Reviewer’s report

Title: The determinants and consequences of adult nurse staff turnover: a systematic review of systematic reviews

Version: 0 Date: 27 Mar 2016

Reviewer: James Vardaman

Reviewer's report:

Review of "The determinants and consequences of adult nurse staff turnover: a systematic review of systematic reviews."

This paper offers a review of 9 review articles on nurse turnover. I agree with the authors that many reviews have been completed on this topic and that synthesizing them offers a useful platform for future research. I believe this work has the potential to contribute to the literature on nurse retention, but also has a few issues that need to be addressed. These issues are detailed below.

1. The papers selected for the review appear to represent the literature comprehensively, and I think the idea of reviewing all the reviews is a good one. Nurse turnover has been studied extensively and there are a lot of reviews in the literature. The topic has been exhausted to some degree and bringing together the reviews is very interesting. That said, the review of reviews doesn't really bring a new perspective in its current form. I appreciate that the authors examined Gilmartin's model as they noted on page 6 of the paper, but I think discussing how the results fit into a more comprehensive turnover model in the broader HR literature might bring a new perspective on nursing turnover. Holtom et al. (2008) have a comprehensive model in their paper, and discussing how nursing turnover studies fit into that framework might ignite new insights and new ideas for future research. If you don't like the Holtom model, Vardaman et al. (2015) have a discussion of extant turnover models and propose a two-stage model of turnover. This paper also sheds light on the intentions versus turnover behavior issue you've highlighted and features a sample of nurses. I realize your paper is specifically on nurse turnover, but applying a framework from the broader turnover literature in management would give the review added novelty and impact. This need not take multiple pages or even be a featured aspect of the paper, but I think an integration or at least a discussion of your findings in the context of such a framework would be valuable and add to the paper's contribution.

2. The paper is executed very well. I found the categorizing of factors that predict turnover to be sensible, and the insights provided were very readable and straightforward. My issue
relates back to point 1, in that although you are reviewing reviews, nothing that is reported is really all that unexpected or novel. For the most part, I don't know more from reading this paper than I would from reading all the other reviews (I acknowledge that your paper does provide a one-stop article for this information and that is valuable, but it in itself doesn't bring a new perspective). This is why I think applying a framework from the broader turnover literature in management is so important. Doing so provides a new perspective that makes your review much more impactful and would give it the added novelty it needs.

3. The confluence of turnover intentions and turnover in the literature is quite problematic. Meta-analysis in the management field (Griffeth et al. 2000) demonstrates that intentions only explain about 20% of turnover variance, and an entire literature has emerged on the reasons for this weak linkage (e.g., Allen et al., 2005). Extant turnover frameworks suggest turnover intentions are a part of the process and not a proxy for turnover behavior. Turnover intentions are in fact not translated into behavior in most cases. I realize you and the authors of past reviews are at the mercy of the studies that have been done in on nurse turnover in the past, but the paper should note this issue. I believe addressing point 1 will help in this regard. I strongly encourage the authors to discuss a turnover framework from the management literature (which would detail that intentions are a step in the process, not a proxy) to help address this issue and the one raised in comment 1.

4. The explanation of job-related determinants was nicely-done. I was struck by the fact that no work has been done on working conditions. Recent work on the role of working conditions in nurse turnover (Vardaman et al., 2014) suggests this could be area of future explanation that has been ignored in past work. I think noting this would be interesting for the reader.

MINOR POINTS

5. Line 4 on page 20 has a strikethrough that should be removed.

6. Why is "adult" specified throughout the manuscript? This is a minor issue but I would assume all RN's or other professionals would be assumed to be adults.

In sum, I very much enjoyed the paper and I feel it has the potential to add to the body of knowledge on nurse retention. The review was well-executed, the paper was clear and easy to read, and the topic is interesting. I believe the contribution and impact of the paper will be enhanced by addressing the comments above.
References


Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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