

Factors Influencing Retention Intention among Nurses in University-Affiliated Hospitals in Guangxi Province, China

Dong Gao^{1*}, Napawan Netpradit², Thatphong Awirothananon³

¹Ph.D. Candidate, Doctor of Philosophy Program in Management, Lampang Rajabhat University, Thailand; Email: 251908600@qq.com

²Doctor of Philosophy Program in Management, Lampang Rajabhat University, Thailand; Email: nok_napawan@hotmail.com

³Faculty of Business Administration Maejo University, Thailand; Email: thatphong@hotmail.com

*Corresponding Author: 251908600@qq.com

Citation: Gao, D., Netpradit, N., & Awirothananon, T. (2025). Factors Influencing Retention Intention among Nurses in University-Affiliated Hospitals in Guangxi Province, China. *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 10(3), 2380–2390. <https://doi.org/10.64753/jcasc.v10i3.2749>

Published: December 03, 2025

ABSTRACT

The present study aims to analyze the structural relationships among key variables that influence nurses' intention to remain in their profession within university hospitals in Guangxi Province, China. Specifically, it investigates the effects of transformational leadership, quality of work life, organizational commitment, and adaptability on professional retention, and further proposes practical approaches to reduce turnover rates among nursing personnel. A mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were obtained from 935 nurses working in nine university-affiliated hospitals under Guilin Medical University and Guangxi Medical University through an online survey. Descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were used to examine inter-variable relationships. For the qualitative phase, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 27 nurses of varying seniority levels. The interview transcripts were analyzed using content analysis to interpret and complement the quantitative findings. The results revealed that all examined variables scored at high levels, with retention intention showing the highest mean value, followed by transformational leadership, quality of work life, organizational commitment, and adaptability. Path analysis confirmed that the proposed model was consistent with empirical data ($\chi^2 = 1035.329$; $df = 106$; $p = 0.146$; $CFI = 0.938$; $GFI = 0.905$; $AGFI = 0.831$; $RMSEA = 0.098$; $CMIN/DF = 10.058$). Among the predictors, work-life balance ($\beta = 0.82$, $p < 0.05$) exerted the strongest influence on nurses' intention to stay, followed by career advancement and job security ($\beta = 0.77$, $p < 0.05$), individualized consideration ($\beta = 0.77$, $p < 0.05$), and continuance commitment ($\beta = 0.75$, $p < 0.05$). All causal paths were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, confirming that leadership, organizational environment, and adaptive capacity jointly explain the intention to remain in the nursing profession. The study provides a structural understanding of nurse retention mechanisms and offers evidence-based strategies for hospitals to improve leadership practices, enhance work-life quality, and strengthen long-term workforce stability.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Quality of Work Life, Organizational Commitment, Adaptation, Nurse Retention.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing remains one of the most essential pillars of modern healthcare systems, particularly in times of public health crises when timely and professional care is vital for patient survival.

Despite its importance, the nursing profession across the world continues to experience critical shortages and high turnover rates, which have become a serious obstacle to achieving effective healthcare delivery.

According to Brook et al. (2019), the global turnover rate among nurses was estimated to reach approximately 22.5% by 2023, and the World Health Organization (WHO) projected a global shortage of nearly 12.9 million nurses by 2035.

Such conditions have resulted in considerable challenges for healthcare institutions striving to maintain quality care and system sustainability.

The causes of nurse turnover are multifactorial.

They include workforce aging, insufficient recruitment of new graduates, high job demands, stressful environments, and limited career advancement opportunities (Tetgoum, 2021).

Brook et al. (2019) also identified inadequate managerial support and restricted career pathways as major contributors to resignation decisions.

In developed regions such as the United States and Europe, the high turnover of nurses has already led to operational difficulties in hospitals.

In China, the situation is particularly concerning in rural areas, where most nurses prefer to work in large cities (Meesen et al., 2007), resulting in an average national turnover rate of around 20% in 2020 (International Council of Nurses, 2020).

Turnover among nurses not only disrupts healthcare delivery but also increases institutional costs, reduces patient safety, and burdens remaining staff with heavier workloads (McKinsey, 2022).

