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Emotional Exhaustion and Turnover Intention Among Frontline Healthcare Workers

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Abstract

Frontline healthcare workers are commonly faced with high workload, stress, and a constant need to attend to patients, which can lead to Emotional Exhaustion (EE) that can, in turn, lead to increased Turnover Intention (TI). This study investigates the connection between EE and TI amongst frontline healthcare workers and its significance for organizational behavior and human resource management. In the study, a quantitative research method was used, with a structured questionnaire applied to 300 healthcare practitioners. Measurement of EE and TI was done using a five-point Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted using a reliability test, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis in order to examine the relationship between study variables. The reliability test showed strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.89 and 0.86 for EE and TI, respectively. Pearson correlation test identified a statistically significant positive relationship between EE and TI ($r = 0.642$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis further confirmed the significant predictability of EE towards intention to leave ($\beta = 0.642$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 41.2 percent of the variability in TI ($R^2 = 0.412$). Wellness programs for employees, supportive leadership style, proper workload management, psychological support, and career development activities need to be implemented in healthcare organizations to overcome the problem of EE and retain their employees. The research adds value to the field of organizational behavior and HRM by proving the significance of psychological well-being in formulating retention policies.

Keywords: Emotional Exhaustion, Turnover Intention, Frontline Healthcare Workers, Employee Well-Being, Human Resource Management, Organizational Behavior.

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Introduction

Frontline healthcare workers have a critical role in healthcare, with direct patient contact and important duties, which is why they are vital to healthcare organizations. Healthcare workers, such as doctors, nurses, paramedical workers, and others, work under highly challenging conditions that involve emotional stressors, long hours, unpredictable circumstances, and constant exposure to distress. Not only is technical skill needed to meet these occupational demands, but there is also a lot of emotional involvement. It is important for the staff to be committed to the system for a successful delivery of healthcare, but extended time periods in emotionally stressful situations can begin to impact a worker's psychological health. There are different kinds of occupational stressors, and one of the most significant is EE, a physical and emotional condition resulting from over-taxed job demands and recurrent stress in the workplace.

EE is part of occupational burnout and is the core of employees' loss of emotional resources in fulfilling their occupational tasks. Healthcare professionals on the front lines often face high workload, low staffing, high workload demands, and emotional interactions with patients and their families. These circumstances can lead to a continuous state of stress and decrease staff's capacity to maintain positive attitudes and involvement in their work. As emotional fatigue increases, workers may experience less job satisfaction, reduced commitment to their business, and decreased motivation to remain in their current position. So, it is crucial to have an understanding of EE for healthcare organizations in order to sustain employee wellbeing and happiness.

TI has been recognized as a major issue in human resource management, especially in the healthcare industry, where trained professionals require considerable amounts of skill development, knowledge, and experience (Thanacoody et al., 2014). Employee TImay be defined as an employee's decision-making process about leaving the current organization (Wong & Laschinger, 2015). Despite the fact that an employee's intention to leave does not automatically lead to turnover, it remains an essential predictor of organizational instability. High TI might have negative impacts on the performance of an organization by increasing expenses on recruiting and training of new staff, creating disruptions in the continuity of patients' treatment, burdening remaining employees with extra workload, and deteriorating quality of services provided. Therefore, understanding the work environment that affects employees' decisions to quit is very necessary for formulating an effective retention policy.

Under the concept of organizational behavior, the association between EE and TIs is related to the psychological strain that employees face owing to ongoing work pressures (Tziner et al., 2015). The ongoing emotional strain can make employees less engaged in their work and less committed to their organizations while making them less willing to stay within the organization. In the context of health care, ongoing exhaustion can undermine the professional satisfaction of employees and make them willing to look for other options. Thus, decreasing EE can contribute to maintaining the stability of the workforce and increasing its retention. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model states that overtaxed stresses on employees' physical and emotional resources will cause them to become exhausted and withdrawn. Low organizational support, little chance to recover, and high emotional demands can exacerbate feelings of exhaustion and affect intentions to stay in a health care setting. Thus, it is important to take a look at EE as a precursor to TI to gain insights into the issues of employee turnover (Laeeque et al., 2018).

Although extensive studies have been performed on burnout and employee attrition across different workplaces, further investigation is required to inspect the influence of EE on the intention to depart among frontline healthcare workers (Yanchus et al., 2017). There is a various study that looks at general burnout measures; however, not much attention has been paid to EE as a standalone psychological construct that impacts retention decisions. Besides, health care institutions need evidence-based human resource strategies that take human resource well-being, workload management, psychological support, and organizational commitment into account. The objective of this research is to investigate the existing gap by analyzing the correlation between emotional fatigue and the intention to leave among frontline healthcare professionals.

This study seeks to: (1) assess the prevalence of emotional tiredness among frontline healthcare professionals, (2) examine the association between EE and employees' intention to leave the organization, (3) explore how EE impacts employees' TI in healthcare organizations, and (4) propose HRM strategies to enhance employees' well-being and retention in healthcare settings.

