Relationship between Nursing Professionalism, Internal Marketing, and Turnover Intention among Hospital Nurses

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Abstract

This descriptive study investigates nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention among hospital nurses. The purpose of this study was to identify the relationships among turnover intention, internal marketing (an internal factor of turnover intention), and nursing professionalism (an external factor of turnover intention). Subjects included nurses from a hospital located in Seoul and Chungbuk, and voluntary participation and confidentiality were explained to each subject who agreed to participate. Data were collected from a total of 270 undergraduate students using a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 18.0. Results indicated that the average score for hospital nurses' nursing professionalism was 3.30 (out of 5), 2.58 for internal marketing, and 3.91 for turnover intention, respectively. Nursing professionalism differed significantly depending on age ($F = 4.10$, $p = .007$) and career length ($F = 2.97$, $p = .032$). Internal marketing also significantly differed depending on age ($F = 3.58$, $p = .014$), career length ($F = 7.29$, $p < .001$), and shift type ($F = 3.43$, $p = .034$). Additionally, there were significant differences in turnover intention depending on marital status ($t = 2.21$, $p = .028$), shift type ($F = 6.39$, $p = .002$), and position ($F = 5.49$, $p = .005$). Furthermore, there was a positive correlation between nursing professionalism and internal marketing ($r = .36$, $p < .001$), and a negative correlation between internal marketing and turnover intention ($r = -.28$, $p < .001$). Nurses' turnover intention is associated with internal marketing and nursing professionalism; hence, it is important to implement internal marketing tactics centered on preventing emotional fatigue and to employ strategies that encourage nursing professionalism.

Keywords: Internal Marketing, Nurse, Nursing Professionalism, Turnover Intention

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Nurse turnover is one of the most critical issues in hospital management. Thus, managing nurse turnover is an imperative task for nurse managers[1]. A high nurse turnover rate in clinics has multiple repercussions. For instance, such a situation undermines patient safety, raises medical costs, increases demoralization and fatigue among colleagues, cripples nursing professionalism, and frustrates nurse recruitment efforts[2,3]. In Korea, the average nurse turnover from 2010–2014 was between 16.6% and 18.9%. Moreover, the proportion of nurses with turnover intention reached a substantial 70–80 %[4].

The factors that are associated with nurses' turnover and turnover intention can be broadly categorized into those related to general features and those associated with the work environment. Factors related to general characteristics include age, education level, position, marital status, experience, working unit, and hospital size[2-6]. The factors related to the work environment include wage, promotion, welfare, relationships with doctors, and workers' negative attitudes[2]. A thorough examination of the literature revealed that the variables most commonly related to turnover intention include age, shift type, organizational commitment, emotional intelligence, job

satisfaction, job stress, internal marketing, emotional incongruence, job autonomy, nursing professionalism, fatigue, emotional labor, doctors' decision-making capacity, job-home conflict, and cynicism[6,7].

Nursing professionalism refers to the professional view of nursing care and the nursing profession, which encompasses the ideas, beliefs, and impressions of general and specialist nurses[8]. Nurses who display high nursing professionalism tend to show low turnover intention[9]. Because turnover intention, along with performance capacity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, is a key variable that accounts for 67.9% of nursing professionalism, nursing professionalism was selected as the internal factor variable for turnover intention.

This study identified the relationships among turnover intention, internal marketing (an internal factor of turnover intention), and nursing professionalism (an external factor of turnover intention). Such an understanding provides a basis for developing effective turnover reduction methods, while also offering valuable basic data for the development of training programs to curtail turnover among new nurses or nursing students.

1.2 Objectives
The objectives of this study were as follows:
- To analyze undergraduate students' general characteristics;
- To analyze the levels of nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention among hospital nurses;
- To analyze the differences in hospital nurses' nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention according to their general characteristics; and
- To analyze the correlations between hospital nurses' nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention.

2. Methods

2.1 Research Design
This study used a descriptive design to investigate nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention among hospital nurses.

