UNDERSTANDING NORTHERN HOSPITAL NURSES’ INTENTIONS TO REMAIN

Over the past number of years there has been an ongoing discussion related to the shortage of nurses in North America. This shortage is expected to continue into the foreseeable future. The retention problem would appear to be particularly acute in the northern and rural parts of Canada (Hyde-Price, 1998).

The purpose of this research study is to identify factors that were related to the nurses intention to remain in their northern and rural hospitals. The factors examined related to management actions over which local management would have some control and the ties the nurses had to the local community. A model was developed which used work experiences, job latitude and community ties as predictors of job satisfaction, affection and continuance commitment and ultimately intention to remain.

Four hypotheses were developed and tested that were derived from the predicted model. Data were collected from 122 nurses that worked in 13 hospitals within Western Canada. These nurses responded to questionnaires and were interviewed by the lead author and his research assistants. The questionnaire included scales on intention to remain, affective and continuance commitment, job satisfaction, ties to the community, management actions and job latitude. Regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses. The results either fully supported or partially supported all of the hypotheses. Intention to remain was predicted by affective commitment, continuance commitment, and ties to the community. Affective commitment was predicted by job satisfaction and management actions. Continuance commitment was predicted by ties to the community and organization tenure. Job satisfaction was predicted by management actions and job latitude.

Overall, the results highlighted the importance of ties to the community and management actions in fostering organizational commitment and employee’s intention to continue working in the hospital. Managerial actions were actions that were under local managerial control.