


Job satisfaction and intent to leave among obstetric nurses

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Abstract

Introduction

The sustainability of the nursing workforce depends on the effective management of occupational stress and job satisfaction. Factors such as workload, organizational support and work environment influence the intention of nurses to stay or leave their jobs. Dissatisfaction, especially in obstetric contexts, can lead to increased turnover, affecting both mental health and organizational commitment of professionals.

Objective

To analyze the job satisfaction and intent to leave among obstetric nurses.

Methods

Qualitative, descriptive and exploratory study carried out with seven obstetric nurses from a university hospital in southern Brazil. The collection took place through a semi-structured interview and the data were submitted to Discursive Textual Analysis. The research respected the ethical precepts established in Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health Council. Participants were identified with pseudonyms.

Results

Two categories emerged: “Job satisfaction among obstetric nurses”, showing the suffering and psychological exhaustion lead nurses to dissatisfaction to work in the obstetric center and, “Intent to leave among obstetric nurses” bringing disappointment in working in the unit.

Conclusion

It is clear that obstetric nurses are dissatisfied with their work and they express an intention to leave.

Keywords

Nurse Midwives; Personnel Turnover; Psychological Distress; Job Satisfaction.

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Introduction

The sustainability of the nursing workforce is intrinsically linked to the effective approach to human resources issues related to stress in the workplace and job satisfaction. The literature shows that the challenges inherent in the provision of health care, which initially attract nurses, can become sources of occupational stress, job dissatisfaction, reduced prospects for work capacity, increased absenteeism and the intention to leave employment.¹

By fostering job satisfaction, work ability and a safe environment, it is possible to decrease the intention of workers to leave their jobs. Therefore, nursing managers need to understand these factors to develop strategies that keep nursing professionals in the work process, aligned with the institution's objectives.² The nurse's intention to remain or leave their job is associated with factors such as self-assessment of health, monthly income, working hours, violence originating from the patients, perception of respect for the patients, coordination between physicians and nurses, and job satisfaction.³ There are often related to various manifestations of adverse reactions and abandonment of employment. This includes low engagement with the organization, frequent absences, and intention to leave the job, high turnover, and job dissatisfaction.⁴

Organizational factors, such as adequate staff and a positive work environment, significantly influence nurses' decisions to remain in their positions. When these factors are absent, nurses are more likely to express intentions to leave.⁵

The work context in obstetric centers has a significant influence on the intention of health professionals to leave their jobs. Factors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and the quality of the work environment are crucial in this decision. Dissatisfaction at work, usually resulting from overload, lack of organizational support and difficulties in reconciling work and personal life, can increase the intention of professionals to leave the profession. Studies indicate that both obstetric nurses are directly impacted by these factors, which can lead to an increase in turnover.⁶⁻⁷

Research indicates that obstetric nurses experience significant dissatisfaction in their functions, which correlates with the intention to give up. One study highlighted that factors such as high workload, emotional stress and inadequate support contribute to job dissatisfaction among these nurses. In addition, a survey revealed that many obstetric nurses feel undervalued and overwhelmed, which not only affects their job satisfaction, but also their mental health, leading them to think about leaving the profession.^{5,8}

Thus, the following research question was outlined: What is the relationship between job satisfaction and the intention to leave the job among obstetric nurses? The

objective was to analyze job satisfaction and the intention to leave the job among obstetric nurses.

Methods

This is a qualitative, descriptive and exploratory study carried out in a university hospital in southern Brazil. The study was conducted with obstetric nurses, where the selection of participants was intentional, according to the inclusion criteria: obstetric nurses working for at least one month in the obstetric center and excluding those who were on sick leave or away from work for any reason during data collection. Of the 11 professionals invited, 01 refused to answer and 3 did not answer, totaling 7 participants.

The data were collected in August to October 2021, and initially the head of the sector was contacted in order to explain the objectives of the research. The head of the nurses' telephone contact was requested, which was passed on to send the invitation, via text message via WhatsApp, to participate in the research.

Nurses were invited to participate in data collection, explaining the objectives, risks and benefits of the research. Due to the health panorama related to the Covid-19 Pandemic, data collection took place online, through the Google meet platform, according to convenience and availability, without interfering with the progress of the professionals' activities.

