The Contribution of Personality and Workplace Characteristics in Predicting Turnover Intention
among Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners: A Path Analytic Study

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10.1111/j.1939-3938.2012.01141.x

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine how personality characteristics, sense of organizational empowerment, and job satisfaction combine to predict turnover intention among a population of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) nurses. Data were collected from 161 SANE nurses from 23 SANE organizations across the central and west United States through standardized tools and a demographic questionnaire. Both personality, namely agreeableness, and workplace characteristics, particularly perceived empowerment and job satisfaction, combine to predict intention to leave the job of these sampled SANE nurses. One particularly curious finding is the positive prediction of agreeableness on turnover intention – that is, the more agreeable people would be more likely to leave their jobs as SANE nurses. Professionals can gain insight from the path analysis results that show the need to address both personal and organizational factors in mitigating turnover intention among SANE nurses. This appears to be particularly true in providing a sense of empowerment and opportunity within the organization.

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Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) serve an important role in treating victims of sexual assault on their presentation to the hospital. SANE nurses perform physical examinations, collect evidence, treat minor injuries, provide follow up care recommendations, give expert testimony regarding evidence they collect, serve on response teams, work with law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices, and support the psychological needs of victims of sexual assault. Because of their immediate role in serving those who have become victims of sexual assault, those working in SANE programs are subject to an extremely high stress work environment (Crabbe, Bowley, Boffard, Alexander, & Klein, 2004). In fact, these nurses are at an increased risk of developing stress-related disorders as they care for traumatized women (Gates & Gillespie, 2008). They are also exposed to an increased sense of vulnerability as well as a higher awareness of mortality (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). All of these factors make SANE nurses a potentially different population than the general nursing staff population in terms of turnover.

One factor that is logical to investigate in influencing turnover intention is job satisfaction. Researchers have demonstrated the relationship of job satisfaction to a number of other variables in the nursing environment. Job satisfaction has been shown to correlate with perceived autonomy (Baernholdt & Mark 2009; Demilt, Fitzpatrick & McNulty, 2011; Grant, Nolan, Maguire, & Melhuish, 1993; Pierce, Hazel, & Mion, 1996; Zurmehly, 2008), critical thinking (Zurmehly, 2008), sense of workplace empowerment (Sarmiento, Laschinger, & Iwasiw, 2004), and quality of direct patient care among nurses (McNeese-Smith, 1999). Adams and Bond (2000) found that job satisfaction was highly correlated to the cohesion of the nursing

unit, organization of the staff, and the level of professional practice achieved. These results demonstrate a link between perceived organizational function and job satisfaction. This link is highlighted further by Makinen, Kivimaki, Eovaino, Vrtanen, and Bond (2003) who found that the organization of the nursing unit was directly associated with nurse job satisfaction.

Among organizational factors associated with job satisfaction is perceived organizational empowerment. Empowerment is strongly related to perceptions of workplace autonomy and a culture in the workplace focused on participation that is fostered by managers (Laschinger, Wong, McMahon, & Kaufmann, 1999). This sense of workplace empowerment has been demonstrated to have a direct and positive relationship to job satisfaction (Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2001; Morrison, Jones, & Fuller, 1997).

Personality may also play a role in likelihood to leave a nursing position. Mount and Barrick (1998) found that conscientiousness was consistently related with job performance and turnover across studies. Richardson, Lounsbury, Bhaskar, Gibson, and Drost (2009) confirmed this with health care professionals. Other researchers have hypothesized the necessity of a match between personality characteristics and job requirements in order for job satisfaction and low likelihood of leaving a job to occur (e.g. Holland, 1996). This becomes particularly relevant in SANE nursing positions where the demands and characteristics of the job may be quite different from the demands and job characteristics of nurses working within hospital unit organizations.

The difference in dealing with victims of sexual assault on a regular basis, the interface with law enforcement, and the varied organizational structures may create a difference in personality-job match and satisfaction that leads to a need to investigate the link between personality and turnover intention among SANE nurses in particular.

