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# Factors that Affect the Turnover Intention among Mental Health Nurses: A Descriptive Literature Review

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<p>There exists a significant challenge of global mental health nurse shortages in healthcare systems. Mental health nurses, who account for almost half of all mental health care workers (44%), play a vital role in enhancing access to professional mental healthcare that can transform millions of lives globally for the better. The purpose of this study is to describe the factors that influence the turnover intention among mental health nurses. The aim is to provide new knowledge to be utilized about mental health nurses leaving their jobs.</p> <p>A descriptive literature review was used and completed through database searches from CINAHL and PubMed, yielding twelve peer-reviewed articles conducted in nine different countries, two in Australia, China, and the United Kingdom, one in Greece, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Sweden, and the USA, selected according to inclusion and exclusion criteria set by the researchers. This study provides a comprehensive analysis based on inductive content analysis to explore multiple perspectives on the subject.</p> <p>Results show a multifaceted issue influenced by individual characteristics, job demands and burnout, and the nurse practice environment. These categories interact and influence each other, impacting the turnover intention of mental health nurses to leave their profession.</p> <p>The discussion highlights the critical areas that require attention and intervention, providing valuable insights for policymakers, healthcare administrators, and mental health professionals seeking to address the global shortage of mental health nurses and mitigate its impact on healthcare systems and patient care in the future.</p>	
Keywords	factors, turnover intention, mental health nurses, intervention

## Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Background and key terms	1
3	Purpose, aims and research questions	3
4	Methodology and Methods	4
4.1	Data collection method	4
4.2	Data search and selection	5
4.3	Data analysis method	7
5	Results	9
5.1	Factors that affect the turnover intention of mental health nurses	11
5.1.1	Individual Characteristics	11
5.1.2	Job Demands and Burnout	11
5.1.3	Nurse Practice Environment	12
5.2	Practical strategies and interventions suggested in the literature to address the factors influencing turnover intention among mental health nurses	13
5.2.1	Workplace Interventions	13
5.2.2	Stress and Mental Health Management Programs	14
5.2.3	Professional Development Opportunities	14
5.2.4	Compensation Policies and Work Arrangements	15
6	Discussion	15
6.1	Discussion of Findings	15
6.2	Ethical considerations and validity	18
6.3	Conclusion	19
7	References	20
	Appendix	

## **1 Introduction**

Mental health nurses play a crucial role because of the diverse settings they work in. While tasks like assessments and medication administration are essential, mental health nurses primarily focus on building and sustaining therapeutic relationships, known as the 'therapeutic use of self' and 'being with' individuals. This emphasis on forming connections and providing support highlights the unique contribution mental health nurses make to the healthcare system. Their presence is vital for offering holistic care, emotional support, and guidance to patients and service users, underscoring the necessity of their specialized skills and compassionate approach in addressing mental health challenges effectively (Oates 2017: 469–470).

Global mental health nurse shortages pose a significant challenge to healthcare systems worldwide. It is essential to emphasize that in various countries, this scarcity has been compounded by a declining number of trained mental health nurses as demand for their services increases (Roth et al. 2018: 1736–1788). The World Health Organization projects that nurses will make up over half of the healthcare workforce by 2035, emphasizing their vital role in the healthcare system. Mental health nurses, who account for almost half of all mental health care workers (44%), play a vital role in enhancing access to professional mental healthcare that can transform millions of lives globally for the better. WHO acknowledges the urgent need to address this concern. They have advocated for a comprehensive mental health service and a resolution to the global shortage of skilled mental health nurses (Stewart et al. 2022: 5).

The issue of mental health nurses leaving their jobs globally has drawn considerable attention for its impact on healthcare systems and patient care. In this light, the aim of this study is to present new knowledge for understanding the reasons for the departure of mental health nurses from their roles. The researchers sought to describe the factors that influence mental health nurses' turnover intentions. Thus, providing insights for targeted interventions to improve retention and reduce turnover in this critical healthcare sector.

## **2 Background and key terms**

Mental health nursing is a specialized healthcare sector that focuses on an individual's mental welfare. It involves providing care, support, and treatment to individuals

experiencing mental health issues (Halsted and Hart 2021: 52–55; Horowitz 2020: 3274). Mental health nurses play a crucial role in multidisciplinary teams, offering unique contributions to health services (Clifton 2018). They provide critical support in delivering rehabilitation services to individuals with severe mental illness (SMI) (Rentala 2022: 5382–5388). People with serious psychological problems often have worse physical condition than people in general, emphasizing the essential part of mental health nurses in equipping comprehensive preventive attention and early intervention to improve physical well-being (Blythe and White 2017: 193–201), given that they are positioned to help minimize the high mortality rates in this population (Oates 2017: 469–470).

The field of mental health nursing is developing, emphasizing patient autonomy, specialized expertise, and a comprehensive approach to care. Overall, mental health nursing encompasses a range of responsibilities aimed at promoting mental wellness and providing effective care to those in need, while historically overlooked despite the crucial role in patient care (Borsay and Dale 2017: 166–167). Despite challenges and questions about its value, mental health nursing remains distinct and essential in modern healthcare (Santangelo et al. 2018: 258–266; Danda 2020: 20–28).

The number of mental health nurses leaving their positions is a growing concern. Job satisfaction has an important impact on mental health nurses' decision to leave their roles (López-López et al. 2019: 1035–1044; Yanchus et al. 2017: 41–56). Mental health nurses often leave their jobs for a wide range of reasons, including moral dissatisfaction, mental fatigue, and workplace stress (Adams et al. 2021: 1476–1497; Hwang and Bae 2017: 325). The shortage of mental health professionals, including nurses, is worsened by high turnover rates, with nearly one-third of all nursing vacancies are in mental health settings (Stephenson 2023: 6).

Turnover intention refers to an employee's conscious desire to leave their job, influenced by various factors. High job satisfaction is generally expected to reduce turnover intention; however, some studies indicate that increased satisfaction can paradoxically lead to higher turnover intention as employees feel more empowered to seek better opportunities (Elisabet et al. 2023). Strong organizational commitment typically correlates with lower turnover intention. Conversely, a lack of commitment can significantly increase the likelihood of employees considering leaving (Elisabet et al. 2023; Nurtati et al. 2020: 75–89). Elevated work stress positively influences turnover intention, while a supportive organizational culture can mitigate this effect (Santika,

2023: 163–169). A positive ethical climate within the organization is associated with lower turnover intention, emphasizing the importance of a respectful and fair workplace (Nurtati et al. 2020: 75–89).

