The Role of Management in Nurse Recruitment
A Comparative Literature Review

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Abstract: The shortage of nurses is a growing challenge in the German healthcare system, accompanied by an increasing trend of staff leaving the profession. This article aims to explore a sustainable solution to this problem. The central research questions address the reasons why nurses leave and remain in the profession, as well as the role of management in structural changes and recruitment frameworks in the healthcare system. Through a comprehensive literature review, reasons for nurses leaving are identified and linked to key aspects of practice conditions and the role of management. The empirical background looks at the demand for nurses and the influence of management on recruitment. This paper places particular emphasis on the important role of management in the long-term retention of nurses and argues for further research to better understand the complex interrelationships. In summary, the study emphasises that adequate and sustainable management is crucial to retaining nurses in the profession in the long term, especially as it determines the framework conditions and the working environment.

Keywords: *Nurses, Management, Sustainability, Recruitment, Framework*

JEL Codes: *I19, J24, J28*

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Introduction

Recruiting of nursing professionals is a key issue in Germany (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021), because, in international comparison, the number of nursing staff is very low in relation to the number of people requiring nursing care (Köppen & Busse, 2023). Although the number of employees in care subject to social insurance contributions in Germany, it has grown by 11% in the last five years whereas the increasing number of people in need of care, 37,000 jobs in the field of care were reported as vacant at the same time (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2023, p. 7ff). In addition, over the past five years, the share of professionals has decreased from 65% to 63%, simultaneously specialists and experts dropped from 8% to 7%, while the share of support staff has increased from 27% to 30% (Statista, 2023).

The workload caused by vacant positions and decrease in skilled workers, is causing staff to become frustrated with the situation, to be absent for long periods due to illness, to reduce their jobs to part-time work or even to leave the profession (Köppen & Busse, 2023, p. 30). Already in the year 2005 Gardulf et al. studied the motivation of nurses to leave their employment and found that out of 833 nurses, about 54% had already intended to leave and 35% were considering it (Köppen & Busse, 2023, p. 30). The reason for nurses leaving their jobs, are poor working conditions. They change wards, employers, or leave the profession altogether (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021, p. 9).

Theoretical Background

People in leadership positions have special responsibilities, beyond simply leading employees (Schneider, 2010; Suermann, 2020, p. 414). Conscious and sustainable leadership is divided into executive and employee leadership (Steinert & Büser, 2018, p. 8f). Management includes economic aspects, such as maximising the organisation's profits, optimising strategies, goals and processes, and the optimal use of resources. Employee management, on the other hand, emphasises human relations aspects (Steinert & Büser, 2018, p. 8f). As early as 2012, responsibility for the shortage of skilled nursing staff was assigned to nursing management (Currie & Carr-Hill, 2012).

To improve the situation Currie & Carr-Hill (2012) proposes various forward-looking strategies to retain nurses, while critically questioning

how the nursing situation can be managed, how nurses can be recruited, why nurses leave the profession and what role management plays in this context. As this situation has been steadily deteriorating since 2012 this work is based on the theories of Currie & Carr-Hill (2012) and Auffenberg & Heß (2021).

To this end, three hypotheses are put forward: 1) Nurses are leaving the profession due to the current framework conditions. 2) The role of management is important in retaining nurses. 3) The adjustment of the framework conditions has an impact on the recruitment of nurses to the profession.

Objective

This paper aims, to shed light on the role and qualities of management in nursing, focusing on recruitment and nursing workforce, following the thesis that leadership qualities are very important and affect the recruitment of nursing staff.

The following research questions were addressed:

- What possible reasons and framework conditions are assumed for nursing professionals leaving the profession?
- What possible reasons and framework conditions are assumed for nursing professionals to remain in the profession?
- What role does management play in structural changes and framework conditions for recruiting nursing professionals back into the profession?

A comparative study of literature is very important to identify the necessary framework conditions and push and pull factors described in the literature, as it reflects the different approaches of the authors.

Method

This thesis provides a comprehensive review of the current literature on management's influence on nurses' retention. The influences of management on the working conditions of nurses are analysed by recording the possible reasons for leaving the profession and the positive effects on remaining in the nursing profession.

To answer the research questions, a systematic literature search was conducted, limited to the last 10 years, 2013-2023. The databases CINAHL and PubMed were searched using the search terms *„Management", „Gesundheitswesen", „Pflegemanagement", „Pflegedienstleitung", „Stationsleitung", „Pflegefachperson", „Rahmenbedingungen", „Karriere", „Rückgewinnung", „Gesundheitswesen", „reasons for turnover in nursing", „Healthcare", „Nursing Management", „Conditions", „Career", „Recruitment"*, with and without truncation and using the Bool' operators AND and OR.

