. These 100,000 employees deliver all of the public health services in Ireland. The HSE manages services through a structure designed to put patients and clients at the centre of the organisation (HSE, 2011).

The Health Service Executive Employee Handbook states “The organisation is changing rapidly with the emphasis on a client/patient centred approach. This will require a strong focus on teamwork and particularly, interdisciplinary work” (HSE, 2011).

1 3 Implications of Employee Turnover on the Service

The HSE are currently experiencing severe staff shortages due to the enforced recruitment ban and ineffective turnover and retention. On the 17th November, 2011, the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) expressed grave concern at the failure of the government to protect further reductions of nursing roles in the next 3 years (INMO, 2011). The health service has already lost 3,100 nursing posts, in an uncontrolled and unmanaged way, which has, and is, resulting in patient care being compromised and frontline services being curtailed and/or closed (INMO, 2011).

In 2010, it was reported that the HSE tendered for a recruitment agency to hire expensive agency staff - even though 1,600 nursing graduates are being forced to look abroad to find work. Despite the nursing graduates having already cost the taxpayer €145million to train, most were looking to emigrate to Britain, Canada and Australia because they are unable to find a hospital job here. The situation was a result of a recruitment ban already forced on hospitals. This meant many are unable to offer the nurses jobs, but can hire expensive agency workers to fill the workforce shortfall (Vousden, 2010).

1 4 Employee Retention

The ineffective turnover and retention of nurses in the HSE is compromising the future health services of the country. However, recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of nurses now would halt any deterioration in services (Price, 2002). A rapidly aging workforce and equally aging population have exacerbated nursing shortages in developed countries. Leurer et al (2007) state that there is growing evidence that the predictors of job satisfaction, organisational commitment and level of engagement differ

according to the number of years in the profession (Leurer, et al, 2007, pp 309) Many services are delivered by temporary staff, or low-paid staff on short-term contracts Examples include home helps, some hospital nurses, some social workers, and others Second, many frontline staff grades are young, and so have higher staff turnover for social reasons (Staines, 2010) This practices as shown no sign of decreasing As recent as August, it was reported that the HSE now faces a bill of €176 million for agency staff Due to the ever increasing cost of utilising agency staff the HSE has announced the use of all agency staff is to stop from December 1, 2012 The equivalent of around 75 nursing jobs will be cut as a result of the cuts, unions warned (Deegan & O'Reagan, 2012)

1 5 The Research Problem

Turnover and retention are two key measures that need to be analysed and forecasted for in any Human Resource planning activity It certainly is not breaking news that the health sector is plagued by a critical shortage of nurses The need for first-class recruitment and retention strategies will not disappear when this current shortages crisis subsides Management will always need to actively recruit and retain nurses in order for hospitals and health care professions to survive and thrive A commitment to both short-term and long-term strategies must become an essential part of every organisation's culture (Gothburg, 2000) Turnover amongst nurses is a critical issue as nurse shortages throughout the Western World are putting a strain on health systems (North, et al , 2005) The goal of this research is to examine the factors attributing to the turnover and retention of nurses employed by the HSE It aims to investigate these factors with the intention of providing recommendations to augment the current retention strategy

1.6 The Structure of the Study

This dissertation encompasses six chapters. Chapter One includes the introduction, the background and context of the study, the organisation where the research was undertaken and the research problem. Contained in Chapter Two is the Literature Review, this primarily focuses on the theoretical aspects relating to employee turnover and retention. Chapter Three describes the Research Methodology utilised and completed. The Findings of the research are displayed in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, the findings of the research are discussed focusing on the factors related to turnover and retention highlighted in the literature review. Finally, Chapter Six contains recommendations and conclusions drawn from the research. These recommendations are for an augmented retention strategy throughout the organisation and are determined from the research undertaken. It is hoped that these recommendations if implemented will influence nurses to stay in the employ of the organisation, curbing the turnover rate and increasing retention.

Ultimately it is hoped that this study will provide insight to management in understanding the factors that contribute to making a decision to stay or leave an employment.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2 1 Introduction

A critical literature review is a detailed and justified analysis and commentary of the merits and fault of the literature within a chosen area, which demonstrates familiarity with what is already known about a research topic (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007, p 595)

2 2 Employee Turnover

Historically, turnover rates in nursing have been high (McCarthy, et al, 2003) Armstrong (2009) defines employee turnover as the rate in which people leave an organisation Turnover can be disruptive and costly (Armstrong, 2009, p 497) The general definition of employee turnover is the cessation of membership in an organization by an individual who received monetary compensation from the organization (Mobley, 1982)

Taylor (2002) suggests finding out why people are leaving before putting in place measures to improve the employee retention record Individuals may choose to resign their jobs for many different reasons, but there is a tendency for some to be more significant than others The fewer reasons employees are given to feel dissatisfied, insecure or uncommitted, the less likelihood there is that they will even consider handing in their notices (Taylor, 2002, p 60)

Another key variable is the extent of attractive job opportunities The greater the numbers of these there are available to staff the more likely they will be take them up (Taylor, 2002, p 60) In light of these factors it is useful for managers who seek to

increase retention rates to take the time and trouble to understand the real drivers of turnover in different parts of their organisations. Only then can effective targeted intervention can be developed that stand the best chance of success (Taylor, 2002, p 60). The turnover of key employees can have a negative impact on the business. The people the organisations wish to retain are usually the ones mostly likely to leave (Armstrong, 2009, p 503). Trying to ensure that the best (most effective) people work for them is a key concern for organisations today, since the ability to attract, hire, retain and develop the most capable individuals is probably the single most determinant of an organisation's strategic effectiveness (Gunnigle, et al , 2011, p 101)

2.3 The Cost of Turnover

Nurse turnover is a recurring problem for the public health care sector. Nurse retention focuses on preventing nurse turnover and keeping nurses in an organisation's employment. However, decisions about nurse turnover and retention are often made without the support of full and complete knowledge of their associated costs and benefits. The definition of nurse turnover costs (and benefits) can be especially problematic (Jones & Gates, 2007). The costs of poor retention are made up of direct and indirect costs. These can include the cost of recruitment advertising, the time taken by the human resources staff, the selection process and the induction/training of the new employee (Torrington, Hall, Taylor & Atkinson, 2011)

A study of district health boards in New Zealand determined that the cost of turnover also included Separation costs. These are the costs associated with processing a nurse's separation from the organisation (North, et al , 2005). Costs may vary depending on the nurse's age, experience and level of specialism. The cost of finding a replacement also

takes into account the nurse's specialism, as some specialist nurses can be hard to source. In the case of a nurse leaving the employment of the HSE, the costs would revolve around replacing the employee such as human resources expenses for advertising and interviewing, increased use of travelling nurses, overtime, and temporary replacement costs for per diem nurses, lost productivity and terminal payouts (Atencio, et al , 2003). American studies have estimated the costs per nurse turnover from around about \$22,000 to over \$64,000 (Jones & Gates, 2007).

The study in New Zealand by North (2005) highlighted the fact that there was no standard method of determining turnover costs as they varied across the different district health boards. Some health boards include both direct and indirect costs while another had only included direct costs. Determining the real costs of turnover within an organisation can help that organisation in making strategic decisions regarding workforce planning and thereby improving retention rates (North, et al , 2005).

Costing turnover each year allows organisations to state with some confidence how much money is being saved as a result of ongoing staff turnover reduction programmes. It can also be used as a method of persuading finance directors within an organisation to invest in retention incentives (Torrington, et al , 2011).

2.4 Reasons for Resignation

There is a considerable body of research on the reasons for turnover (North, et al , 2005). Employees resign for many different reasons. Sometimes it is the attraction of a new job or the prospect of a period outside the workforce which 'pulls' them. On other occasions they are 'pushed' (due to dissatisfaction in their present jobs) to seek alternative employment. It can also be as a result of both 'pull' and 'push' factors.

(CIPD, 2008) Departures take different forms and occur in different patterns according to prevailing organisational circumstances, much depending on culture, management orientation and competitive position (Taylor, 2002, p 60) The predominant reasons are issues with pay, job satisfaction, autonomy, work schedules and stress (North, et al , 2005) Nursing turnover matches the 'push-pull' model, where a combination of factors contributes to a high level of turnover (North, et al , 2005) Retention strategies should be based on an understanding of the factors that affect whether or not employees leave or stay (Armstrong, 2009, p 503)

2.5 Factors Affecting Turnover and Retention

Factors affecting retention include company image/reputation, recruitment, selection and deployment, leadership, learning opportunities and performance recognition rewards (Armstrong, 2009, p 503)

Gothburg (2000) identified that the number of factors that influence staff retention are overwhelming. In several surveys, the nurses work environment (including compensation, long hours, shift changes, increased workload, not being involved in the decision-making process, and job stress) is identified as the primary problem related to retaining nursing staff. Nurses merely want a workplace where they are valued by the organisation, feel supported, and feel good about the care they give their patients (Gothburg, 2000)

Years of downsizing and the effects of cost cutting measures during this financial crisis are making the nursing profession eager to retire and change jobs more than ever (Johnson, 2001). A report published in 2004 on the factors affecting turnover and retention of health care professionals in the United Kingdom found that a lack of

appreciation and the preconception of not being valued are key factors in the decision to stay or leave an employment (Shen, Cox, McBride, 2004) While this article was not on nurses in particular, it highlighted the factors affecting midwives and consultants in the health service in the United Kingdom (NHS) Some comparisons can be made with the health service in Ireland (HSE) and factors influencing retention in similar occupations in the health care profession The report also determined additional factors such as working hours, workload and work schedules (Shen, et al , 2004) These factors cause concern for most occupations in the health care profession

An article by Atencio, Cohen and Gorenburg (2003) determined that a major theme in the literature implies that the social climate of a workplace can be an initiator of a nurse's intent to stay or leave an employment (Atencio, Cohen & Gorenburg, 2003) Factors such as work frustration (negative influence) and work excitement (positive influence) directly influence job stress leading to job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction (Atencio, et al , 2003) Job satisfaction and or dissatisfaction is the strongest predictor of intention to stay or leave a job (Atencio, et al , 2003)

A 1998 report detailing research carried out in the US determined that the principle reasons nurses change jobs could be grouped into four categories The authors of this study described these four categories as salary or benefits, convenience, work schedule, and job related stress Cangelosi et al (1998) recommended that hospital administrators and management should introduce motivational and hospital commitment programs to reduce turnover and improve retention (Cangelosi, et al , 1998)

2 6 Commitment

The commitment of a nurse to an organisation is also a factor that affects turnover and retention. Building commitment among nurses would lead to an improvement in retention. Research on organisational commitment determined that it is related to four aspects, commitment to the organisation, to top management, to immediate supervisors and to work groups (McCabe & Garavan, 2008). Factors influencing commitment among nurses are notable and are essential in order to build commitment. McCabe and Garavan (2008) examined commitment among the nursing profession and found that the following factors influenced commitment. Shared values was the first factor identified. This factor encompassed vocational and patient care. A high level of commitment is needed within the nursing profession. However, high levels of stress, low pay, poor terms and conditions of employment and increasing physical and emotional demanding nature of the role can hinder commitment (McCabe & Garavan, 2008).

2 7 Management Support

The next factor explored involved leadership, teamwork and support. Research conducted by McCabe and Garavan (2008) found that a visible and credible support from management motivated and increased the commitment of nursing staff. They were prepared to work harder and do more for 'good leaders'. The biggest variable for this factor was the support from line management (McCabe & Garavan, 2008). Nurses often speak of their need for support from management. This need was observed in research undertaken with experienced registered nurses. Most of the participants had worked as nurses for at least a decade and had seen restructuring of the health care systems. Many of these participants called for a return to a management structure that included more

front line managers capable of making changes that would better meet the needs of staff (Leurer et al, 2007, pp 312)

2 8 Training and Development

Training, development and career progression was also a factor highlighted. Nurses are professionally obliged to set aside time for professional training and development. This obligation is necessary for nurses to continuously update their working practices. However, aspects of this factor were hindered when nurses found it difficult in getting time off to study (McCabe & Garavan, 2008)

2 9 Recognition

Nurses felt more committed when they were recognised and valued in their role in delivering health care. McCabe and Garavan (2005) identified this factor as value and staff recognition. Nurses felt they were undervalued and that there was a bias towards giving negative feedback to nurses. Nurses involved in the research also highlighted the fact that they viewed their pay as inadequate at its current level. If a two-way communication was put in place nurses would feel that the organisation was committed to them and in turn the nurses would feel committed to the organisation (McCabe & Garavan, 2008). Nurses possess a strong yearning to receive recognition for their efforts from those higher in the organisation. Leurer et al (2007) determined that although nurses felt appreciated by patients and their families for their work efforts, there is a perception that employers lack gratitude for their efforts. Nurses desired only small symbolic tokens or gestures of appreciation (Leurer et al, 2007, pp 311)

2 10 Consultation and Communication

Professional, organisational commitment and involvement was a factor examined in McCabe and Garavan's research. This factor was linked with value recognition as the nurses felt that a two-way communication would result in a greater support for management initiatives as at the moment the nurses felt that the current system held them accountable without giving them any sense of control (McCabe & Garavan, 2008). This factor was also highlighted in research conducted by Leurer et al (2007) among nurses in Canada. Consultation and communication with nurses was a major theme determined by the research. Participants expressed a desire for improved consultation with nurses regarding changes to the health care system, combined with improved communication regarding such changes. Participants also felt that advice offered from front-line nurses was not incorporated into change plans (Leurer et al, 2007, pp 311).