New graduates are often the most vulnerable group — they tend to leave within the first year of employment due to overwhelming job expectations and inadequate mentorship support (Brook et al., 2019).

This early attrition trend reflects systemic deficiencies in hospital management, including the absence of effective leadership, work-life balance, and organizational commitment mechanisms. Addressing this issue requires strategic interventions.

Leadership development, improved work-life quality, and continuous professional training are essential measures to mitigate turnover and promote mental well-being (Mafumo & Netshikweta, 2022).

Moreover, utilizing digital tools and analytics to monitor retention data enables administrators to make data-driven decisions that strengthen staff satisfaction.

A culture that values open communication, mentorship, and career support can transform hospital environments into sustainable, high-retention workplaces (Baharum et al., 2023).

Research Objectives

1. To examine the levels of transformational leadership, quality of work life, organizational commitment, adaptability, and intention to remain among nurses working in university hospitals in Guangxi Province, China.
2. To investigate the causal factors influencing nurses' retention intention in university-affiliated hospitals in Guangxi Province, China.
3. To propose strategic guidelines for reducing the turnover rate of nurses working in university hospitals in Guangxi Province, China.

Scope of the research

Content Scope

This study focuses on examining the causal relationship affecting nurses' intention to stay in their profession at university hospitals in Guangxi Province, China.

The independent variables include transformational leadership, quality of work life, organizational commitment, and adaptability.

The conceptual framework is grounded on established theories: transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), quality of work life (Walton, 1973), organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), and adaptation (Roy's Adaptation Model).

The dependent variable, nursing career retention intention, was adapted from Taunton, Krampitz, and Wood (1989).

The study also covers organizational, individual, managerial, and job-related factors influencing nurses' decisions to remain in their profession.

Population and Sample

The population includes nurses employed in university hospitals across Guangxi Province, namely:

- (1) Guilin Medical University — six affiliated hospitals;
- (2) Guangxi Medical University — three affiliated hospitals.

In total, nine hospitals with 11,723 nurses were included (Guilin Medical University, 2024; Guangxi Medical University, 2024).

Study Area:

The research was conducted within Guangxi Province, China.

Study Period:

The research was carried out from March 2024 to March 2025.

Expected Benefits

The results of this study are expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions. From a theoretical perspective, the study enriches academic understanding of the relationships among transformational leadership, quality of work life, organizational commitment, adaptability, and nurses' retention intention. It also serves as an empirical reference for future research applying Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in healthcare management.

From a practical perspective, the findings can assist administrators and policymakers in university hospitals in Guangxi Province in formulating strategies to enhance leadership effectiveness, improve working conditions, and strengthen nurse retention.

By identifying key determinants of turnover intention, hospitals can develop human resource policies that create a more sustainable and supportive nursing environment

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study reviews and compiles related concepts, theories, and research in detail as follows:

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is widely recognized as a leadership approach that motivates employees to achieve higher levels of performance and personal development by influencing their attitudes, values, and beliefs (Bass, 1985).

Unlike transactional leadership, which focuses primarily on the exchange of rewards and punishments, transformational leadership emphasizes intrinsic motivation, creativity, and a long-term vision for both individual and organizational growth (Burns, 1978).

Bass and Avolio (1994) further explained that transformational leaders are capable of inspiring subordinates through moral integrity, clear communication, and the demonstration of confidence and empathy. Such leaders articulate a compelling vision that aligns organizational goals with personal aspirations, encourage innovative problem-solving, and recognize the individual needs and potential of each member.

In the context of healthcare, transformational leadership is particularly significant. It enhances teamwork, promotes adaptability, and fosters a supportive environment that helps nurses maintain morale and professional engagement.

Leaders who display empathy, offer mentorship, and acknowledge contributions are able to strengthen nurses' emotional connection to their work and organization, leading to higher job satisfaction and reduced turnover (Mafumo & Netshikweta, 2022).

Similarly, Abbas et al. (2021) and Amin et al. (2023) found that transformational leadership is closely linked to nurses' retention, as it fosters trust, mutual respect, and a shared sense of purpose within the workplace. When nurses perceive their leaders as inspiring and supportive, they are more likely to experience a sense of belonging, remain committed to organizational goals, and sustain long-term engagement in their profession.