The retrieved literature was subjected to screening, structuring, duplication removing, critical appraisal, and content relevance checks. Within the detected studies, references were examined using the snowball principle. Studies that were thematically relevant were included in this work and studies with high relevance, even beyond the 10-year limit.

In the comparison and analysis of the contents, the influencing factors are separated into structural level, management level and personal level and discussed with the role of management.

Results

The presentation of results includes possible reasons for leaving the nursing profession and factors that positively influence staying in the profession.

Structural level

The structural level includes management structures, staff situation, entry into the profession, time for professional nursing work as well as duty roster and duty hours.

Possible reasons for leaving the nursing profession

Organisational failure is one of the push factors, which manifests itself in inadequate staffing situations and overcrowding of beds in healthcare facilities (Wirth, Jalaß, Ruppert, Büscher, & Hülsken-Giesler, 2022). In the field of nursing management, a structural challenge is the division of management levels into work areas of upper, middle and lower management, with non-standardised tasks (Lieb, 2010; Steinert & Büser, 2018, p. 109). This division is not universally defined (Steinert & Büser, 2018, p. 109).

It is adapted to each work area and leads to disagreements concerning work goals, roles and responsibilities, and competencies (Steinert & Büser, 2018, p. 109). These disagreements have a negative effect on the motivation in the team (Steinert & Büser, 2018, p. 109). Competence problems also arise when foreign staff are deployed without taking into account the increasing cultural diversity and the challenges that come with it (Neumann-Ponesch & Schreiner, 2019). Unclear responsibilities arise when tasks are not assigned, or the distribution of tasks is not according to the employee's qualifications (Neumann-Ponesch & Schreiner, 2019).

New hires' morale suffers when their first work experience leaves a bad impression, full-time employees don't have the time, and no effective or sufficient induction training courses (Gferer & Radinger, 2021). In addition, there is often a generational shift among new hires (Gferer & Radinger, 2021). Generations X and Y have different work expectations than the currently working baby boomers (Huber & Schubert, 2018). They expect planning security and want regular working hours (Huber & Schubert, 2018). Shift work, however, is part of everyday nursing practice, but stands in contrast to the increasingly important work-life balance (Gferer & Radinger, 2021). In addition to shift work, extra shifts and constant readiness are also recognised as stressful (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021). Increasingly, reliability of leisure time planning is being demanded, and the instability of working schedules and leisure time organisation in nursing is being criticised (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021). Regarding work-life balance, the new generation has a high willingness to leave the healthcare system (Gferer & Radinger, 2021). Salaries that are perceived to be too low, no opportunities for salary increases, and no bonus payments are also considered turnover factors (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021).

In addition to possible reasons for leaving the profession, there are also structural-level factors that have a positive impact on remaining in the nursing profession.

Positive effects on retention in the nursing profession

Among the positive effects is the cohesion, that can sustain operational management of the ward, which has a more positive impact on staff despite the poor staffing situation (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021; Schneider, 2010). The staff are able to support each other, improve care and organisational processes, and maintain quality of care (Ferrentino, 2021).

In a survey of nurses' reasons for returning to the profession Auffenberg & Heß (2021) found, that improving working conditions and quality of care was one of the most important criteria, followed by work-life balance, the possibility to leave work on time without feeling guilty and salary.

In order for nurses to stay, it is necessary to adjust their salaries to the quality of their work and their qualifications (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021). Whether the reasons are high workload, low salary or acceptance of a new or alternative job, individuals tend to leave the job rather than the profession per se (Engström, Mårtensson, Pålsson, & Strömberg, 2022; Gardulf et al., 2005; Gferer & Radinger, 2021). The working model should be compatible with private life and flexible working time arrangements should be possible on an individual basis (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021). Nurses stay in the profession if they do not have to work split shifts and, if possible, no weekends or nights (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021; Gardulf et al., 2005). Overtime should be avoided, break times should be respected and there should be no substitutions from free time (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021; Gardulf et al., 2005).

These collected perspectives from the structural level offer an overview of the possibilities to adapt structures and framework conditions for the future. In this way nurses, who would be willing to work in the health system again, can be addressed to return, if the framework conditions were improved, such as a qualification-adjusted salary, high-quality work or more flexible working hours and shifts.

Management level

The management level includes the working environment, transparency, appreciation and career.

