Relationship between Professional Commitment and Intention to leave the job among Nurses Working in Intensive Care Units

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Abstract
Background: Professional commitment is one of the factors that can improve performance and job satisfaction in nurses. It can also play an important role in nurses’ willingness to stay in the profession. This study was conducted to determine relationship between professional commitment and the intention to leave the job in nurses working in intensive care units (ICUs).

Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted in 2019, on 202 nurses working in the ICUs of hospitals affiliated to the Golestan University of Medical Sciences, northeastern Iran. Eligible nurses were enrolled via census. Data were collected by using the Nurses’ Professional Commitment Scale (NPCS) and the Hanshaw’s Anticipated Turnover Scale (ATS). Data were analyzed in SPSS (version 16) using the Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient, Mann–Whitney U test, and Kruskal-Wallis test. P-values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

Results: The mean score of professional commitment (90.40±16.69) and its dimensions had a significant inverse association with intention to leave the job (36.87±8.87) (P<0.05). There was also a significant relationship between professional commitment and age, clinical experience, and work experience in ICUs (P<0.05). However, the intention to leave the job had a significant inverse relationship only with clinical work experience (P<0.05).

Conclusion: According to the results, necessary measures should be taken by healthcare policy makers and hospital managers to reduce the turnover intention rate among nurses. Officials can increase the nurses’ job satisfaction by considering the factors that promote professional commitment and by incorporating incentive systems to encourage nurses to remain in the profession.

Highlights:
What is current knowledge?
More than half of Iranian nurses had a moderate to high tendency to leave the nursing profession. The level of professional commitment has been reported as an important factor affecting the intention to leave the nursing profession.

What is new here?
The nursing profession tendency to leave the job was moderate. The mean scores of professional commitment of the nursing profession was more than median. The highest and lowest mean scores of the professional commitment were related to the self-sacrifice and job satisfaction, respectively there was an inverse association between the intention to leave the job and professional commitment.

Introduction
Human resources have always been considered as one of the most important factors in the social progress; therefore, one of the main concerns of managers is how to create a suitable ground for workers in all professions to increase a sense of responsibility and commitment (1). Nurses are one of the largest groups of healthcare providers, and the intention to leave the profession among nurses and the nursing shortages can cause problems, such as increased workload and stress, burnout, reduced quality of care, and increased medical costs (2–4). Therefore, managers of health organizations should monitor their employees in order to reduce turnover intention and the subsequent loss of human resources (5). Today, only organizations are able to continue to exist, which promote professional commitment and job satisfaction by caring about employees and providing a suitable ground for their activities (1, 5). The turnover intention rate among nurses in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Scotland, and Germany was reported to be between 6.16% and 9.38% in 2011-2012, while this rate was between 4.29% and 7.53% in personnel younger than 30 years of age (7). Meanwhile, due to the increasing population growth, the need for healthcare services and nursing care is increasing everyday (8). In addition to the lack of experienced nurses, leaving the nursing profession imposes a significant financial burden on the society (9). Nikjoo et al. reported that 55% and 19% of Iranian nurses had a moderate and high tendency to leave the nursing profession (10).

Hospitals are concerned about losing their workforce, because every hospital spends a huge amount of money to train its employees to the desired level of productivity and efficiency (11). Therefore, it is imperative to identify factors, such as professional commitment, which affect turnover intention (12). Professional commitment is a mental state that indicates a desire, need, and obligation to work in a particular profession. It becomes mean-
leave the job in nurses working in the ICUs of teaching hospitals affiliated to the Golestan University of Medical Sciences.

Methods
This cross-sectional study was carried out on all eligible nurses working in the ICUs and cardiac care units of 5 Azar and ShahidSayadShirazi hospitals in Gorgan and Amir al Momennin hospital in Kordkuy in 2019. Overall, 202 volunteer nurses who met inclusion criteria were enrolled in the study via census. The inclusion criteria were working in the ICUs at the time of studying, having at least 6 months of work experience in ICUs, having an associate degree or higher education, and not having any known mental or chronic physical illness in the last 6 months.

