

The Relationship Between Nurses' Psychological Flexibility, Life Satisfaction, and Turnover Intention

Hemşirelerin Psikolojik Esneklik ve Yaşam Doyumu İle İşten Ayrılma Niyeti İlişkisi

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of the study was to determine the relationship between Psychological flexibility (PF), Life Satisfaction (LS) and turnover intention among nurses.

Method: This is a descriptive and correlational research. The data were collected using the Demographic Information Form, Psychological Flexibility Scale (PFS), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and Nurse Turnover Intention Scale (NTIS). Descriptive statistics are presented as percentages, mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to compare the total scores of the scales.

Results: Participants who did not chose their profession willingly had significantly higher NTIS scores ($p < 0.05$). Participants who chose their profession willingly had significantly higher PFS and SWLS total scores ($p < 0.05$). There is a weak negative correlation between the NTIS and PFS scores. Furthermore, there was a weak negative correlation between the NTIS and SWLS scores. Participants' levels of PF, LS, and turnover intention were moderate in this study, and they were influenced by whether or not they willingly selected the profession.

Conclusion: As nurses' PF and LS decrease, their turnover intention increases.

Keywords: Turnover intention, psychological flexibility, life satisfaction, nursing.

Öz

Amaç: Araştırmanın amacı hemşirelerde psikolojik esneklik (PE), yaşam doyumu (YD) ve işten ayrılma niyeti arasındaki ilişkiyi belirlemektir.

Yöntem: Bu araştırma tanımlayıcı ve korelasyonel bir çalışmadır. Veriler "Tanıtıcı Bilgi Formu, Psikolojik Esneklik Ölçeği (PEÖ), Yaşam Doyumu Ölçeği (YDÖ) ve Hemşire İşten Ayrılma Niyeti Ölçeği (HİANÖ)" kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Tanımlayıcı istatistikler yüzde, ortalama, standart sapma ve minimum ve maksimum değerler olarak sunulmuştur. Ölçeklerin toplam puanlarını karşılaştırmak için Pearson korelasyon analizi yapılmıştır.

Bulgular: Mesleğini isteyerek seçmeyen katılımcıların HİANÖ puanları anlamlı derecede daha yüksek ($p < 0,05$) bulunmuştur. Mesleğini isteyerek seçen katılımcıların PEÖ ve YDÖ toplam puanları anlamlı derecede daha yüksek belirlenmiştir ($p < 0,05$). HİANÖ ve PEÖ puanları arasında zayıf bir olumsuz ilişki olduğu saptanmıştır. Ayrıca HİANÖ ve YDÖ puanları arasında zayıf olumsuz ilişki bulunmuştur. Bu çalışmada katılımcıların PE, YD ve işten ayrılma niyeti düzeyleri orta düzeyde olup mesleği isteyerek seçip seçmediklerinden etkilenmektedir.

Sonuç: Hemşirelerin PF ve LS'leri azaldıkça, işten ayrılma niyetleri artmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: İşten ayrılma niyeti, psikolojik esneklik, yaşam doyumu, hemşirelik.

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Introduction

Nurses have key roles in providing care within the healthcare system. The increasing prevalence of chronic illnesses and need for care is also increasing the demand for the nursing profession. In high-income countries, there are approximately 107.7 nurses per 10,000 people, whereas in low-income countries, this number drops significantly to just 9.1 nurses per 10,000 people (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). It is estimated that by 2030, there will be approximately 6 million nursing vacancies worldwide (WHO, 2020). Nurses face certain problems while providing high-quality nursing care under difficult working conditions. Psychological flexibility (PF) is an important concept while dealing with these problems.

PF is defined as “the individual’s ability to be present in the moment, not getting caught up in the past or future, and behaving in line with their adopted values” (Luoma et al., 2010). Psychologically flexible individuals are highly successful in using and developing resources and managing stressful situations (Öcel, 2017). Nurses experience high workloads and job-related stress due to factors in the work environment (Çelik and Cerit, 2023). A notion associated with negative situations like work stress is life satisfaction (LS) (Söyler et al., 2023). There is a positive relationship between PF and LS (Lucas and Moore, 2020).