Possible reasons for leaving the nursing profession

Possible reasons for leaving the profession from the management level include poor transparency and lack of appreciation (Engström et al., 2022; Linka, Staudacher, & Spirig, 2021). Negative work environment, poor work climate, culture and quality, with poorly available resources such as equipment, staff and infrastructure, as well as the lack of promotion of staff, increase the desire to leave the profession, especially when there are no career prospects (Engström et al., 2022; Marufu, Collins, Vargas, Gillespie, & Almghairbi, 2021).

Limited career opportunities in the profession run counter to people's desire to try something new, to deliver quality at work and achieve personal development (Engström et al., 2022; Gardulf et al., 2005; Linka et al., 2021). In addition, career opportunities are dependent on the decisions of nursing management, which are often not transparent (Gardulf et al., 2005; Manthey, 2011; Weidling, Herwig, & Ayerle, 2023). Many people are even unaware of the opportunities for further development (Gardulf et al., 2005).

Low appreciation, assignment of blame and a lack of support underline a negative management or leadership style (Engström et al., 2022; Marufu et al., 2021). The fact that organisational changes are decided without participation of nursing staff also supports dissatisfaction (Marufu et al., 2021).

Positive effects on retention in the nursing profession

Workplace-related factors for staying in the profession include positive leadership, good staffing, positive aspects of education and training, opportunities for professional advancement, organisational and work environment issues, workplace support, followed by personal, demographic, financial and monetary aspects (Marufu et al., 2021). However, in order for nurses to stay in the profession, there is a focus on workplace cohesion (Ferrentino, 2021).

A culture of transparent information about staffing levels and access to resources ensures, that employees accept each situation (Gferer & Radinger, 2021; Marufu et al., 2021; Zander, 2017).

Support and further development as well as employee orientation in the workplace have a positive and appreciative effect (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021). This means that the frontline manager behaves respectfully and sensitively towards nurses and takes their stress seriously (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021). Employees are given more opportunities to have a say in company processes (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021). Interdisciplinary collaboration with other professional groups takes place in a cooperative relationship (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021). In addition to a positive leadership management style, further development programmes are one way of retaining existing staff (Zander, 2017). As there are many different solutions, it is important to take the right steps tailored for your organisation (Zander, Dobler, Bäumler, & Busse, 2014). Aspects of education, training and continuing education, as well as further development and career, have a positive impact on nurses' job retention (Marufu et al., 2021).

Weidling et al. (2023) explain the importance of career opportunities for the retention of staff in practice in relation to the academisation of nursing at Master's level. The offer of career opportunities should be made taking into account the skills of the employees Overall, professional career opportunities are considered more important (Manthey, 2002, 2011; Mischo-Kelling & Schütz-Pazzini, 2007; Weidling et al., 2023).

These collected perspectives from the management level provide an overview of the possibilities for adapting structures and framework conditions for the future. Nursing staff who want to be employed in a good working environment, wish to develop further or pursue a career, prefer transparent work or simply expect recognition, can be addressed in this way.

Personal level

The personal level includes not only the team but also the family environment (Wirth et al., 2022). Lack of team spirit or lack of interdisciplinary cooperation can have a negative impact on the team and lead to team fragmentation (Marufu et al., 2021).

Possible reasons for leaving the nursing profession

Cohesion in the workplace promotes relationship building, which is necessary for good co-operation and workplace wellbeing (Ferrentino, 2021). Lack of this can lead to psychological stress (Ferrentino, 2021).

Nursing staff would return to the nursing profession if working conditions and care quality were better (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021). Mental stress may occur if they are not able to perform their nursing duties according to their qualifications (Gferer & Radinger, 2021).

The family level involves the compatibility of work and private life, which includes factors such as childcare or caring for relatives who need to be looked after, and a relaxing evening after work (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021; Gferer & Radinger, 2021).

In the family domain, it is the image of the caring profession or the lack of awareness of this work, because if the family does not view the image of this profession positively, no one will take this job (Gferer & Radinger, 2021).

Positive effects on retention in the nursing profession

Feeling part of a professional group or team has a positive impact on one's personal life (Reinhardt, León, & Amatya, 2020). Well-being and a good team are strengthened by mutual support between colleagues during working hours (Reinhardt et al., 2020). Meaning in activities, achieving meaning at work, and experiencing success make work positive (Gferer & Radinger, 2021). Taking personal resources into account also reinforces these positive experiences (Gferer & Radinger, 2021). At the family level, the focus is on balancing work and private life (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021).