Written informed consent was taken from all participants, and the study received approval from the Ethics Committee of the Deputy of Research and Technology of the Golestan University of Medical Sciences. Data were collected by using a demographic and professional information form and the professional commitment scale for nurses. Demographic and professional information including age, gender, marital status, level of education, workplace department (ICU, CCU, dialysis, emergency), work experience, work shift, type of employment, type of responsibility in the workplace, and average monthly overtime hours were collected.

The Hanshov's Anticipated Turnover Scale (ATS) was designed in 1985 and consists 12 items that are scored based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from completely agree (score 5) to completely disagree (score 1), in order to assess intention to leave nursing profession. In order to reduce bias, the items are divided into two equal categories with positive and negative phrases. Items 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 14 are given a reverse score.

The total score of professional commitment among the subjects was higher than the median score of the questionnaire, which indicates the high level of professional commitment among the nurses. The findings of this study are consistent with the results of Shali et al. (2015), in which the total score of professional commitment of nurses was 86, indicating a high level of professional commitment among nurses (16). Similarly, Lu et al. reported the total score of professional commitment to be 84.3 among nurses in Taiwan (17). In a study in Yazd (Iran), HoseyniManesh et al. reported a moderate level of professional commitment among government personnel (18). In the present study, there was a significant inverse relationship between the total score of professional commitment and its dimensions and the tendency to leave the job in nurses working in ICUs. This finding is in agreement with results of previous studies (22, 23). Ghandi also reported a significant association between turnover intention and environmental ethics, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment in staff of a government company (24). Therefore, professional commitment can be considered as one of the most important predictive components of turnover intention among nurses.

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Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the nurses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>108 (53.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>94 (46.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>134 (66.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>68 (33.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>3 (1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>75 (37.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree or PhD</td>
<td>125 (62.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working shift</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening/Night</td>
<td>124 (61.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotating</td>
<td>98 (48.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean scores of professional commitment and intention to leave the nursing profession among the subjects were 90.40±16.69 and 36.80±4.87, respectively. The highest and lowest mean scores of the professional commitment were related to the nursing profession in Saudi Arabia (21). Sharifzad et al. (2013) found that gender and age could affect turnover intention among nurses, in a way that, older nurses had a higher tendency to leave the job, and the total score of professional commitment and its dimensions (Table 3).

Table 3: The relationship between the intention to leave the job and professional commitment and its four dimensions in nurses working in ICUs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Professional commitment</th>
<th>Professional commitment</th>
<th>Professional commitment</th>
<th>Professional commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intention</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Intention</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to leave the job</td>
<td></td>
<td>to leave the job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>-0.275**</td>
<td>-0.175**</td>
<td>-0.158*</td>
<td>-0.214**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a significant inverse association between the intention to leave the job and the total score of professional commitment and its dimensions (Table 3).

Discussion
According to the results, the mean score of professional commitment among the subjects was higher than the median score of the questionnaire, which indicates the high level of professional commitment among the nurses. The findings of this study are consistent with the results of Shali et al. (2015), in which the total score of professional commitment of nurses was 86, indicating a high level of professional commitment among nurses (16). Similarly, Lu et al. reported the total score of professional commitment to be 84.3 among nurses in Taiwan (17). In a study in Yazd (Iran), HoseyniManesh et al. reported a moderate level of professional commitment among government personnel (18). In the present study, the mean score of intention to leave the job was 36.80±4.87, indicating the moderate tendency to leave the nursing profession. In a previous study in Iran, 69.9% of staff in research units had a moderate tendency to leave their job (19). Consistent with our findings, other studies in Iran (20) and Belgium (21) reported moderate turnover intention among nurses.

