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Personal, Professional, and Work-Life Balance Factors Influencing Nurses' Retention in Selected Government Hospitals in the Jaffna District, Sri Lanka

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Introduction: Retention of skilled nurses is crucial for quality healthcare, yet workforce stability in Sri Lanka remains a challenge. Evidence on how personal, professional, and work-life factors influence nurse retention in government hospitals in Sri Lanka is limited.

Objectives: This study aims to assess the influence of personal factors, professional factors, and work-life related factors on nurses' retention in selected government hospitals in the Jaffna District.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 282 nurses from Teaching Hospital Jaffna, Base Hospital Chavakachcheri, Base Hospital Point Pedro, and Base Hospital Thellipalai, using stratified random sampling. Data was collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire with a 3-point Likert scale (1=make me leave, 2=neutral, 3=make me retain). The instrument was validated by experts and demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.903$). Mean scores were interpreted as 1.00-1.49 = high intention to leave, 1.50-2.49 = neutral, and 2.50-3.00 = high intention to retain. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and independent t-tests ($p < 0.05$). Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethical Review Committee, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

Results: Majority of participants were female (68.8%, $n=194$), with a mean age of 33.28 ± 7.05 . Retention intention was significantly higher among nurses with greater job satisfaction (2.41 ± 0.59) compared to those with lower satisfaction (1.71 ± 0.60), , work-life balance factors (2.42 ± 0.58 vs. 2.10 ± 0.58), and family responsibilities (2.31 ± 0.60 vs. 1.99 ± 0.61 ; all $p < 0.01$). Professional development factors such as career-building opportunities (2.47 ± 0.60 vs. 2.00 ± 0.58), training participation (2.48 ± 0.57 vs. 2.03 ± 0.59), and support from senior staff (2.38 ± 0.61 vs. 2.05 ± 0.57 ; all $p < 0.001$) were also significant predictors. Work-life balance showed strong effects, with higher scores for scheduling satisfaction (2.51 ± 0.56), control over workload (2.45 ± 0.57), and time-off opportunities (2.39 ± 0.60) among nurses intending to stay ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: These findings underscore the need for context-specific workforce strategies that prioritize job satisfaction, professional growth, and work-life balance to enhance nurse retention in government hospitals of the Jaffna District.

Keywords: Nurse retention, Personal factors, Professional development, Work-life balance