LS is obtained by comparing what one desires with what one has (Diener et al., 1985). Various challenges faced by nurses, such as working in shifts, heavy work conditions, low pay, high-risk environments, uncertainties in job descriptions, lack of recognition, and unfavorable societal perceptions of the profession, decrease their LS (Piotrkowska et al., 2019). LS is a significant variable in the relationship between stress and burnout (Martins et al., 2022). The increasing prevalence of these issues over time can lead to nurses quitting their jobs.

Turnover intention refers to an individual’s likelihood and subjective estimation of quitting their job in the near future (Kaymaz, 2020). Turnover rates decreases patient satisfaction and also increases medication errors and pressure ulcers (Bae, 2022). Nurses had high turnover intention rates of 20.9% (Liu et al., 2024) and 69.4% (Liu et al., 2023). In Turkey, Aydoğmuş and Özlük (2022) reported that 50.8% of nurses expressed high turnover intentions. Another study by Koroğlu and Bahar (2021) found that 38% of nurses thought of quitting their jobs in the past 1 year and that the turnover intention was associated with burnout levels.

Turnover intention is the final cognitive step before a person physically leaves their job (Mosallam et al., 2015). Therefore, early identification of nurse turnover intention (NTI) is crucial to prevent nurses from leaving their jobs. Therefore, it is important to address cognitive concepts such as PF and LS that may affect turnover intentions.

Methodology

Aim and Type of Research: The aim of the study was to determine the relationship between PF, LS, and turnover intention among nurses. This study was conducted as a descriptive and correlational research.

Research Questions:

- What is the level of PF of the nurses?
- What is the level of LS of the nurses?
- What is the level of NTI of the nurses?
- Is there a relationship between PF, LS and NTI ?
- Do the Nurses' sociodemographic and work characteristics affect PF, LS and NTI?

Setting and Participants: Data collection was carried out using an online survey from 211 nurses utilizing the snowball sampling method. The minimum sample size calculated for the study was 153 people with an effect size of 0.15, a 5% margin of error, a 95% confidence interval, and a 95% power using the F test in the G Power program (Cohen 1998). Since there is no similar research to our research topic was found in the literature, the effect size was calculated according to Cohen (Cohen 1998). It was aimed to reach a larger number of samples so effect size was taken lower than 0.2 (Cohen 1998). Nurses who have been working for at least 1 year were included in the study. Nurses who were not actively working due leave or illness were excluded from the study.

Data Collection: The data were collected between January 1, 2024 and March 1, 2024, using the Demographic Information Form, Psychological Flexibility Scale (PFS), Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), and Nurse Turnover Intention Scale (NTIS). The data collection forms created through the online data collection system (Google Forms) was distributed to nurses via social media announcements. Those who received the link were asked to participate in the survey and forward the link to potential participants. The link to the survey was shared by the researchers on social media applications during the data collection period. Those interested in participating in the survey were able to access the web link directly to obtain information about the study, including its title, purpose, risks, benefits, and confidentiality. Additionally, the informed consent form included the email addresses and phone contact information of the researcher. After reading the informed consent form and participants indicated their willingness to participate in the study and their acceptance of the use of their personal information.

Demographic Information Form: The form consists of five questions regarding the nurses' age, years of experience, educational background, department of work, and their intention for choosing the nursing profession (Aydoğmuş et al, 2022; Zeyrek et al, 2023)

Psychological Flexibility Scale (PFS): Francis et al. (2016) was developed the scale and its Turkish validity and reliability were established by Karakuş and Akbay (2020). PFS measures the psychological flexibility level of individuals. It comprises 28 items. This is a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = totally agree). PFS has five sub-dimensions: instant (7 items), acceptance (5 items), contextual self (3 items), dissociation (3 items), and behavior in line with values (10 items). Each dimension is evaluated separately by summing up its respective items, and a total score can also be obtained from the scale. The lowest and highest scores obtained were 28 and 196, respectively. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.79 (Karakuş and Akbay, 2020). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.78 in this study.

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS): Diener et al. (1985) developed SWLS to assess LS, which is the cognitive and judgmental dimension of subjective well-being. The Turkish validity and reliability of the scale was established by Dağlı and Baysal (2016). The original form is a unidimensional scale consisting of five items rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The responses ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). In their adaptation study, Dağlı and Baysal (2016) modified the original 7-point Likert scale to a 5-point Likert scale to better suit the Turkish culture, as participants found the options too close to each other. This 5-point Likert system was adapted to Turkish. In the Turkish version, the responses ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the scale is 0.88 (Dağlı and Baysal, 2019). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.84 in this study.