2.2 Sample and Data Collection
Subjects included nurses in a university hospital located in Seoul and Chungbuk. The study's purpose, and the rights to voluntary participation and confidentiality were explained to each subject prior to participation. A total of 300 nurses completed a questionnaire survey between May and June, 2013. After excluding 30 questionnaires with unclear or missing responses, 270 questionnaires were used as the research data.

2.3 Research Instruments

2.3.1. Nursing Professionalism
This study used a nursing professionalism instrument developed by Yeun, Kwon, & Ahn[8]. Nursing professionalism was rated on a five-point scale, with one point representing 'very negative' and five points representing 'very positive'. Higher scores indicated a higher degree of nursing professionalism among hospital nurses. The Cronbach's α was 0.927.

2.3.2 Internal Marketing
An instrument that had been revised and compensated by Choi and Ha[10] was used to measure internal marketing among hospital nurses in this study. Items were rated on a five-point scale, with one point representing 'very negative' and five points representing 'very positive'. Higher scores indicated a higher degree of internal marketing activities among hospital nurses. The Cronbach's α was 0.918.

2.3.3 Turnover Intention
This study used the turnover intention instrument developed by Yeun, Kim[7]. Turnover intention was rated on a five-point scale, with one point representing 'very negative' and five points representing 'very positive'. Higher scores indicated a higher degree of turnover intention among hospital nurses. The Cronbach's α was 0.811.

2.4 Data Analysis
The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 18.0. The following analyses were conducted:

The frequencies and percentages of subjects' general characteristics were calculated; 2) The level of nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention were analyzed by calculating the average and standard deviation of the scores; 3) To analyze the differences in nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention according to subjects' general characteristics, t-tests and analysis of variance

(ANOVA) were conducted; and 4) The correlation between nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention among hospital nurses was analyzed using the Pearson's correlation coefficient.

3. Results

3.1 Subjects' General Characteristics

Table 1 presents the subjects' general characteristics. In

Table 1. Subjects' general characteristics (N=270)

Characteristic	Classify	n(%)	Nursing professionalism M(SD)	Internal marketing M(SD)	Turnover intention M(SD)
		270(100)	3.30(.40)	2.58(.48)	3.91(.53)
Age(yr.)	≤25	76(28.1)	3.37(.35)	2.68(.46)	3.89(.48)
	26-29	88(32.6)	3.28(.43)	2.54(.45)	3.99(.42)
	30-39	87(32.2)	3.21(.40)	2.49(.52)	3.89(.56)
	40≤	|19(7.0)	3.50(.39)	2.80(.42)	3.66(.84)
	F		4.10	3.58	2.18
	p		.007†	.014*	.091
Education	College	159(58.9)	3.29(.39)	2.59(.45)	3.91(.53)
	Bachelors	99(36.7)	3.28(.40)	2.56(.52)	3.86(.50)
	≥Masters	12(4.4)	3.55(.56)	2.65(.53)	4.17(.57)
	F		2.54	.25	1.81
	p		.081	.783	.165
Marital status	Single	200(74.1)	3.30(.41)	2.58(.47)	3.95(.48)
	Married	70(25.9)	3.31(.39)	2.57(.53)	3.79(.63)
	t		-.16	.14	2.21
	p		.871	.890	.028*
Career(yr.)	≤2	86(31.9)	3.39(.36)	2.72(.47)	3.89(.57)
	3-5	70(25.9)	3.26(.37)	2.47(.42)	4.01(.42)
	6-10	59(21.9)	3.20(.47)	2.41(.45)	3.94(.48)
	11≤	55(20.4)	3.32(.42)	2.68(.52)	3.76(.60)
	F		2.97	7.29	2.35
	p		.032*	<.001†	.073
Shift	Full-time	42(15.6)	3.29(.40)	2.61(.51)	3.89(.59)
	12-hr	16(5.9)	3.41(.48)	2.88(.37)	3.47(.75)
	shift	212(78.5)	3.29(.40)	2.55(.48)	3.94(.48)
	8-hr shift				
	F		.58	3.43	6.39
	p		.560	.034*	.002†
Work unit	Ward	193(71.5)	3.31(.41)	2.56(.47)	3.91(.53)
	Specific	55(20.4)	3.26(.40)	2.71(.46)	3.82(.51)
	unit	22(8.1)	3.29(.35)	2.48(.59)	4.12(.43)
	OPD				
	F		.32	2.78	2.67
	p		.728	.064	.071
Position	Nurse	244(90.4)	3.29(.39)	2.56(.48)	3.94(.51)
	CN	17(6.3)	3.25(.52)	2.78(.44)	3.55(.47)
	≥HN	9(3.3)	3.54(.32)	|2.71(.41)	3.67(.73)
	F		1.80	1.96	5.49
	p		.168	.143	.005†
Experience of turnover	Yes	60(22.2)	3.26(.44)	2.50(.48)	4.00(.52)
	No	210(77.8)	3.31(.39)	2.61(.48)	3.88(.53)
	t		-.88	-1.50	1.52
	p		.380	.135	.129

