Why do we enter and why do we stay? A study of registered nurses’ motivation for entering the profession and occupational commitment

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Background

- Low retention rates contribute to the nursing shortage
- Motivation for entry and occupational commitment may be important predictors of intent to remain with an employer until retirement

Purpose

- To examine relationship of registered nurses’ (RN) motivation for entering the profession, occupational commitment, select demographic variables and intent to remain with an employer

Conceptual Framework

- Occupational Commitment
  - Altruistic Motivation
  - Analytical Motivation

- Motivation for entry into occupation
- Trajectory of Education
- Intent to remain with employer

Results

- Sample (N = 150)
  - Mean age 46 years
  - Education: N (%)  
    - Diploma 4 (3)  
    - BS 53 (35)  
    - Doctorate 4 (3)  
  - AD 34 (23)  
  - MS 54 (36)
- Length of time in profession: 89 (59%) had >10 years
- Time in current position: 83 (55%) 4 years or more
- Number of children: 104 (69%) had children

Implications for Educators

- Teach importance of obligation and loyalty to profession as it relates to normative commitment
- Recognize that older adults are likely to be more committed to remain in nursing as an occupation

Implications for Administrators

- Encourage loyalty and obligation in RNs through transformational changes in healthcare environments (e.g., open communication, participatory decision-making)
- Accommodate older nurses to maximize retention
- Explore retention strategies aimed at accommodating younger nurses

DEMographic VARIABLES:

- Age, marital status, number of children, education, full or part-time work status, length of time in profession and in current position

Method

- Descriptive survey design
- Convenience sample of RNs enrolled in a school of nursing and/or employed at the associated university medical center
- Blau’s 4 dimensional measure of occupational commitment  
  - ~24 item Likert scale measured affective, normative, accumulated costs and limited alternatives commitment (modified version)  
  - ~11 items added to measure motivation for entry

Major Findings

- Long-term commitment:
  - Normative commitment and age were the strongest predictors of intent to remain with employer until retirement
  - Normative commitment, age, length of time in profession and in current position, and number of children correlated with intent to remain

Conceptual Definitions

- Altruistic motivation – calling or desire to help others
- Analytical motivation – job security, salary, benefits
- Affective commitment – emotional attachment
- Normative commitment – feeling of obligation and loyalty
- Accumulated costs commitment – concern for losses associated with leaving
- Limited alternatives commitment – available options in pursuing another occupation