Overall, transformational leadership in nursing institutions not only contributes to improving performance and efficiency but also serves as a vital factor in enhancing nurse satisfaction, building mutual trust, and ultimately reducing turnover intention.

This leadership style creates a culture of empowerment and shared vision that ensures both individual growth and organizational stability in the healthcare sector.

Quality of Work Life

The concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL) was first introduced by Walton (1973), emphasizing the balance between employees' professional performance and their overall life satisfaction. QWL is not limited to physical working conditions but extends to the social, psychological, and organizational dimensions that influence how employees perceive their work environment. It reflects the extent to which employees are able to meet personal and professional needs through their occupation, and it is regarded as a key determinant of both productivity and well-being.

According to Walton's framework, QWL includes various components such as fair compensation, job security, safe working conditions, professional development opportunities, participative management, and work-life balance.

Later scholars, including Huse and Cummings (1995) and Gupta and Hyde (2022), further emphasized that QWL represents a holistic approach to human resource management, integrating both employee welfare and organizational effectiveness.

A high level of QWL has been found to increase job satisfaction, strengthen organizational commitment, and reduce absenteeism and turnover.

In the context of nursing, QWL plays a crucial role in determining both the physical and emotional well-being of nurses, who often face demanding workloads, emotional strain, and time pressure.

Nurses with better working conditions and institutional support report higher levels of job satisfaction and stronger intentions to remain in their profession (Mousazadeh et al., 2019).

Hospitals that offer fair wages, health and safety measures, and career advancement opportunities can foster a more stable and motivated nursing workforce. Moreover, supportive policies—such as flexible scheduling, mental health programs, and recognition systems—help nurses manage stress more effectively, improving retention and overall care quality.

Recent studies indicate that when nurses perceive fairness, respect, and autonomy in their workplace, they are more likely to develop long-term attachment to their organization (Baharum et al., 2023).

QWL thus serves as both a motivational and protective factor that enhances job engagement while mitigating burnout.

In summary, quality of work life is not only a measure of organizational health but also a vital condition for ensuring the sustainability of nursing professions, contributing to both individual satisfaction and institutional stability.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has long been recognized as one of the most influential factors determining employee behavior, job satisfaction, and retention across various professional contexts. It refers to the psychological attachment, identification, and emotional bond an employee feels toward their organization, reflecting the extent to which they are willing to contribute to organizational goals and remain part of it over time (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Employees with high organizational commitment tend to display greater work engagement, stronger loyalty, and a lower intention to leave.

According to the three-component model of organizational commitment proposed by Allen and Meyer (1990), this construct comprises three interrelated dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment represents an employee's emotional attachment to the organization, where individuals stay because they want to.

Continuance commitment reflects a rational calculation, where employees remain because they need to—often due to perceived costs or lack of alternatives.

Normative commitment, in contrast, is based on a sense of moral obligation, where individuals stay because they ought to. Together, these three elements provide a comprehensive understanding of the motivational bases behind employee retention.

In healthcare institutions, organizational commitment plays a crucial role in determining nurses' professional behavior and career stability.

Nurses who experience fair treatment, professional recognition, and supportive management are more likely to feel valued and develop a sense of belonging to their workplace (Rodwell et al., 2017).

High levels of commitment among nurses not only improve patient care outcomes but also enhance teamwork and reduce turnover intention.

Conversely, poor communication, lack of advancement opportunities, and excessive workload often weaken nurses' organizational identification, leading to stress and eventual attrition (Babaei et al., 2021).

Studies have consistently demonstrated that when hospital administrators emphasize transparent leadership, equitable compensation, and continuous development, nurses respond with stronger emotional investment in their work (Tao et al., 2023).

This emotional engagement contributes to greater resilience and long-term retention. Moreover, in settings where organizational culture encourages participation and shared decision-making, employees are more likely to perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with institutional values, reinforcing commitment and satisfaction.

In conclusion, organizational commitment among nurses is both a psychological and structural factor that connects individual motivation with institutional performance.

Strengthening this commitment requires not only external incentives such as compensation and security but also internal drivers like respect, recognition, and professional growth.

