

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

MAXIMISING RETENTION OF NURSES

A Dissertation submitted by

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ABSTRACT

With a growing global population and an ageing society the retention of nurses within the healthcare system is crucial, even more so than their recruitment. The dissertation examines the possible remedies to the worldwide nurse shortage, before probing the relationship between turnover and turnover intention with a focus of increasing retention. This research used archival data from the Community and Organisational Research and Evaluation Unit (CORE) of the University of Southern Queensland on Queensland Health nurses, as well as obtaining additional data directly from Queensland Health. Employee opinion surveys and turnover data for 2007–2008 from Queensland Health, a large Australian public health organisation, showed a strong correlation between nurses expressing an intention to leave and the actual separation.

Building on this, the supplied information was subjected to a model of organisational health which considered organisational climate upon well-being and turnover. Structural equation modelling created a more predictive and interpretable model to explain the variation in nurses' turnover intention. This model will provide information to enable Queensland Health to allow collaboration and consultation with staff to develop interventions which will reduce turnover and assist retention. Individual morale, individual distress, supportive leadership, and opportunities for professional growth were found to be areas of challenge.

These factors formed part of the "forces of magnetism", used in the accreditation of hospitals that have been praised for quality outcomes for patients and staff, together with superior business results. "Magnet" hospitals are recognised in part by an ability to recruit and retain nurses in times of shortage. Further analysis of the above data compared Australia's first magnet hospital with two similarly matched non-magnet hospitals. The organisational health, and thus nurse retention, of the magnet hospital was significantly better than the comparison institutions. This suggests magnet principles have a positive influence on

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organisational climate and reducing turnover intent, but further analysis is required to establish causality.

Acknowledging that continued research is required, the dissertation provides an improved model for understanding organisational health and climate within the nursing environment. Such information can aid decision-makers of healthcare services towards a greater retention of nurses, and towards the goal of meeting the need for high quality global care.

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, work, results, analyses and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

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*This dissertation is dedicated to my youngest brother, Warren Traves RN,
Clinical Nurse, Cairns Base Hospital.*

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List of Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACIRRT	Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training
AGFI	.....	Adjusted goodness of fit index
AHA	.....	American Hospital Association
AHPRA	.....	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
AHPRA	.....	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
AHWI	.....	Australian Health Workforce Institute
AIC	.....	Information Theoretic measures
AIDS	.....	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
AIHW	.....	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AMOS	.....	Analysis of moment structures
ANA	.....	American Nurses Association
ANCC	.....	American Nurses Credentialing Center
ANMC	.....	Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council
ANPA	.....	Australian Nurse Practitioner Association
AUSPRAC	.....	Australian Nurse Practitioner Study
BWSOS	.....	Better Workplaces Staff Opinion Survey
COAG	.....	Council of Australian Governments
CORE Unit	.....	Community and Organisational Research and Evaluation Unit, University of Southern Queensland
DEEWR	.....	Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations (Cwlth)
DEST	.....	Department of Education, Science and Training (Cwlth) (now called DEEWR)
EEA	.....	European Economic Area
EN	Enrolled nurse
EU	European Union
FTE	Full-time equivalent (in relation to work hours)

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GDP	Gross domestic product
GFC	Global financial crisis
GFI	Goodness of fit index
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HRD	Human Resource Development
ICN	International Council of Nurses
ICU	Intensive care units
JCAHO	Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organisations
NHS	National Health Service
NHWT	National Health Workforce Taskforce
NPDU	Nursing Practice Development Unit (a unit within the PAH)
NSSRN	National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAH	Princess Alexandra Hospital
PGFI	Parsimony goodness of fit index
QPASS	Queensland Public Agency Staff Survey
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation
RN	Registered nurse
SEM	Structural equation modelling
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America
VHA	Victorian Healthcare Association
WHO	World Health Organisation