Discussion

According to the DGB (2022), nurses will return to the profession or increase their working hours if the conditions of care work are significantly improved, so here the role of management in the recruitment of care workers is discussed and linked to the reasons for leaving the care profession and the positive impact on retention. Recruitment of care workers to counter the current negative spiral is a key issue in care management (Köppen & Busse, 2023).Given the already tight ratio between the number of nursing staff and the number of people needing care, the large number of unfilled positions has a significant impact and needs to be filled, especially with professional nursing staff (Köppen & Busse, 2023; Statista, 2023).

Just a few years ago, the role of ward manager, a low-level management position, was given to the person who had worked on the ward the longest or had completed a ward management course (Lieb, 2010). This person was expected to have a willingness to perform, constant presence, organisational talent, a sense of responsibility, integrity, and professional qualifications as well as the ability to work across teams (Lieb, 2010). Today, these expectations are supplemented by specialist nursing knowledge, an expert nursing role, business administration content, personnel management and organisational skills, and managers in nursing are expected to have a great deal of knowledge and flexibility (Lieb, 2010). They are also expected to motivate employees and retain them in the organisation (Lieb, 2010; Schneider, 2010). They are expected to represent the organisation to the outside world, carry out public relations work, solve problems and carry out quality management, conduct negotiations,

distribute resources and, ideally work directly in the nursing sector themselves (Lieb, 2010).

Nursing managers are part of these structures and are significantly involved in the framework conditions for nursing staff. The nursing staff that needs to be brought back, left because of the basic conditions set by management. Therefore, the next three chapters look at the level to which nursing staff can be brought back and the role of management in this process.

Recruitment opportunities at structural level

In order to win back nursing professionals and make the profession attractive, it is necessary for the management level to offer an improved personnel situation and organisational processes (Gferer & Radinger, 2021; Suermann, 2020, p. 414).

In order to make the profession attractive, it is important that leaders strengthen their sense of responsibility, concentrate on their tasks, possess personal and methodological competence and are able to take on responsibility and place a high value on self-leadership, personal development and career development (Linka et al., 2021). The role of leadership is characterised by the support of the leader but also by the leadership qualities of the leading person (Wirth et al., 2022).

To keep them in the job, a high-quality induction program is necessary not only for career starters, but also for returnees. Different generations behave differently and have different structures and values, which are not always taken into account by current organisational processes (Klaffke & Parment, 2011). In addition to personnel development and recruitment, management development also includes staff retention (Klaffke & Parment, 2011). Based on external- and a self-assessments of the value preferences of Generation Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomers in the nursing workforce Huber & Schubert (2018) found that, in terms of employee retention, nursing management is required to take generation-specific values into account through transformational leadership behaviour.

Managers are not only faced with a shortage of skilled staff, but also with the challenge of caring for an increasing number of people (Köppen & Busse, 2023; Statista, 2023). However, they are responsible for responding to short-staffing situations in order to increase the attractiveness of the profession and avoid bed overcrowding (Steinert & Büser, 2018; Wirth et al., 2022). The distribution of tasks and responsibilities in relation to the quality of care must be clearly and bindingly defined so that quality

nursing work can be performed again (Steinert & Büser, 2018; Wirth et al., 2022). The missing time factor is countered by the improvement of organisational structures and time savings through high-quality work (Marufu et al., 2021; Neumann-Ponesch & Schreiner, 2019; Wirth et al., 2022). Marufu et al. (2021) emphasise that staff shortages in nursing have a direct impact on patient safety and the quality of care.

To win back employees, management is responsible for exemplifying a culture of quality, not quantity, and for providing quality improvements (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021; Currie & Carr-Hill, 2012; Gardulf et al., 2005). They are responsible for ensuring that background information is provided transparently, either through salary levels or allocation of additional training (Gardulf et al., 2005). Informing care professionals about the background to their opportunities can prevent dissatisfaction (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021). Employers should consider appropriate remuneration for the qualifications of care professionals and bring this to the collective bargaining level (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021).

Not every management level in nursing can influence the structural framework of working time, remuneration and the pace of work, but by supporting innovative structures, they can contribute to further developing the system in a positive direction. At this point, the management level can be checked for personal and methodological competence as well as professional qualifications.

