

The Top Nursing Turnover and Retention Articles

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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this review was to provide a resource identifying important articles in the scientific literature related to nurse turnover and retention. Our review identifies frequently cited scholars and papers, influential nursing journals, and important literature reviews related to nurse turnover and retention.

Methods: Using key word searches of the ISI Web of Knowledge data base, we identified the 25 most cited authors for “nursing” and “turnover” using nursing, turnover, and/or retention as keywords. Then, we identified the 25 articles with the highest cumulative citations, as well as those with the highest average citations per year. We also identified the most influential nursing journals according to the impact factor, a composite rating of a journal’s prestige and influence based on how frequently articles are cited. Finally, we provide a list of meta-analyses and other literature reviews covering topics related to nurse turnover and retention.

Results: The most-cited authors differed by search terms, but Castle appeared most frequently in the results. Regarding the most-cited articles, there was a great deal of overlap in the top 25 results of each search (total citations and citations per year), although approximately 20% of the results of each search were unique to that search. The search for top nursing journals, identified by impact factor, yielded 12 journals, which contain articles that have been cited anywhere from 480 to 7,386 times in the previous year. Lastly, we identified 30 meta-analyses and literature reviews related to turnover and retention. These reviews cover several topics beyond turnover and retention, including nursing students and interventions.

Conclusions: Taken as a whole, our findings should provide a useful resource for those interested in learning more about nurse retention and turnover research. The current study illustrates the need for caution when using quantitative methods to identify important articles because different criteria yield different results. An important limitation to research focused on citation counts is that it may not identify recent but important research. Therefore, we would recommend using these findings in combination with searches of recent literature for additional studies.

The Top Nursing Turnover and Retention Articles

As the literature on nurse turnover and retention grows, it becomes increasingly important to develop strategies for filtering through this literature to be able to identify important studies. Researchers have used many methods to determine the most influential articles in scientific research. One of the most common methods focuses on the number of times a particular author, article, or journal has been cited by other scholars. Therefore, we conducted a key term search of scholarly literature related to nurse turnover and retention using the ISI Web of Knowledge data base. The Web of Knowledge is an online database that tracks most peer-reviewed scholarly journal articles published each year and records how often each article is cited. Although the ISI Web of Knowledge has some shortcomings, it is still considered an very useful source for determining the popularity of scholarly articles (cf. Garfield, 2005; Ironside, 2007; Johnstone, 2007; Ketefian & Freda, 2009).

We began our search by selecting all scholarly databases to which Clemson University subscribes and then specified "peer-reviewed" articles and results sorted by relevancy to "nurs*" and "turnover" or "nurs*" and "retention" as search terms. The use of the asterisk (*) in searches indicates that all forms of the word, such as "nurses" and "nursing," were included in the results. We also examined other key terms such as "intent to leave," "exit," "commitment," and "voluntary exit." These searches produced largely similar findings, so we decided to focus the reporting below on the results for "nurs*" and "turnover" and/or "retention" as keywords. This search resulted in a list of approximately 140 relevant articles. Although most research listed focuses on nurses, several articles addressing turnover and retention of nursing students and faculty were included because many of the issues addressed, such as the stress of the chronic care setting, were the same as those addressed in broader nursing literature.

Table 1 shows the most cited authors in the nursing literature related to turnover and retention within the past 20 years. The authors are listed with the number of articles or citations each has for the combination of keywords used as a topic listed at the top of the column. Tables 2 and 3 show the most frequently cited journal articles in terms of number of citations per year and total number of citations per year over the past twenty years. It is worth noting that the articles focusing on turnover are frequently older than are those addressing retention, reflecting a trend present in the broader work attitudes literature over the past two decades (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, Eberly, 2008; Mowday, 1998). Articles marked by two asterisks (**) appeared in the top 25 results only when the search results are sorted in the particular way indicated by the table title. Both lists of results have approximately equal numbers of these unique citations, with 6 and 7 for total and average citation counts, respectively. Results without any asterisks appear in the top 25 search results for both sets of search criteria. Given the substantial overlap between the two lists, we combined these two searches into a single list of articles (Appendix A).

Table 4 shows the most frequently cited nursing journals. To generate this list, we used ISI Impact Factors and standards employed by Plohman, Capanec, and Heaman (2008), which focus on the most recent rankings from the *Journal Citation Reports (JCR)*. The impact factor is a controversial assessment of perceived importance and popularity of given articles and quality of work faculty members publish, though it is still widely used by universities and researchers, particularly in evaluating the larger state of a given research topic (Ironside, 2007). The findings indicated that the top nursing journals are *Birth-Issues in Perinatal Care* and *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, both with impact scores above 2. The range of immediacy index scores, articles from 2007, and the number of times those articles were cited in 2007 indicates if one were to use only one of these search criteria, the results might be drastically different. Thus, these results can easily support an argument for the importance of the impact factor and the consideration of multiple criteria.