The turnover intention among mental health nurses across different countries and regions is influenced by various factors. In China, factors impacting turnover intention among mental health nurses were work-related stress, demographics such as age and part-time status, and patient-to-nurse ratios (Wang et al. 2022: 698–708). Moral distress and job satisfaction were regarded as significant considerations among mental health nurses in South Korea (Hwang and Bae 2017: 325). The study reveals that violence and traumatic experiences, prevalent globally, contribute to distress among nurses in developed countries, thereby affecting the quality of healthcare services (Yosep et al. 2017). In Ohio, organizations with higher maximum pay and smaller sizes had lower turnover rates, whereas those offering professional growth chances had higher turnover (Bukach et al. 2017: 115–122). These findings highlight the complex relationship of individual, organizational, and cultural factors that influence turnover rates in mental health nursing globally.

The high turnover of mental health nurses is a widespread concern in several countries, as demonstrated by research studies (Stephenson 2023: 6). A comprehensive review of existing literature will be used in the present study to describe the key factors influencing turnover intention among mental health nurses (Goertel 2023: 65-84). The purpose of this study is to describe the factors that influence the turnover intention among mental health nurses. The aim is to provide new knowledge to be utilized about mental health nurses leaving their jobs. The results of this study will offer important insights that will help policymakers, healthcare leaders, and researchers create targeted programs to lower turnover rates and enhance the stability of the mental health nursing workforce.

### **3 Purpose, aims, and research question**

The purpose of this study is to describe the factors that influence the turnover intention among mental health nurses.

The aim is to provide new knowledge to be utilized about mental health nurses leaving their jobs.

The research questions are:

What are the factors that influence the turnover intention among mental health nurses?

What are the practical strategies and interventions suggested in the literature to address the factors influencing turnover intention among mental health nurses?

## **4 Methodology and Methods**

### **4.1 Data collection method**

A descriptive literature review method was utilized to explore factors contributing to turnover among mental health nurses covering relevant papers and articles from academic journals. A descriptive literature review involves analyzing and summarizing existing literature without necessarily providing new interpretation or critique (Kalpokaite and Radivojevic 2021). The goal is to offer a comprehensive overview of the topic by integrating information from various related sources (Dick et al. 2016). Descriptive literature reviews are important to establishing a fundamental understanding of the topic and convey existing knowledge coherently.

The review aimed to identify the factors that lead to mental health nurses leaving their profession. The findings were synthesized using inductive content analysis. Inductive content analysis is a research approach that is utilized to discover the basis within documented communication. In order to perform content analysis, the researcher gathered data from a collection of manuscripts in a systematic manner, which may include written, oral, or visual forms like books, interviews, and films. The researcher employs content analysis to understand the objectives, messages, and effects of communication content. This method helps researchers to analyze communication and social interaction without directly involving participants, assuring that the researcher's presence does not influence the results (Luo 2023a). This approach is used to examine qualitative data. Qualitative data encompasses textual and visual information gathered during research, such as interviews and videos (Auerbach and Silverstein 2022). Content analysis is a qualitative method that investigates the meaning and semantic relationships of words and ideas to make inferences (Luo 2023b).

## 4.2 Data search and selection

The literature reviews were generally limited to the past 10 years, as they reflect recent advancements and trends. The titles and abstracts were simultaneously filtered to identify related research papers. Subsequently, the papers underwent full-text screening for eligibility based on predetermined criteria. In this qualitative study, the PICo, which stands for Population, Phenomena of Interest, and Context (see Table 1), was used.

Table 1. PICo Tool

<b>P</b>	Population	Nurses
<b>I</b>	Interest	Factors that affect the turnover intention among mental health nurses
<b>Co</b>	Context	Nurses working in the mental healthcare sector

The study applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 2) to enhance the retrieved studies, directly address the research questions, and ensure appropriate results in establishing more relevant data for the research question. The study setting, the language, and the participants were the key determinants for the inclusion criteria for this review.

**Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Articles that are peer-reviewed	Non peer-reviewed articles
Studies published in English language	Studies not published in English language
Published earliest 2014	Published earlier than 2014
Articles pertinent to the topic or research subjects	Articles that were irrelevant to the topic or research subjects

An extensive search was conducted using the following databases: CINAHL and PubMed, known for their rich repositories of nursing and healthcare literature. The search terms used are the following: mental health (Nurse\* OR MHN) AND factor\* OR reason\* OR turnover OR "intent\* to leave" OR "intent\* to stay" OR resign\* OR

shortage. Boolean operators ("AND" and "OR") and truncation were used to search the databases.

Table 3. Database search results

Database/ Limiters	Search sentence	Total no. of hits	Papers selected based on title	Papers selected based on abstract	Papers based on full text
CINAHL	Mental health nurs* OR MHN AND Factor* OR reason* OR turnover OR "intent* to leave" OR "intent* to stay" OR resign* OR shortage	308	75	13	8
PubMed	Mental health nurs* OR MHN AND Factor* OR reason* OR turnover OR "intent* to leave" OR "intent* to stay" OR resign* OR shortage	1683	39	10	4
Records in total	-	1991	114	23	12
Limiters	Peer reviewed, Published in English language, Year 2014- 2024, Relevant to the topic	-	-	-	-
Total number of included studies	-	-	-	-	12

The search of the two databases, CINAHL and PubMed, identified 308 related studies from CINAHL and 1683 from PubMed as potentially relevant papers out of the 1991 literature studies, 1877 articles were excluded based on title, leaving only 114 with approved titles. The abstracts were then screened, resulting in 23 papers eligible for full-text screening. These 23 papers underwent careful examination by the students, leading to their inclusion. A sum of 10 papers were rejected in full text for various reasons. Twelve papers were acceptable for inclusion, with Figure 1 providing a summary of the study selection process using a Prisma flowchart.