Thus, enhancing nurses' organizational commitment is a strategic approach for hospitals aiming to reduce turnover, sustain morale, and ensure continuous quality of care.

Adaptation Adaptation

Adaptation Adaptation is an essential process that enables individuals to cope effectively with environmental and organizational changes.

In the nursing context, adaptability helps nurses manage stress, accept change, and maintain motivation in dynamic hospital environments.

According to Roy's Adaptation Model (1999), adaptation involves physiological, self-concept, role function, and interdependence modes, through which individuals achieve balance in response to external stimuli. These aspects are highly relevant to nurses, who must continuously adjust both physically and psychologically to workload demands and interpersonal interactions in the workplace.

Kim's (1988) Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory further explains adaptation as a continuous process of learning and adjustment that integrates new experiences with existing beliefs.

For nurses, this process strengthens professional confidence and resilience when facing new technologies, work patterns, and patient diversity.

Black and Mendenhall (1990) also emphasized that adaptability reduces stress, improves job satisfaction, and promotes organizational commitment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To study the causal relationship between nursing career intention and nursing career at a university hospital in Guangxi Province, China, the researcher reviewed the literature, research, and related theoretical concepts and synthesized variables related to intention to remain, including transformational leadership, quality of work life, organizational commitment, and adaptation, which were used to establish the conceptual framework for the study

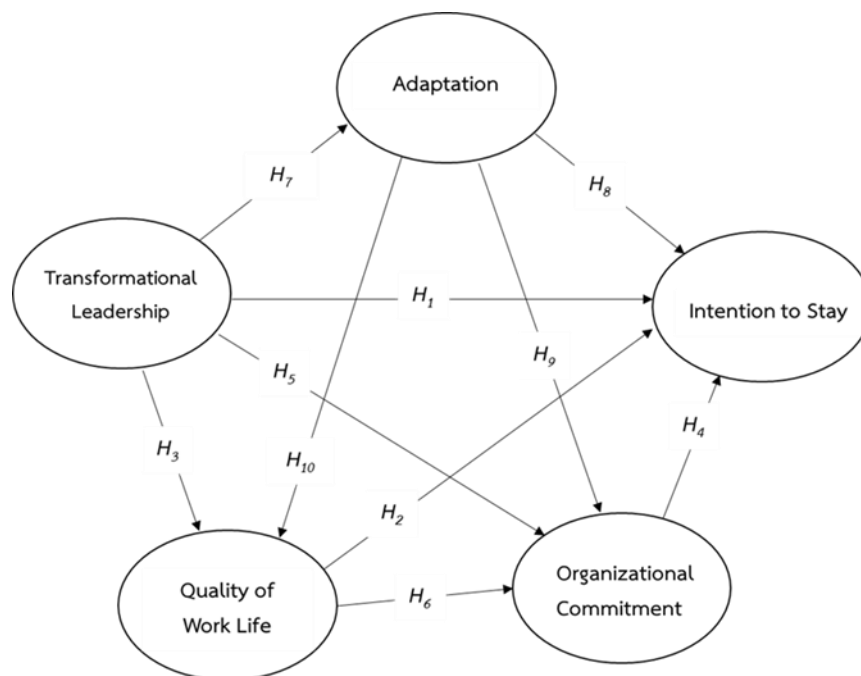


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

Research Hypothesis

Based on the literature review and conceptual framework, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on nurses' retention intention.

H2: Quality of work life positively influences nurses' retention intention.

H3: Transformational leadership positively affects the quality of work life.

H4: Organizational commitment has a positive effect on nurses' retention intention.

H5: Transformational leadership positively influences organizational commitment.

H6: Quality of work life positively affects organizational commitment.

H7: Transformational leadership positively influences adaptation.

H8: Adaptation positively affects nurses' retention intention.

H9: Adaptation positively influences organizational commitment.

H10: Adaptation positively affects the quality of work life.

These hypotheses collectively explain how leadership, work-life quality, commitment, and adaptability interact to shape nurses' decision to remain in their profession.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative research to examine factors influencing nurses' retention intention in university hospitals in Guangxi Province, China.