Nurse Turnover Intention Scale (NTIS): NTIS was developed by Yeun and Kim in 2013 to measure turnover intention in nurses. The Turkish validity and reliability of the scale was established by Zeyrek et al. (2023). The NTIS consists of 10 items. It is a 5-point Likert scale. (Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5). The scale consists of one dimension. There are no reverse coded items. The total score of the scale ranged 10–50. Higher scores indicate a stronger turnover intention. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as 0.90 (Zeyrek et al, 2023). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.89 in the present study.

Statistical Analysis: The data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 22.0 software package. Descriptive statistics are presented as percentages, mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values. Independent samples t test was used to test the difference between two groups. One way Anova test was used for to test the difference between more than two groups. The reliability of the scale was assessed with Cronbach alpha coefficient. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to compare the total scores of the scales. Correlation value; "r<0.20 was accepted as no relationship or very weak relationship, 0.20-0.39 as weak relationship, 0.40-0.59 as medium level relationship, 0.60-0.79 as high level relationship and 0.80-1.0 as very high relationship" (Erdoğan et al., 2018). The statistical significance level was set at $p < 0.05$, with a margin of error of 0.05 and a confidence interval of 95%.

Ethical Considerations: Permission was obtained from the University Health Sciences Scientific Research Ethics Committee (Date: 06.12.2023 Issue: 2023-626). Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Necessary measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality of the participants' data. Permission for use was obtained from the authors of the scales. This study was designed, conducted, and reported according to the Strengthening the Reporting of Observational Studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) guidelines (Von Elm et al., 2008).

Limitations: The research had limitations. The first is research data were collected via an online survey. The second is the results cannot be generalized to all nurses in the country.

Results

The descriptive characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of scale total scores according to the descriptive characteristics of the participants (N:211)

Characteristics/Categories	PF				SWL		NTI	
	n	%	M (SD)	t/F p	M (SD)	t/F p	M (SD)	t/F p
Unit								
Emergency	27	12.9	138.40 (18.80)	F=0.938	16.07 (3.57)	F=0.208	31.18 (9.58)	F=0.705
Intensive Care	31	14.8	132.74 (17.94)	p=0.457	15.67 (3.21)	p=0.959	33.64 (5.79)	p=0.620
Internal Diseases	71	33.8	131.78 (15.49)		15.47 (4.25)		33.57 (9.49)	
Surgical Clinics	38	18.1	131.13 (13.78)		15.97 (3.30)		33.97 (7.32)	
Pediatrics	16	7.6	136.56 (16.53)		15.18 (2.68)		35.87 (6.50)	
Other	27	12.9	131.03 (20.79)		15.77 (3.99)		34.11 (9.41)	
Education								
Associate degree	17	8.1	133.35 (19.38)	F=0.630	14.76 (4.67)	F=0.635	29.70 (0.57)	F=2.440
Bachelor	161	76.7	132.28 (16.13)	p=0.533	15.73 (3.68)	p=0.531	33.68 (8.44)	p=0.090
Master's Degree	32	15.2	135.93 (19.13)		15.96 (3.16)		35.21 (7.93)	
Choosing profession willingly								
Yes	149	71.0	134.88 (16.64)	t=2.669	16.15 (3.62)	t=2.898	32.18 (8.45)	t=-3.90
No	61	29.0	128.14 (16.51)	p=0.008*	14.51 (3.61)	p=0.004*	37.03 (7.38)	p<0.001
			M (SD)	Med (IQR)	Min- Max			
Age			32.60 (2.38)	29 (15)	22-52			
Working time (year)			10.25 (8.79)	6 (14)	1-32			

NTI: Nurse Turnover Intention, PF: Psychological Flexibility, SWL: Satisfaction with Life

*p<0.01

Participants who chose their profession willingly had significantly higher PFS and SWLS total scores compared to those who did not choose their profession willingly (p<0.05). Participants who did not choose their profession willingly had significantly higher NTIS scores compared to those who choose their profession willingly (p<0.05) (Table 1).

Table 2. Participants' total scale scores (N:211)

Scales	Mean (SD)	Min	Max	Cronbach
PF	132.92 (16.85)	91	178	0.78
SWL	15.69 (3.68)	5	25	0.84
NTI	33.59 (8.43)	10	50	0.89

NTI: Nurse Turnover Intention, PF: Psychological Flexibility, SWL: Satisfaction with Life.