2 11 Resource Management and Staffing Levels

Resource management and quality care was the final factor demonstrated by the research. The respondents felt that the current managerial aims and objectives were not realistic in contrast to resources available to the organisation. Lack of sufficient resources affected the quality of care delivered, the level of qualified staff, training and development resources and pay and terms and conditions of employment. As a result of this practice nurses felt that management was exploiting them and that they were less understanding and flexible when interacting with their staff (McCabe & Garavan, 2008). Participants in nursing research often describe heavy workloads as a factor in a decision to stay or leave an employment. They generally credit this to a higher client nurse ratio and there is a strong sentiment that staffing levels would have to be improve

in order to keep older nurses in the system (Leurer et al, 2007) The literature suggests that a greater visible and credible involvement for nurses in the delivery of health and meeting the organisation's objectives would greatly help to enhance commitment throughout the nursing profession

2 12 Aging Workforce and Next Generation Nurses

A study undertaken in Canada determined three main strategies to address nursing shortages. As Canada and Ireland are both developed countries, comparisons can be drawn. The three main strategies recommended by the researchers include, increasing the amount of new recruits to the nursing profession, retaining Registered Nurses (RNs) currently employed in nursing, and attracting RN's who have left the profession back into nursing employment (Leurer, Donnelly & Domm, 2007, pp 307)

Few researchers have examined the relationship between the nursing work environment and the psychological well-being of this new generation of nurses, in particular at the start of their careers. For new nurses in particular, poorly managed student to nurse transitions can be costly for the recruiting institutions when employees leave initial jobs to search for work environments more closely aligned with their values and aspirations and indeed less stress levels (Lavoie-Tremblay, Wright, Desforages, Gelinat, Marchionni, Drevniok, 2008)

2 13 Stress associated with the Nursing Profession

A study conducted in Northern Ireland found that stress was very costly to an organisation and was prevalent among the nursing profession. It can result in sickness, absence, premature death and retirement. Stress is a global problem and affects many

professions. The findings found that stress was derived from the following categories: job content, resources issues, professional concerns, professional working concerns and extrinsic factors (Murphy, 2004).

The study found many themes and sub-themes as a result of its research. The first theme identified was job content. This contained job experience, shift patterns, workload, job satisfaction and role content. Every nurse had a different experience on the job and the majority had an issue with shift patterns. Not surprisingly, nearly all of the nurses emphasised that their wards were very busy. Of the nurses interviewed, two addressed the matters of job satisfaction and role conflict. They stated that a high level of autonomy was associated with job satisfaction and that nurses with more than one role within the organisation felt that it took away from their level of patient care (Murphy, 2004).

The second theme that emerged from Murphy's (2004) study was resource issues. This theme involved time management, understaffing and work environment. Nearly all of the nurses interviewed stated that time constraints enforced on them put them under pressure at work. The issue of understaffing caused a lot of stress as it meant that there was a reduced cover on the wards during breaks. The majority of nurses believed that the work environment caused a lot of stress and that it affected their health (Murphy, 2004).

Professional concern was the third theme identified. This involved the following sub-themes: standards of care, education and opportunities for staff development, abuse by patients, orienting new qualified nurses and death and dying. The time constraints and heavy workloads put on nurses, leads them to believe that they do not deliver the

standard of care they would like. They believe they are too busy to talk to their patients to quell any insecurity they may have. A lack of education is a vital issue for less experienced staff as they lack the knowledge to deal with some patients. The likelihood of abuse is a high stressor for nurses, seventy percent of the nurses interviewed had already been verbally abused while at work. Anxiety experienced by new qualified staff and taking care of dying patients causes stress for many nurses (Murphy, 2004).

Professional working relationships resulted in the fourth theme. This theme encompassed relationships with colleagues and management and communication. Responses concerning the relationships with colleagues and management were both positive and negative and the communication was identified as frustration when it was poorly operated (Murphy, 2004). The nurse/physician relationship has been seen as a source of job-related stress and anxiety for nurses. Nurses receive directions from many sources but it is the expectations of the physician that are the most demanding. Many nurses feel they must prove themselves to physicians on a daily basis, creating a challenge that is often a primary source of stress (Cangelosi, Markham & Bounds, 1998, pp 33).

The last theme identified was extrinsic factors. This involved political factors and personal concerns. This study was conducted in Northern Ireland, where civil unrest can cause problems for both nurses and patients going to and from the hospital. Personal concerns for the nurses included family life and work life balance. Many found working, studying and child rearing to be very stressful (Murphy, 2004). Although stress can never be fully eradicated from the workplace, it is possible to decrease the amount or even the level of stress for nurses.

2.14 Retention and Management

Most organisations either fail altogether to record the reasons people leave or do so in such an unsophisticated way as to provide little by way of a useful platform in which to build robust employee-retention practices. The typical approach involves managers' talking briefly and formally to their departing staff to confirm the reason for leaving and to ask the identity of their new employer. These are commonly referred to as 'exit interviews' (Taylor, 2002, p. 61). An exit interview is a way that organisations can stem unwanted turnover; the organisations can gather feedback from departing employees. The data compiled can determine what is good about an organisation and what areas need to be improved. However, all too often time is not found to conduct the interview or it is forgotten (Taylor, 2002, p. 61).

A report by Rankin (2008) determined that many employers do not attempt to manage staff retention. After expending considerable time, effort and money on hiring the best staff, they often leave it to chance whether or not recruits stay with them over the long term. Employees, who leave, take with them the knowledge, skills and attitudes that recruiters originally wanted to obtain for their organisations, together with the experience they have developed during their time with the employer (Rankin, 2008, p. 2).

Despite the potential loss of valuable employees, many employers do not attempt to actively manage staff retention. In fact, many organisations cannot manage retention in the method they wished to do so, because they lack the basic information to do so. From Rankin's (2008) research he concluded that managers do not take action until they are already suffering from poor retention rates. This means that it is likely that damage has

already been suffered by an organisation Rankin (2008) highlights that, there is growing evidence of the links between employee retention and employee engagement, and, in turn, between engagement and profitability, performance and customer service (Rankin, 2008, p 11)

Nursing turnover can have a negative social impact on the organisation It can disrupt cohesiveness and lead to additional turnover (North, et al , 2005) Effectively managing retention could dramatically reduce turnover

For management to realise the potential of retaining employees, management development and learning opportunities must be put in place Within the health care sector this involves healthcare professionals, in particular nurses Human Resource Development officials must also consider informal learning opportunities, such as in-house training, and formal initiatives such as management development programmes (Sambrook, 2007)

It is difficult to gain the interest of HR specialists and line management in staff retention at the best of times Economic downturns, such as the present one, make this a daunting task (Rankin, 2008, p 1)

2.15 Models of Turnover and Retention

Over the years there have been thousands of research articles exploring the various aspects of turnover. Consequently, several models of employee turnover have been promulgated.

Models of Turnover

William Mobley's Intermediate Linkages Model

Researchers specialising in the study of employee turnover have long debated the nature of the multi-staged decision-making process which precedes the final decision to quit. One of the most influential approaches has been that of William Mobley (1977). Mobley's was the first academic work undertaken in the modern business environment. His model includes both pull and push factors. The negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover had been well established. His view suggested that in most cases dissatisfaction occurs first and that this precipitates the search for a new job (Taylor, 2002). This model focuses on turnover as a process and questions the role of satisfaction as the immediate precursor of turnover (Mobley, 1982).

Porter and Steers Met Expectation Model

Motivation at work has been the focus of continuous attention since the emergence of industrial society (Gunnigle et al, 2011). Porter and Steers (1973) proposed the "meet expectations" model, which asserts that not meeting initial expectations of an employee will result in dissatisfaction and subsequently, turnover. This model formed the basis of realistic job previews, which are widely used by employers to give potential employees a balanced picture of their future job roles. Following Porter's and Steers' model, the

relationship between met expectations and intentions to remain would be reconciled by work satisfaction (Capon, Chernyshenko & Stark, 2004) Measuring job motivation, involvement and commitment can be very problematic in terms of theory The major problem lies in whether people dissimulating their answers or not being able to report on their motivational patterns accurately Motivation is complex and many workers are unable to articulate what features of their job are motivating or not (Furnham, 1997 in Gunnigle et al, 2011)

Models of Retention

As with turnover, many models have proposed the link between motivation and a high level of retention

Adam's Equity Theory of Motivation

Equity theory focuses on individuals' comparisons of their circumstances to those of others Equity theory takes three elements into consideration, inputs (age, experience, education), Outcomes (salary, benefits, titles, perks), and ratios of an individual's input/outcome versus that ratio of another person or people If the ratio of outcomes to inputs is equal to the ratio of other's outcomes to inputs then the individual is satisfied and is motivated to do nothing If the ration of outcomes to my inputs is less than the ratio of other's outcomes to inputs then the individual is dissatisfied and is then motivated to choose between increasing individual outcomes, decreasing individual inputs, re-evaluating the other's inputs, changing the referent or leaving the situation (Hitt, Black & Porter, 2009) The concept of a fair day's work for a fair day's pay is often utilised to express how the parties to the labour process wish to perceive the employment relationship Equity theory sets down the individual's cognitive process

that determines whether or not the individual in the effort-reward bargain within the framework of the social exchange process. An amount of research interest has surrounded Adam's theory. The interest centres on testing the relationship advanced by Adam's, particularly those relationships that focuses on employees reactions to pay. Overall, the research highlights support for Adam's theory about employee reactions to wage inequities (Tiernan, et al, 2006)

Herzberg's Two Factor Theory of Motivation

In the early 1960's, Frederick Herzberg, proposed a motivation theory called the 'two factor theory'. This theory focused on the distinction between factors that can increase job satisfaction (motivators) versus those that can prevent dissatisfaction but cannot increase satisfaction (hygiene factors). Motivators are intrinsic factors directly related to doing the job, such as the nature of the work itself, responsibility level, personal growth opportunities, and the sense of achievement and recognition directly received by performing the work. The other factors, hygiene factors, are extrinsic to directly performing the job. They are associated with surrounding the job. Hygiene factors include supervision, relations with co-workers, working conditions, and company policies and practices related to benefits and compensation. The two factor theory was a hit with managers because it portrayed a simple message – if you want to motivate an employee, focus on improving how the job is structured so that they obtain positive job satisfaction. Simply taking care of hygiene factors can prevent dissatisfaction but will have no effect on motivation. Critics of the theory have labelled it too simple, in that recent research has shown that satisfaction and motivation is not the same thing. Simply reacting to a positive event does not correlate to motivation to do a job (Hitt, et al, 2009). Another major criticism of Herzberg's focused on the extent of his research

being methodologically sound. Questions have been asked surrounding the extent to which accountants and engineers, who were the focus of his study, are actually like all other workers. Herzberg's findings were not deemed universal to all (Tiernan, Morley & Foley, 2006)

2.16 Conclusion

As the recession continues and recovery begins, the issues of turnover and retention remain at the centre of most HR professional worlds. Smart organizations know that despite layoffs, voluntary turnover can put an already challenged organisation in an even more precarious position in terms of productivity and leadership. As a result, retention continues to be the goal, though pursued a little more quietly than in the past (Anonymous, 2009)

CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Methodology is the theory of how research should be undertaken, including the theoretical and philosophical assumptions upon which research is based and the implications of these for the methods or methods adopted (Saunders, et al, 2007, p 603)

This chapter deals with the methodology that was used to carry out the research to achieve the goal of this study. The aim of this study was to investigate the factors that contribute to the turnover and retention of nurses in the employ of the Health Service Executive (HSE). It also aims to examine possible changes that could be put in place by management to curb high turnover and poor retention.

This chapter outlines the research approach and methods chosen as part of this research. This chapter provides details on the justification of the methods chosen and considers the strengths and limitations of the approach. The areas covered in this chapter include the research approach, research design, data collection instrument, data collection, limitations and the ethical considerations to the research.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were utilised during this study. First, data was collected through the use of a structured questionnaire which was distributed to nurses in various hospitals managed by the HSE. This survey was primarily conducted to determine the main factors contributing to the turnover and retention of nurses and to identify possible management initiatives that could curb turnover and retain nurses, with vital skills, within the HSE. The survey was distributed among selected nurses in various hospitals around Ireland. The survey was then followed by

interviews with individuals in management positions within the HSE to confirm and discuss the findings

3 2 Research Question, Aim and Objectives

The research seeks to answer the questions

- 1 Investigate turnover among nurses within the HSE
- 2 Explore the impact of poor retention among nurses employed by HSE
- 3 Outline recommendations to improve turnover and retention among the nursing profession employed by the HSE

Therefore, the goal of this research is for nurses, employed by the HSE, to indicate the degree of importance a range of factors would have on their intention to stay or leave an employment with the aim of making recommendations to the management of the HSE

The objectives of the research are as follows

- To establish the most important factors that nurses employed by the HSE consider when deciding to stay or leave an employment
- Identify the level of intention to quit among nurses employed by the HSE and determine the reasons behind the intention
- Explore external factors that contribute to the turnover and retention of nurses
- To provide the most effective recommendations/changes that could be implemented by management by identifying the most important influences when deciding to stay or leave an employment

3.3 Research Paradigm

When choosing the research methodology the topic at hand needs to be considered. Pragmatism argues that the most important determinant of the research philosophy adopted is the research question. According to this view, it is possible for the researcher to work with epistemology and ontology. It mixes methods such as qualitative and quantitative to fulfil research questions (Saunders, et al., 2007, p. 110). Pragmatism is the most appropriate philosophy to research the topic at hand. It allows the researcher to work with both epistemology and ontology. With this approach, the researcher can mix both quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (non-numerical) methods to collect and analyse the data.

The research method choice will be a mixed method, combining quantitative and qualitative. Saunders et al. (2007) state that 'mixed method research uses quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and analysis procedures are used in the research design'. The mixed method approach uses both types of research and analyses them together. Using a mixed method approach brings with it strength in that it allows triangulation to occur. Triangulation uses two or more independent sources of data collection methods within one study in order to ensure that the data obtained coincides with what the researcher believes the data is portraying (Saunders et al., 2007). By using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the results of the questionnaires are backed up with interviews with management, allowing for more accurate research.

The mixed method approach was chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, the questionnaire, which combined both quantitative and qualitative methods, determined the age and gender of the participants and the degree of importance of a range of factors.

had when influencing a decision to stay or leave an employment. The questionnaire contained a number of questions asking participants to elaborate more on certain questions. These questions were included to elicit a greater understanding in turn leading to more accurate research. A qualitative method of semi-structured interviews followed the results of the questionnaire. The findings of both methods would be combined to allow for in depth analysis and to allow comparisons to be made.

A second reason for the mixed method approach was the various geographic locations of the hospitals where the nurse participants were employed. This would make a purely qualitative approach difficult to accomplish. A questionnaire would be easier to send out to all participants and thus would be more suitable.