In the present study, there was a significant inverse relationship between the total score of professional commitment and its dimensions and the tendency to leave the job in nurses working in ICUs. This finding is in agreement with results of previous studies (22, 23). Ghadori also reported a significant association between turnover intention and environmental ethics, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment in staff of a government company (24). Therefore, professional commitment can be considered as one of the most important predictive components of turnover intention among nurses.

In our study, the mean score of professional commitment had no significant association with age, marital status, education level, income, and shift work; however, there was a significant relationship between professional commitment and gender and work experience in ICU. In a previous study in Iran, there was no significant relationship between organizational commitment and education level, age, work experience, marital status, and employment status (25). GeramiNejad et al. (2017) found no significant relationship between professional commitment and age, gender, and marital status (26). However, they reported that nurses with rotational shift work had higher professional commitment.

In line with our findings, Soudagar et al. (2012) reported a significant relationship between gender and desire to work, while women were more willing to work in the nursing profession (27). According to Mortazavi and Meybodi, male, married, and less experienced nurses have higher turnover intention (28). Other studies also demonstrated that turnover intention is higher among male and single nurses (29-31). This may be due to the fact that, men in the Iranian society are responsible for providing for the family, and nursing is not considered a high-income occupation. In addition, being a male nurse is not socially acceptable in Iran (28).

The results of some studies in Iran showed that nurses with lower salaries are more inclined to leave their jobs than other nurses (32). A study in Saudi Arabia also showed that nurses who receive lower salaries have a greater tendency to leave their jobs. The mentioned study also attributed the higher tendency of male nurses to leave the nursing profession to the poor public image of the nursing profession in Saudi Arabia (31). Sharifzad et al. (2013) found that gender and age could affect turnover intention among nurses, in a way that, older nurses had a higher tendency to leave the job. The mean total score of intention to leave did not differ between female and male nurses (P=0.12). The total mean score of professional commitment and intention to leave the job had no significant association with marital status, education level, and working shift (P>0.05).

Table 2: Mean scores of professional commitment and its dimensions, as well as intention to leave the job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean ± SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional commitment</td>
<td>90.40±16.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of the nursing profession</td>
<td>17.18±5.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job satisfaction</td>
<td>16.07±5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement of nursing professionals</td>
<td>22.54±5.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice for the nursing profession</td>
<td>34.6±6.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to leave of work</td>
<td>36.8±4.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a higher tendency to leave (34). Myers (2010) also reported a positive correlation between turnover intention among nurses and age (35). Ahmadi et al. (2013) also showed that married women have higher tendency to leave the nursing profession, possibly due to the interference of hospital shifts and their roles at home (36). In line with our findings, Cai and Zhou (2009) found no significant association between demographic variables and intention to leave the nursing profession (37). Contrary to these results, Politi (2009) found no relationship between age and turnover intention among nurses (38).

Nursing is a mentally and physically challenging profession because the know that as a healthcare provider are the most reliable source of patients’ support (39) but numerous shifts, and mandatory or voluntary overtimes are some factors that affect nurses’ job satisfaction or turnover intention. Therefore, including nurses in monthly meetings, exploiting their experiences, encouraging them to share their knowledge, and involving them in committees directly related to patient care can be effective in creating a feeling of independence and control over one’s career. Furthermore, hard working conditions and different work shifts can become more bearable if accompanied by public understanding and appreciation.

Conclusion
Based on the results, there is an inverse significant association between the total score of professional commitment and its dimensions and the intention to leave the nursing profession. Professional commitment not only promotes the profession in the society, but also prevents turnover intention and output reduction.

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Ethical statement
Written informed consent was obtained from all subjects prior to participation in the study. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Golestan University of Medical Sciences (ethical approval code: ir.goums.rec.1398.086).

Conflict of interest
The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding publication of this article.

Author contributions
MM, FH, and HR contributed to the conception and design of the study. FH collected the data. MT performed data analysis. MM, FH, EK and MT performed data interpretation. MM, FH, HR and EK evaluated and edited the manuscript.

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