The interviews were conducted individually by the researchers. The semi-structured interview guide included characterization questions, and then open questions that discuss the experiences and manifestations of dissatisfaction with work and the intention to leave the job, consisting of the following questions: "How do you feel about this routine?", "How do you evaluate the working conditions in this sector?", "Do you believe that conflicts or the way you face situations that occur in the workplace affect your health?", "How is care provided to the patients in this sector?". The interviews were recorded for later transcription with the authorization of the interviewee, with a mean duration of approximately 42 minutes per interview. The confidentiality agreement and the informed consent form were signed via form. The sample size was due to data saturation, that is, when it is observed that the participants' responses become repeated and redundant, so that the collection of a greater amount of data does not generate new information.⁹

The speeches were transcribed by a qualified scholarship holder from the research group together with the researcher. The information was organized in the Microsoft Word software and submitted to discursive textual analysis, which aims to deconstruct and reconstruct the researcher's understanding, so that new understandings emerge from the investigated phenomena.

This analysis went through three stages: 1) unitarization that consists of the deconstruction of the texts of the

corpus; 2) categorization that establishes relationships between the unitary elements; and 3) capture of the new and the emerging understanding is communicated and validated.¹⁰ In the first stage of unitarization, the interviews were examined in detail in order to identify constituent units of the studied phenomenon. This stage, in turn, also followed three steps: 1) fragmentation of texts and coding of each unit; 2) rewriting of each unit in order to recognize a meaning in it; and 3) assigning a title to each unit (Moraes; Galiazzi, 2016).

In the second stage of categorization, the units of analysis were organized and grouped in order to compose categories that established relationships between the elements. In the third stage, related to a new understanding of the phenomenon studied, meta-texts were produced based on the units of analysis and categories (Moraes; Galiazzi, 2016). The research respected the ethical precepts established in Resolution 466/2012 of the National Health

Results

Seven obstetric nurses participated in the research, of which 100% (n=7) were female. Regarding the age group, 42.8% (n=03) of the participants were aged between 28-39 years and 57.2% (n=04) were aged between 40-61 years and had worked for more than 6 years in the obstetric center; the reports were divided into two categories, as shown in the following box:

Box 1: Categories

Category	Subcategory
Job satisfaction	Suffering and psychological exhaustion
Intention to leave the job	Demotivation.

Source: Authors

Job satisfaction among obstetric nurses

As a result of suffering and psychological exhaustion, it is clear that obstetric nurses are dissatisfied with working in the obstetric center. Job dissatisfaction is reported by the nurses' awareness of suffering constraints that prevent them from fulfilling the proposed work.

"A little frustrated! Because, in fact, the work I set out to do, for which I came, was boycotted" (NUR06)

"But it's a very slow change and, until it happens, I already had several colleagues who have already left the obstetric center, who are obstetric nurses too, because they couldn't stand to see what was happening [...]" (NUR03)

"So, we can't do a complete job, as an obstetric nurse, you know? This is something that bothers me." (NUR04)

Intent to leave among obstetric nurses

The intention to leave the job was verified by the disappointment in working in the obstetric center.

"I used to feel better. It was once my dream to work there. I'm currently looking at strategies to feel better or maybe even get another job." (NUR05)

"[...] you can't work like this; you end up isolating yourself from... In a painful way, but you end up moving away from patients and you want to give up on everything [...]" (NUR06)

Council.¹¹ The participants were identified with pseudonyms formed by the acronym "Nurse 01, Nurse 02...", followed by the order number of the interviews. The data were saved on an external hard drive, and deleted from the cloud and will be kept for a period of five years according to the confidentiality agreement, approved by the Research Ethics Committee with opinion 4,847,212, July 14, 2021.

The emergence of only two main categories is due to the saturation of information related to the objectives of the study. During the process of discursive textual analysis, it was observed that the participants' answers converged to two major thematic axes that encompass multiple aspects of their experiences: "Satisfaction with work" and "Intention to leave work". Despite the breadth of the question script, the reports showed greater intensity and relevance in these two domains, justified by the specific working conditions reported by the participants.