Quantitative Phase: Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to 935 nurses from nine university-affiliated hospitals under Guilin Medical University and Guangxi Medical University. The instrument measured five key variables: transformational leadership, quality of work life, organizational commitment, adaptability, and retention intention.

A five-point Likert scale was used, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to verify relationships among variables.

Qualitative Phase: To complement the quantitative results, 27 nurses representing different professional levels were interviewed through semi-structured interviews.

Content analysis was used to interpret emerging themes related to leadership, work environment, and motivation to stay.

This combined method provided both statistical evidence and contextual understanding, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of factors affecting nurses' retention in university hospitals.

RESULTS

Quantitative Study Results

1. General information of the respondents It was found that the nurses from the hospitals of Guilin Medical University and Guangxi Medical University, Guangxi Province, China, were mostly female (72.80%), aged 31-35 years (29.70%), followed by 36-40 years (21.20%) and 51-55 years (1.00%). In terms of education level, 69.60% had a bachelor's degree, followed by less than a bachelor's degree (14.00%) and a doctorate (2.50%). In terms of family status, 60.90% were married, 26.40% were single and 2.80% were separated. In terms of work experience, most had 4-6 years of experience (48.40%), followed by 1-3 years (25.30%) and 13-15 years (1.90%).

2. Factors that have a causal relationship with the intention to remain in the nursing profession.

Table 1. Results of the statistical analysis of factors that have a causal relationship with the intention to remain in the nursing profession.

Variable	\bar{X}	(S.D.)	Mean
Transformational leadership	4.37	0.36	Farthest
Quality of Work Life	4.33	0.35	Farthest
Organizational Commitment	4.35	0.38	Farthest
Adaptability	4.22	1.41	Farthest
Intention to Stay	4.39	0.36	Farthest

The results of the analysis of the causal relationship between the research variables and the intention to remain in the nursing profession at the Guangxi University Hospital, China, found that all components had the highest mean values, including transformational leadership ($\bar{x} = 4.37$), quality of work life ($\bar{x} = 4.33$), organizational commitment ($\bar{x} = 4.35$), adaptation ($\bar{x} = 4.22$), and intention to remain ($\bar{x} = 4.39$).

3. Results of the relationship analysis of factors with causal relationship to intention to remain in nursing career under university hospitals in Guangxi Province, China.

Table 2. Number of sub-variables, Eigen values, and percentage of variance of components. Causal relationships.

Performance components	Number of variables Subvariables	Eigen Value	Percentage Variance
1. Ideology	5	3.53	36.63
2. Inspiration	5	3.67	32.89
3. Stimulation	5	4.22	44.37
4. Individuality	5	6.99	43.65
5. Adequate and Fair Compensation	5	4.13	41.55

6. Safety	5	5.80	42.03
7. Progress	5	3.32	34.37
8. Balance	5	3.29	35.82
9. Mental	5	3.39	42.11
10. Persistence	5	4.37	54.15
11. Norm	5	3.55	38.84
12. Physiological Adaptation: PA	5	6.67	54.89
13. Self-Concept Adaptation: CA	5	3.22	34.37
14. Role Function Adaptation	5	3.75	37.65
15. Interdependence Adaptation: IA	5	6.13	48.55
16. Personnel	5	7.80	42.03
17. Workload	5	3.34	36.37
18. Organization	5	4.29	43.82
19. Leader	5	5.39	37.11

From Table 2, the results of the causal relationship analysis on nursing career retention intention in university hospitals in Guangxi Province, China, show that the components with a causal relationship on nursing career retention intention consist of 19 dimensions and 95 sub-variables, and the correlation coefficients among the observed variables indicate the importance of the factors on nursing career retention. Structural equation modeling was used to study the causal relationship of the factors influencing nursing career retention intention.

4. Results of the structural validity analysis of the latent variables on the causal relationship between nursing career intention and nursing career persistence intention.

Table 3. The fit index of the confirmatory components of the latent variables.