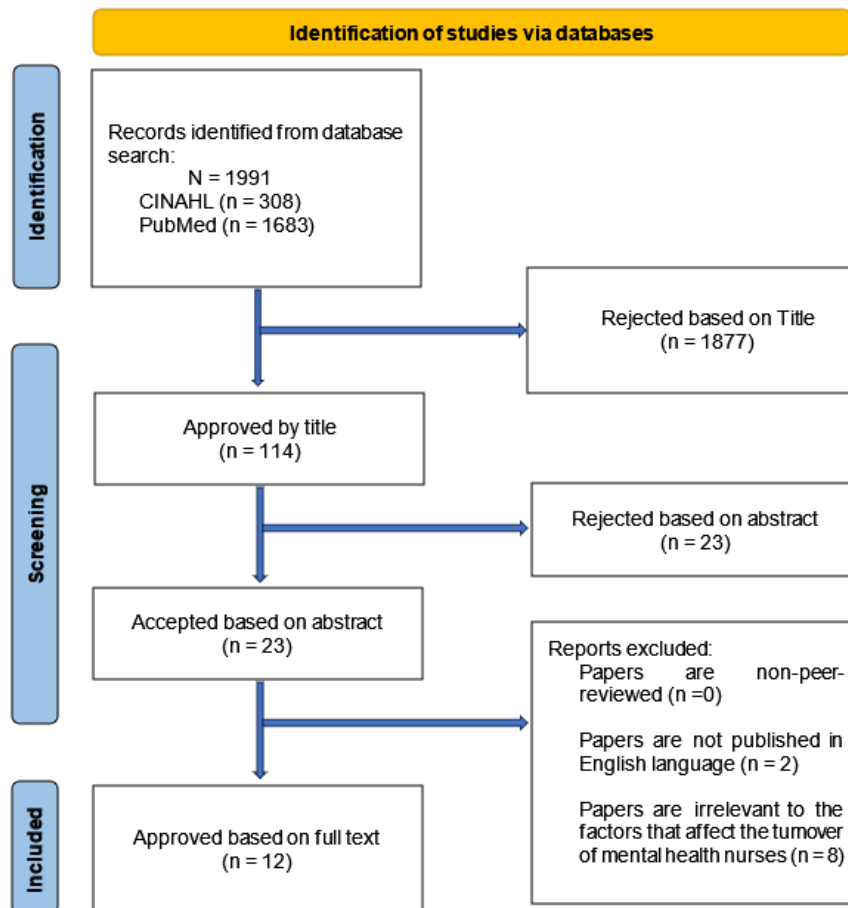


Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart on data selection process.

## 4.2 Data analysis method

Inductive content analysis (ICA) is a qualitative research method used to analyze data by identifying emerging categories or themes from text. It involves a manual process of reading and categorizing data without predetermined categories (Kyngäs 2019: 13–21; Vears and Gillam 2022: 111–127; Bakharia 2019: 291–298). The process of ICA includes identifying open codes, grouping them into sub-concepts, categories, and themes, and further organizing them into main concepts for reporting results (Hoiruddin and Ulfa 2020: 105).

The inductive content analysis process in the context of studying the factors that affect turnover intention among mental health nurses typically unfolds in several systematic steps. The researchers first acquired a diverse range of data, such as interview transcripts, surveys, and other textual sources found in the gathered articles, and then thoroughly analyzed the data to gain a full understanding of the content. This

immersion phase involved reading and rereading the texts to identify recurring words, phrases, or concepts. Following this, the researchers began the process of coding, where they systematically assigned labels or codes to meaningful text segments for analysis. These codes were developed inductively, which emerged directly from the data rather than being predetermined by pre-existing theories or frameworks. Subsequently, the researchers grouped similar codes into broader categories through a process of constant comparison, where they continuously compared new data with existing codes to refine and expand their understanding. Finally, they interpreted the main category relative to the research question, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence turnover intention among mental health nurses (Vears and Gillam 2022: 111–127).

The data analysis example is presented in Table 4 below, with the corresponding results discussed in Chapter 5.

Table 4. Example of data analysis

Meaning Unit (authors and page numbers)	Reduction/ Coding	Sub-category	Generic Category	Main Category
<p>The findings extend prior knowledge on MHN experiences. Frequent workplace challenges included violence and aggression from consumers, bullying from colleagues, low staffing levels and poor skill mix.</p> <p>The implementation of targeted policy and initiatives that focus on reducing key stressors and supporting practice are vital to staff retention and ensuring a high standard of practice in complex mental health workplaces. (<i>Cranage and Foster 2022: 665–676</i>)</p>	<p>Violence and aggression from consumers</p> <p>Bullying from colleagues</p> <p>Low staffing levels</p> <p>Poor skill mix</p> <p><b>Reducing stressors and supporting practice</b></p>	<p>Work-related stress</p> <p>Workplace relationships and culture</p> <p>Workload and staffing</p> <p>Support and resources</p> <p><b>Stress-reduction workshops tailored for nurses</b></p>	<p>Job demands and burnout</p> <p>Nurse practice environment</p> <p><b>Stress and mental health management programs</b></p>	<p>Factors that affect the turnover intention of mental health nurses</p> <p><b>Practical strategies and interventions suggested in the literature to address the factors influencing turnover intention among mental health nurses</b></p>
<p>Nursing work environment and all its five dimensions had significant effects on work-related outcomes, which were partly mediated by work engagement.</p> <p>Supportive nursing work environment could improve nurses' work engagement, enhance nurse-perceived quality of care and reduce nurses' turnover intention. (<i>Huang et al. 2020: 186–196</i>)</p>	<p>Verbal or physical threats from patients</p> <p>Unsafe work environment Increased workload</p> <p>Low level of work engagement and the quality of care</p> <p><b>Supportive nursing work environment</b></p>	<p>Demographic characteristics</p> <p>Perception of the job</p> <p>Work-related stress</p> <p><b>Enhancing support systems</b></p>	<p>Individual characteristics</p> <p>Job demands and burnout</p> <p><b>Workplace interventions</b></p>	<p>Factors that affect the turnover intention of mental health nurses</p> <p><b>Practical strategies and interventions suggested in the literature to address the factors influencing turnover intention among mental health nurses</b></p>

## 5 Results

This section outlines the findings of twelve peer-reviewed articles conducted in nine different countries, two in Australia, China, and the United Kingdom, one in Greece, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Sweden, and the USA, determined according to inclusion and exclusion criteria set by the researchers. These studies encompass a wide range of perspectives and experiences, drawing from a study group of nurses specializing in mental health and psychiatry who work in psychiatric hospitals and clinics ranging from 15 to 7933 individuals. A notable limitation of this study lies in the inherent differences among nurse training programs and healthcare systems across the various countries included in the analysis. Factors such as cultural norms, healthcare policies, and resource availability could have disparate impacts on the experiences and motivations of nurses, thereby influencing turnover rates differently across countries. Through a diverse sample, this chapter only offers a comprehensive analysis of factors influencing turnover intentions among mental health nurses on a global scale. The lists of selected articles are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. List of selected articles