Discussion

Job satisfaction and the intention to leave the job among obstetric nurses are linked to factors that reflect an organizational and systemic scenario. Dissatisfaction, often manifested by challenges such as excessive workload, lack of recognition and barriers to the implementation of humanized practices, generates a negative impact on both the well-being of professionals and the quality of care provided. Dissatisfaction in the work environment is associated with excessive workload, where the volume of activities exceeds the operational capacity of nurses, generating physical and mental exhaustion.¹² The difficulty in implementing humanized practices, especially in contexts that prioritize the biomedical model, leads to misalignment with the ethical and professional principles of nurses.¹³ The little appreciation of the specialized learning of obstetric nurses by the medical team, as in the case of the management of vaginal delivery, accentuates the feeling of demotivation.⁷ Difficult interpersonal relationships and the absence of institutional support also aggravate discontent.¹⁴ The illness of obstetric nursing professionals emerges as a threat to the continuity of quality care. Factors such as emotional exhaustion and the feeling of powerlessness in the face of decisions unrelated to good practices contribute to situations of stress, burnout and

absence from work.⁵ Dissatisfaction, combined with emotional exhaustion, significantly influences the intention of turnover, especially when nurses perceive that their professional competencies and values are not recognized.¹⁵ Studies show that favorable environments, with psychological support and recognition of individual contributions, are essential to reverse this scenario.¹⁶ To mitigate these challenges, actions such as the revision of institutional policies are necessary to promote fairer working conditions, with adequate teams and reduction of overload.¹⁷ Offering opportunities for professional development and updating that value the specialized performance of obstetric nurses is also fundamental.⁷ In addition, it is necessary to implement psychological support programs that take care of the mental health of professionals and strengthen interprofessional dialogue, promoting the inclusion of nurses in care decisions.¹⁵ The interaction between job satisfaction and intention to leave reflects the need for a holistic look at working conditions and institutional factors that impact the practice of obstetric nurses. Valuing these professionals is essential to ensure retention and continuous improvement in obstetric care.¹⁴

Conclusion

The results show that obstetric nurses are dissatisfied with their work and intend to leave their jobs. This study contributes to both practice and theory by highlighting the complex dynamics that influence job satisfaction and intention to leave employment among obstetric nurses. In the practical sphere, the results highlight the need to reassess the work environment and management practices in health institutions, proposing greater appreciation and recognition of the specialized knowledge of these professionals. The lack of autonomy and underutilization of obstetric skills emerge as critical factors that directly impact the motivation and retention of these professionals, suggesting the urgency of strategies that promote autonomy in decision-making and collaborative integration in the care of parturients.

From a theoretical point of view, the study reinforces the importance of investigating the relationship between job satisfaction, professional appreciation and intention to abandon in specific groups of nurses, contributing to a growing body of literature on well-being and management in the field of nursing.

The implications for nursing management and work policies are clear: it is essential to implement organizational practices that value the technical knowledge of obstetric nurses, promote inclusive work environments and encourage a culture of recognition and autonomy. In addition, retention policies should prioritize evidence-based interventions that address the factors of dissatisfaction highlighted, also considering the specificities of public and private institutions.

Future research can expand on these findings, investigating how the characteristics of different health institutions influence levels of dissatisfaction and abandonment, as well as exploring concrete interventions that can increase job satisfaction and strengthen the permanence of obstetric nurses in the labor market.

Study limitations

As a limitation of the Dar study, the study was carried out in a single university hospital in southern Brazil, which may not reflect the realities of other places or health institutions and data collection occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have influenced the participants' responses due to increased stress and changes in working conditions.

Authorship and Contributions

Villagran CA: Data collection; Writing the manuscript; Critical revision of the manuscript; Approval of the final version of the manuscript;

Lanes TC: Data collection; Writing the manuscript; Critical revision of the manuscript;

Dalmolin GL: Conception and design of the study; Data collection; Writing the manuscript; Critical revision of the manuscript; Approval of the final version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of interest and funding

No conflicts of interest have been declared by the authors.

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