The final goal of this report was to identify meta-analyses and reviews of nursing attitudes. To generate this list, we conducted similar searches as those described above but adding the keywords "meta-analysis" and "review" were conducted. This yielded approximately 30 additional articles (Appendix B). It is important to note that many of these articles are relatively recent and therefore would not yet be frequently cited.

Conclusions

Taken as a whole, our findings should provide a useful resource for those interested in learning more about nurse retention and turnover research. We recommend caution when using quantitative methods to identify important articles because different criteria yield different results. For example, author citation counts may be influenced more by an author's prominence in the field and the journal an article appears in, than by the quality of a particular study. Further, citation counts may not identify recent but important articles, such as meta-analyses. Concerns can be raised about other methods of identifying important articles as well and no-one method can provide a definitive list of important articles. Therefore, we would recommend using these findings in combination with searches of recent literature for additional studies.

Table 1. Most Cited Authors

Author	Record Count
“Nurs*” + “Turnover”	
Castle, N. G.	18
Jones, C. B.	7
Engberg, J.	6
Alexander, J. A.	5
Baba, V. V.	4
Cavanagh, S. J.	4
Cohen, A.	4
McNeese-Smith, D. K.	4
Mueller, C. W.	4
Stone, P. W.	4
Tauson, A. H.	4
Vandenberghe, C.	4
Zimmerman, S.	4
“Nurs*” + “Retention”	
Aiken, L. H.	4
Andrews, G. J.	4
Buchan, J.	4
Ulrich, B. T.	4
“Nurs*” + “Turnover” or “Nurs*” + “Retention”	
Castle, N. G.	6
Camerino, D.	4
Conway, P. M.	4
Ellenbecker, C. H.	4
Hasselhorn, H. M.	4
Next Study Grp	4
“Nurs*” + “Turnover” + “Retention”	
Castle, N. G.	8
Aiken, L. H.	6
Buchan, J.	5
Jones, C. B.	5
Laschinger, H. K. S.	5
Alexander, J. A.	4
Cavanagh, S. J.	4
Clarke, S. P.	4
Shamian, J.	4
Sloane, D. M.	4
Vandenberghe, C.	4

Table 2. Highest Total Citations for Nursing Turnover & Retention

"Nurs*" + "Turnover" OR "Nurs*" + "Turnover"			
Ranking	Reference	Total Citations	Average Citation/Year
1	Aiken, Clarke, Sloane, Sochalski, & Silber (2002)	585	73.12
2	Meyer, Allen, & Smith (1993)	418	24.59
3	Shortell, Zimmerman, Rousseau, Gillies, Wagner, Draper, Knaus, & Duffy (1994)	296	18.5
4	Aiken, Smith, & Lake (1994)	283	17.69
5	Price & Mueller (1981)	187	6.45
6	Blegen (1993)	176	10.35
7	Irvine & Evans (1995)	127	9.07
8	Aiken, Clarke, & Sloane (2002)	80	10
9	Firth & Britton (1989)**	75	3.57
10	Shader, Broome, Broome, West, & Nash (2001)	72	8
11	Leveck & Jones (1996)**	70	5
12t	Vahey, Aiken, Sloane, Clarke, & Vargas (2004)	67	11.17
12t	Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman (1996)**	67	4.79
14	Lum, Kervin, Clark, Reid, & Sirola (1998)**	64	5.33
15	McVicar (2003)	60	8.57
16	Ingersoll, Olsan, Drew-Cates, DeVinney, & Davies (2002)	54	6.75
17t	Rosenstein (2002)	51	6.38
17t	Shields & Ward (2001)	51	5.67
19	Castle & Engberg (2005)	50	10
20	Goodin (2003)	49	7
21t	Zimmerman, Gruber-Baldini, Hebel, Sloane, & Magaziner (2002)	48	6.86
21t	Herscovitch & Meyer (2002)	48	6
23t	Janssen, de Jonge, & Bakker (1999)**	47	4.27
23t	Alexander, Lichtenstein, Oh, & Ullman (1998)**	47	3.92
25	Lu, While, & Barriball (2005)	45	9

Table 3. Highest Average Citations Per Year for Nursing Turnover and Retention References