The purpose of this study was to determine how job satisfaction, sense of organizational empowerment, and personality combine to predict turnover intention among a population of SANE nurses. The specific hypotheses were that job satisfaction and personality would separately contribute to predicting turnover intention, and that perceived organizational empowerment would indirectly predict turnover intention through job satisfaction.

Method

Participants

The population utilized was the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) at 23 medium (300,000 – 600,000 population) to large (600,000 plus) cities in the United States ranging from Cleveland, OH in the east to the west coast. The overall return rate was 70%. The mean participant age was 43.38 ($SD = 11.07$), with a range from 24 to 73. The total sample size was 161. Of these, 95% were women, and 5% were men. This disparity in gender representation is typical for the general disparity in gender representation in the nursing profession. In terms of ethnicity, 86.3% participants reported they were white, 3.7% that they were African American, 4.3% that they were American Indian, 3.7% that they were Hispanic or Latino, and 1.9% reported “Other” as their ethnicity. The majority of SANE nurses in this sample were married, with 67.7% reporting they were married, 18% that they were single, 12.4% that they were divorced, and 1.9% that they were widowed. Most also had a baccalaureate degree, with 49.1% reporting this level of education, 26.1% an associates degree, 18.6% a master’s degree, 4.3% a high school diploma, 1.2% reporting “Other” for level of education, and one participant not reporting education level.

The organizational demographic information response rate was 83% although several (17%) were incomplete. The SANE organizations included were 61% small (1 – 10 persons),

35% medium (11 – 20 persons), and 4% large (21+ persons) in size. They were community based and hospital based organizations. Funding for services came from city resources, non-profit sources, and state or federal grants. One organization was identified as private for profit. Self scheduling was identified by 57% of the responses.

Materials

Materials included the Mini International Personality Item Pool (IPIP), which is a 20-item personality inventory (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006). This scale is designed to measure the Big Five factors of personality (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and imagination/intellect) using a 5-point Likert-type scale. There are four items for each Big Five trait. In development studies, the Mini IPIP showed a comparable pattern of convergent, discriminant and criterion-related validity with other Big Five measures studied (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006). In the present study, the scales showed acceptable reliability with the lowest being the Conscientiousness subscale ($\alpha = .664$; Sample item: Get the chores done right away), followed by the Imagination/Intellect subscale ($\alpha = .675$; Sample item: Have a vivid imagination), the Neuroticism subscale ($\alpha = .696$; Sample item: Have frequent mood swings), the Agreeableness subscale ($\alpha = .709$; Sample item: Sympathize with others' feelings), and the Extraversion subscale ($\alpha = .826$; Sample item: Am the life of the party) using mean scores for each scale after reverse-coding items specified by the authors. This scale was used as the measure of participant personality characteristics.

Also included was The Conditions of Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ) II (Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2001), which consists of 19 items that measure components of structural empowerment. The subscales showed adequate reliability in the present sample, and include Opportunity ($\alpha = .891$; Sample item: The chance to gain new skills and

knowledge on the job), Information ($\alpha = .890$; Sample item: The values of top management), Support ($\alpha = .929$; Sample item: Specific comments about things you could improve), Resources ($\alpha = .825$; Sample item: Time available to accomplish job requirements), and a 2-item global empowerment scale ($\alpha = .875$; Sample item: Overall, I consider my workplace to be an empowering environment). All items are rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, and the mean of all items on each scale is taken to produce the subscale scores. The construct validity of the CWEQ-II was supported by a confirmatory factor analysis that revealed a good fit of the hypothesized factor structure. The CWEQ-II correlated highly with the global measure of empowerment ($r = 0.56$), providing additional evidence of construct validity (Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2001).

The materials also included the abridged Job Descriptive Index (JDI), which was used to measure job satisfaction (Stanton, Sinar, Balzer, Julian, Thoresan, Aziz, & Fisher, 2001). Each facet (Present Work, Present Pay, Opportunity for Promotion, Supervision, and People at Work) contains 5 items with response options of “yes”, “no”, and “?”. All facets showed acceptable reliability in the present sample, and include Work on Present Job ($\alpha = .861$; Sample item: Challenging), Present Pay ($\alpha = .812$; Sample item: Income adequate for normal expenses), Opportunity for Promotion ($\alpha = .790$; Sample item: Good chance for promotion), Supervision ($\alpha = .855$; Sample item: Tactful), and People at Work ($\alpha = .851$; Sample item: Responsible). For this scale, items are scored according to a scale provided by the publisher, and mean scores are calculated for each facet.