* p<0.05, † p<0.01; CN= Charge nurse; HN= Head nurse; OPD= Outpatient department

terms of age, 32.6% were between 26–29 years of age, 32.2% were between 30–39 years, and 7.0% were over 40 years, respectively. Concerning subjects' education levels, 58.9% had a college-level education, 36.7% had a bachelor's degree, and 4.4% had a master's degree or higher. With respect to the subjects' nursing career length, 31.9% had worked for less than 2 years, 25.9% for 3–5 years, and 21.9% for 6–10 years.

3.2 Levels of Nursing Professionalism, Internal Marketing, and Turnover Intention

The levels of nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention among hospital nurses are presented in Table 2. The results show that the average score of hospital nurses' nursing professionalism was 3.30 out of 5, internal marketing was 2.58, and turnover intention was 3.91, respectively.

Table 2. Levels of nursing professionalism, internal marketing and turnover intention (N=270)

Variables	Categories	M(SD)	Min	Max
Nursing professionalism	Average	3.30(.403)	1.86	4.97
	Self-concept of the profession	3.46(.509)	2.11	4.89
	Social awareness	3.03(.541)	1.00	5.00
	Professionalism of nursing	3.55(.532)	2.25	5.00
	The roles of nursing service	3.49(.563)	2.00	5.00
	Originality of nursing	3.13(.708)	1.00	5.00
Internal marketing	Average	2.58(.481)	1.32	3.92
	Communication	3.04(.528)	1.33	4.17
	Reward system	2.15(.651)	1.00	4.00
	Employment benefit	2.27(.783)	1.00	5.00
	Work environment	2.58(.605)	1.00	4.00
	Vacation	2.50(.718)	1.00	4.75
	Education and training	2.57(.657)	1.00	4.80
Turnover intention	Average	3.91(.526)	1.30	5.00
	Job satisfaction	4.11(.572)	1.75	5.00
	Interpersonal relationship	3.67(.805)	1.00	5.00
	Work performance	3.88(.694)	1.00	5.00

3.3 Difference in Nursing Professionalism, Internal Marketing, and Turnover Intention According to General Characteristics

Table 1 shows the differences in nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention according to subjects' general characteristics. Nursing professionalism significantly differed depending on age (F = 4.10, p = .007) and career length (F = 2.97, p = .032). Internal marketing also significantly differed depending on age (F = 3.58, p = .014), career length (F = 7.29, p < .001), and shift type (F = 3.43, p = .034). Additionally, turnover intention significantly differed depending on marital status (t = 2.21, p = .028), shift type (F = 6.39, p = .002), and position (F = 5.49, p = .005).

