

Original Article

# The Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Desire to Emigrate among the Nurses of Public Hospitals in Tehran

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The emigration process of nurses as the main human resources of the health system is worrying. The study aimed to determine the relationship between job satisfaction and the desire to emigrate among the nurses in Tehran.

**Methods:** This correlational study was performed on the nurses of public hospitals in Tehran. We used random classified sampling to determine the hospitals. A research questionnaire was also used, including three sections: demographic information, job satisfaction, and desire to emigrate. The content validity of the questionnaire was 9.5, and the obtained Cronbach's alpha was 0.89. The SPSS software was used to analyze the data.

**Results:** The average level of the desire to emigrate was high (30.2). The job satisfaction of the participants was reported to be moderate. There was a significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and desire to emigrate ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $r = -0.24$ ). The correlation between job satisfaction aspects, including the job situation, job environment, salary and benefits, and social attitude to the nursing profession with the desire to emigrate, was also meaningful. However, there was not any statistical relationship between colleagues in the job environment and the job's effect on the personal life and the desire to emigrate.

**Conclusion:** This study showed that the nurses had a high desire to emigrate. There was a significant relationship between the desire to emigrate and the job satisfaction of nurses. Increasing the satisfaction of different aspects of the job can prevent the educated and valuable members in the healthcare system from leaving the country.

## INTRODUCTION

The nurses are the base and foundation of a health system. Now, the world is facing a healthcare crisis. The most obvious example is the shortage of nurses [1]. The nurse emigration, as the main human resources of the healthcare system, is worrying. The negative effect of the emigration on the developing countries is a global concern [2]. According to a study conducted in Poland, the researchers found that 34% of Physicians had the intention to emigrate [3]. Valizadeh et al, in 2017, said that problems such as job dissatisfaction, social or political unrest, and less social welfare are some of the factors that increase the pace of the nurses' emigration. They also believed that the emigration of the healthcare workforce could be considered a brain drain phenomenon. [4]. Gross et al, discovered that almost among the 4.5 Kenyan nurses employed, one nurse emigrates to another country [5]. Another survey also found that the desire to emigrate among the physicians is 53.3% [6]. Nourihkmat et al., showed that most Iranian medical students (85%) had the desire to emigrate [7].

On the other hand, the main factor influencing the quality of nursing care is job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a complex phenomenon affected by multiple causal factors such as work environment, supervision, and management. Job satisfaction is defined as the positive response of individuals to working conditions and has been cited as an influential factor contributing to nurses' turnover. [8]. Research also shows that job dissatisfaction is an essential factor in leaving the nursing profession and emigrating [9]. Alameddine et al., in 2020, expressed that there was an inverse relationship between job satisfaction of nurses and intention to leave the job for emigration. [10].

The workforce emigration is not a new phenomenon. In recent years, the nurses' emigration has reached an alarming point, and the global shortage of nurses has caused them to emigrate easily [3-11]. The nurse emigration is not only due to the repulsive factors inside the country but also to the attractive factors outside the country. The repulsive factors have the internal nature that causes the health service providers to retreat from the healthcare system. In contrast, the external factors are conditions of the foreign countries that motivate nurses to emigrate. The financial, professional, political, social, and personal factors can have an attractive role in emigration. Inviting factors include the best salary, job improvement, better and more secure work environment, and appropriate lifestyle. Thompson et al., in 2019, showed that better care, higher salary, and fewer career risks in the developed countries are the influential reasons for emigration [12]. Thomas in 2006, also found that the

dissatisfaction of the social attitude to nursing is another factor in desiring to emigrate for Indian nurses [13]. In general, two groups benefit from the nurse emigration: immigrants and host countries. The immigrants benefit due to a better work environment, care situations, and more salary, and the host countries benefit from providing the human force [14].

The job satisfaction is another issue that influences the emigration phenomenon. Park et al., in 2012, categorized factors of job satisfaction into two groups:

1. Personal characteristics, such as age, gender, marital status, degree of education.
2. Job factors, such as environment (physical environment, duration of work), advantages (salary, job security, rewards, side benefits of the job), interpersonal relationships (with colleagues and managers) and organizational commitment, work independence, and also social status of the job [15].

The researchers' studies confirmed that job dissatisfaction in the home country plays a leading role in the emigration of nurses. [4,6,7]. Considering research in this area, it seems that job satisfaction is efficient in the nursing emigration phenomenon. This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and desire to emigrate in nurses of selected hospitals in Tehran.