Latent Variable	b(SE)	(R²)	(e)
1. Ideological influence (IL)	0.58**	0.76	0.017
2. Inspiration (IP)	0.59**	0.77	0.020
3. Intellectual stimulation, creating change, achieving goals (ST)	0.58**	0.76	0.015
4. Individualism (ID)	0.77**	0.88	0.014
5. Adequate and fair compensation (FA)	0.54**	0.73	0.007
6. Safe and healthy work environment (SA)	0.65**	0.80	0.017
7. โอกาสความก้าวหน้าในงานและความมั่นคง (PR)	0.77**	0.88	0.007
8. Opportunity for advancement and security (BA)	0.82**	0.91	0.007
9. Psychological engagement (ME)	0.60**	0.78	0.014
10. Existence engagement (PE)	0.75**	0.87	0.007
11. Normative engagement (NO)	0.55**	0.74	0.012
12. Physiological adaptation (PH)	0.70**	0.83	0.016
13. Identity adaptation (SC)	0.60**	0.77	0.008
14. Social role adaptation (RF)	0.65**	0.81	0.009
15. Dependence on others (IA)	0.38**	0.62	0.008
16. People (PS)	0.39**	0.62	0.0015
17. Workload (WL)	0.53**	0.73	0.009
18. Organization (OG)	0.65**	0.81	0.014
19. Leader (LD)	0.71**	0.84	0.013

From Table 3, it was found that the analysis of the latent variable components that have a causal relationship with the intention to work and remain in the nursing profession concluded that the top 5 components with the highest weights were work-life balance (BA) 0.82, advancement opportunity and security (PR) 0.77, individualism (ID) 0.77, retention commitment (PE) 0.75, and safe working environment (SA) 0.65, with the highest predictive coefficient of 0.91 and the lowest of 0.62 for the dependence on others (IA) component with a weight of 0.38.

5. Results of the Research Hypothesis Testing

Table 4. Research hypothesis testing.

Research Hypothesis	Loading	CR	Conclude
H.1 Transformational leadership influences nursing career retention intention in university hospitals, Guangxi Province, China.	0.442 and 0.291	1.412	Support
H.2 Quality of work life influences nursing career retention intention in university hospitals, Guangxi Province, China.	0.35* and 1.705	-1.620	Support
H.3 Transformational leadership influences quality of work life in nursing careers in university hospitals, Guangxi Province, China.	0.67**	12.590	Support
H.4 Organizational commitment influences nursing career retention intention in university hospitals, Guangxi Province, China.	1.10**	11.509	Support
H.5 Transformational leadership influences organizational commitment in nursing careers in university hospitals, Guangxi Province, China.	-0.60, 1.038 and 0.362 **	8.663	Support
H.6 Quality of work life influences organizational commitment in nursing careers in university hospitals, Guangxi Province, China.	1.55**	11.509	Support
H.7 Transformational leadership influences adjustment in nursing careers in university hospitals, Guangxi Province, China.	0.65**	15.836	Support
H.8 Adjustment influences nursing career retention intention in university hospitals, Guangxi Province, China.	0.68, 0.156 and 0.126 **	10.898	Support
H.9 Adjustment influences organizational commitment in nursing careers. Affiliated Hospital of Guangxi University, Guangxi Province, China	0.558**	20.172	Support
H.10 Adaptation influences on the quality of working life in nursing professionals Affiliated Hospital of Guangxi University, Guangxi Province, China	-0.36**	8.663	Support

From Table 4, it was found that from the results of testing Hypothesis 1, it was found that transformational leadership has a direct influence on the intention to remain in the nursing profession, with an influence coefficient of 0.12, and also has an indirect influence through various variables such as adaptation (coefficient of 0.442) and quality of work life (coefficient of 0.291). In addition, transformational leadership also influences quality of work life (coefficient of 0.67), which results in nurses being able to adapt and work better.

The results of the second hypothesis test found that quality of working life has a direct influence on nursing career retention intentions, with a coefficient of 0.35, and also has an indirect influence through organizational commitment (coefficient of 1.705), which indicates that when nurses have better quality of working life, organizational commitment will encourage them to have a higher intention to remain in the profession.

For hypotheses 4 and 5, it was found that organizational commitment has a direct influence on nursing career retention intentions (coefficient of 1.10), and also has an indirect influence through variables such as quality of working life and adaptation, which can encourage nurses to have a higher commitment to their work.