Also included was the Turnover Intentions measure (Kelloway, Gottlieb, & Barham, 1999), which was used to measure the intent to leave the present position. This is a four-item measure using a 5-point Likert-type scale. In the present sample, this showed high reliability (α

= .944; Sample item: I intend to ask people about new job opportunities) and produces a single mean score. Finally, a demographic questionnaire was included, with questions about age, gender, race, education level, other employment and years in the position and as a nurse. An organizational demographic questionnaire was included for the director of the program to complete including number of employees, education levels, percentage turnover per year, funding sources, scheduling and continuing education questions.

Procedure

Solicitation letters were sent to SANE organizations in medium (300,000 – 600,000) and large (600,000+) population cities listed in the online program list maintained by the Office for Victims of Crime (www.sane-sart.com). The directors of the included SANE organizations agreed to participate in the research. Once approved, a study packet for each nurse currently employed in the site containing an informed consent form, all surveys, and a \$5.00 Starbucks giftcard was sent, along with a packet for the director of the site. A researcher-addressed, postage-paid envelope was included in each packet for return mailing, which also protected confidentiality of responses. After one month, a reminder postcard was sent to each site's director to be forwarded to the SANE nurses requesting any not yet completed to complete and return the surveys. All participants were treated in accordance with APA ethical standards, and the University IRB approved these procedures.

Results

First, hierarchical regression analysis was used to determine what possible pattern of prediction might exist in the observed data to predict Turnover Intention. Prior research has established job satisfaction as a reliable predictor of turnover intention (Haugh & Laschinger, 1996; Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2001; Laschinger, Wong, McMahon, &

Kaufmann, 1999; Morrison, Jones, & Fuller, 1997), and so was used in this analysis. Also entered in the hierarchical analysis was personality. Hierarchical regression analysis is useful in the incremental partitioning of variance, wherein the statistical effects of variables are controlled when analyzing the effects of variables in subsequent steps (Pedhazur, 1997). Then, based on the pattern of prediction, a hypothesized path model was created, tested, and refined, resulting in a final path model describing the predictive relationships among personality and job satisfaction for turnover intention. Path analysis is used here because, whereas hierarchical regression is useful in understanding the relative contributions of variables in explaining the dependent variable (in this case, turnover intention), path analysis allows the construction and testing of theoretical models (Pedhazur, 1997).

Because job satisfaction, theoretically, is comprised of more job-specific variables, whereas personality is comprised of more central, personal traits for the individual, job satisfaction as measured on the CWEQ was entered in the first step of the hierarchical regression analysis, with personality as measured on the mini-IPIP entered in the second step. The results of the initial hierarchical regression analysis may be found in Table 1. Although the analysis was significant at both step 1 ($F_{7,150} = 9.208, p < .001, r^2 = .301, SEE = .866$), and step 2 ($F_{12,145} = 6.398, p < .001, r^2 = .346, SEE = .851$), the majority of predictors in both sets did not reach statistical significance, so a reduced hierarchical regression model was created by eliminating non-significant predictors from both steps one at a time until the standard error of measurement was no longer reduced by removing additional predictors. The result is the reduced regression model presented in Table 2. In the reduced model, both step one ($F_{3,155} = 21.600, p < .001, r^2 = .295, SEE = .858$) and step two ($F_{4,154} = 13.360, p < .001, r^2 = .313, SEE = .838$) result in a significant overall prediction. Although there is a slight loss in effect size in the reduced model,

by eliminating the large number of non-significant predictors, the overall error is also reduced significantly, resulting in much larger F values, and smaller standard error terms. Therefore, the reduced model was used in constructing the hypothesized path model.