## METHODS

The present study was cross-sectional and descriptive, done with the nurses of the selected hospitals of Tehran in 2017. In this research, random classified (stratified) sampling was used. The university hospitals from the central three universities of the Tehran were marked, and among them, six hospitals were chosen randomly. In the next step, based on the number of samples in similar studies, 450 nurses working in those hospitals were selected. Furthermore, the sampling was performed randomly among the nurses who tended to participate in this study. The measurement tool for this study was a questionnaire that included three sections. The first section contained the demographic information. The second part included 40 questions about the participants' job satisfaction (after studying literature and considering the Herzberg job satisfaction questionnaire). The final part contained ten questions about the desire to emigrate that was planned by the researcher after studying related articles. The validity of the questionnaires was evaluated with the content validity method. The results showed that the content validity index was 0.95 for these questionnaires. We used the internal consistency determination method (the calculation of Cronbach's alpha). Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be 0.89. It showed

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acceptable reliability for all parts of the questionnaire. The score range of the job satisfaction questionnaire was between 40 and 200, and the score range of the desire to the emigration questionnaire was 10 to 50. The job satisfaction questionnaire score between 40 and 80 represents low job satisfaction, 81 to 120 shows moderate, and above 120 represents high satisfaction. In the desire to emigrate questionnaire, the score between 10 and 20 shows a low desire to emigrate, 20 to 30 means mild desire, and above 30 represents a high desire to emigrate. The SPSS software was used to analyze the obtained data. To discover the sample's characteristics, we used the descriptive indicators (frequency, mean, and standard deviation), and to study the relationship between the variables, we used Pearson correlation, Independent-Samples t-test, and ANOVA.

**RESULTS**

The average age of the participants was 32.6, with a standard deviation of 5.8. Most of the participants were female (70.9%). More than half of the participants were married (54.4%). Most of the participants had a bachelor degree (83.3%). Also, most of the participants worked in the non-intensive sections (64.3%) and with the rotational work time (68%). 40.9% of the participants had a temporary work situation. The average of the work experience was 8.4 years with a standard deviation of 3.5. The average score of the desire to emigrate was 30.2, with a standard deviation of 8.9. Moreover, 36.9% of the participants had a high desire to emigrate. The job satisfaction of the nurses participating in this study was moderate.

The mean and standard deviation of the total job satisfaction score and its dimensions and correlation with the desire to emigrate are reported using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation in Table 1.

Table 1 shows a significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and the desire to emigrate. This correlation is valid for the job position, work environment, salary and benefits, social attitude, and monitoring site. However, there is not any meaningful relationship between relationships with colleagues and personal life. Based on the reported correlation coefficient and significance level, we can conclude that there is a positive correlation between age and work experience and job satisfaction, and a negative correlation between age and work experience and the desire to emigrate. In other words, it can be said that as the age and work experience rose, job satisfaction increased, and the desire to migrate decreased among the participants. To study the relationship between variables of gender, educational degree, and the workplace with

job satisfaction and the desire to emigrate (after analyzing and ensuring the normality of data), we used the Independent-Samples t-test. These test results showed that the scores of job satisfaction and the desire to emigrate were not related to the gender and educational degree of the participants (P-value<0.05). In association with the workplace's effect on job satisfaction and the desire to emigrate, the results showed that the job satisfaction of staff working in the intensive section was more than those working in the non-intensive departments, and this difference was statistically significant (P-value<0.05). However, there was no meaningful relationship between the desire to emigrate and the workplace variables (P-value>0.05). The ANOVA analysis results after performing the homogeneity test of variances show that there is a significant relationship between marital status (Single, Married, Divorced) and the desire to emigrate. Married people have the most job satisfaction and least desire to emigrate, but the separated persons have the least job satisfaction and the most desire to emigrate (P-value<0.05). The results of ANOVA analysis about the employment status show that there is a significant difference between employment status and job satisfaction. The people who are officially employed have the least desire to emigrate, and the people who are temporarily employed have the most desire to emigrate (P-value<0.05). ANOVA analysis also showed that participants who worked during the day had more job satisfaction and less desire to emigrate than those who worked during the night. According to the P-value, these differences were statistically significant.

Table 1- The mean value and the standard deviation of the total job satisfaction score and its dimensions and correlation with the desire to emigrate.

Variable	Mean	SD	Score range	Correlation Coefficient	p-value
Job position	18.5	4.6	6-30	-0.17	.000
Job environment	16.4	4.7	8-40	-0.21	.000
Salary and benefits	15.1	4.8	8-40	-0.29	.000
Social attitudes to profession	10.6	3.7	4-20	-0.12	.008
Relationships with colleagues	16.4	1.7	4-20	-0.06	.14
Monitoring site	14.7	6/3	6-30	-0.14	.002
Personal life	12.7	1.2	4-20	-0.08	.07
Total job satisfaction	104.7	18.4	40-200	-0.24	.000

## The Relationship between Job Satisfaction...

Table 2- The relationship between type of the work time and job satisfaction and the desire to emigrate.

