

Mediating Effect on the Relationship Between Professional Commitment and Intent-to-Leave Among Hospital Nurses in Taiwan

Chang, Yuan-Ping RN, PhD., Assistant Professor, Department of Nursing, DaYeh University

(E-Mail: dyucyp@gmail.com)

Introduction

Constant exposure to a stressful and depressing work environment can result in both mental and physical fatigue and frustration for nurses, especially when combined with a shortage of manpower and work overload. Work frustration refers to the situational feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction toward work (Chang, Tsai, Liao, Wang, & Wang, 2012). Unexpected events at work, such as occupational hazards, resource shortages, time limitations, and lack of assistance, are all situational constraints that influence individuals' work frustration (Kutney-Lee, Wu, Sloane, & Aiken, 2012; Lu, Chang, & Wu, 2007). Professional commitment, which is a stabilizing force for nurses' job satisfaction and retention, is defined as personal concern for the profession, belief in the value of the profession, involvement in the profession, and loyalty toward the profession, as well as professional growth and development (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Teng et al., 2007). The turnover among nurses and the nursing shortage in Taiwan have become emergent issues for both the nursing profession and the health care sector. The average turnover rate in Taiwan is approximately 20% (Taiwan Department of Health, 2012). The reasons that nurses thought they would leave their profession were the lack of compensation and incentives, heavy workload, insecure work environment, less respect from others, inflexible staffing, and the lack of learning opportunities (Lu, 2011; Rosseter, 2012; Teng et al., 2007).

Purpose of Study

This study was conducted to determine the mediating effect of work frustration on the relationship between professional commitment and intent to leave. The conceptual model was shown in Figure 1.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Professional commitment is negatively and significantly correlated with nurses' intent to leave.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant negative correlation between work frustration and professional commitment.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant positive correlation between work frustration and intent to leave.

Hypothesis 4: Work frustration has a mediating effect between professional commitment and intent to leave.

Design, Sample and Procedures

A cross-sectional research design with self-administrated questionnaires was used in this study. Nurses from general units in two hospitals in southern Taiwan were invited to participate in the study between June and August 2012. Data were verified by *structural equation modeling* with AMOS. Valid questionnaires were completed by 836 nurses, with a 71% response rate. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Boards of the participating institutions. The participants' rights and study procedures were presented on the title page of the questionnaire. All questionnaires were retrieved anonymously, and all of the participants participated voluntarily.

Measures

The measurement tools used in this study were the Socio-Demographic Inventory, the Professional Commitment Scale (PCS), the Intent to Leave Scale (ILS), and the Work Frustration Scale (WFS).

Data Analysis

The data were managed and analyzed using SPSS 19 and AMOS 19 software. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to describe the background of the participants and to examine the relationships among the variables. Item analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were used to verify the structural equation model for professional commitment, work frustration, and intent to leave. Cronbach's α coefficient was determined, and convergent validity, discriminate validity, and cross-validation were examined for the structural equation model. The mediating effects were evaluated using AMOS 19.

Results

Among 836 participants, 99% were female; 20% had graduated from junior college and 80% had completed university or additional education. The mean age was 32 years, with a range from 20 to 53 years, and the mean nursing experience was 7 years, with a range from 1 to 33 years. Of the participants, 87% were nursing staff and 13% were managers; 23% worked in intensive care units, 45% worked in general wards, and 32% worked in the operation room, outpatient clinics, delivery room, or newborn unit.

The participants showed a moderate level of professional commitment ($M=3.35$, $SD=.56$) and worked in a frustrating situation ($M=3.35$, $SD=.82$). The mean score and the standard deviation of nurses' intent-to-leave were 2.97 (from a five-point Likert scale) and .82 accordingly. A significant negative correlation existed between the mean scores on the PCS and those on the ILS ($r=-.419$, $p<.01$). The hypothesis 1 was supported. The mean score on the PCS was negatively and significantly correlated with that on the WFS ($r=-.176$, $p<.01$), whereas the mean score on the ILS was positively and significantly correlated with that on the WFS ($r=.296$, $p<.01$). The hypothesis 2 and 3 were therefore supported from the study. The hospital nurses most commonly reported frustration regarding the nursing manpower shortage, followed by disappointing relationships among colleagues and then poor working conditions.