Based on the results of the hierarchical regression analyses, which are here used to explore potential predictive relationships, a hypothesized path model was constructed. It was believed that personality and job satisfaction would contribute relatively independently to predicting turnover intention, particularly because there did not appear to be any mediation of the predictive power of job satisfaction by the sole significant personality predictor, agreeableness, in the hierarchical analyses. It was hypothesized that global empowerment, opportunity, and present pay would all directly predict turnover intention, but in addition to direct prediction, opportunity would have an indirect predictive path through empowerment. This was hypothesized due to the nature of the items. Essentially, it was hypothesized that opportunity would predict the global sense of empowerment, and thus indirectly predict turnover intention. This hypothesized path model may be found in Figure 1.

Following an initial path analysis, the hypothesized model was modified based on modification indices. These modification indices indicated that, in addition to the indirect path of opportunity through global empowerment, global empowerment might have an indirect predictive path through present pay. Additionally, the originally hypothesized direct path from opportunity to turnover intention was not significant and was removed, which may suggest mediation by the other job satisfaction variables. This creates a more nuanced model, and this model showed good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 9.445$, $p = .093$, CFI = .964, RMSEA = .075, SRMR = .039). It is worth noting that fit indices are only occasionally calculated for path analysis, but in

this case the final model is over-identified allowing for fit indices to be calculated. A path diagram with path weights can be found in Figure 2.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine how personality and workplace characteristics contribute to predicting turnover intention among SANE nurses. The results illustrate that both personality, namely agreeableness, and workplace characteristics, particularly perceived empowerment and job satisfaction, combine to predict intention to leave the job. These results support the idea of employee-job match (e.g. Holland, 1996) in that personality may contribute to likelihood to leave one's job as a SANE nurse. The results also support previous research on perceived workplace empowerment, in that sense of opportunity and workplace empowerment were predictors of turnover intention. Job satisfaction also contributed in the final path model, with satisfaction with present pay predicting turnover intention.

One particularly curious finding in this study is the positive prediction of agreeableness on turnover intention – that is, that more agreeable people would be more likely to leave their jobs as SANE nurses. This is at odds with the findings of Zimmerman (2008) in a meta-analysis of turnover studies, in which agreeableness was negatively associated with turnover intention (average $r = -.13$) but more strongly associated with actual turnover behavior (average $r = -.27$). This stronger association might be due to a better predictive accuracy to actual behavior than to self-reported intent, but it could also be that there is a difference between intent to leave the job, and actual turnover. In their study of how personality characteristics relate to turnover, Liao, Chuang, and Joshi (2008) suggest that personality operates indirectly through the creation of deep-level dissimilarity with the work environment and with coworkers. This dissimilarity, then, leads to negative feelings and attitudes about the job, and eventually to turnover intention. It

could be that the differences in the environment for SANE nurses are such that high agreeableness serves to create dissimilarity rather than to create similarity and its typically protective function. However, deep-level dissimilarity was not measured in this study, so it is not possible at this time to determine if this is a possible reason for the unanticipated finding for agreeableness.

When comparing the SANE nurses surveyed in this study with the population studied for the norming of the mini-IPIP, they are significantly different in terms of agreeableness ($t_{(488)} = 20.21, p < .001$), and this difference is relatively large ($\omega^2 = .454$). This difference between the current study sample and the norming sample for the mini-IPIP suggests a need for further research as to what characteristics of SANE nurses may be related to these results.

Of additional interest, in comparison to The National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses March 2008 data, there were significantly more extremely satisfied nurses (standardized residual = 4.19) and significantly fewer extremely unsatisfied nurses (standardized residual = -3.52) than expected. The observed distribution was significantly different from the expected distribution based on national norms (chi-squared = 31.080, $p < .001$). The level of independence in role function and organizational structure may be of impact with satisfaction and turnover intent. Of the SANE nurses sampled, 55.9% reported other employment. Many of these nurses choose to do this job in addition to other employment. The ability to make this choice may relate to the Agreeableness and job satisfaction results. More than half (57%) of the SANE organizations reported self or modified-self scheduling for work hours or “on call”. The option to set one’s own schedule is identified as providing a level of control for the work-life balance (Bailyn, Collins, & Song, 2007) but not without potential complications for the organization. These results showed a relationship between satisfaction with present pay and

decreased turnover intention. Lastly, the ‘framing’ (Foley, 2006) an individual SANE nurse does of this work related to the provision of patient care may also contribute to a different avenue for satisfaction.