Country	Author (s) & year	Methodology & Methods	Participants
Australia	Crannage & Foster (2022)	Qualitative Cross-sectional survey design	Registered and enrolled nurses working in Victorian mental health roles and/or services n = 374
	Foster et al. (2022)	Cross-sectional descriptive survey design	Mental health nurses in Victoria, Australia n = 87
China	Huang et al. (2020)	Cross-sectional design Structural equation modelling Path analysis	Mental health nurses n = 349
	Jiang et al. (2019)	Cross-sectional, anonymous survey	Nurses in 32 tertiary psychiatric hospitals n = 7933
Greece	Konstantinou et al. (2018)	Cross-sectional design	Mental health nurses in private psychiatric clinics n = 78
Iran	Ghavidel (2019)	Qualitative approach Inductive conventional content analysis	Nurses in Psychiatric wards n = 15
Israel	Baum & Kagan (2015)	Cross-sectional quantitative design	Psychiatric nurses working on closed and open wards n = 52
Jordan	Alsaraireh et al. (2014)	Quantitative Descriptive, correlational, cross-sectional design	Jordanian nurses in psychiatric units n = 154
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Alharbi et al. (2023)	Opt-in 5-point Likert Scale survey	Junior and senior mental health nurses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia n = 90
	Aloufi (2023)	Cross-sectional, descriptive, correlational design Quantitative	Nurses working in psychiatric hospitals in Saudi Arabia n = 161
Sweden	Holmberg et al. (2016)	Cross-sectional survey	Registered and assistant nurses employed n = 118
USA	Pelletier et al. (2019)	Quantitative time-sequenced comparative study	NGNs hired into NRP n = 34

Using inductive content analysis, the results (see Figure 2) show the main category that answers the question, “What are the factors that influence the turnover intention among mental health nurses?” derived from the combination of the 11 sub-categories within the 3 generic categories identified. It shows a multifaceted issue influenced by individual characteristics, job demands and burnout, and the nurse practice environment. These categories interact and influence each other, impacting the decision of mental health nurses to leave their profession.

The results for the research question, “What are the practical strategies and interventions suggested in the literature to address the factors influencing turnover intention among mental health nurses?” were categorized into four main areas: workplace interventions, stress and mental health management programs, professional development opportunities, and policies related to compensation and work arrangements. These results are illustrated in Figure 3 and further detailed in Section 5.2.

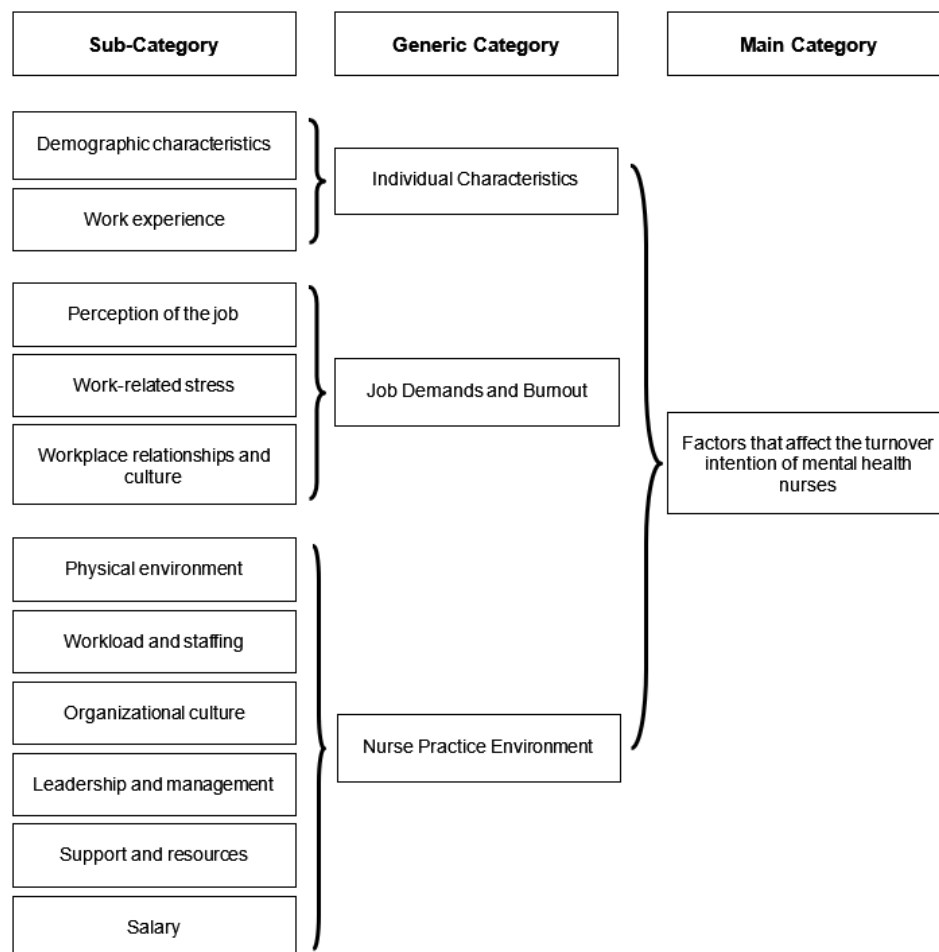


Figure 2. Inductive content analysis of factors that affect the turnover intention among mental health nurses

## 5.1 Factors that affect the turnover intention among mental health nurses

The present study analyzed mental health nurses' intentions to leave their profession. A comprehensive literature review was conducted concerning the elements that impact the intention of mental health nurses to leave their jobs, covering relevant articles and academic journals from 2014–2023 (see Appendix).

### 5.1.1 Individual Characteristics

Results revealed that demographic characteristics such as age (Alsaraireh et al. 2014: 460–467; Baum and Kagan 2015: 213–216; Foster et al. 2022: 409–419), marital status (Alsaraireh et al. 2014: 460–467), health status (Jiang et al. 2019: 159–165), and level of education (Alsaraireh et al. 2014: 460–467; Jiang et al. 2019: 159–165) significantly influence mental health nurses' options to leave their profession. Nurses' experience and practice also affect the decision to leave their profession. Two studies identified an inverse relationship between work experiences and nurses' intention to leave their jobs, with newly graduated nurses showing higher turnover rates during their first year of practice (Alsaraireh et al. 2014: 460–467) and long-term work histories retaining jobs (Jiang et al. 2019: 159–165).