Adaptation is another variable with significant influence, with a direct influence on nursing career retention intentions (coefficient of 0.68) and an indirect influence through the variables quality of working life and organizational commitment (coefficient of 0.156). In addition, adaptation also has a direct influence on quality of working life (coefficient of 0.36), indicating that nurses who can adapt well will have a better quality of working life.

Qualitative Study Results

The quantitative analysis revealed that all key variables—transformational leadership, quality of work life, organizational commitment, adaptability, and retention intention—were rated at a high level. Among them, work-life balance ($\beta = 0.82$) and career advancement ($\beta = 0.77$) were the strongest predictors of nurses' intention to remain.

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) results showed that the proposed model had a good fit with the empirical data ($\chi^2 = 1035.329$, $df = 106$, $p = 0.146$, $CFI = 0.938$, $GFI = 0.905$, $AGFI = 0.831$, $RMSEA = 0.098$, $CMIN/DF = 10.058$).

All path coefficients were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, confirming that the causal model accurately explains nurses' retention intention.

Specifically, transformational leadership had both direct and indirect effects on retention intention through organizational commitment, quality of work life, and adaptability. Similarly, adaptability showed a mediating role, strengthening the relationship between leadership and long-term commitment.

The qualitative findings supported the quantitative results. Interviewed nurses emphasized that supportive leadership, fair compensation, teamwork, and opportunities for professional growth were key to their decision to stay. Many participants also mentioned that adaptability and emotional resilience helped them handle workload stress and organizational change.

Overall, the results confirmed that leadership quality, positive work environments, and adaptive capacity jointly determine nurses' willingness to remain in their profession.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that transformational leadership, quality of work life, organizational commitment, and adaptability are key determinants of nurses' retention intention in university hospitals. These results are consistent with previous studies showing that supportive leadership and positive work environments significantly improve nurses' satisfaction and reduce turnover (Abbas et al., 2021; Amin et al., 2023).

The results also highlight the mediating role of adaptability, which links leadership and work-life quality with organizational commitment.

Nurses with higher adaptability are better able to manage stress and cope with hospital challenges, aligning with Roy's (1999) and Kim's (1988) adaptation theories.

This suggests that adaptability not only strengthens individual resilience but also promotes long-term engagement and professional stability.

In addition, organizational commitment emerged as a strong predictor of retention. As suggested by Allen and Meyer (1990), emotional and moral attachment to the organization encourages nurses to remain loyal.

When leadership practices emphasize fairness, recognition, and open communication, nurses are more likely to develop affective bonds that sustain their professional motivation.

The study further confirms that quality of work life directly enhances both job satisfaction and retention intention.

Hospitals offering equitable compensation, flexible scheduling, and professional growth opportunities create a supportive climate that encourages nurses to stay.

This is consistent with Gupta and Hyde (2022) and Baharum et al. (2023), who found that work-life balance is central to healthcare workforce sustainability.

Overall, the findings suggest that improving leadership effectiveness, promoting adaptability, and enhancing work-life quality together create an organizational culture that supports long-term nurse retention. Thus, human resource policies should focus not only on material incentives but also on psychological support and career development to maintain stability in the nursing workforce.

SUGGESTIONS

This study examined the influence of transformational leadership, quality of work life, organizational commitment, and adaptability on nurses' retention intention in university hospitals in Guangxi, China. The results confirmed that all four variables significantly contribute to retention, with work-life quality and organizational commitment showing the strongest effects. Adaptability played a mediating role, linking leadership and work-life balance with nurses' professional engagement.

The findings affirm that supportive leadership, fair compensation, psychological well-being, and continuous learning opportunities are crucial to maintaining a stable nursing workforce.

To enhance nurse retention, hospital administrators should focus on three key areas:

(1) Leadership Development: Train nursing leaders in transformational leadership skills to improve communication, empathy, and staff motivation.

(2) Work-Life Improvement: Provide flexible scheduling, safe work conditions, and fair reward systems to strengthen satisfaction and reduce stress.

(3) Adaptability Promotion: Encourage adaptive capacity through mentorship, peer support, and ongoing professional development programs.