This study tested the mediating effect of work frustration between professional commitment and intent to leave. The result showed that work frustration had a partial mediating effect between professional commitment and intent to leave through a significant indirect effect (PC→WF→IL) ($z>|1.96|$). Bias-corrected, the 95% confidence interval did not include zero (refer to table 1); therefore, the mediating effect was verified and the hypothesis 4 was supported. Thus, the mediator had a partial effect in the measurement model in this study. The results indicated that the influence of professional commitment on intent to leave was partially affected by work frustration.

Conclusion

Work frustration may cause turnover among nurses and reduce the quality of nursing care. Managers should thus strive to enhance interpersonal relationships in the workplace, schedule adequate numbers of staff and provide sufficient equipment and supplies to engender a safe and positive work environment and to improve the retention of nurses. The study findings can provide evidence for nursing managers to improve the nursing work environment and the management of human resources.

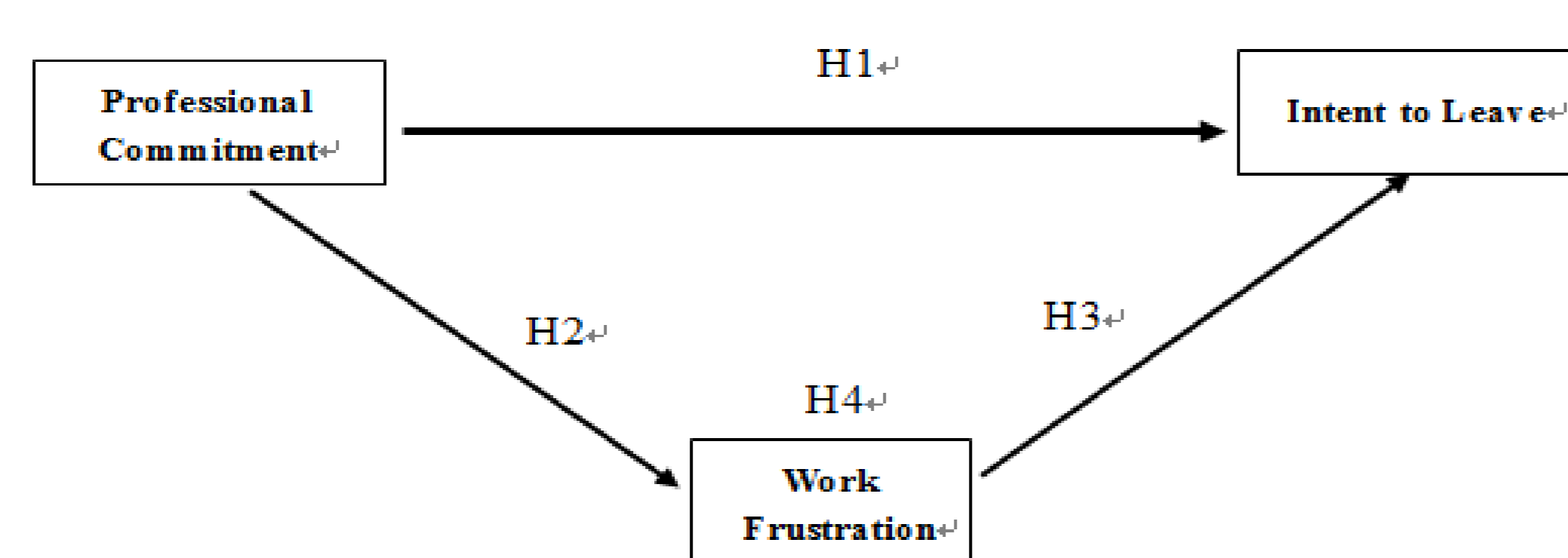


Figure 1. Conceptual model showing the mediating effects between professional commitment and the intent to leave.

Table 1.

Mediating Effect on the Relationship between Professional Commitment and Intent to Leave

Variable	Point Estimates	Product of Coefficients	Bootstrapping			
			SE	Z	Bias-Corrected 95% CI	Percentile 95% CI
			Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Indirect Effect						
PCS→WFS→ILS	-0.067	0.018	-3.722	-0.115	-0.039	-0.108 -0.035
Direct Effect						
PCS→ILS	-0.599	0.070	-8.557	-0.751	-0.479	-0.748 -0.476

Note: N = 886, the mediating effect was conducted through 2,000 bootstrap samples.