### 5.1.2 Job Demands and Burnout

Findings indicated that job demands and burnout significantly impact mental health nurses' turnover intention, leading to exhaustion and dissatisfaction. Factors such as high workloads (Huang et al. 2020: 186–196), floated positions (Pelletier et al. 2019: 66–75), time pressures, complex patient needs (Huang et al. 2020: 186–196; Pelletier et al. 2019: 66–75), and role conflict (Alsaraireh et al. 2014: 460–467; Konstantinou et al. 2018: 449–456) contribute to these issues. Ultimately, factors such as bullying from colleagues (Alharbi et al. 2023: 1171–1177; Cranage and Foster 2022: 665–676), patient-initiated violence and threats (Alsaraireh et al. 2014: 460–467; Cranage and Foster 2022: 665–676; Huang et al. 2020: 186–196; Jiang et al. 2019: 159–165), stress (Baum and Kagan 2015: 213–216; Foster et al. 2022: 409–419; Pelletier et al. 2019: 66–75), depression, stigma, lower resilience (Foster et al. 2022: 409–419), and unsafe work conditions (Huang et al. 2020: 186–196) can contribute to burnout and increase turnover intention within the profession.

### 5.1.3 Nurse Practice Environment

Studies revealed several key findings related to the nurse practice environment. The physical environment, including facility and resource availability, emerged as a significant contributor to turnover intention (Ghavidel 2019: 3893). Nurses reported feeling stressed and burned out when working in cramped or outdated facilities with limited resources (Alsaireh et al. 2014: 460–467). One study conducted a comparison of working in two settings: an open and closed psychiatric ward, which shows that working in closed wards leads to higher turnover intention (Baum and Kagan 2015: 213–216). Workload and staffing levels were also recognized as key contributors. Nurses expressed frustration when faced with high patient loads and inadequate staffing, leading to feelings of being overwhelmed and unsupported. A poor skill mix, where nurses feel their skills are not utilized effectively, can also contribute to turnover intentions (Alsaireh et al. 2014: 460–467; Cranage and Foster 2022: 665–676; Ghavidel 2019: 3893).

Nurses are considering leaving their jobs due to issues such as lack of social recognition (Jiang et al. 2019: 159–165), management responsiveness (Pelletier et al. 2019: 66–75), and poor quality of supervision (Aloufi 2023) in their organizational culture. Leadership and management styles were cited as influential, with nurses feeling disempowered and unsupported by their leaders. The importance of support and resources, including access to training and development opportunities, was also recognized (Cranage and Foster 2022: 665–676; Ghavidel 2019: 3893).

Finally, nurses consistently expressed being underappreciated and underpaid for the challenging work they do, emphasizing the need for better compensation and benefits. This point of view was aggravated by the insufficient acknowledgment and backing from leadership, which contributed to their overall job dissatisfaction (Aloufi 2023; Alsaireh et al. 2014: 460–467; Holmberg et al. 2016: 581–592; Konstantinou et al. 2018: 449–456).

## 5.2 Practical strategies and interventions suggested in the literature to address the factors influencing turnover intention among mental health nurses

The articles highlight a range of practical strategies and interventions to address the factors influencing turnover intentions among mental health nurses. These strategies are categorized into 4 generic categories: workplace interventions, stress and mental health management programs, professional development opportunities, and policies related to compensation and work arrangements that were obtained from 10 sub-categories.

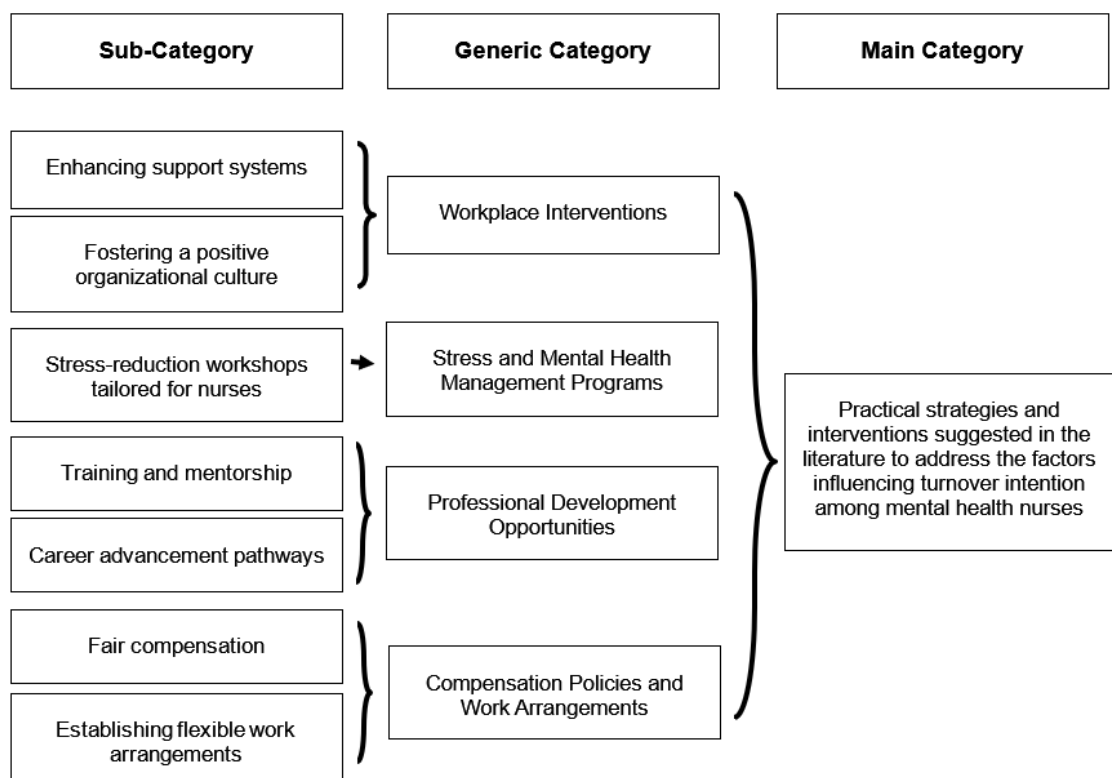


Figure 3. Inductive content analysis on practical strategies and interventions suggested in the literature to address the factors influencing turnover intention among mental health nurses

### 5.2.1 Workplace interventions

The literature consistently highlights several workplace interventions to address turnover intention among mental health nurses, emphasizing the importance of enhancing support systems and fostering a positive organizational culture. Key strategies include creating a supportive nursing work environment (Huang et al. 2020: 186–196), promoting

interpersonal relationships (Jiang et al. 2019: 159–165), and implementing organizational and individual interventions (Konstantinou et al. 2018: 449–456). Operational improvements, including clear instructions and psychological support (Konstantinou et al. 2018: 449–456), are essential for reducing stress and ambiguity. Ensuring workplace safety through robust protocols, stricter laws and mandatory regulations, and comprehensive programs for preventing, reporting, and managing workplace violence (Alsaraireh et al. 2014: 460–467) are critical measures. Together, these interventions aim to reduce turnover by addressing job satisfaction, safety, and organizational support effectively.