This study will use research in the form of questionnaires as this will generate greater findings. The questionnaires will use elements of quantitative and qualitative. The questionnaire will use quantitative methods to establish age, gender and the degree of importance each variable holds for the respondents. The questionnaire will use qualitative methods when it asks the respondents to comment on selected variables. The findings will then be displayed using charts for ease of display for the reader. This study will also again use qualitative data in the form of semi-structured interviews. This will allow for key topics and themes to be discussed and the research question to be answered. Semi-structured interviews will allow the researcher a better opportunity to evaluate the extent to which the findings can be evaluated. Qualitative data allows for more truth in responses from nurses and management which will allow the researcher to locate more valid dependable research.

3.4 Research Design

The research design of this study will be both qualitative and quantitative as it will use questionnaires and interviews to collect data. Qualitative research explores the insights and perceptions of others and the deeper meanings they attach to a situation. By using a qualitative approach, underlying attitudes, motivations and feelings can be examined (Leurer, Donnelly & Domm, 2007, pp. 310). A qualitative approach generates non-numerical data that will allow the researcher to gain more information (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p. 153). Quantitative research is described as being “objective in nature and concentrates on measuring phenomena”, while qualitative research is described as being “more subjective in nature and involves examining and reflecting perceptions in order to gain an understanding of social and human activity” (Collis & Hussey, 2003, p. 13).

The findings of the questionnaires will be displayed using charts for ease of display. The research will also utilise semi-structured interviews to answer the research questions. This method was chosen as it will allow the researcher to better answer the research questions and will provide the researcher with more information.

This study will use primary research in the form of qualitative questionnaires that will allow the researcher to gain a better understanding of turnover and retention of nurses in the HSE and will be able to determine recommendations to improve practises relating to turnover and retention. The findings will be displayed using charts (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p. 153). Primary research will also be collected in the form of semi-structured interviews. These will be conducted with nurses in management positions and with members of hospital management. These interviewees were chosen as the

researcher feels the knowledge they possess will further help to answer the research questions

3.5 Questionnaires

There will be a combination of open and closed questions on the questionnaires. Closed questions will be asked to determine the most important factors that influence nurses when making a decision to stay or leave an employment. Closed questions were also utilised to determine the degree of intention to quit among employees. Open questions will be used to determine why the respondent left their last employment and to extract reasons behind any intention to quit. The questionnaire is self-administered by the respondents and will be posted back to the researcher when completed. The researcher chose this self-administration method as it allowed the participants' time to fully understand and honestly answer the questions. The researcher felt that their presence while participants filled out the questionnaire would distort the responses. Self-administration was chosen to ensure that valid and dependable data was collected. The questionnaire was divided into five sections (A-E). Section A examined the biographic details of the respondents, the works worked in a typical week and the main reason for leaving a participant's last employment. Section B asked the participants to rate a factor related to turnover and retention by the degree of importance they felt it would influence a decision to stay or leave an employment. Next, Section C asked participants to indicate how important a range of management initiatives would influence a decision to stay or leave an employment. Section D explored external factors. This section asked what factors, if any, affected a decision to stay or leave an employment. The questionnaire concluded by determining if there was an intention to quit among the participants and, if so, what was the reason behind this intention.

3.6 Population and Sample Size

The population for this proposed research would include every nurse employed by the HSE in Ireland. For sampling purposes, it is proposed to test just the nurses in selected hospitals to collect the required data. Sampling only a number of hospitals saves time, which is an important consideration when meeting tight deadlines (Saunders, et al, 2007). It is possible to assume that the nurses in the selected hospitals, in the network of hospitals managed by the HSE, would reflect the thoughts and experiences of nurses in other areas of the country.

3.7 Pilot Testing

Saunders, et al (2007) recommends pilot testing to ensure respondents can clearly understand and answer the questions as well as allowing some assessment of the questions' validity and reliability of the data to be collected (Saunders et al, 2007). The questionnaire was pilot tested on a number of individuals before general distribution. Firstly, the questionnaire was pilot tested by a number of college peers. Feedback was requested by this group and modifications were made to the questionnaire. Secondly, the questionnaire was pilot tested by individuals in each of the hospitals surveyed to ensure the questions were clearly understood. After consultation with these individuals further modifications were made to the questionnaires.

3.8 Interviews

This research will use semi-structured interviews whereby the researcher will have a list of themes to cover but will also allow for discussion. Open questions will be used in a logical pattern to encourage the interviewee to provide an extensive and developmental answer (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 337). A semi-structured interview allows for more flow

of discussion but the researcher still has some control concerning the direction the discussion follows. The researcher felt this format would be the best decision as it would give the interviews an informal feel and allow for more open and honest responses. The interviews were conducted to obtain management's opinion on the findings of the questionnaire and to discuss the recommendations regarding potential management initiatives that could be put in place to curb turnover and increase retention. The findings from the interviews were analysed qualitatively. The interviews were conducted with a nurse or individual in a management position in each hospital. Participants were chosen this way to ensure the research was valid. Although the HSE has a presence nationwide, different hospitals in different regions might have slightly varying attitudes. The researcher felt it was best to conduct interviews this way to ensure the data obtained was valid. Notes were taken and a Dictaphone was used to record the interviews. The interviews were then transcribed. The interviews were conducted on quiet, neutral ground with no distractions.

An in-depth interview with a sample of nurses, working in the HSE, analysed qualitatively would allow the researcher to get a picture of the important issues that concerned the nurses (Saunders, et al, 2007). A semi-structured interview analysed qualitatively could potentially clarify the content of some of the questionnaire results. This would be essential in getting the full meaning behind some of the data (Saunders, et al, 2007). Although group interviews were considered, the data obtained could have been distorted due to group influence. One individual could agree openly with the group during the interview, while privately disagreeing (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).

3 9 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics encompasses the appropriateness of the researcher's behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of a research project, or who are affected by it (Saunders, et al, 2007) To ensure the research remains ethical the researcher will avoid bias in design, data analysis and data interpretation, ensure confidentiality, remain open in terms of sharing data, protect the human subjects and practise non-discrimination The researcher in no way tried to influence the participants when it came to the completion of the questionnaires Participants were asked to provide answers according to their personal opinion It was specified that the research being conducted for academic purposes and that their response were confidential Trust was established between the interviewee and the interviewer as the interviewer explained the purpose of the research and stressed confidentiality All the questions put to the interviewees were asked in the same tone and body language so no answers were biased The interviewer maintained eyes contact throughout the interview and demonstrated attentive listening skills Ethical considerations were taken into consideration when drawing up questions so they did not suggest any misinterpretation regarding race, culture, etc Quinlan (2011) outlines that, ethics in business research is simply the application of ethical principles and standards to business research Essential in ethics and ethical standards is a capacity to distinguish between right and wrong (Quinlan, 2011, pp 73)

3 10 Limitations of the Research

The Health Service Executive manages 48 hospitals in Ireland (HSE, 2012) For this study, research was conducted in 3 hospitals, one each from Connaught, Leinster and

Munster Had the researcher had more time they would have conducted the research at more locations but this was not possible However, the researcher feels that the data obtained from the three hospitals accurately reflects the opinions and mindsets of the general population of nurses employed by the HSE

CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The primary data was collected using

- Open questionnaires were given to nurses employed by three hospitals. These hospitals were located in Connaught, Leinster and Munster. A mix of gender, age and length of service questions preceded the main body of the questionnaire (See appendix 1)
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three individuals in management positions within the Health Service Executive (HSE). These three interviews were conducted with nurses in management positions. The researcher felt that their experience would give the research more depth.

The findings from these data collection methods will be discussed in this chapter.

4.2 Analysis of primary data

Out of the 50 questionnaires distributed, 37 were returned. From the 37 returned, only 35 responses were complete and valid. This is a response rate of 70%. The interviews were transcribed.

4.3 Findings

4.3.1 Questionnaires

The findings of the questionnaires will be displayed using charts. This is for the ease of the reader. Findings from the four different areas/hospitals will be combined together. Additional data observed will be found under the chart.

Section A

Section A of the questionnaire determined the age and the gender of the respondents.

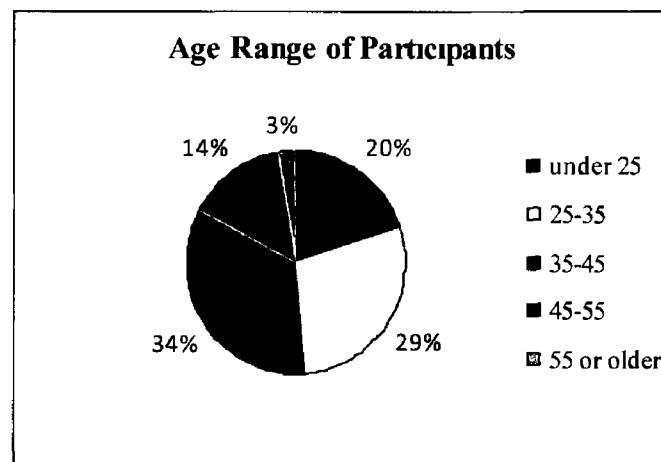


Figure 1 Q 1 Age range of the participants

The majority of respondents were aged between 35 and 45. This age range accounts for 34% of the respondents' surveys. The lowest percentage was the respondents aged 55 or older. These participants accounted for 3% of the sample.

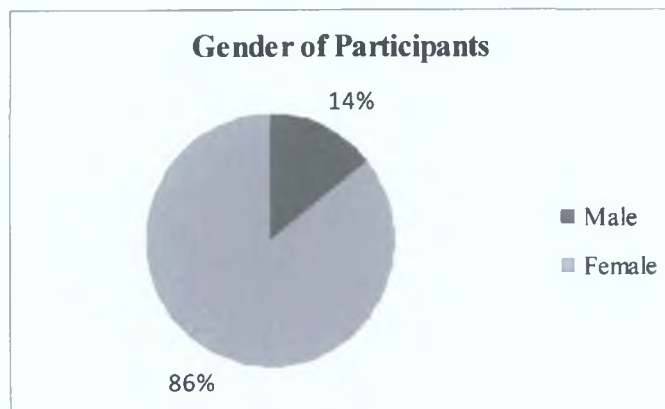


Figure 2: Q.2 Gender Distribution of Participants

Question two of the questionnaire determined the gender distribution of the participants. Females accounted for 86% of the population surveyed while males made up the remaining 14%.

Question three of the survey asked participants to state their length of service with their current employer. The format requested was in years and months. The findings from this question ranged in length from 12 months to 34 years and 1 month.

Question 4 of the questionnaire asked the participants to state their main reason for leaving their last employment. The findings from this question were varied. Many of the respondents were in their first job after graduating and thus did not have a previous employer. These respondents marked their answer as N/A or non-applicable. The responses to this question garnered various responses. Family reasons, promotion, relocation from the US, relocation due to speciality, and a job closer to home to reduce travel time were all indicated as reasons for leaving an employment.

Question 5 of the questionnaire was related to the average hours a week a participant worked. The following chart shows the distribution of hours worked by the respondents.

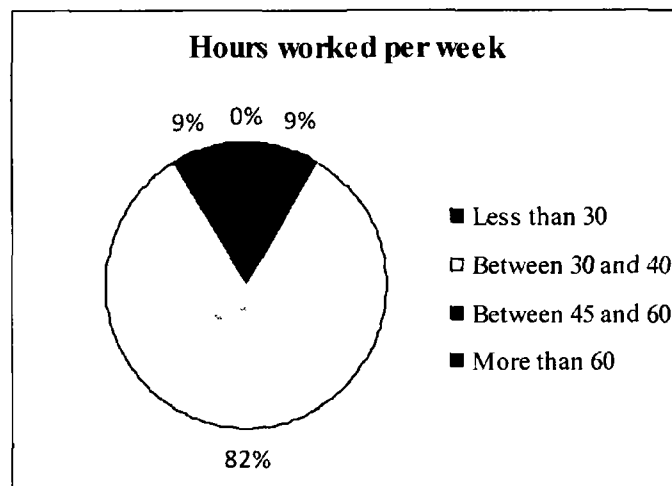


Figure 3 Q 5 Hours worked per week

The vast majority of the nurses surveyed work between 30 and 40 hours a week. These respondents accounted for 83% of the population studied. The findings from this question determined that none of the respondents worked more than 60 hours a week, 8% worked less than 30 and 9% worked between 45 and 60 hours a week.

Section B

Section B of the questionnaire was broken up into 14 questions. These questions asked participants to indicate the degree of importance a particular factor would influence a decision to state or leave an employment. The participants could choose from three options. These options were:

- a) An important influence on me leaving
- b) Not important
- c) An Important influence on me staying

The first question of this section (question 6) concerned the influence the public reputation of the organisation would have on a decision to stay or leave an employment

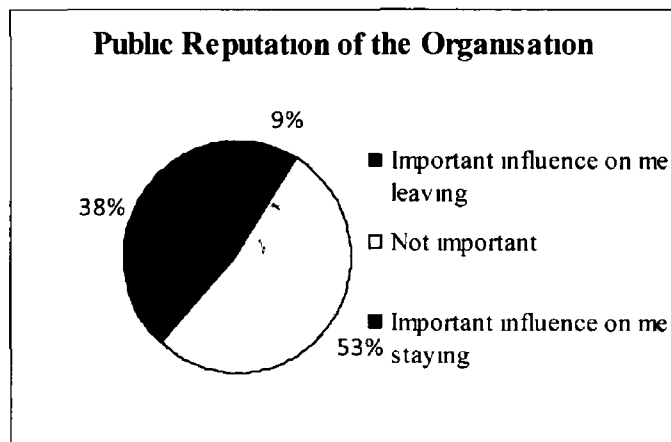


Figure 4 Q 6 Public Reputation of the Organisation

The findings from this question determined that 9% of nurses indicated that it would be an important influence on them staying in an employment, 53% of those surveyed felt it was not important at all and 38% regarded this factor as an important influence on them staying in an employment

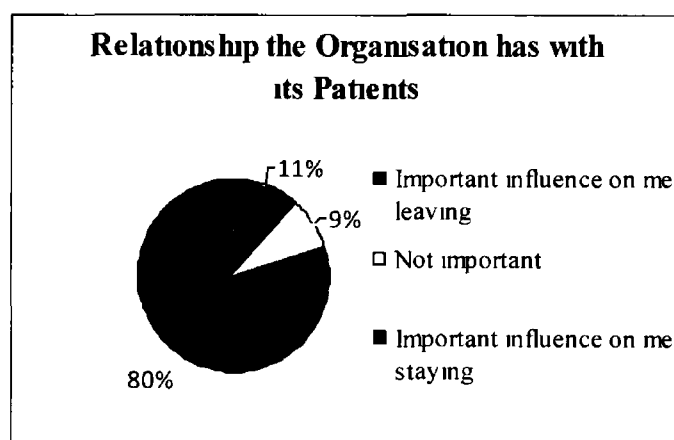


Figure 5 Q 7 Relationship the Organisation has with its Patients

The second factor measured by the degree of importance in influencing a decision to stay or leave was the relationship the organisation had with its patients. 11% of the nurses surveyed indicated that it was an important influence on whether to leave an employment, 9% felt that it was not important and 80% of respondents stated that it would be an important influence on a decision to stay in an employment.