Recruitment opportunities at management level

The role of management is a critical factor in the retention of nursing professionals (Marufu et al., 2021). Competent, supportive, and employee-friendly management is necessary in order to win back nursing staff (Marufu et al., 2021). The key factors for the relationship between accountability and change in nursing are engagement, sufficient room for manoeuvre, and a trusting management relationship (Linka et al., 2021). The upper management level should act as a role model for middle management (Linka et al., 2021). This subdivides into role model function, participation, appreciation, trust, leadership relationships, transparency, and the provision of framework conditions, which also include avoiding the double burden of management tasks and patient care (Linka et al., 2021). As well as competence and support change processes in nursing practice, targeted further and advanced training, as well as individual or external coaching (Haring, Freigang, Gersch, & Amelung, 2023; Linka et al., 2021).

Nursing management is of great importance to nurses' turnover behaviour from the profession (Gferer & Radinger, 2021). Long-term staff retention involves the positive experience of nurses when practising their profession (Gferer & Radinger, 2021). Centrally controlled and responsible leadership management with a positive leadership style is one of the established, successful strategies for staff retention (Haring et al., 2023; Zander et al., 2014). Cohesion and unity are also relevant in terms of the day-to-day management experiences of ward managers (Ferrentino, 2021).

The dependence of individuals on management decisions can be seen in the establishment of new nursing role structures in practice, even though this change is necessary for the requirements of high-quality nursing practice (Manthey, 2011; Mischo-Kelling & Schütz-Pazzini, 2007; Weidling et al., 2023). Competitive thinking, fear of a perceived loss of power and ignorance prevent important development steps and are currently dependent on the creative will of nursing management (Weidling et al., 2023).

The opportunities for recovery at management level play a major role, as these can be personally influenced by managers. They can ensure a good working atmosphere, a positive management or leadership style, adapt the culture of care as well as organize and allow people to work according to their quality. Managers have the opportunity to allocate material or human resources according to need and to provide transparent information about their procedures. Open communication with employees is important, as is appreciation and support of their person and their work by managers.

Recruitment opportunities at personal level

Positive factors for retention in the nursing profession can be divided into individual, family, and workplace levels as well as team and management levels (Wirth et al., 2022). At the workplace-related level, it is important to counteract the negative effects of poor management, poor communication, and lack of engagement at the executive and management level to reduce turnover in the nursing profession (Marufu et al., 2021; Zander, 2017). The personal level includes meaningful work, the meaningfulness of the activity itself and experiencing a sense of achievement at work and what can motivate people to return to the nursing profession (Marufu et al., 2021; Zander, 2017).

The family level also plays an important role in the return to the nursing profession, on which management has little direct influence, but it reflects the support of the social environment (Wirth et al., 2022). Thus, at least at

the work-related level, which includes the team and management level, employee orientation at the workplace, the promotion of cohesion and the support of colleagues should be the focus of the management level (Wirth et al., 2022).

More attention should be paid to these constructs at the nursing management level, as bonding or cohesion with the employer appears to be important for nurses to stay in the profession (Ferrentino, 2021). Team cohesion and a good management structure improve nursing work and helps to retain staff (Ferrentino, 2021). By ensuring a good work-live balance, management shows its appreciation of employees and makes its organization attractive to returnees (Auffenberg & Heß, 2021).

In the private sphere, the management level has no direct influence on the recruitment of nursing staff. However, they could present and promote the nursing profession in a more positive light in order to improve the image and reputation of the profession in society. This can counteract a lack of appreciation and make the profession more attractive. Company-financed support could support the process.

Conclusion

The management level, regardless of whether it is the upper, middle or lower level, determines the framework conditions for the workplace and the work processes of nursing staff. These include salary, recognition, time factor, compatibility with family and reputation in society. These framework conditions lead to staying in or leaving the profession. As nurses leave the profession due to the framework conditions, the management level plays a key role in bringing them back into the profession, The role of management in structural changes and framework conditions for recruitment of nursing staff lies in structural, organizational and personal objectives.

In the area of structural objectives, it is important that the structures are adapted to the needs of the returnees. Important points extracted from the literature were the personnel situation, career entry, working hours, salary, work pace and time required to complete tasks. These factors cannot be directly influenced, but only indirectly. The same applies to the numerous components at the personal level, at least in relation to the family environment. At team level, managers can exert a great deal of influence by adopting an employee-orientated approach, taking employees seriously

and strengthening team structures. At the organizational level, managers also have an influence on the further development and career of employees, as well as on their personal and monetary mapping. Personal and methodological competence as well as professional qualifications are expected at management level, particularly in view of the fact that we are faced with the problem of a shortage of nursing staff and attempts to win back nursing staff, it is important to find out not only the framework conditions for returning staff but also what requirements there are for filling positions at the respective levels in nursing management and who fills which position with which qualifications. This should be analysed through a comprehensive study. Therefore, this topic is essential for the future care in an ageing society.

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