Variable	Type of the work time	Mean	SD	P-value
Total job satisfaction	Day work	109.5	19.3	.021
	Night work	105.3	18.9	
	rotationally	103.2	17.9	
Desire to emigrate	Day work	28.1	8.5	.036
	Night work	30.4	9.1	
	rotationally	31.8	8.1	

## DISCUSSION

The results of this research show that the job satisfaction of the nurses is moderate. Nurses participating in this study had less satisfaction with the salary and benefits and work environment. Moreover, they had high satisfaction in the relationships with colleagues. Dubas-Jakóbczyk et al., also reported an almost similar result in their study conducted in 2019 in Poland. According to a scale from one (very dissatisfied) to six (very satisfied), the career satisfaction mean score of participants was 4.0, with a standard deviation of 0.74 [3]. Jarosova et al., in 2016, reported the mean and standard deviation scores of the job satisfaction to be 3.05 and 0.55, based on a five-point scale. This score is approximately moderate, and their results showed that the mean and standard deviation of the satisfaction score were 52.6 and 10.13, ranging from 10 to 80. They also found 46% of the nurses were not satisfied with the benefits received, while 42% were satisfied [16]. Hajibabae et al., showed that 44.1% of nurses who participated in their study were dissatisfied, 22.5% were satisfied, 22% had no comment on job satisfaction, only 3.4% were very dissatisfied, and 8% were very satisfied with the job [17]. A comparison of previous research with the present study shows that nurse satisfaction is moderate. On the other hand, they are dissatisfied, especially about the work environment and salary. In another study conducted in Iran, Shojaeimotlagh et al., found the opposite result in the job satisfaction among colleagues' relationships. They discovered that the interaction and relationship among colleagues were not in a good condition [18].

The present study also reports a strong desire for the emigration of the nurses. Nguyen et al., found that more than 70% of the Ugandan participants desired to emigrate [19]. In George and Reardon's research in 2013 in South Africa, 37% of the participants tended to emigrate [20]. Research shows that many participants, such as nurses, tend to emigrate to achieve better work conditions. Our study results show that there is a negative correlation between total job satisfaction and the desire to emigrate (P-

value<0.05,  $r=-0.24$ ). The correlation between job satisfaction dimensions such as job position, work environment, salary, and social attitude with the desire to emigrate is meaningful. However, there is no significant correlation between interpersonal relationships in the job environment and the effect of the job on personal life with the desire to emigrate. Jarosova et al., in 2016 reported a meaningful relationship between job satisfaction and the desire to emigrate. (P-value<0.001) [16]. Gurcova et al., found that there is a negative correlation between job satisfaction and the desire to emigrate [21]. In Thomas's study, job dissatisfaction is the main reason for the nurse's desire to emigrate. He found that 87% of people who were dissatisfied with jobs tended to emigrate [13]. Oosthuizen et al., also showed that the unsuitable job position, because of the lack of job improvement facilities, is the most important factor in deciding on emigration [22]. Jibril et al., in 2014 found that an inappropriate physical environment is an influential factor affecting the nurse emigration [23]. Thomas also found that the dissatisfaction of the social attitude to nursing is another factor in desiring Indian nurses [13]. In many other studies, nurses said if they had strong social support, their job stress would decline, so they would stay in the organization and compensate for the shortage of nurses [24]. Contrary to our study results, Delobelle et al., in 2010 did not find any meaningful relationship between the satisfaction of colleagues and the desire to emigrate [25]. Dovlo also states that the home countries' management policies are the most effective factor in the desire to emigrate among nurses [26]. Results of a study conducted in China found that job satisfaction was negatively correlated with the work environment [24]. As seen in the reports, the satisfaction of the different dimensions of the job has a significant contribution to the desire to emigrate. This shows that nurses' discontent with their jobs can lead to leaving their work and immigrating to another country.

This study shows a significant relationship among the variables of age, marital status, working hours with job satisfaction, and the desire to emigrate. Increasing the age and job experiences can enhance job satisfaction, and persons with rotational work time as well as divorced individuals have more desire to emigrate. Gurcova et al., also reported a negative correlation between age and desire to emigrate (P-value<0.05,  $r=-0.19$ ) [24]. Reidcarol et al., also reported a meaningful and positive correlation between age and job satisfaction [27]. Furthermore, Gurcova et al., found a significant relationship between marital status and the desire to emigrate [21]. They concluded that the desire to emigrate in single people is more than that of married people. Moreover, they reported that the coefficient of the correlation between job



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satisfaction and work experience of the nurses is 0.08, and between the desire to emigrate and work experience is -0.18. These values are significant statistically ( $P$ -value $<0.05$ ).

Since the nurses are the most significant human resources in the healthcare system in any country, paying attention to their job satisfaction can affect the quality of the nursing care and patient satisfaction. As found in this study, the nurses had a high desire to emigrate, and it had a direct relationship with job dissatisfaction. Based on the research results, the relationship among the dimensions of job satisfaction, such as job position, work environment, salary, and social attitude with the desire to emigrate, is meaningful. This means that these factors are essential in nurses' job satisfaction and eventually lead to their leaving the job and emigrating. Increasing job satisfaction not only maintains the valuable human investment of the countries but also reduces the economic losses due to nurses' emigration. The factors related to personal job status, such as political, social, economic, cultural and religious factors, and environmental and

internal stresses in nurses participating in the study due to high workload, were the limitations of the present research which affected the emigration phenomenon, so they need further investigation.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

**Ethical approval:** This manuscript results from the thesis by Mr. Mohsen Kamali under the guidance of Mr. Kianoush Niromand Zandi, which states the main findings of the study thesis conducted in 2017. The code of ethics is IR.SBMU.PHNM.1394.193. All the participants were informed about the general explanations of the research goals, confidentiality of the information, and optional participation in this research.

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**Conflicts of interest:** The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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