The next factor investigated in Section B was the influence of the purpose or vision of an organisation would have on a decision to stay or leave an employment. 15% of the participants surveyed indicated that this factor would be an important influence on them leaving, another 15% of the respondents felt that it was not important in a decision and 70% of the nurses surveyed stated that it would be an important influence on a decision to stay in an employment.

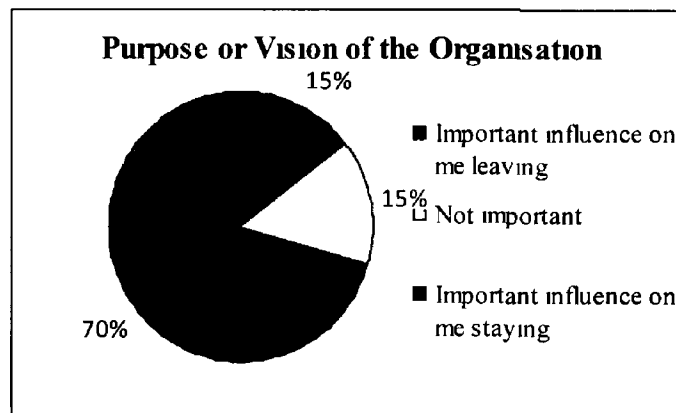


Figure 6 Q 8 Purpose or Vision of the Organisation

The culture of the organisation was the fourth factor that the questionnaire asked the participants to determine how they felt

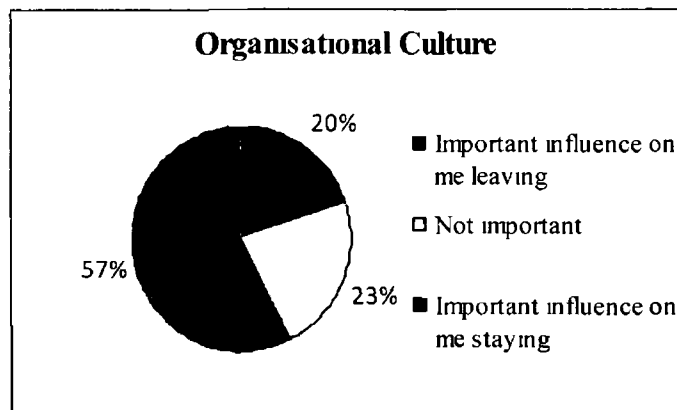


Figure 7 Q 9 Organisational Culture

The findings to this factor determined that 20% of participants felt that this factor would be an important influence on a decision to leave, 23% indicated that it was not important and that 57% felt that it would be an important influence on a decision to stay in an employment

The training and development opportunities available to participants, was the fifth factor to be measured in Section B

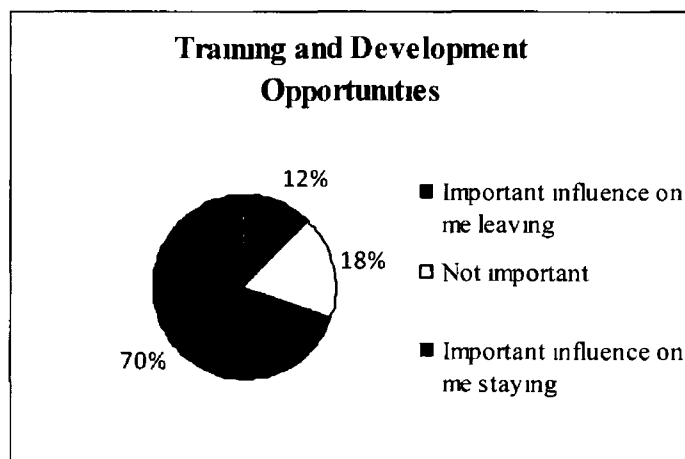


Figure 8 Q 10 Training and Development Opportunities

The findings from this factor determined that 12% of participants felt that the availability of training and development opportunities would be an important influence on them leaving, 18% felt that it was not important and the final 70% of participants indicated that the factor would be an important influence on a decision to stay in an employment. At this stage of the questionnaire, one participant who answered that the factor would influence them to leave, felt the need to add a comment. The participant (response 11) commented that there is no training and development provided these days, the respondent blamed this lack of training and development on cutbacks put in place by the HSE.

The opportunity for career development was an interesting factor highlighted in the literature. The findings of this question determined that 20% of nurses surveyed felt that opportunities for career development would be an important influence on a decision to leave an employment, 9% stated the factor was not important and the remaining 71% of participants would be an important influence on a decision to stay in an employment.

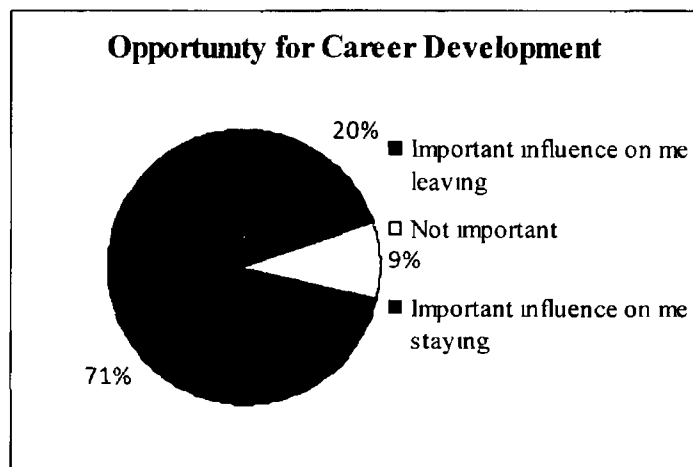


Figure 9: Q.11 Opportunities for Career Development

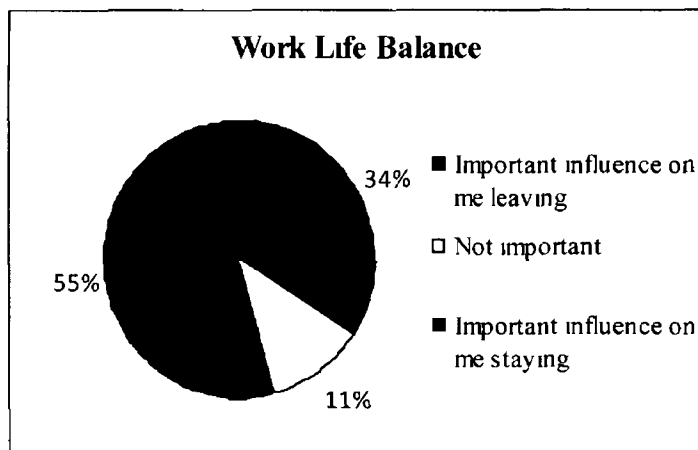


Figure 10 Q 12 Work Life Balance

Work life balance was the seventh factor to be measured in the questionnaire

Participants were asked to indicate the degree of importance a balance would have on a decision to stay or leave an employment. The findings from this question resulted in 34% of participants indicating that the factor would be an important influence on them leaving, 11% felt it was not important in a decision to stay or leave and the remaining 55% surveyed felt that it would be an important influence on a decision to stay or leave an employment.

The size of a participant's workload was the next factor to be measured. This question asked the respondents to indicate how important this factor would be in influencing a decision to stay or leave an employment. The findings of this question resulted in 36% of respondents stating that this factor would be an important influence on a decision to leave an employment, 17% believed it was not important in an decision to stay or leave and 47% felt that it would be an important influence to stay in an employment.

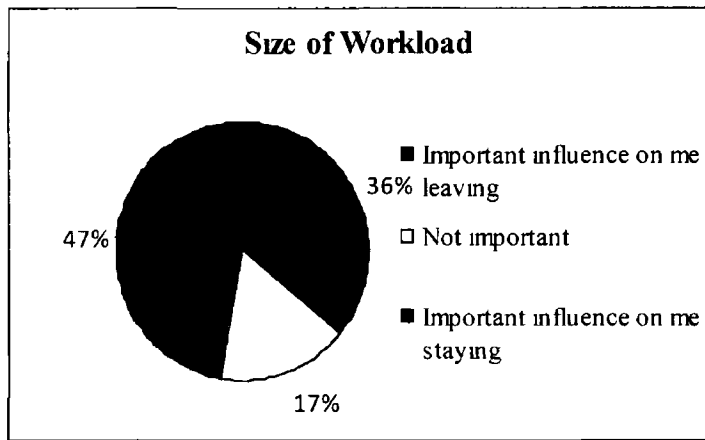


Figure 11 Q 13 Size of Workload

The amount of flexibility that participants had in their working hours was question fourteen in the questionnaire given to nurses employed by the HSE. The findings from this factor revealed that 31% of the nurses' survey stated that it was an important influence on them leaving, 3% felt that it was not important in making a decision and 66% believed it would be an important influence to stay in an employment.

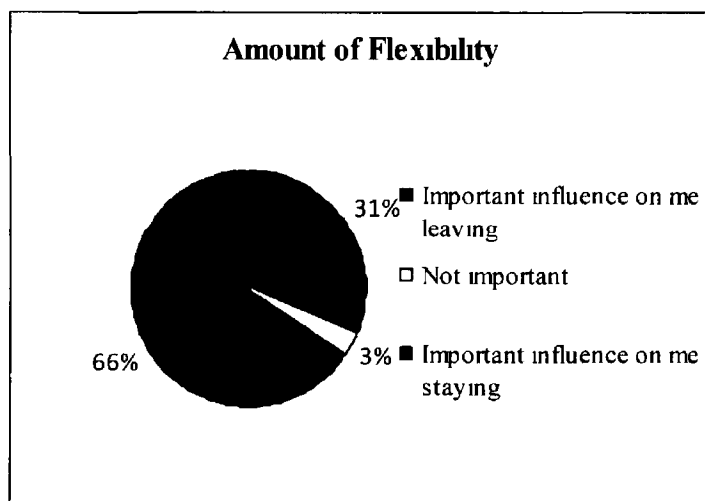


Figure 12 Q 14 Flexibility in Working Hours

The level of significance or importance of their job was the next factor measured by the questionnaire. The finding showed that 14% of those surveyed stated that the factor was an important influence on a decision to leave an employment, 17% believed it was not important and 69% felt that it would be an important influence in a decision to stay in an employment.

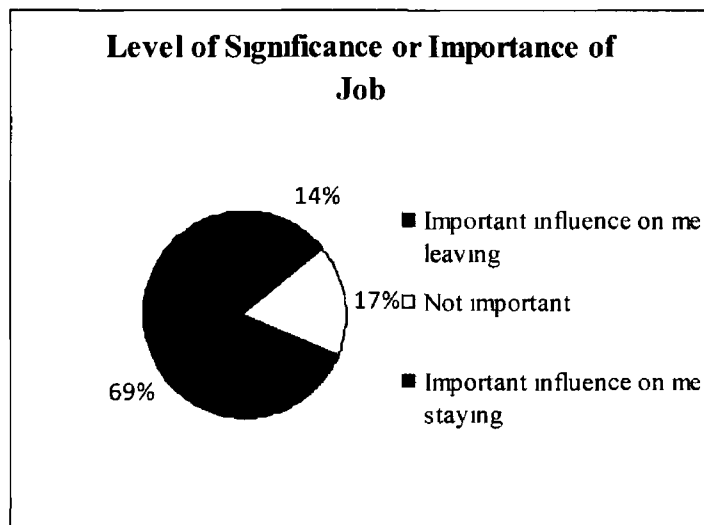


Figure 13 Q 15 Level of Significance or Importance of Job

Autonomy was the second last factor examined in the questionnaire. Question fifteen asked how important the level of autonomy a participant's job provided would influence a decision to stay or leave an employment. The findings from measuring this factor concluded that 9% of respondents stated that autonomy would be an important influence a decision to leave an employment, 26% felt it was not important in making a decision and the remaining 65% of respondents believed it would be an important influence on a decision to stay in an employment.