The relationship results of opportunity to sense of empowerment decreasing turnover intention partially supports previous research on empowerment, autonomy, workplace organization and satisfaction (Baernholdt & Mark 2009; Demilt, Fitzpatrick & McNulty, 2011; Grant, Nolan, Maguire, & Melhuish, 1993; Laschinger, Wong, McMahon, & Kaufmann, 1999; Pierce, Hazel, & Mion, 1996; Sarmiento, Laschinger, & Iwasiw, 2004; Zurmehly, 2008).

The unexpected finding for agreeableness, and the apparent differences in personality for the SANE nurses in this study from the general population of nurses are both areas for exploration in future research. This population is exposed to stresses and occupational demands that are unusual for the general population, and that are unusual for nursing professionals. These differences need to be explored, both in terms of how they affect the individual working in the profession, as well as how they affect the dynamics of job satisfaction, workplace characteristics, and the potential for turnover intention.

Implications for Clinical Practice

SANE program personnel can gain insight from these results through the path analysis results that show the need to consider both personal and organizational factors in mitigating turnover intention among SANE nurses. Although the effect of personality, namely agreeableness, on turnover intention in the present study is marked, it is essential to note that the combined effects of sense of empowerment and satisfaction with pay combine to play a much larger role in the prediction of turnover intent. These characteristics are within the domain of forensic programs to adjust or modify. Satisfaction with pay, along with peer support, age and

education were variables identified by Townsend and Campbell (2009) as protective against secondary traumatic stress and burnout in sexual assault nurse examiners. It makes sense for organizations to offer opportunities for individual growth and development to enhance feelings of empowerment and satisfaction with pay as a way of both protecting against secondary traumatic stress and burnout and decreasing turnover intention.

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Table 1

Regression Table for Initial Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Turnover Intention

Step	Measure	B	SE B	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i> ²
1	CWEQ Opportunity	-.206	.110	-.151	-1.865	.064	.301
	CWEQ Information	.106	.085	.100	1.238	.218	
	CWEQ Support	.012	.113	.101	.102	.919	
	CWEQ Resources	-.065	.095	-.057	-.668	.492	
	CWEQ JAS	-.023	.124	-.019	-.185	.854	
	CWEQ ORS	.181	.097	.163	1.873	.063	
	CWEQ Global Empowerment	-.648	.138	-.507	-4.676	<.001	
2	CWEQ Opportunity	-.196	.115	-.144	-1.712	.089	.346
	CWEQ Information	.099	.087	.093	1.135	.258	
	CWEQ Support	.008	.114	.006	.068	.946	
	CWEQ Resources	-.067	.093	-.058	-.714	.477	
	CWEQ JAS	-.063	.125	-.051	-.507	.613	
	CWEQ ORS	.179	.098	.161	1.833	.069	
	CWEQ Global Empowerment	-.607	.138	-.475	-4.389	<.001	
	mini-IPIP Extraversion	.035	.155	.016	.277	.821	
	mini-IPIP Agreeableness	.439	.188	.165	2.339	.021	
	mini-IPIP Conscientiousness	.105	.181	.042	.582	.562	
	mini-IPIP Neuroticism	-.185	.153	-.087	-1.203	.231	
	mini-IPIP Imagination/Intellect	.172	.143	.087	1.196	.233	

Table 2

Regression Table for Reduced Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Turnover Intention

Step	Measure	B	SE B	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	r^2
1	CWEQ Opportunity	-.183	.105	-.134	-1.754	.081	.281
	CWEQ ORS	.232	.087	.209	2.668	.008	
	CWEQ Global	-.696	.106	-.545	-6.580	<.001	
	Empowerment						
2	CWEQ Opportunity	-.209	.103	-.154	-2.041	.043	.313
	CWEQ ORS	.237	.085	.213	2.779	.006	
	CWEQ Global	-.697	.103	-.546	-6.741	<.001	
	Empowerment						
	Agreeableness	-.504	.177	.189	2.852	.005	

Figure 1

Hypothesized Path Diagram

Figure 2

Path Diagram for Turnover Intention