Future research could explore longitudinal effects and expand the sample to different regions or hospital types to validate the model's generalizability.

Overall, fostering an empowering leadership culture and promoting adaptability will be essential strategies for improving nurse retention and ensuring the sustainability of healthcare institutions.

REFERENCES

- Aria, A., Jafari, P., & Behifar, M. (2019). Authentic Leadership and Teachers' Intention to Stay: The Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support and Psychological Capital. *World Journal of Education, 9*(3), 67-81.
- Asmaa, E., Wafaa, F., Sleem, M., & Fekry, M. A. (2022). Association Between Leadership Competency, Quality of Work, and Readiness For Change Among Head Nurses. *Mansoura Nursing Journal, 9*(1), 189-200. <https://doi.org/10.21608/mnj.2022.259017>
- Baharum, H., Ismail, A., McKenna, L., Mohamed, Z., Ibrahim, R., & Hassan, N. H. (2023). Success factors in adaptation of newly graduated nurses: A scoping review. *BMC Nursing, 22*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-023-01300-1>
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership*. Psychology Press.
- Bass, B. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York.
- Bennis, W. G. (2000). *Managing the Dream: Reflection on Leadership and Change*. Cambridge, Los Angeles: Perseus Publishing.
- Black, J. S., & Mendenhall, M. (1990). Cross-cultural training effectiveness: A review and a theoretical framework for future research. *Academy of Management Review, 15*(1), 113-136.
- Buchanan, B. (1974). Building organizational commitment: The socialization of managers in work organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 19*, 533-546. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2391809>
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper & Row, New York.
- Cascio, W. F. (1991). *Managing human resources: Productivity, quality of work life, profits* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Chang, E., & Daly, J. (2012). *Transitions in nursing: Preparing for professional practice* (3rd ed.). Elsevier Australia.
- Changxian, S., Yu-rong, X., Yuting, W., Xia, W., Yaping, D., Yan, C., Wenhui, X., Xiaoxiao, W., Hongling, X., Qian, Z., Min, Y. (2023). Association between career adaptability and turnover intention among nursing assistants: The mediating role of psychological capital. *BMC Nursing, 22*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-023-01187-y>
- Denison, D. R. (1990). *Corporate Culture and Organizational Effectiveness*. New York: Wiley.
- Davis, K., & Newstrom, J. W. (1985). *Human behavior at work: Organizational behavior* (7th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Herzberg, F. (1966). *Work and the Nature of Man*. Cleveland: World, Pub.
- Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. B. (1959). *The Motivation to Work*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Ippolito, N., Notarnicola, B., Duka, B., Lommi, M., Grosha, E., De Maria, M., Iacorossi, L., Mastroianni, C., Ivziku, D., Rocco, G., & Stievano, A. (2024). Transformational leadership and its impact on job satisfaction and personal mastery for nursing leaders in healthcare organizations. *Nursing Reports, 14*(4), 3561-3574. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nursrep14040260>
- Kim, Y. Y. (1988). *Communication and cross-cultural adaptation: An integrative theory*. Multilingual Matters.
- Laschinger, H. K. S., Finegan, J. E., & Shamian, J. (2001). The impact of workplace empowerment, organizational trust on staff nurses' work satisfaction. *Journal of Nursing Administration, 31*(5), 237-244.
- McKinsey. (2022). *Surveyed nurses consider leaving direct patient care at elevated rates*. Retrieved September 26, 2023, from <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare/our-insights/surveyed-nurses-consider-leaving-direct-patient-care-at-elevated-rates#/>
- Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review, 1*(1), 61-89.
- Sun, L., & Yuniar, N. (2024). The Influence of workload, work stress, work motivation, and organizational commitment on nurse performance in the intensive care unit. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 22*(3), 1582-1589. <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.22.3.1874>
- Walton, R. E. (1973). Quality of working life: What is it?. *Sloan Management Review,*

15(1), 11-21.

Zhang, S. A., & Zhou, Y. (2022). Chinese nurses' innovation capacity: The influence of inclusive leadership, empowering leadership, and psychological empowerment. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 30(6), 1990-1999. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.13654>