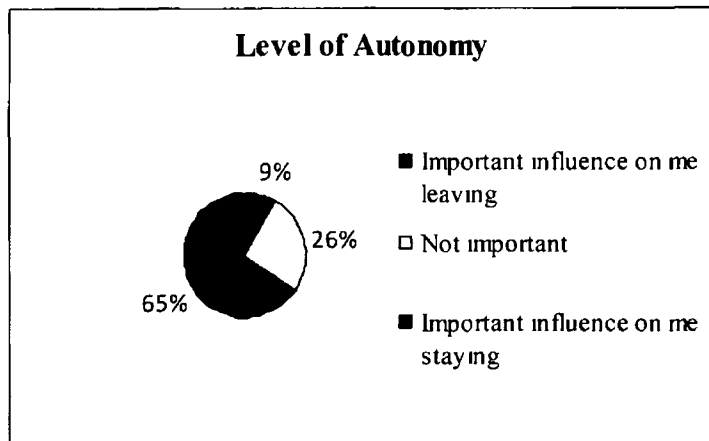


Figure 14 Q 16 Level of Autonomy

The final factor in Section B to be explored was the overall level of job satisfaction

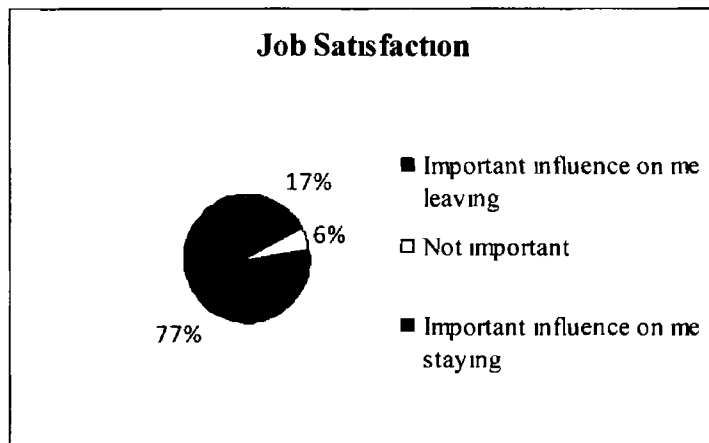


Figure 15 Q 17 Job Satisfaction

The findings from this question revealed that 17% of respondents considered job satisfaction as an important influence on a decision to leave an employment, 6% stated that it was not important in making a decision and a majority of 77% felt that it was an important influence on a decision to stay in an employment

Question eighteen of Section B asked participants to indicate which of the factors measured would be the most important in a decision to stay or leave an employment. This question was a chance for the participants to make comments and it gave the researcher a deeper understanding on why certain factors were more important than others (Figure 16 in Appendix 3). The factors deemed most important by the participants were Job Satisfaction at 27%, Career Development at 18%, Worklife Balance at 15% and Flexibility at 13%.

Question nineteen of Section B asked respondents to further elaborate on why they chose their answer to the previous answer. This question again was a chance for more valid data to be obtained. A full list of responses to this question can be seen in Figure 24 in Appendix 4.

Section C

Section C of the questionnaire asked participants to indicate how important a range of practices would be, if implemented by management, in a decision to stay or leave an employment. Participants were asked to consider how each important each practice would be from a choice of three degrees. The degrees were

- a) Important
- b) Neither important or not important
- c) Not important at all

The first practice examined by the questionnaire was an effort by management to communicate more with staff about what is happening in the organisation. The findings

from this question establish that an overwhelmingly 100% of respondents would find this an important influence in making a decision to stay or leave an employment

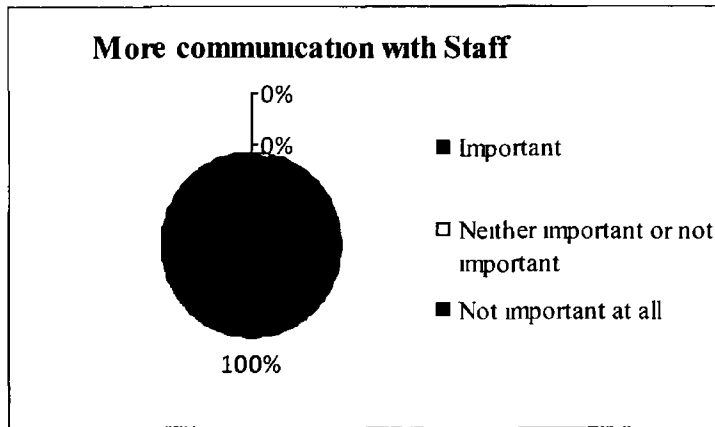


Figure 18 Q 20 more communication with staff about what is happening in the organisation

The next practice examined dealt with communicating more with staff about issues affecting their jobs

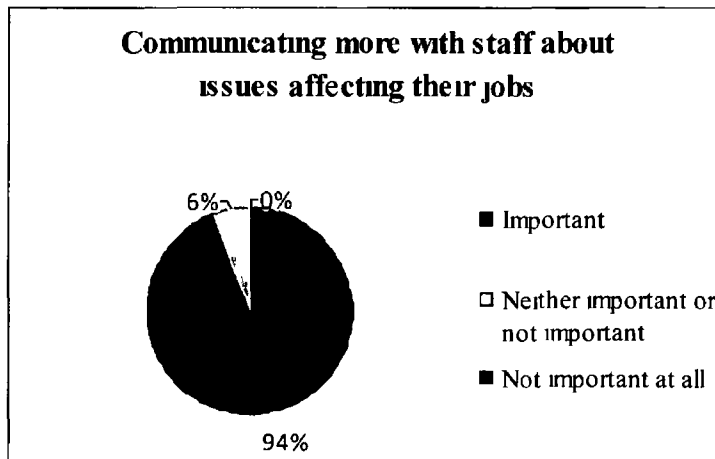


Figure 19 Q 21 Communicating more with staff about issues affecting their jobs

The findings when this practice was measured resulted in 94% of participants indicating that the practice would be important and 6% felt that the practice would neither important or not important

The third practice investigated in Section C was the provision of more job related training. When asked would implementing this practice be an important influence in making a decision to stay or leave an employment 94% of participants surveyed stated that it would be important while 6% of participants would find it neither important or unimportant in making a decision

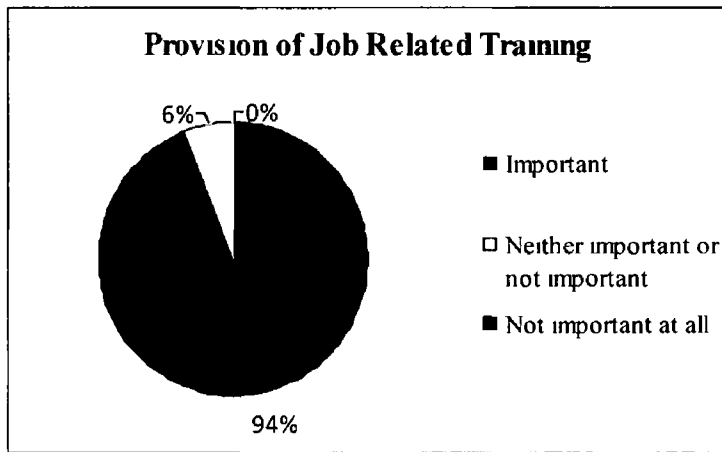


Figure 20 Q 22 Provsion of more Job Related Training

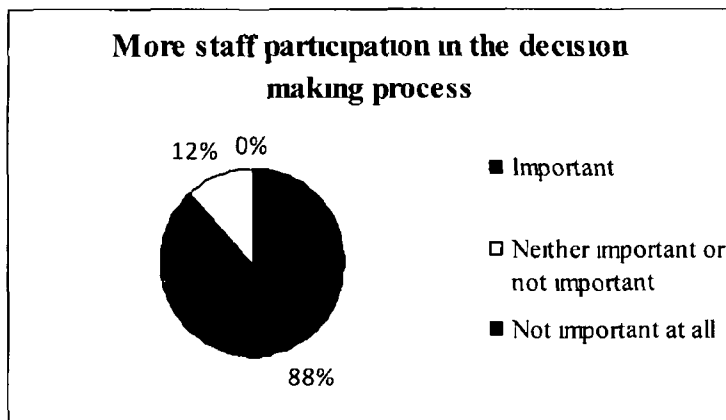


Figure 21 Q 23 Allowing more staff participation in the decision making process

The next practice examined in this section was allowing more staff participation in the decision making process. The findings obtained showed that 88% of the nurses surveyed would find this practice an important influence in making a decision to stay or leave an employment. 12% of participants felt this practice was neither important or not important in making a decision to stay or leave an employment.

The final practice presented to participants was increasing pay in line with performance or contribution. The findings of this question showed that 82% of respondents felt that this practice would be important in deciding to stay or leave an employment while 18% believed this practice would be neither important or not important in making a decision.

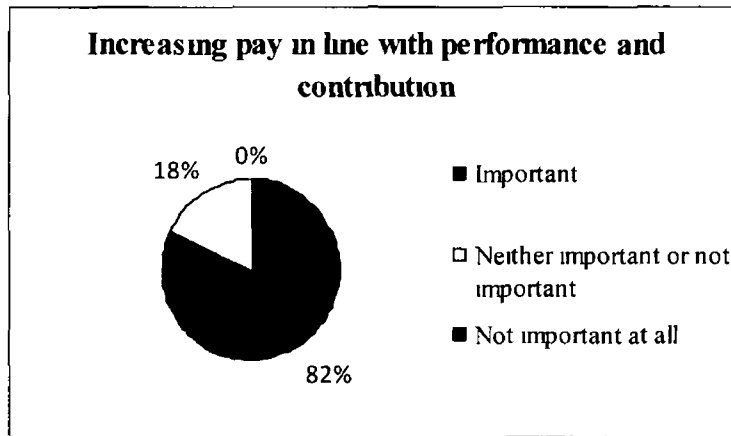


Figure 22 Q 24 Increasing pay in line with performance and contribution

Section D

Section D of the questionnaire examined external factors related to turnover and retention. This question asks participants to indicate if any of the factors presented had influenced a decision to stay or leave an employment. The results of this question revealed that 40% of participants had been influenced by a geographic location, 7% by infrastructure, 24% by the quality of education in an area and 29% by the availability and quality of health care services in the area.

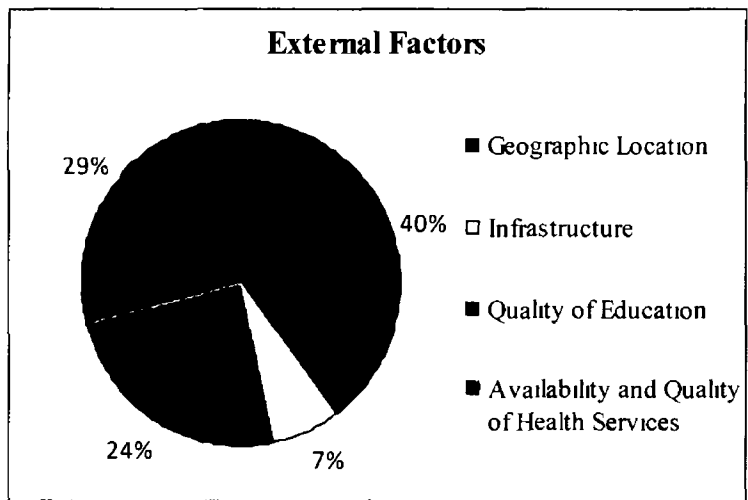


Figure 23 Q 25 External Factors

Section E

Section E examined the intention to quit among the participants of the questionnaire. The first question in this section asked the participant if they had an intention to quit their current employment. The findings from this question revealed that 11% of participants had an intention to quit while the remaining 89% had no intention to quit. One participant who indicated they had no intention to quit commented that they 'were unable to in the current climate'.

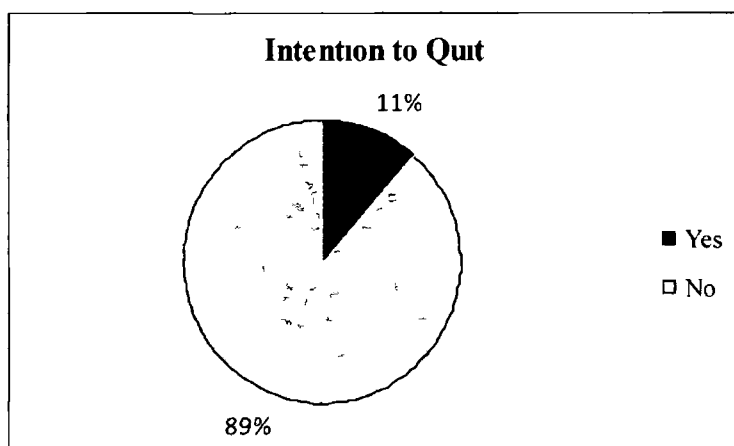


Figure 24 Q 26 Intention to Quit Distribution

The last question in Section E asked those participants who answered yes to having an intention to quit, the reason behind the intention. This question gave the participants an opportunity to voice their reasons for intending to quit. The researcher included this question to gain more understanding of the factors affecting turnover and retention. The findings from this question varied. Many reasons were given for an intention to quit. The reasons given were:

- In today's current climate things are getting worse. I have many times have intended to quit in search of other opportunities. Workload, pay, patients, staff visitors, and emotional drain the work can have. Do not see myself in Ireland in 5 years.
- Culture (lack of respect, reduction in pay and increase in working hours)
- Offer of another job with opportunities to develop
- HSE cutbacks

4.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three individuals in management positions within the Health Service Executive (HSE). These three interviews were conducted with nurses in management positions and nurses with extensive lengths of service with the HSE.

The interviewees were promised confidentially while taking part in this study. For this reason the interviews will not be named. The interviewees were only comfortable to record their position and location. These were as follows:

- Subject A: Clinical Nursing Unit Manager, Connaught,
- Subject B: Senior Staff Nurse, Leinster, and
- Subject C: Senior Nursing Manager, Munster.

Before the interviews began the researcher sent the findings of the questionnaire to review, this allowed the interviews to be familiar with the subject. This practice introduces trust into the process before the interview.

The findings from the interviews were analysed using themes that prevailed in the duration of the interviews. The researcher began the interview by revealing the biographical details of the surveyed nurses in the three hospitals combined. Each participant was asked if the age and gender distribution data obtained through the questionnaire reflected the demographics in each interviewee's location. The three interviewees (subjects A-C) confirmed that the majority of nurses are aged between 35 and 45 and that the next age range was indeed 45-55 years of age. Again, the researcher asked the interviewees if the gender distribution reflected their experience and was met

by a unanimous yes. Subject B stated that historically nursing was a female dominated profession and that hadn't really changed in the current labour market. The interviewees were asked about the hours of work that the surveyed nurses completed. Subject A reflected that the majority of nurses worked between 30 to 40 hours a week and that it was very rare to work over 60 hours a week. Subject C highlighted the fact that longer hours are commonplace for nurses working on busy wards.

Theme 1 Factors affecting turnover and retention

Factors affecting turnover and retention were the primary theme of the interviews. The researcher informed the participants beforehand of the findings of the survey. This allowed every participant to review the results and gave them more time to analyse the data.