3.4 Correlations between Nursing Professionalism, Internal Marketing, and Turnover Intention

Correlations between nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention among hospital nurses are presented in Table 3. Results showed that there was a positive correlation between nursing professionalism and internal marketing (r = .36, p < .001). This means that higher nursing professionalism increased internal marketing among hospital nurses. However, there was a negative correlation between internal marketing and turnover intention (r = -.28, p < .001). Thus, lower turnover intention increased internal marketing among hospital nurses.

Table 3. Correlational matrix among nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention (N=270)

	Nursing professionalism	Internal marketing	Turnover intention
Nursing professionalism	1		
Internal marketing	.36 (.000)	1	
Turnover intention	.04(.237)	-.28(.000)	1

4. Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine the relationships among nursing professionalism, internal marketing,

and turnover intention. This study found high average turnover intention (3.91 points), analogous to the average of 3.39 points found in a study conducted on emergency nurses working in hospitals with 300–800 beds. On the other hand, a university hospital with more than 1,000 beds reported a score of 2.73, which was lower than that in this study[11]. This reduction supports the findings of an earlier study that posited that turnover intention decreases with an increase in hospital size[4]. In terms of demographic features, nurses' marital status (unmarried), training type (general nurses), amount of experience (novice), and shift type (three shifts) were correlated with high turnover intention[1,2,12]. Hence, turnover intention appears to be influenced by general, environmental, and structural properties.

The average internal marketing score in this study was 2.58 points (out of 5). Of the subcategories, communication and a reward system had the highest and lowest scores, respectively. Again, this finding was similar to other studies on hospital internal marketing that reported an average score of between 2.76–2.78 points, with the lowest score for a reward system[10,12]. In the present study, nurses with less than two years of experience scored highest on internal marketing. Similarly, an earlier study[13] reported that relatively new nurses displayed a higher perception of internal marketing than their more-experienced counterparts. This likely stemmed from the fact that new nursing training programs include content regarding internal marketing. Additionally, turnover intention significantly increases as internal marketing activities decrease[12]. Therefore, in order to curb turnover intention, nurse training programs should conduct training about internal marketing activities, with a particular focus on effective interventions related to remuneration policies.

The nurses in this study displayed a normal range of nursing professionalism an attained an average score of 3.30. Previous studies have reported similar results (average 3.34 points) for nursing professionalism. Of the nursing professionalism subcategories, clinical nursing practice had the lowest score (2.63 points), and the job-related field had the lowest score (2.52 points) for the subcategory of job satisfaction[5]. This indicates that efforts to enhance the practice of clinical nursing would be one of the key intervention strategies to reduce turnover intention, while boosting nursing professionalism and job satisfaction.

An analysis of the relationships among nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention revealed a positive correlation between internal marketing and nursing professionalism and a negative correlation between turnover intention and internal marketing. Internal marketing activities motivate workers to achieve more by instilling service- and customer-oriented mindsets[10]. Therefore, buttressing internal marketing activities will augment nursing professionalism, while reducing turnover intention. As shown in the results of this study, nurses' turnover intention is associated with internal marketing and nursing professionalism; hence, it is important to implement internal marketing tactics centered on preventing emotional fatigue and to employ strategies that encourage nursing professionalism.

5. Conclusion

This study sought to examine the differences in nursing professionalism, internal marketing, and turnover intention as related to nurses' demographic characteristics in an attempt to identify relationships among these three variables. The results indicated that there were statistically significant differences in nursing professionalism and internal marketing depending on nurses' ages, amount of experience, marital status (single), and shift type (three shifts). Moreover, internal marketing was directly correlated with nursing professionalism, while turnover intention was inversely correlated with internal marketing.

Against this backdrop, hospitals should develop training programs that focus on nursing professionalism and internal marketing. Furthermore, hospitals must strategically establish an appropriate and well-accepted reward system. These improvement strategies must be feasible and readily used in turnover intention reduction programs. In the long term, developing and implementing such strategies would benefit hospitals by fostering a supportive and positive organizational culture.

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