Mean PFS score of the participants was 132.92 (SD=16.85). The mean SWLS score was 15.69 (SD=3.68) and the mean NTIS score was 33.59 (SD=8.43) (Table 2)

Table 3. Correlation analysis of the nurses Turnover Intention (N:211)

	PF		SWL		Age		Working time (year)	
	r	p	r	p	r	p	r	p
NTI	-0.298	<0.001	-0.207	0.003*	-0.078	0.261	-0.071	0.305

NTI: Nurse Turnover Intention, PF: Psychological Flexibility, SWL: Satisfaction with Life

*p<0.01

A weak negative correlation was identified between the NTIS and PFS scores (r = -0.298, p<0.001). Furthermore, there was a weak negative correlation between the NTIS and SWLS scores (r = -0.207, p<0.01) (Table 3).

Discussion

The nursing profession, grounded in comprehensive theoretical and practical education centered on human care, stands as one of society's most ubiquitous and impactful professions. Students and academics contribute significantly, both financially and spiritually, to the professional education process. Intentions to quit the profession, acquired after a long period of education and training, carry various implications. The effects of PF and LS on turnover intention were examined in this study.

Based on the results of this study, nurses had moderate levels of PF (Table 2). Moreover, nurses who chose their profession willingly had higher levels of PF than those who did not (Table 1). Previous study reported that nurses have high levels of PF (Sarabia-Cobo, 2021). PF is a protective factor against burnout (Martínez-Rubio et al., 2021). PF had a negative impact on depression by empowering individuals to cope with negative situations more effectively (Yao et al., 2023). When PF is considered as being in the moment, intense working hours and increasing responsibilities may constitute an obstacle to nurses' high psychological flexibility. PF also affects LS (Lucas and Moore, 2020).

In this study, nurses had moderate LS scores (Table 2), and those who chose their profession willingly had higher LS scores compared to those who did not choose their profession willingly (Table 1). Studies report that nurses have moderate levels of LS (Milutinović et al., 2023). Work-related challenges can increase job stress and decrease LS among nurses (Söyler et al., 2023). Simultaneously, experiencing burnout also reduces the LS of nurses (Yılmaz and Kutmeç, 2023). Choosing the profession willingly increases job-related motivation and positive attitudes; thus, leading to increased LS. In general, a decrease in LS can lead to negative outcomes, such as seeking changes in current living conditions and quitting or changing jobs.

In this study, nurses had moderate levels of turnover intention (Table 2), and those who choose their profession not willingly had higher turnover intention levels (Table 1). According to a previous study, 43.8 % nurses have high and very high turnover intentions, and positive relationship is observed between unmet nursing care and turnover intention (Li, 2024). Turnover intention is important as it reduces perceived patient-centered care and quality of care (Huang et al., 2021). To reduce nurses' turnover, it is necessary to understand and manage turnover intention in advance (Chang, 2023). Therefore, turnover intention should be considered alarming.

According to this study, as the PF and LS decrease, turnover intention increases (Table 3). The essence of nursing lies in providing assistance to individuals in need. However, the challenges faced by nurses can often lead to difficulties in coping. Turnover has been associated with concepts such as organizational support (Galanis, 2024). PF and LS can vary based on present life circumstances and standards of the individual. The results obtained in the present study show that cognitive characteristics of nurses, such as PF and LS, are also associated with turnover intention. Nurse managers should provide work environments, working conditions, and wages at an optimum level that will increase nurses' PF and ensure LS.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Participants' levels of PF, LS, and turnover intention were moderate in this study, and they were influenced by whether or not they willingly selected the profession. Therefore, individuals should be better informed about the philosophy of the nursing profession and working conditions before selecting this profession. As PF and LS decrease, turnover intentions increase. Strategies should be developed to increase the retention rates among nurses through collaboration between nursing faculties and all healthcare units where nursing services are provided. Governments should develop regular training and psychotherapeutic initiatives to increase the PF of nurses. Psychotherapeutic interventions that accept the principles of Acceptance and Commitment Therapies are strongly recommended. We think planning for professional development opportunities and increasing autonomy is important in reducing turnover intention. Reducing work intensity and economic improvements can reduce turnover intention.

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