Public reputation of the organisation

Subject A linked this factor to the relationship the organisation has with its patients. The subject was not surprised by the findings and reflected that she has expected a high neutral response to the factor. A nurse duty of care is a high motivator and for this reason Subject A was not surprised by 80% of participants indicated the relationship the organisation had with its patients as an important influence on them staying in an employment. Subject B found the high percentage of participants who did not feel public reputation did not affect a decision to stay or leave as surprising. Subject B felt cost cutting measures by the organisation might be a reason for this and the fact that nurses are on the front line and would be more likely to bear witness to its effects.

Subject C believed notice should be taken if any factor resulted in low levels in influencing a decision to stay in an employment

The relationship the organisation has with its patients

Subject B highlighted the fact that the results for the relationship with patients and purpose of the organisation were similar. The purpose or vision of the organisation lies with patient care and was not surprised that the two factors were linked. Subject C agreed with Subject B that the two factors were linked and that the results were positive.

The purpose or vision of the organisation

Subject A found that 15 % of those surveyed would find this factor important in a decision to leave as shocking. Subject A elaborated by stating organisations strive to instil organisational values through the purpose and vision of the organisation and in effect creating a unified nursing profession. Subject felt this was an area that needs to be followed up on.

The culture of the organisation

Subject A found the results relating to this factor as promising, stating, the organisation is going through a challenging time. A culture of cutbacks is prevalent throughout the organisation. 57% indicated that the culture would be an important influence in a decision to stay in an employment, Subject A felt this was encouraging even battling such a challenging culture. Subject B agreed with Subject A adding that participants might be doing their best with what they had. Subject C had some concern about the

low percentage indicating the factor as a decision to stay should be taken notice of and improved

Training and development opportunities and career development

All three subjects linked the above factors together. Subject A reflected that the additional comment left by one questionnaire respondent was justified and acceptable. The cost cutting culture prevalent within the organisation has affected training and development opportunities. In Subject A's opinion training and development must not be neglected if high quality delivery of care is to be continued. Subject A stated that Career Development and Training go hand in hand. Without training and development opportunities to gain sought after skills career progression is not likely. Subject B reflected that historically the nursing profession is hard to progress in but that 71% of participants seeing the factor as important in a decision to stay as very promising. It shows ambition in the ranks and hope for the future. Subject C agreed with the results and responded nurses in any climate simply want opportunities to train and progress in their careers.

Work life Balance, Workload & Flexibility

Subject A showed interest in the fact that all of these 3 factors showed remarkably similar results. This similarity would equally influence a nurse with a young family and an older nurse in a different stage of life. Subject A informed the researcher that they themselves had considered these three factors, both in their past and currently, in making a decision to stay or leave an employment. Subject B and C agreed wholly with

Subject A Subject C added that the nature of the profession means that the work can be very demanding putting strain on the body and the mind

Level of Significance, Autonomy and Job Satisfaction

All three subjects grouped these factors together in making a decision to stay or leave an employment Subject A highlighted the high percentage of participants who would find the factors important in making a decision to stay in an employment Subject A noticed that the three figures correlated and found this very encouraging It shows consistency across the countrywide network but more can be done to improve the levels Subject B found the results of these three factors promising for the future of the organisation Subject C added that the fact that the high percentage of importance placed on Autonomy lead to a correlation in high levels of Job Satisfaction

Theme 2 Possible management initiatives and practices

The second theme of the interviews surrounded the possible management initiatives participants were asked to rate with a degree of importance

More communication with staff about what is happening in the organisation and regarding their jobs

Subject A first noticed the overwhelmingly high response to more communication with staff about what is going on in the organisation As the organisation is government funded there is a constant battle to keep costs low Subject A believes that if something as simple as letting staff know more about what is going on in the organisation would increase retention rates this can only be an advantage Subject A added that it is hard to

be happy in an employment if an individual does not know what is happening. When asked about the practice involving more communication about jobs, Subject A had the same mindset, if it would help settle the nursing population fears it would be an advantage. Subject B was not surprised by the responses to the two practices. Subject B stated that the two practices would be beneficial if implemented. Employees would be happier if they were made aware of the status of the organisation and the stability of their jobs. Subject C felt that the two practices would be advantageous, the practice was in effect to a smaller degree and should be encouraged more within the organisation.

More staff participation in decision making

Subject C felt this practice would be the most influential practice if implemented. This practice would let staff have their say, would encourage brainstorming and would bring fresh ideas to the organisation.

Provision of more job related training & increasing pay in line with performance

When discussing training and development the practice was linked with increasing pay in line with performance. All three subjects heralded the need for the practices but highlighted the current culture of cutbacks and commented that it might not be possible in the existing climate. The practices would be beneficial but not financially realistic. Subject B added that unfortunately the current recruitment embargo in place would also hinder the chances of the practice being implemented. Subject B understood why the practices were so indicated as important due to the links to career development it would bring.

Theme 3 Investigation of External Factors

Theme 3 focused on the external factors that affected a decision to stay or leave an employment. Participants were asked to indicate if any factors from a list presented had ever influenced a decision to stay or leave an employment.

Subject A found the result to this result interesting. Subject A was not aware of the full effects such factors have on a decision to stay or leave an employment. Subject A highlighted that the highest percentage of influence was focused on Geographic location. Due to the majority of female nurses it was understandable that nurses would take location into account, especially those with young families. Subject A expected availability and quality of health services in an area to have a high response. Subject A attributed this result to family concerns and indeed employment opportunities. Subject C agreed with Subject A and also commented on the response to education. Subject C attributed this to family consideration. Subject B noted that the high response to geographic location might encompass a nurses' need to relocate due to her speciality.

Theme 4 Intention to quit

The last theme discussed was that of the level of intention to quit throughout the organisation. Participants were asked to indicate an intention to quit and the reasons behind any intention.

Subject A was not surprised by the result regarding intention to quit. The current economic climate has made employees very hesitant about changing jobs. Subject A believed this was reflected in the results. Subject A added that 89% response to No was positive for the future of the organisation and can give more insight to future headcount.

requirements Subject B found the 89% response as promising and noted that this figure would lend stability to the running of wards day by day Subject B found the reasons given for an intention to quit as interesting and not surprising Subject C expected a higher percentage with an intention to quit but understands the reluctance to leave an employment in the current climate Subject C felt that more practices should be put in place to combat any intention to quit

The next chapter will discuss the above findings The findings from the questionnaire and the semi structured interviews will be discussed together

CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the findings of this research. This chapter will analyse the research findings from both the quantitative and qualitative research. The analysis is based on returned questionnaires and the transcripts from the semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the questionnaires is based on 34 completed surveys. These will be analysed together with the findings of the semi-structured interviews. The researcher will link back to the literature reviewed in chapter three where appropriate. It is expected that the analysis of the results displayed in Chapter Four will allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that related to turnover and retention in the Health Service Executive (HSE) and fulfil the aims and objectives laid out in chapter two.

5.2 Biographical Information

Questions one and two of the survey asked demographical questions to establish the age and gender distribution of the respondents. The majority of participants surveyed were aged between 35 and 45 years of age. The interview participants agreed with the age distribution and confirmed it reflected age ranges throughout the HSE. The information gathered correlates with the literature concerning the recruitment of nurses. There is a rapidly aging workforce in the country, which are coming closer to retirement. The recruitment embargo in place throughout the HSE can clearly be seen in the age distribution data. 20% of the participants surveyed were aged 25 or under. This figure highlights that recruitment has slowed in recent years. The current embargo in operation

and the rapidly aging workforce will undoubtedly contribute to nursing shortages in the foreseeable future

The gender distribution displayed by the questionnaire reflects that 86% of the nursing population are female and the remaining 14 % are male. Historically, nursing has been a female dominated profession. The results of the questionnaire show that this trend had not dramatically increased in recent time. The interview participants were not surprised and expected to see such a distribution. The recruitment embargo in place throughout the HSE will not aid in improving this figure in the future. No nurses, male or female, will secure a permanent position in the near future.

Section A of the questionnaire concluded with a question aimed at determining the number of hours worked by nurses throughout the HSE. The majority (82%) of participants surveyed worked between thirty and four hours a week. The average working week is forty hours. The logic behind asking this question was to examine the level of stress caused by overtime working. Only a small percentage of the participants completed over forty five hours a week and interview participants stated that only a very demanding role would require a sixty hour week. This contradicts the literature concerning the causes of stress among nurses. Long working weeks were thought to be the primary reasons of stress among nurses. The findings for this study that in fact 9% of the population surveyed worked less than 30 hours a week, this is significantly less than the average working week.

5.3 Factors affecting Turnover and Retention

Section B examined the factors affecting the turnover and retention of nurses employed by the HSE. This section of the questionnaire had fourteen questions. Section B contained factors described in turnover and retention literature. When research was conducted on nurses many factors came to light. The researcher included factors in this research that would affect employees in this profession and geographic location.

The researcher asked participants to indicate the degree of importance a range of factors would influence a decision to stay or leave an employment. Each factor was given a choice of three degrees. These were

- Important influence on me leaving
- Not important
- An important influence on me staying

From the findings it was determined that nurses within the HSE consider the organisation's relationship with its patients to be the most important influence on a decision to stay. 80% of participants indicated that this factor would influence them to stay in an employment. The researcher attributes this high importance to a nurse's obligation and duty of care. As seen in the literature, the nature of the profession instils a sense of commitment to one's work which results in a high delivery of patient care.

The second most important factor as identified by the research was the overall level of job satisfaction achieved within the workplace. 77% of participants indicated that this factor would be an important influence in a decision to stay in an employment. This correlates to the literature on the topic. The job satisfaction among nurses employed by

the HSE is high but much can be done to improve 17% of those satisfied stated that the level of job satisfaction would be an important influence on a decision to leave an employment and 6% believed that it was not important at all in a decision

The next most important factor highlighted by the research was career and development opportunities This garnered a 77% participant response rate in influencing a decision to stay in an employment Interview subject B highlighted that career progression is historically difficult in the nursing profession and that this response showed ambition within the ranks and could only be promising for the future The results show that nurse, like any other profession, simply want to have opportunities to develop their careers Career progression has links to job satisfaction and motivation and but it is clear that more paths need to be open to nurses as 20% of participants said it would be an important influence in a decision to leave an employment

Training and development opportunities and the purpose of the organisation displayed the same results for the factor being important in a decision to stay in an employment Many would say that training and development opportunities would provide a higher level of service within an organisation as the organisation would have the most up to date know available Nurses are obliged to update their skill and practices as seen in the literature but these attempts can be hindered by difficulty in getting time off to complete training This difficult in acquiring time may account for the 12% of participants who said the factor would be an important influence in a decision to leave an organisation A further 18% said that it was not important in a decision The purpose of an organisation strives to instil unified values across a working population 70% of participants indicated that the purpose of the organisation would be important in making a decision

to stay in an organisation. The purpose of the organisation is linked to the level of commitment an employee is motivated to attain. If the purpose of the organisation is not clear it can only result in an unmotivated workforce. Interview subject A was shocked that 15 % of those surveyed would find the factor important in a decision to leave an employment. All interview subjects concluded that this is an area that needs to be considered. The purpose of any organisation should be at the heart of any retention strategy.

The level of significance of a job, the level of autonomy and the amount of flexibility were factors where a high percentage of participants claimed they would be greatly influenced by when making a decision to stay in an employment. The percentage of participants who found these factors important was 69%, 65% and 66% respectively. The figures show that a high level of participants want some amount of control over what work they do and the level of flexibility they have in their working hours. Many nurses have young families and other pressures to consider. These reasons mean that flexibility would be deeply considered in any decision to stay or leave an employment. The high levels of job significance correlate with job recognition literature. The findings show that nurses simply want their work's efforts to be appreciated, especially the level of care they deliver.

Just over half of the nurses surveyed cited the culture of the organisation as an important influence in a decision to stay in an employment. At 57% this figure is acceptable but the organisation should look at improving this figure. 20% of the participants surveyed believed it would be an important influence in a decision to leave an organisation while 23% said it was not important in a decision. The current culture of

the HSE is particularly focused on cost cutting. The HSE is a government funded body and thus is under extreme pressure at the minute to curtail costs. Clearly, this culture is having a negative effect on the employee culture throughout the organisation. From the figures obtained from the research it is clear that the culture of the organisation needs to be improved to prevent future retention problems.

Two factors highlighted by the findings in that resulted in low levels of importance in a decision to stay in an employment were work life balance and workload. These factors received relatively low figures at 55% and 47% accordingly. Workload usually reflects the work life balance felt by an employee. If workload is high it takes from the social hours of an employee. The aim of a work life balance is to balance work and life in a sustainable fashion. One questionnaire participant highlighted this when they stated that "Cannot separate work and life from each other, have to learn to balance both".

The least popular factor, so to speak, was the public reputation of the organisation's ability to influence a decision. A mere 38% of those surveyed indicated that the public reputation of the organisation would be important in a decision to stay in an employment. A shocking 58% said it was not important at all and the remaining 9% believed that it would be important in a decision to leave an employment. Interview subject B stated that cost cutting measures by the organisation might be the reason for these results. The researcher believes that the present culture within the organisation has left the nurses at the front line to bear witness to the consequences of such a culture. The public reputation of the organisation must be improved to prevent deterioration of employee turnover.

5.4 Possible Management Practices to Increase Retention

Section two of the questionnaire contained five questions regarding five possible management initiatives that could increase retention with the HSE

From the analysis of the five initiatives the one deemed the most important by the respondents was the practice of communicating more with staff about the organisation. The option classed as 'important' displayed a 100% response rate. It was without a doubt the most popular management initiatives presented. The researcher attributes this to the financial problems that the organisation is experiencing at the moment. As previously stated the HSE is a government funded body and is under tight constraints to perform on limited budgets. The popular response rate leads the researcher to believe that if implemented the practice would be very successful in retaining top talent and highly skilled nurses.

More communication with staff about their jobs and more provision of job related training both garnered a 94% response for the 'important' option. From the analysis of the five management practices, both practices were deemed to be the second most popular by respondents of the survey. The popular response to the practice of more communication with staff regarding their jobs leads the researcher to believe that the practice was severely lacking in the organisation. This response links the research back to the literature on communication and consultation with nurses by management. If implemented this practice would greatly influence employees in a decision to stay in an employment. The popularity of more job related training is linked closely with career prospects and in turn motivation. Nurses want opportunities to develop their careers and training and development is a clear path to high positions within any organisation. All

three interview subjects believed that these practices if implemented would greatly impact nurses in a decision to stay in an employment. The interview subjects did have reservations about the financial element of providing more job related training. The current culture within the organisation might curtail the effects of this practice.