### 5.2.2 Stress and Mental Health Management Programs

Stress and mental health management programs, such as stress reduction workshops tailored to the unique needs of nurses, can be implemented for addressing workplace stress, promoting resilience, and improving overall well-being and job satisfaction. These initiatives aim to alleviate stressors, provide targeted support during transition periods, and intervene early for nurses experiencing mental distress (Cranage and Foster 2022: 665–676). Programs are designed to enhance well-being and job satisfaction (Foster et al. 2022: 409–419; Jiang et al. 2019: 159–165) by implementing policies that prioritize both the physical and mental health of nurses (Ghavidel 2019: 3893). Such interventions seek to foster a supportive environment, address nurses' concerns, and build resilience.

### 5.2.3 Professional Development Opportunities

Professional development opportunities, including training and mentorship programs as well as clear career advancement pathways, are essential for fostering growth, enhancing job satisfaction, and reducing turnover among mental health nurses. Emphasis is placed on team-building strategies and trainings (Konstantinou et al. 2018: 449–456) to strengthen collaboration and reduce burnout. In addition, education and training programs focused on risk management and prevention (Alsaraireh et al. 2014: 460–467) can enhance workplace safety and competence. Implementing nurse residency programs (NRPs) is also highlighted as a valuable initiative to support nurses during the transition into practice, promoting confidence and retention (Pelletier et al. 2019: 66–75). Together, these opportunities foster professional growth, job satisfaction, and long-term commitment to the nursing profession.

#### 5.2.4. Compensation Policies and Work Arrangements

Compensation policies and flexible work arrangements are important for promoting job satisfaction, reducing burnout, and retaining mental health nurses by addressing their financial needs and work-life balance. Work arrangement policies should address the relatively low job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions among younger and part-time nurses, particularly by reconsidering shift allocations, as part-time nurses often work evening and night shifts, which limits their involvement in daily staff interactions and may reflect a preference for reduced engagement with the psychiatric nursing role (Jiang et al. 2019: 159–165; Baum and Kagan 2015: 213–216). These measures aim to enhance job satisfaction and retention by fostering a more sustainable and rewarding work environment for mental health nurses.

## 6 Discussion

### 6.1 Discussion of Findings

The discussion of this study delves into the multifaceted factors influencing turnover intention among mental health nurses based on inductive content analysis. These factors range from workload and emotional exhaustion to organizational support and personal resilience. The discussion emphasizes the critical areas that require urgent attention and intervention by policymakers, healthcare administrators, and mental health professionals aiming to address the global shortage among mental health nurses and minimize its effect on healthcare systems and future patient care.

The study on the connection between individual characteristics and turnover intentions among mental health nurses highlights several key elements affecting this issue. The study showed that demographic characteristics play a key role in determining turnover intentions among nurses. Similar to the present study, Wang (2022) demonstrated that job stress, having more children, part-time employment, education level, income, nurse-to-patient ratio, and specific age brackets (such as 31–39 years old) are associated with increased turnover intention among psychiatric Chinese nurses. Additionally, years of experience significantly impact mental health nurses' turnover rates. Research studies by Alsarairh et al. (2014) and Jiang et al. (2019) show that new graduate nurses experience higher turnover rates in their first year, while nurses

with extensive work experience are more inclined to remain in their positions. The review by Turnover and Retention Strategies Among Mental Health Workers (2022) indicates that nurses with more years in the profession tend to have less mental health issues, potentially leading to higher retention rates. The aging nursing workforce, while requiring the retention of younger nurses, also poses challenges as older nurses often leave, leading to a critical shortage and potentially affecting standard of care in mental health services.

Understanding the interplay of these characteristics and external factors can offer valuable insights into the turnover intentions of mental health nurses. Organizations can enhance retention strategies for mental health nursing staff by analyzing individual characteristics within the workplace, thereby reducing turnover rates and enhancing job satisfaction among employees.

The study found a significant link between job demands and burnout among mental health nurses as a result of increased turnover intentions. Factors like job perception, work-related stress, and workplace relationships and culture overwhelm nurses, causing emotional fatigue, depersonalization, and diminished feelings of personal achievement (Tang et al. 2023), leading to moral distress and job satisfaction decline (Hwang and Bae 2017: 325).

A systematic review of 400 articles found that nearly all mental health nurses experienced verbal abuse, majority encountered psychological abuse, while fewer experienced physical violence and sexual harassment, with negative psychological impacts often experienced (Yosep et al. 2017). These results align with those observed in the current study, as the most highlighted factor faced by mental health nurses is patient-related violence and threats. Due to the special nature of their profession, this issue emerged as a predominant concern, significantly affecting their mental well-being and distress. The impact of such violence is profound, contributing to feelings of fear, burnout, and emotional exhaustion. Consequently, addressing patient-related violence is critical in efforts to reduce turnover rates and improve the overall work environment for mental health nurses.

Mental health nursing demands high job demands due to the emotional and psychological intensity of the work, frequent exposure to traumatic patient experiences, and managing complex cases with limited resources, leading to substantial emotional and physical exhaustion and burnout. High burnout rates not only increase turnover

intentions but also negatively impact patient care quality, as burnt-out nurses may struggle with empathy and effectiveness. To retain skilled nurses, targeted interventions like stress management training, regular debriefings, and work-life balance are crucial. The link between job demands and burnout indicates the significance of organizational factors like workload management, supervisory support, and professional development opportunities in reducing burnout and plans to leave the job. Promoting a positive work atmosphere where nurses feel valued and understood can mitigate job demands, enhancing resilience and job satisfaction.

The present study found a significant link between nurse practice environment and turnover intention among mental health nurses. The physical environment plays a crucial role, as inadequate facilities and unsafe conditions can delay the delivery of care and exacerbate stress and dissatisfaction. The results of Poku et al. (2022) confirms that nurses' turnover intention is significantly influenced by burnout caused by an unsafe work environment.

High patient-to-nurse ratios, inappropriate staffing, labor shortages, and mandatory overtime increase workload, leading to mental and physical burnout. The results of Holland et al. (2019) indicate that the belief that a heavy workload correlates with greater job demands depletes nurses' resources, leading them to contemplate leaving their profession. In the study of Bae (2024), mandatory overtime work may indicate a coercive working culture, as it may increase the intention to leave. The effect of workload on turnover intention is facilitated by job satisfaction, indicating that managing workload levels and ensuring adequate staffing can impact nurse retention in psychiatric settings.