"Nurs*" + "Turnover" OR "Nurs*" + "Turnover"			
Ranking	Reference	Average Citation/Year	Total Citations
1	Aiken, Clarke, Sloane, Sochalski, & Silber (2002)	73.12	585
2	Meyer, Allen, & Smith (1993)	24.59	418
3	Shortell, Zimmerman, Rousseau, Gillies, Wagner, Draper, Knaus, & Duffy (1994)	18.5	296
4	Aiken, Smith, & Lake (1994)	17.69	283
5	Vahey, Aiken, Sloane, Clarke, & Vargas (2004)	11.17	67
6	Blegen (1993)	10.35	176
7t	Aiken, Clarke, & Sloane (2002)	10	80
7t	Castle & Engberg (2005)	10	50
9	Needleman, Buerhaus, Stewart, Zelevinsky, & Mattke (2006)**	9.75	39
10	Irvine & Evans (1995)	9.07	127
11	Lu, While, & Barriball (2005)	9	45
12	McVicar (2003)	8.57	60
13	Hayes, O'Brien-Pallas, Duffield, Shamian, Buchan, Hughes, Laschinger, North, & Stone (2006)**	8.5	34
14	Shader, Broome, Broome, West, & Nash (2001)	8	72
15	Larrabee, Janney, Ostrow, Withrow, Hobbs, & Burant (2003)**	8	56
16	Goodin (2003)	7	49
17	Zimmerman, Gruber-Baldini, Hebel, Sloane, & Magaziner (2002)	6.86	48
18	Ingersoll, Olsan, Drew-Cates, DeVinney, & Davies (2002)	6.75	54
19	Buerhaus, Donelan, Ulrich, Norman, & Dittus (2005)**	6.75	27
20	Price & Mueller (1981)	6.45	187
21	Rosenstein (2002)	6.38	51
22	Harrington & Swan (2003)**	6.29	44
23	Herscovitch & Meyer (2002)	6	48
24	Shields & Ward (2001)	5.67	51
25	Adams & Bond (2000)**	5.6	56

Table 4. Top Nursing Journals

Abbreviated Journal Title	ISSN	2007 Total Cites	Impact Factor	Immediacy Index	2007 Articles	Cited Half-Life
Adv Nurs Sci	0161-9268	809	1.333	.138	29	> 10.0
Birth-Iss Perinat C	0730-7659	1059	2.217	.500	34	6.5
Cancer Nurs	0162-220X	1661	1.262	.167	60	8.1
Int J Nurs Stud	0020-7489	1432	2.115	.299	127	5.2
J Adv Nurs	0309-2402	7386	1.442	.154	254	7.6
J Clin Nurs	0962-1067	1768	1.301	.236	284	4.8
J Hum Lact	0890-3344	586	1.359	.214	28	6.1
J Nurs Admin	0002-0443	1126	1.206	.200	90	5.4
J Prof Nurs	8755-7223	480	1.201	.043	47	6.2
Nurs Res	0029-6562	2475	1.748	.190	63	> 10.0
Oncol Nurs Forum	0190-535X	1961	1.438	.121	58	8.1
Qual Health Res	1049-7323	1488	1.659	.107	122	5.7

Table 5. Reviews and Meta-Analyses

	Turnover	Retention	Staffing Practices	Interventions	Research Methods	Nursing Students	(Quasi) Meta-Analysis
Antonozzo, et al., (2003)					X	X	
Atwater, et al. (2006)	X	X	X	X			X
Bostick, et al.(2006)			X				
Brooks (2000)		X					
Campbell & Dickson (1996)		X			X	X	X
Casey & Buchan (1989)	X	X					
Castle, et al., (2007)	X	X					
Cavanagh (1989)	X				X		
Cohen-Mansfield (1997)	X						
Coomber & Barriball (2007)	X	X			X		X
Davey, et al., (2009)	X	X					X
Donoghue & Castle (2007)	X			X			
Force (2005)		X					
Gaynor, et al., (2007)		X			X	X	X
Gibbs, et al., (1991)	X		X				
Goodin (2003)		X		X			X
Hayes, et al., (2006)	X			X			
Hogan, et al., (2007)		X		X			
Horton, et al., (2007)		X			X		X
Lu, et al., (2005)		X	X	X			
Moseley, et al., (2008)	X	X		X			
Pearson, et al., (2006)				X	X		
Price (2009)		X				X	X
Salt, et al., (2008)	X	X		X			X
Tai, et al., (1998)	X		X		X		X
Takase, et al., (2005)	X			X	X		
Venturato, et al., (2007)		X		X			
Wagner (2007)	X	X					X
Yin & Yang (2002)	X				X		X
Zangaro & Soeken (2007)		X					X

Table Note.

The "X" next to the citation in various columns indicates various key terms each article contains. The "staffing practices" category include articles that review various practices and policies related to nursing staff in the hospital and issues related to both staffing quantity and quality or the mix of available staff and their skills. The "interventions" category contains articles that evaluate various policies, practices, and strategies geared towards improving the nursing environment.

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Appendix B
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