More staff participation in the decision making process saw 88% of those surveyed responded with 'important'. Staff participation links to communication and consultation factors highlighted in the literature. Interview subjects C stated that this would be the most influential practice if implemented, it would allow employees to have their say and would encourage fresh thinking throughout the organisation. Such a vast amount of responses to the practice being an important factor in a decision to stay or leave an organisation can only lead the researcher to assume that the practice would be very successful if implemented.

The practice of increasing pay in line with performance was met with 82% of the participants indicating that if implemented it would be important in making a decision to stay or leave an organisation. This practice received the highest 'neither important nor not important'. This response speaks volumes to the researcher that monetary gain is far down the list of motivators for nurses working within the Irish public health care sector. This correlates with the literature in that job satisfaction and the duty of care felt by the nursing profession motivates more than pay. The researcher believes that the practice would be successful if implemented but that it would not impact very drastically on a decision to stay or leave an employment. All three interview subjects responded that pay was another financial issue and thus might prevent this practice from being implemented.

5.5 External Factors

Section D examined external factors outside an organisational context that would affect turnover and retention of nurses employed by the HSE

The results showed the geographic location was the factor that has most influenced a decision to stay or leave an employment. The interview subject and the researcher alike believe that this is down to the high proportion of female nurses that took part in the questionnaire. At 40% this was nearly half of the population surveyed. The geographic reasons correlate to work life balance and the need to consider a young family when making a decision. The literature also suggests that a spouse's occupation and possible relocation would influence a decision to stay or leave an employment. Although there is not much an organisation can do about this factor it is important to be aware of the consequences of such an influence.

The second most influential external factor was the availability and quality of health services in an area. 29% of those surveyed stated that this factor was highly influential in making a decision. The nature of the nursing profession would assume that health services would attribute such a percentage for both family reasons and the possibility of employment opportunities.

The quality of education in the area was the third most popular external factor indicated by the participants. 24% of respondents said that it had influenced a decision to stay or leave. This figure was accredited to nurses with young family. The researcher also believes that future educational opportunities for nurses were a factor in the decision. As

highlighted previously in the research, career development opportunities are important factors when making a decision to stay or leave an employment

The factor that least influenced the participants was the infrastructure in the area. This accounted for merely 7% of those surveyed. This asked participants to indicate, if an employment was located in an urban or rural decision, would this have an impact in a decision to stay or leave an employment. The availability of private and public transport has impacted the influence this factor would have on a decision.

5.6 Intention to Quit

Section E of the questionnaire examined the intention to quit among nurses employed by the HSE. The results showed 11% of those surveyed had an intention to quit and the vast majority had no intention to quit at 89%. This is an excellent result in the current climate. However, any intention to quit within an organisation should be taken notice of. The participants were asked to elaborate on their intention to quit and the respondents gave the following reasons:

- In today's current climate things are getting worse. I have many times have intended to quit in search of other opportunities. Workload, pay, patients, staff visitors, and emotional drain the work can have. Do not see myself in Ireland in 5 years.
- Culture (lack of respect, reduction in pay and increase in working hours)
- Offer of another job with opportunities to develop
- HSE cutbacks

The interview subjects were not surprised by the findings and comments and largely agreed that some participants may want to quit but simply cannot for many reasons

5.7 Conclusion

This discussion of the results has revealed the most important factors affecting turnover and retention of nurses employed by the HSE. This chapter highlighted the popularity of a range of management practices. It was determined that if implemented they would be highly successful. This chapter concluded by examining external factors to turnover and retention and the level of intention to quit present in the organisation. The next chapter will outline the conclusions and recommendations from this research.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6 1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections. These are the main findings of the study, strategies that can be utilised to improve the retention of nurses employed by the Health Service Executive and recommendations for future research.

6 2 Summary of Main Findings

The results of the study revealed that the most influential factors affecting turnover and retention in the Irish public health care sector are the relationship the organisation has with its patients followed closely by the overall job satisfaction and opportunities for career development. These three factors were labelled the most influential factors from a total of eleven in a decision to stay in an employment. Training and development opportunities, the purpose or vision of the organisation, the level of significance of a job, the amount of flexibility, the level of autonomy, the culture of the organisation, the level of the work life balance, the overall level of workload, and the public reputation of the organisation were the last eight factors in order of preference. The public reputation of the organisation of the organisation was the factor that stood out from the findings of this study. 53% of the participants believe that this factor was not important in a decision to stay or leave an employment. The findings revealed that this is an area that needs to be examined and improved in any future retention strategy. The culture of the organisation and the public reputation of the organisation are factors that should be examined and improved upon by management.

Possible management practices to increase retention were investigated throughout this research. The findings and recommendations of this study will be presented in the next section.

External factors affecting turnover and retention were examined in this research. The findings from this section showed that 40% of the population surveyed were influenced by geographic location and a further 29% were influenced by the availability and quality of health services in an area. There is not much that can actively be done by an organisation to combat these factors, but awareness of these factors can be beneficial.

The level of intention to quit among those surveyed was determined during this research. An 11% intention to quit was recorded and reasons were given for any intention. The cost cutting nature of the organisation at the moment is one of the reasons given for one intention. The demands of the job and lack of appreciation were two other major factors revealed. This level of intention is acceptable but one interview participant added that in the current climate employees may have an intention but to leave the organisation may not be possible.

6.3 Recommendations to Management

During the primary research phase of this study, questionnaire participants were asked to rate a range of management practices that could be implemented. The response to the five practices was very positive. A practice to offer more communication to staff about what is happening with the organisation was an overwhelming 100%. Participants expressed that it would be important in a decision to stay or leave an employment. The second most influential practices if implemented were offering more communication.

with employees regarding their jobs and the provision of more job related training. The practice of communicating more with staff regarding their jobs correlated to the practice of revealing what is happening in the organisation. Training and development for nurses is a requirement by law but the difficulty in getting time off can hinder an employee's ability to complete any training. A commitment by management to provide this time off would be advantageous to organisation intent on retaining top talent. Staff participation in the decision making process was the next most influential practice rated. Interview participant highlighted that this would be an essential approach to creating new ideas within the organisation. As expected, pay was not at the top of the list for practices deemed influential if implemented. It received the highest choice for being neither important nor not important. If implemented it would certainly influence the recognition received for a job but would not change the levels of retention drastically.

The research recommends implementing all the practices above to curb employee turnover and increase retention throughout the HSE. The practices above were very popular with questionnaire respondents and interview participants alike. The only drawbacks highlighted were the financial issues concerning the implementation of increasing pay in line with contribution and providing more job related training.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

This research only focused on three hospitals out of the forty eight managed by the Health Service Executive. A major recommendation for future research is to include many more hospitals in a larger research initiative.

For this study only the public sector was examined, for more detailed and comprehensive findings the private sector should be included in future research. Many nurses leave the public sector as the demands of the environment become too much. Results from a study including both would lead to a greater understanding and more valid and dependable research.

For a more extensive research project a longer period of time should be resourced. Unforeseen circumstances can halt a research project and leave researchers with very little options when under a specific time constraint.

More research is recommended in this area. The world is constantly changing and thus the factors that affecting turnover and retention are endlessly evolving. Research should be conducted more frequently and to a greater degree to understand current turnover trends.

6.5 Conclusion

The outcome of the research determined that the most influential factor in a decision to stay in an employment was the relationship the organisation had with its patients. The factor found to be less influential was the public reputation of the organisation. To increase retention throughout the organisation public reputation must be improved. An improved public reputation would insure that top talent would be recruited and indeed retained.

To increase retention throughout the organisation a commitment must be made to provide valuable information more frequently to employees. This was highlighted

during the research, especially by the popular response received by the practices in the questionnaires

The Health Service Executive need to develop a clear retention strategy to prevent the deterioration of its health services throughout the county. It is hoped that this study can throw some light on the areas that need to be examined. The recommend areas to consider concern the factors that affect turnover and retention, internal and external, and the intention to quit throughout the organisation.

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APPENDIX 1 LETTER TO PARTICIPANT

Dear Participant,

Research investigating factors that influence the turnover and retention of staff

Attached is a questionnaire designed to gain insight into what influences employees to stay working for the Health Service Executive (HSE) It is aimed at employees in the nursing profession

The aim of the research is to get your views on what would influence your decision to stay or leave the employment of the HSE It also aims to establish the practices that the HSE could apply that would positively affect the retention of its employees

The results will be used purely for academic purposes and the completed work will be available from the National College of Ireland for your information

This is an anonymous questionnaire and therefore you will not be personally identified in the reporting of the results The questionnaire is divided into five sections (Section A-E) and should take only 20 minutes to complete It would be appreciated if you could complete and return to the person who distributed it to you

If you have any queries concerning the questionnaire, please contact me at marian-cullen@hotmail.com

Thank you for you participation

Yours sincerely,

Marian Cullen

APPENDIX 2· QUESTIONNAIRE

Private and Strictly Confidential

Questionnaire Investigating Turnover and Retention of Nurses Employed by the HSE

Please indicate your selection with (X) where appropriate

Please use the space provided under questions to write your answers where appropriate

Section A - Biographical Details of Respondent

1 Age

- a) under 25
- b) 25-35
- c) 35-45
- d) 45-55
- e) 55 or older

2 Gender

- a) Male
- b) Female

3 Please state length of service (years and months) with current employer

4 Please state your main reason for leaving your previous place of employment

5 How many hours per week do you work

- a Less than 30
- b Between 30 and 40
- c Between 45 and 60
- d More than 60

Section B

Factors that affect your decision to stay or leave an employment

This section examines issues related to staff turnover

Please indicate the degree of importance each factor would influence you to stay or leave an employment

6 The public reputation of the organisation would be

a) an important influence on me leaving

b) not important

c) an important influence on me staying

7 The relationship that the organisation has with its patients would be

a an important influence on me leaving

b not important

c an important influence on me staying

8 The purpose or vision of the organisation would be

a an important influence on me leaving

b not important

c an important influence on me staying

- 9 The organisational culture would be
- a an important influence on me leaving
 - b not important
 - c an important influence on me staying

- 10 The training and development opportunities available would be
- a an important influence on me leaving
 - b not important
 - c an important influence on me staying

- 11 Opportunity for career development would be
- a an important influence on me leaving
 - b not important
 - c an important influence on me staying

- 12 My work life balance would be
- a an important influence on me leaving

- b not important
- c an important influence on me staying

13 The size of my workload

- a an important influence on me leaving
- b not important
- c an important influence on me staying

14 The amount of flexibility I have in my working hours would be

- a an important influence on me leaving
- b not important
- c an important influence on me staying

15 The level of significance or importance of my job would be

- a an important influence on me leaving
- b not important
- c an important influence on me staying

16 The level of autonomy that my job provides would be

- a an important influence on me leaving
- b not important
- c an important influence on me staying

17 The overall level of job satisfaction I have would be

- a an important influence on me leaving
- b not important
- c an important influence on me staying

18 Please indicate which of the above factors would be the most important in making a decision to stay or leave an employment

19 Please explain why you have indicated this factor as most important

Section C

Possible Recommendations for increasing staff retention

This section examines possible recommendations that could be made to an employer to increase staff retention

Please indicate how important the following practices (if implemented) would influence your decision to stay or leave an employment

20 Communicating more with staff about what is happening in the organisation would be

- a Important
- b Neither important or not important
- c Not important at all

21 Communicating more with staff about issues affecting their jobs would be

- a Important
- b Neither important or not important
- c Not important at all

22 Providing more job related training would be

- a Important
- b Neither important or not important
- c Not important at all

23 Allowing more staff participation in the decision making process would be

- a Important
- b Neither important or not important
- c Not important at all

24 Increasing pay in line with performance or contribution would be

- a Important
- b Neither important or not important
- c Not important at all

Section D

External factors

There are a number of reasons outside of the working environment, which may influence a person to leave their place of employment. This section examines these influences.