The study revealed that an unsupportive organizational culture can significantly reduce turnover, as a negative atmosphere can negatively impact morale and engagement. Leadership and management quality is another critical factor; effective leaders who provide clear communication, recognition, and support can enhance job satisfaction, while poor leadership contributes to turnover. Nurses require support and resources like mental health services, training, and professional development opportunities to feel valued and capable in their roles. The study conducted by Gold (2022) reveals a negative correlation between leadership empowerment and turnover intentions among psychiatric RNs in their first two years, suggesting that inadequate leadership empowerment, including autonomy and professional development opportunities, can increase turnover intentions.

Lastly, salary is a fundamental factor; competitive and fair compensation is necessary to retain skilled nurses, as inadequate pay can drive them to seek better opportunities elsewhere (Bukach et al. 2017: 115–122). Higher compensation can reduce turnover intentions by enhancing job satisfaction, which acts as a mediating factor. When compensation is perceived as fair and competitive, they will feel valued, which will increase work satisfaction.

A positive nursing environment can boost nurses' engagement, enhance quality care, and decrease turnover intentions in psychiatric hospitals (Huang et al. 2020: 186–196). Addressing these areas holistically can help mitigate turnover intentions and foster a more stable and motivated workforce in mental health nursing. Fostering a teamwork, communication, and professional development culture can enhance job satisfaction and decrease turnover rates among mental health nurses, thereby enhancing healthcare organization stability and improving mental health care quality.

## 6.2 Ethical considerations and validity

Research ethics uphold scientific integrity, protect human rights and dignity, and foster collaboration between science and society by guaranteeing that participation in studies is voluntary, informed, and prioritizes safety (Bhandari 2023). Ethical considerations in descriptive literature research are paramount, to adhere ethical guidelines and ensure the validity of the review findings.

Validity is crucial in literature research as it guarantees the accuracy and reliability of the findings. It pertains to how well a study accurately measures the concepts it aims to address. In the context of writing literature research, validity is essential to ensure that the research outcomes align with the intended objectives and accurately represent the phenomena under investigation (Chetwynd 2022: 392–396; Gordon 2018: 46).

Researchers meticulously scrutinize the representation of authors and research participants in original studies, avoiding misrepresenting findings that do not suit the purpose of the study. The researchers properly cited the references consulted to avoid plagiarism. They used publicly accessible scientific papers with relevant literature as evidence from credible sources and ensured that the selected literature was relevant to the research question or topic under investigation. This includes performing a comprehensive literature search using suitable databases (CINAHL and PubMed) and

search terms. The researchers evaluated the quality of selected scientific papers by considering factors like study design, methodology, and research methods.

The ethical principles and guidelines outlined by TENK (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity) and Arene (Advisory Board for Research and Innovation) emphasize the importance of integrity, transparency, and respect for human dignity in research practices. The aspects discussed in this text protect the rights of research participants, improve the research's validity, and maintain scientific integrity. These principles and guidelines guided the researchers in maintaining ethical standards across various domains and were followed during the completion of this study. These guidelines indicate that the researchers of this literature review maintained an impartial stance regarding the study's findings (TENK 2023; Arene 2020).

### 6.3 Conclusion

International evidence supports the notion that turnover intention among mental health nurses is influenced by various predictors, and these factors remain pertinent in the current healthcare landscape. Key areas needing attention include improving individual characteristics, managing job demands and burnout, and enhancing the nursing practice environment. This research emphasizes the need for healthcare administrators and policymakers to have a comprehensive strategy to promote nurse retention, which includes mentorship programs, workload optimization, resource allocation, and work-life balance as a way of effectively managing the workforce of mental health nurses. Research on psychiatric hospital nurses' mental health is important in developing interventions based on evidence that increase retention rates, improve quality patient care, and maintain a dedicated workforce within the mental health sector. Institutions can improve mental nursing by implementing training programs focused on building resilience and preparing individuals for unique challenges in this role. Likewise, promoting the worth of mental health nursing can also foster a positive work environment, thereby reducing turnover intentions among nurses.

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Author (s), year, country	Topic/Title	Methodology & Methods	Participants	Main Outcomes	Limitations
1. Cranage & Foster 2022 Australia	Mental health nurses' experience of challenging workplace situations: A qualitative descriptive study	Qualitative Cross-sectional survey design	Registered and enrolled nurses working in Victorian mental health roles and/or services  n = 374	Violence and aggression from consumers Bullying from colleagues Low staffing levels Poor skill mix  Lack of support from colleagues and/or the organization  The implementation of targeted policy and initiatives that focus on reducing key stressors and supporting practice are vital to staff retention and ensuring a high standard of practice in complex mental health workplaces.	Limited to one state in Australia and may not represent the experiences of the wider mental health nursing workforce.
2. Foster et al. 2022 Australia	Well-being, turnover intention, and stigma attitudes of mental health transition-to-practice nurses: A cross-sectional study	Cross-sectional descriptive survey design	Mental health nurses in Victoria, Australia  n = 87	Age Depression Lower resilience Work satisfaction Stress  Stigma	No limitation available in the study.

				To help prevent attrition, it is vital that mental health services provide tailored well-being initiatives during transition and intervene early to provide support for nurses with mental distress.	
3. Huang et al. 2020 China	Effects of nursing work environment on work-related outcomes among psychiatric nurses: A mediating model	Cross-sectional design Structural equation modelling Path analysis	Mental health nurses n = 349	Verbal or physical threats from patients  Unsafe work environment  Increased workload  Low level of work engagement and the quality of care  Supportive nursing work environment could improve nurses' work engagement, enhance nurse-perceived quality of care and reduce nurses' turnover intention.	The study only surveyed two psychiatric hospitals located in Beijing, which might lead to the limited generalization.
4. Jiang et al. 2019 China	Intention to leave and associated factors among psychiatric nurses in China: A nationwide cross-sectional study	Cross-sectional, anonymous survey	Nurses in 32 tertiary psychiatric hospitals n = 7933	Patient-initiated violence  Lack of social recognition	Psychiatric nurses included in the study were from the top psychiatric hospitals in each province, and their representativeness of

				<p>Job satisfaction</p> <p>Health status</p> <p>Marital status</p> <p>Level of education</p> <p>The government and hospital administrators should pay attention to the wellbeing and job satisfaction of psychiatric nurses, take measures to ensure that nurses' income fairly compensates for their workload, and promote interpersonal relationships in their work environment, thereby improving the retention of nurses in tertiary psychiatric hospitals.</p>	<p>nurses in psychiatric hospitals across China, especially those in smaller cities and rural areas was limited.</p> <p>Causal relationships cannot be established.</p> <p>Some measures used in this study may render some results less reliable.</p> <p>The survey did not consider the hospitals' organizational characteristics.</p>
<p>5.</p> <p>Konstantinou et al.</p> <p>2018</p> <p>Greece</p>	<p>Burnout Evaluation and Potential Predictors in a Greek Cohort of Mental Health Nurses</p>	<p>Cross-sectional design</p>	<p>Mental health nurses in private psychiatric clinics</p> <p>n = 78</p>	<p>Job burnout due to:</p> <p>Role conflict</p> <p>Satisfaction with workload</p> <p>Satisfaction with training</p> <p>Role ambiguity</p> <p>Satisfaction with pay</p>	<p>No limitation available in the study.</p>

