

Identifying Occupational and Non-Occupational Factors Affecting the Retention of Health Care Employees in the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review Study

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Article Info

Received: 2021/02/19;

Accepted: 2021/05/06;

ePublished: 2021/05/18

 [10.30699/jergon.9.1.15](https://doi.org/10.30699/jergon.9.1.15)

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: Increasing the retention of health care workers in the context of Covid-19 expansion is one of the most important challenges for the health care systems. To design a strategy to maintain health care workers, it is necessary to identify the factors influencing willingness to work or leave the job among health care workers. This study aimed to identify the factors affecting the willingness to work or leave the job among health care workers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Methods: To identify relevant publications, the online Databases including Scopus, PubMed, Web of Science, and ProQuest were searched on October 20, 2020. Based on the inclusion criteria, only studies that investigated the factors influencing willingness to work or motivation to leave the job among health care workers during the Covid-19 pandemic were included.

Results: Of the 610 studies found through searching, after deleting similar and unrelated studies, a number of 10 cross-sectional articles with a sample size of 15834 subjects were selected. Obtained findings indicated that the willingness to work among health care workers ranged from 61% to 98.7% and averaged 83.5%. The results of studies showed that job factors such as work experience, previous work experience in emergency time or Covid-19, workload, cooperation between employees, the relationship between employees and managers, access to personal protective equipment, and welfare facilities were significantly proportional to the willingness of health care workers to work.

Conclusion: The results of this study showed to design a strategy to maintain the health care workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, a broad range of occupational and psychological variables should be considered. Due to the limited number and quality of studies and the extent of influential variables, more studies are needed in this field.

Keywords: Corona, Covid-19, Crisis, Retention, Healthcare Workers



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How to Cite This Article:

Khosravipour M, Khanlari P, Jafari M R. Identifying Occupational and Non-Occupational Factors Affecting the Retention of Health Care Employees in the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review Study. Iran J Ergon. 2021; 9 (1) :15-32

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Increasing the retention of health care workers in the context of COVID-19 expansion is one of the most important challenges for the health care systems. This study aimed to identify the factors affecting the willingness to work or leave the job among health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods

Science, and ProQuest were searched on October 20, 2020. Based on the inclusion criteria, only studies that investigated the factors influencing willingness to work or motivation to leave the job among health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic were included.

Results

Of the 610 studies found through searching, after deleting similar and unrelated studies, a number of 10 cross-sectional articles with a sample size of 15834 subjects were selected. The willingness to work among health care workers ranged from 61% to 98.7% and averaged 83.5%. The results of studies showed that job factors such as work experience, previous work experience in emergency time or COVID-19, workload, cooperation between employees, the relationship between employees and managers, access to personal protective equipment, and welfare facilities were significantly proportional to the willingness of health care workers to work.

Discussion

In this systematic review study, the factors affecting the motivation of health workers to stay or leave their jobs during the corona pandemic were investigated. After searching in databases with relevant keywords, 10 articles that met the required conditions based on inclusion criteria were reviewed. The results of the study showed that a high percentage of health care workers tend to stay in their jobs during the corona pandemic and care for patients. Although people differed in their views on this issue, some considered this positive sense of willingness to work

and care for patients with COVID-19 as part of their job and considered leaving the job to be immoral and unprofessional. On the other hand, one group had a different opinion. They attributed their willingness to work only to the rules of the job and the commitments they made when joining the organization. However, although it can be said that most employees highly tend to work for any reason, there are influential factors that can be particularly effective in motivating those employees who work in the organization only on the basis of job commitment.

In this study, we observed that demographic variables have a small effect on the willingness of health care workers to work during the corona pandemic. In other words, none of the studies that examined the gender of individuals found a significant relationship between gender and the level of motivation or willingness to work. Similarly, there was no significant relationship between the variables of having children and their number with the level of willingness to work. Regarding the variables of education level and marital status, although some studies showed a significant relationship, in most studies that examined these variables, there was no significant relationship between these variables and the level of willingness to work. However, the conditions were different for age and income level, and it was found that almost half of the studies that examined the relationship between these variables and the level of willingness to work, reported this relationship as significant. In these studies, it was observed that with increasing age and income, the motivation to leave the job during the pandemic conditions significantly decreases. Overall, although the number of studies is limited, demographic characteristics appear to have a limited effect on employees' willingness to work during the corona pandemic.

Another group of influential factors studied in the studies are job variables. In this study, it was observed that most of these variables are significantly related to the willingness of people to work during the corona pandemic. These results were consistent

with a review study by Mohammadiaghdam *et al.* regarding the job variables and physicians staying in deprived places such as villages [30]. Regarding the work experience variable, there was a direct and significant relationship in most studies that examined the relationship between this variable and the desire to work or the motivation to leave the organization; in other words, these studies found that people with more work experience were more likely to want to work. Given that there is a direct relationship between age and work experience, it is likely that the relationship between age and willingness to work, which was observed in some studies, is influenced by people's work history. Similarly, the variable of previous work experience in corona pandemic or emergency situations was significantly associated with a decrease in employee willingness to work in most studies.

Another job-related variable that was significantly associated with employee desire in studies was the job position variable. In all studies that examined this variable, it was found that employees with higher job positions such as head nurses or heads of wards were significantly more inclined to work compared to general nurses. Also, there was a significant relationship between the work department and the willingness of individuals to work in most studies. Employees in departments such as the emergency department and the ICU were less likely to work than those in departments such as surgery and internal medicine. The reason for this can be related to the direct exposure of these people to patients with COVID-19. The other variables examined were the type of employment (full-time-part-time) and the amount of workload. No significant relationship was observed in any of the studies that examined the relationship between employment type and willingness to work. On the other hand, the increase in workload was significantly associated with an increase in the tendency to leave work, which is also concluded in a systematic review study [31]. Of course, this can depend on the size of the workforce, the size of the organization,

private or public, and the organization being specialized or public.

Anxiety, stress, and fear of caring for people with COVID-19 were other variables that were studied in their relationship to willingness to work. In almost all studies that examined these variables, increased levels of anxiety, stress, and fear associated with COVID-19 care were significantly associated with increased motivation to leave work. On the contrary, increasing the level of knowledge and awareness related to Corona, participating in Corona-related training programs, increasing the level of social support for employees, effective communication between staff and managers, good communication between staff (nurse and doctors) and patient and increasing sense of teamwork in employees, were other variables that were significantly associated with increased willingness to work or decreased motivation to leave the job. The availability of appropriate personal protective equipment were another important variable that was significantly associated with a decrease in the level of fear and anxiety caused by corona and thus increase the level of willingness to work. These factors, which are part of the characteristics of working conditions and environment, are discussed in another study showing the willingness of the employees to stay [32-33].

Conclusion

The results of this study showed to maintain the health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, a broad range of occupational and psychological variables should be considered. Due to the limited number of studies and the extent of influential variables, more studies are needed in this field.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank all those who supported them in this project.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.