Please indicate (by placing an **X** beside the statement), if any of the following factors have influenced a decision to stay in or leave an employment

- Geographic location For example, rural or urban setting
- Infrastructure of an area Conditions of roads, public transport system etc
- Quality of education in the area
- Availability and quality of health services in the area

Section E

Intention to quit

Have you an intention to quit your current employment?

a Yes

b No

If you answered **Yes**, please state the main reason for this intention

This is the end of the questionnaire

Thank you for completing this questionnaire

APPENDIX 3· PIE CHART- MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS

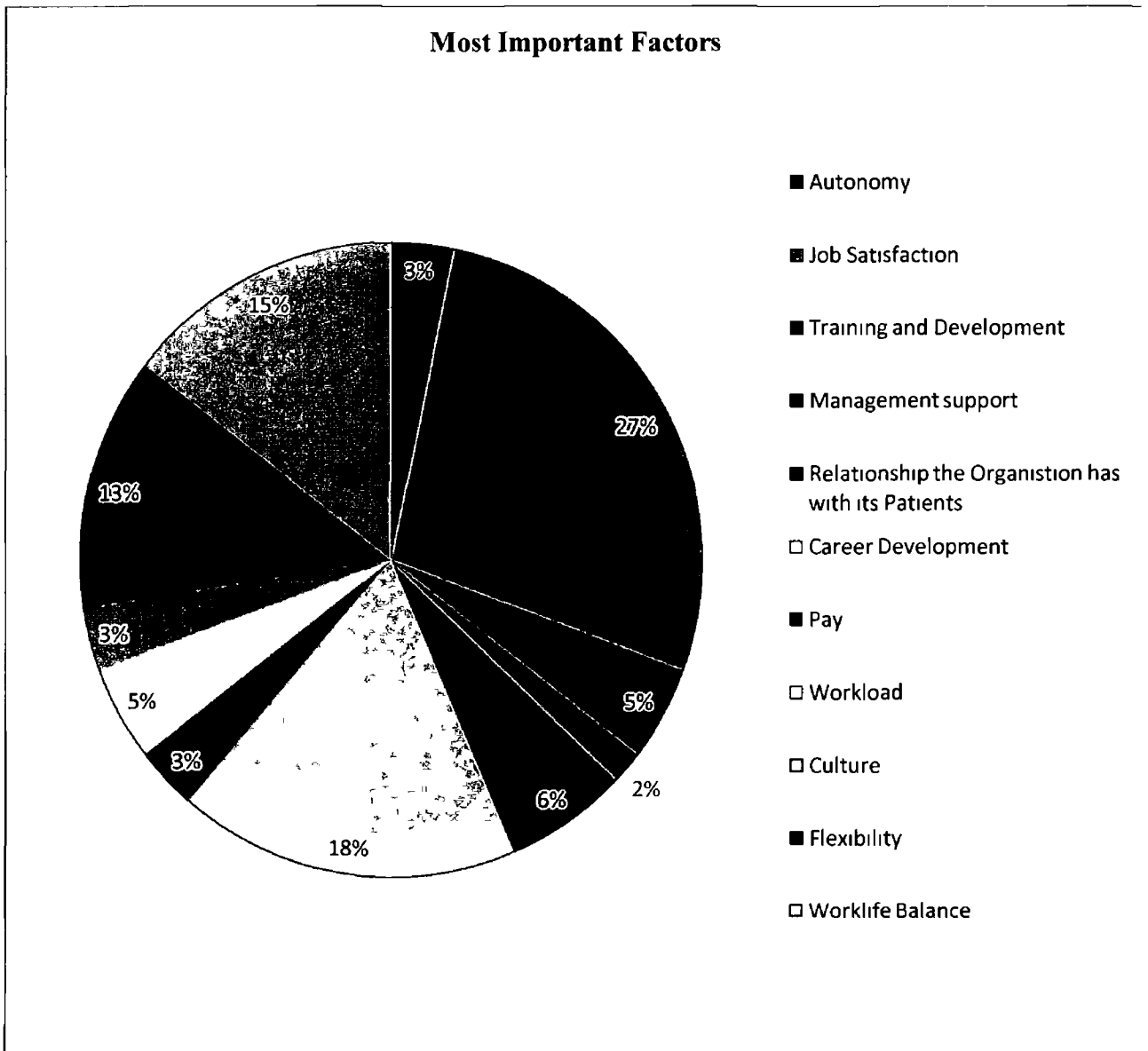


Figure 16 Q 18 Most Important Factors Indicated by Questionnaire Participants

APPENDIX 4 QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS TO Q 19

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Flexibility	More reliable
	This important as it affects job performance and job satisfaction
Culture	Culture within organisation is focused on cost cutting measures and not on patients
Workload	Very demanding (13 hour shift), takes toll on physical, mental and personal well being Become danger to themselves and others Go above and beyond duty of care
Pay	Qualifications and experience are good, would consider leaving for better wages
Career Development	Improvement in social and personal life
	Want a career, need a goal

	Further develop career, 3 years general, 18 months paediatrics Enjoy progressing my knowledge and developing my clinical practice
	Experience and promotion, better working hours
Work Life Balance	Young family, want to enjoy children growing up
	Cannot separate work and life from each other, have to learn to balance both Stage of life I am in at the moment
Training and Development	Want to learn consistently
Job Satisfaction	Years of working in different ward settings have shown me that at the end of the day Job Satisfaction is very important

	for delivering a good level of care
	Rewarding work and more satisfying, want to enjoy work

Figure 17 Q 19 Responses regarding reasons for choosing a factor as most important

APPENDIX 5 INTERVIEWS WITH MANAGEMENT

Subject A Clinical Nurse Manager, Connaught

Can you confirm the results of the age and gender distribution?

Yes, the majority of nurses employed by the HSE are in the age range between 35 and 45, closely followed by those in the 25 to 35 age range

Historically, nursing has been a female dominated profession so these percentage splits are expected

Hours of work indicated by respondents

The majority of nurse work these hours It would be rare to see a nurse that worked less than 30 hours and rarer still to see a nurse who put in over 60 hours Only very demanding roles would justify over 60 hours of work

A questionnaire examining turnover and retention factors showed the following findings What is your opinion of these findings and do you believe they accurately reflect events at your hospital?

I find these results very interesting, some I expected but others surprised me The factors such as public reputation and the relationship the organisation has with its patients showed results I would have suspected

Shockingly, the purpose of the organisation resulted in 15% indicating it would influence a decision to leave an employment while another 15% said it have not importance at all An organisation strives to instil values through their purpose and

vision to create a more unified nursing population. This is an area that needs to be improved upon.

The results regarding the culture of the organisation, appears to be promising. The HSE is going through a challenging time. A culture of cutbacks is prevalent throughout the organisation. 57% of the respondents displayed the culture as an important influence on them staying in an organisation. This is encouraging while battling a cost cutting culture.

Only 70% of those surveyed said that training and development would influence them to stay. This is acceptable but more could be done to improve this. The additional comment highlighted by one respondent is unfortunate but it is a reality in the current organisational culture. In my opinion more training should be provided to enable the HSE to keep delivering a high quality delivery of care.

I believe Career Development opportunities are linked with training and development opportunities. Training and development opportunities increase the skill sets of those employed by the HSE. This ultimately will make career progression easier.

The factors examining work life balance, workload and flexibility remarkably have similar results. They all link to together to influence a decision to stay or leave an employment. Nurses with young families and even older nurses in different stages of life would consider all three whilst making a decision. I, myself, have considered all three factors in the early stages of my career. I still afford these factors great importance while making a decision today.

Again, the level of significance of a job, level of autonomy and the overall level of satisfaction would clearly be considered together making a decision to stay or leave an

employment. The majority of those surveyed attributed the most importance in making a decision to stay in an employment. This is encouraging especially in today's economic climate. It shows that the levels are consistent throughout the organisation but clearly a lot more work needs to be done.

As part of the questionnaire the participants were asked to reflect on a set of management initiatives. Participants were asked to rate how important these practices would be, if implemented, in a decision to stay or leave an employment. What are your opinions on these practices and the response of those surveyed?

Firstly, I notice the overwhelming response to communicating more with staff about what is happening in the organisation. As we are a government funded organisation this is not surprising, we are constantly battling cost cutting and morale might be low at times. If by implementing such an initiative we retain more nurses it can only be advantageous. At the end of the day, it is hard to expect people to be happy if they don't know what is happening in the organisation that they work for. More communication about jobs is in the same league as the concern about the organisation. Fear is constant about job losses in this climate so any information about concerning job stability is greatly appreciated.

Provision of more job related training and increasing pay in line with performance are issues for finance and due to the current culture would be hard to implement. I agree whole heartedly with the practices but it is hard to believe it will come to fruition.

There are a number of reasons outside of the working environment which may influence a person to stay or leave an employment. The questionnaire asked respondents to indicate if any of the factors presented had ever influenced a

decision to stay or leave an employment What is your opinion of the factors and the results the participants generated

I found this an interesting bit of information to have I was not aware beforehand that such factors would have an affect on the turnover of an organisation I can see that the geographic location had the biggest response I assume this is due to the high percentage of females in the profession It is understandable to take location into account when young children need to be considered 29% was the next highest factor and this was attributed to availability of health services The nature of the participant's profession would undoubtedly ensure that this was taken in to account for both family and indeed employment opportunities

The last question of the survey asked respondents to indicate whether they had an intention to quit their employment. For those that answered yes, a follow up question asked for their reasons Were you aware of any intention to quit within the organisation and what are your opinions on the reasons?

I am not surprised by the level of intention Climate is tough at the minute, even if a participant had an intention to quit sometimes it is not possible At 89%, no intention to quit is very positive

APPENDIX 6 INTERVIEWS WITH MANAGEMENT

Subject B Senior Staff Nurse, Leinster

Can you confirm the results of the age and gender distribution?

Yes, the majority of nurses employed by the HSE are in the age range between 35 and 45 closely followed by those in the 25 to 35 age range. The embargo on recruitment at the minute throughout the HSE is undoubtedly decreasing the number of younger nurses employed by the Irish public health service. This has led to mass emigration and the loss of Irish trained talent.

Female dominated as to be expected.

Hours of work indicated by respondents

The majority of nurses work these hours. It would be rare to see a nurse that worked less than 30 hours and rarer still to see a nurse who put in over 60 hours. Only very demanding roles would justify over 60 hours of work. With less new graduates being recruited I believe working hours will start to rise.

A questionnaire examining turnover and retention factors showed the following findings. What is your opinion of these findings and do you believe they accurately reflect events at your hospital?

53% of those surveyed indicated that public reputation was not important in a decision to stay or leave, this was not surprising. Cost cutting measures in place by the organisation has weakened the reputation of the service. Nurses at the front line would witness this first hand.

Patients and purpose have similar patterns (70 and 80%) would be influence to stay The purpose of the organisation is to deliver quality healthcare service to patients and it is no wonder that they are linked

Culture has been hit by cost cutting measures, this figures display that participants are doing the best with what they have

Training and development opportunities and career opportunities display similar responses regarding the influence they have in influencing a decision to stay or leave an employment Although there is not much training being provided to nurses the figure looks promising Historically, it has been hard to progress to high positions within the nursing profession A 71% response to career development opportunities influencing a decision to stay is encouraging It shows that there is ambition and hope in the ranks

Factors such as work life balance, workload and flexibility are all very important in a decision to stay or leave an employment Younger nurses would consider all three very closely when a family is involved These factors do not just affect younger nurses, it is considered by all stages of life

The level of significance of a job, autonomy and overall job satisfaction are all important factors to be considered when making a decision This is clearly illustrated by the results of the questionnaire I note that all three factors provided similar results A high percentage of those surveyed would consider the factors in a decision to stay These levels are very promising for the future of the organisation

As part of the questionnaire the participants were asked to reflect on a set of management initiatives. Participants were asked to rate how important these

practices would be, if implemented, in a decision to stay or leave an employment

What are your opinions on these practices and the response of those surveyed?

More communication with staff about the organisation and their jobs were expected

The 100% response to the practices being very important is very interesting and definitely something to be looked into. Employees are happier when they are aware of the status of the organisation and the stability of their jobs.

The provision of more training and development and increasing pay in line with performance are cost related issues. Unfortunately with recruitment embargo in place and cost cutting ongoing these initiatives, however, advantageous might not be implemented. It is understandable why participants indicated these practices as important, training and development is essential for career progress and monetary compensation for reward.

As part of the questionnaire the participants were asked to reflect on a set of management initiatives. Participants were asked to rate how important these practices would be, if implemented, in a decision to stay or leave an employment

What are your opinions on these practices and the response of those surveyed?

The geographic factor was expected at 40%. Economic climate is a factor and indeed a nurse's need to relocate due to their speciality. I would have expected this factor to have influenced previous decisions to stay or leave an employment. A high response to the availability of health services was expected. As with the nature of the nursing profession, it was no surprise that participants would be influenced by this factor. This could be attributed to family reasons and to possible employment opportunities.

The last question of the survey asked respondents to indicate whether they had an intention to quit their employment. For those that answered yes, a follow up question asked for their reasons. Were you aware of any intention to quit within the organisation and what are your opinions on the reasons?

An 89% response with no intention to quit is very promising and is a good sign for the future of the organisation. This will lend stability to the day to day running of wards around the country. The reasons given for intentions to quit are not surprising and were expected.

APPENDIX 7 INTERVIEWS WITH MANAGEMENT

Subject C Senior Nurse Manager, Munster

Can you confirm the results of the age and gender distribution?

Yes, the majority of nurses employed by the HSE are in the age range between 35 and 45 closely followed by those in the 25 to 35 age range. An older population of nurses correlates to an older general population. People are living longer.

Female dominated as to be expected.

Hours of work indicated by respondents

The majority of nurses work these hours. It would be rare to see a nurse that worked less than 30 hours and rarer still to see a nurse who put in over 60 hours. Only very demanding roles would justify over 60 hours of work.

A questionnaire examining turnover and retention factors showed the following findings. What is your opinion of these findings and do you believe they accurately reflect events at your hospital?

The public reputation of the organisation and the culture of the organisation are the most surprising factors. Low levels indicating both factors as an influence in staying in an employment should be taken notice of and measures put in place to improve.

The relationship with patients and the purpose of the organisation show levels that are positive. The two factors are expectantly linked as they reflect duty of care.

Training and development opportunities correlate with opportunities within career development. Nurses want opportunities to both train and progress within their careers.

Factors such as work life balance, workload and flexibility are all very relative in a decision to stay or leave an employment. Young families need to be taken into account and the physical and emotional demands of the nursing profession can take its toll and cause strain on employees.

The level of significance, autonomy and job satisfaction all show very positive responses. High levels indicating job satisfaction as an influence in a decision to stay in an employment. In my experience a high level of autonomy increases job satisfaction.

As part of the questionnaire the participants were asked to reflect on a set of management initiatives. Participants were asked to rate how important these practices would be, if implemented, in a decision to stay or leave an employment. What are your opinions on these practices and the response of those surveyed?

In my opinion all these proposals are very interesting and that some should be implemented within the HSE.

Communication with staff about both what is happening in the organisation and their jobs is already in place to a certain extent. It seems from these figures more needs to be done to improve this practice.

Training and development opportunities and increasing pay practices are very appealing but are heavily dependant upon financial constraints. It might not be possible in the current climate due to constant cost cutting and cutbacks.

Staff participation with decision making would be very influential. Letting staff have their say encourages brainstorming and fresh ideas come from a new direction.

As part of the questionnaire the participants were asked to reflect on a set of management initiatives. Participants were asked to rate how important these practices would be, if implemented, in a decision to stay or leave an employment. What are your opinions on these practices and the response of those surveyed?

These factors are all understandable and very acceptable. I believe that all the factors would be influences around the country. I would have assumed Education would have had a higher response due to the high number of younger nurses working in the profession. Family is the biggest consideration in this area.

The last question of the survey asked respondents to indicate whether they had an intention to quit their employment. For those that answered yes, a follow up question asked for their reasons. Were you aware of any intention to quit within the organisation and what are your opinions on the reasons?

I would have expected a higher percentage of those confirming an intention to quit but can understand the percentage in today's climate. The reasons given are interesting but not surprising. Measures should be put in place to combat any preventable reasons for an intention to quit.