				<p>Presence of serious family issues</p> <p>These findings have implications for organizational and individual interventions, indicating that mental health nurses' burnout could be reduced, or even prevented by team building strategies, training, application of operation management, clear instructions and psychological support.</p>	
<p>6. Ghavidel 2019 Iran</p>	<p>The role of organizational factors in nurse burnout: Experiences from Iranian nurses working in psychiatric wards</p>	<p>Qualitative approach</p> <p>Inductive conventional content analysis</p>	<p>Nurses in Psychiatric wards n = 15</p>	<p>Shortage of human resources: shortage of labor force, inappropriate staff, and mandatory overtime</p> <p>Shortage of standard facilities in providing care: shortage of tools and equipment and inadequacy of the building and the area</p> <p>The impact of management</p>	<p>The interviews were limited only to nurses working in the psychiatric ward, while physicians and psychologists working in the ward were not included.</p>

				<p>approaches on provision of care: insufficient welfare and financial facilities, exposure to discrimination and ingratitude, officials' inadequate support for nurses and lack of job support, paying little attention to and weakness in employee training, and employing inappropriate staff for the psychiatric ward</p> <p>By adopting appropriate policies in the programs, paying special attention to the physical and mental health of nurses, and addressing their problems, managers of healthcare organizations can motivate and sustain the human resources within the organization.</p>	
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<p>7. Baum &amp; Kagan 2015 Israel</p>	<p>Job Satisfaction and Intent to Leave Among Psychiatric Nurses: Closed Versus Open Wards</p>	<p>Cross-sectional quantitative design</p>	<p>Psychiatric nurses working on closed and open wards n = 52</p>	<p>Age Work schedule (Part-time work) Working on closed wards (younger age) Stress  Psychiatric hospitals need to pay attention to all factors associated with workers' readiness to leave. Given the widespread shortage of nurses, it is especially important that they address the relatively low job satisfaction of both younger and part-time nurses, and the particular stresses that closed-ward nurses work under.</p>	<p>No limitation available in the study.</p>
<p>8. Alsaraireh et al. 2014 Jordan</p>	<p>Job Satisfaction and turnover intention among Jordanian nurses in psychiatric units</p>	<p>Quantitative Descriptive, correlational, cross-sectional design</p>	<p>Jordanian nurses in psychiatric units n = 154</p>	<p>Level of Education Over-crowding or cramped work areas Lack of control over work Risk of violence Unclear job responsibilities</p>	<p>The sample was limited to nurses employed in the government psychiatric hospital in Jordan, and thus the findings are relevant to this sample only. No conclusions can be made regarding nurses in Jordan who</p>

				<p>Age Years of work experience Salary Job satisfaction</p> <p>It is important for the Ministry of Health, in coordination with the administration board of the NMHC in Jordan, to establish and maintain safe work environments; education and training programmes about risk management and prevention; stricter laws and mandatory regulations enforcing safe work practices; and a comprehensive programme for the prevention, reporting, and management of all types of workplace violence.</p>	work in private psychiatric hospitals.
9. Alharbi et al. 2023	The role of human resource management and governance in addressing bullying, burnout and the depersonalization of junior	Opt-in 5-point Likert Scale survey	Junior and senior mental health nurses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	<p>Burnout Workplace bullying *weak level of affirmation on the</p>	No limitation available in the study.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	and senior psychiatric nurses in Saudi Arabia		n = 90	<p>leadership within the clinical setting</p> <p>*weak level of perceptions of the HR and governance responsibility of senior and junior nurses</p> <p>If bullying, and its derived consequence of burnout, is to be addressed there needs to be a cultural shift in the attitudes of junior and senior nurses towards more acceptance of their HR and governance responsibilities. Furthermore, there needs to be an increased focus on shared leadership responsibilities, with greater nurse-manager interaction and cooperation on transformational practices that will bring cultural change to the clinical space.</p>	
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<p>10. Aloufi 2023 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</p>	<p>Job satisfaction and turnover intention among nurses working in psychiatric hospitals in Saudi Arabia</p>	<p>Cross-sectional, descriptive, correlational design Quantitative</p>	<p>Nurses working in psychiatric hospitals in Saudi Arabia n = 161</p>	<p>Job satisfaction Organizational policies Quality of supervision: lack of support, guidance, and effective leadership Relations with colleagues Rate of pay  The study emphasizes the need to take departmental variations and religious beliefs into account when determining and addressing turnover intention in the workforce of psychiatric nurses.</p>	<p>As a non-experimental approach, the target group is the only population for which generalizability is important. A convenience sample was used to acquire the data. The lack of randomization may have raised the likelihood of sample bias occurring, decreasing the study's generalizability.</p>
<p>11. Holmberg et al. 2016 Sweden</p>	<p>Job Satisfaction Among Swedish Mental Health Nursing Staff: A Cross-Sectional Survey</p>	<p>Cross-sectional survey</p>	<p>Registered and assistant nurses employed n = 118</p>	<p>Salary Lack of training and skills  Hospital administrators should encourage nursing staff to improve relationships between staff and managers and establish good relationships among colleagues.</p>	<p>Based on a single hospital clinic with a relatively small sample; more studies are needed to provide a broad and more-generalizable picture of Swedish circumstances regarding mental health nursing staffs' job satisfaction.</p>

<p>12. Pelletier et al.  2019  USA</p>	<p>Effectiveness of a Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Residency Program on Retention</p>	<p>Quantitative time- sequenced comparative study</p>	<p>NGNs hired into NRPs  n = 34</p>	<p>Understaffed/acuity/ patient load Shift/hours/weekends Lack of downtime Stress Overworked Management responsiveness Getting floated Not enough time with patients</p> <p>The nurse residency program (NRP) is a means of attracting new graduate nurses (NGNs) to the psychiatric- mental health specialty and retaining them in the profession and in their new jobs. An NRP can serve as a recruitment and retention strategy that lowers overall turnover rates as demonstrated in this study focused on an NRP in a specialty area.</p>	<p>Low response rate. Insufficient sample size.</p>
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