A literature review is presented in Section 2. The research method is reflected in the study design, sampling approach, measuring instruments, and data analysis technique as described in Section 3. In Section 4, the results and statistical analysis of the collected data are presented. The findings and implications for the healthcare organizations are discussed in Section 5. Managerial implications and limitations are discussed in Section 6, and Section 7 summarize and suggest future research.

Review of Literature

EE Among Frontline Healthcare Workers

EE is a well-known symptom of occupational burnout and is characterized by a decrease in employees' emotional energy resulting from the cumulative effect of workplace demands. EE on the job is especially noteworthy in health care contexts, where workers routinely manage emotional encounters with patients, make decisions that can mean the difference between life and death, and face intense exposure to life-threatening scenarios. EE is a more gradual process than that of normal workplace stress, whereby workers feel a lack of resources to deal with the demands of the job. There are several pressures that can lead to psychological fatigue in healthcare workers, such as excessive workload, long hours, not enough time to rest, emotional responsibilities towards patients and/or organizational limitations.

Existing studies have shown that EE has adverse consequences on the personal and organizational level. When a worker feels extremely tired, they can exhibit a lack of interest, a diminished interest in the work, and a poor relationship with their colleagues. They are especially significant in healthcare because emotional availability and professional dedication are vital to providing high-quality patient care. Frontline workers often have to deal with emotional demands, such as managing their own emotions, as well as caring for those of the client, all the while. Hence, EE in the workplace has emerged as one of the significant organizational behavior concerns, and it is important for healthcare administrators and human resource practitioners to address this concern.

Factors Influencing EE in Healthcare Organizations

Healthcare professionals can experience EE because of many factors emanating from the environment in which they work. One of the most common factors is the workload, especially for healthcare workers who may have to process a significant number of patients while ensuring accuracy and efficiency within a limited timeframe. Extended shifts, low staffing, and higher administrative demands may result in chronic stress, which may reduce chances of physical and emotional recovery. Further, psychological demands are enhanced because of employees' responsibilities to manage their emotions and express empathy and professionalism with regard to emotional labor.

Organizational factors also form another aspect that significantly influences the degree of exhaustion among workers. Mismanagement, absence of acknowledgment, limited participation in decision-making processes, and ineffective communication structures can serve as sources of stress in the work environment. At the same time, the effects of psychological strain can be alleviated by means of good leadership, efficient resource management, and a favorable organizational climate. It is highly essential, in terms of human resource management, to identify these factors in order to create measures to promote resilience among workers and retain them in the company for a longer period of time.

TIAmong Healthcare Workers

TIs are the likelihood or willingness of individuals to leave the organization and are considered key predictors of employee turnover behavior (Sung et al., 2012). Considering the possible effects of TI on health care organizations, for instance, on service quality, organizational efficiency, and organizational stability, TI has attracted considerable attention (Wang & Wang, 2020). Because replacing healthcare employees requires significant investment in recruitment and training, maintaining a stable workforce is essential.

Turnover among health care employees has many causes, such as dissatisfaction with work, heavy workload, lack of promotion opportunities, low salary, and lack of work-life balance (Ran et al., 2020). Health care frontline staff are particularly vulnerable because their tasks obligate them to be permanently involved in emotionally and physically challenging work. In case personnel notice a lack of resources in the organization to deal with challenges, a negative attitude may develop, which will make them more willing to accept other job offers.

From the organizational behavior standpoint, TI can be defined as the psychological response of the employee to his/her work environment (Zaheer et al., 2019). It depends not only on external job offers but also on perception of fairness, recognition, institutional support, and personal well-being. Therefore, identifying the factors that shape employees' intention to leave is essential for developing effective retention strategies.

Relationship Between EE and TI

The relationship between EE and TI has been thoroughly investigated in the field of occupational psychology and HR management. Psychological exhaustion might cause negative attitudes towards the work environment since the continuous psychological demand decreases the ability to develop positive attitudes in the workplace (Alharbi et al., 2020). Due to emotional exhaustion, workers may become less committed to the organization and tend to quit their jobs.

Theoretically, this relationship can be viewed from the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, in which it is stated that high levels of job demands along with low levels of job resources can lead to burnout and withdrawal outcomes. Job demands in the context of healthcare can be attributed to overload, emotional involvement, and constant interaction with patients. At the same time, job resources can consist of supervisor support, acknowledgment of employees' contributions, sufficient staff, and appropriate workplace facilities. The shortage of job resources to cope with job demands can make healthcare professionals feel exhausted and prone to turnover. In case demands are higher than resources, the employee suffers from EE that eventually results in TIs.

Also, the Conservation of Resources Theory proposes that people have the tendency to preserve their resources. These include resources such as emotional and psychological resources. When employees are faced with situations where they keep losing resources, then there will be a tendency for them to leave the organization. Accordingly, EE is a critical mechanism that mediates between job stressors and employee withdrawal intentions.

Human Resource Management Perspective on Employee Retention

It is evident that HRM techniques play a vital role in reducing EE and improving the retention of healthcare professionals (Hur et al., 2015). Successful human resource management is characterized by creating supportive environments with adequate availability of resources and professional development of employees. Workload management, employee assistance programs, psychological counseling, flexible work schedules, and leadership support are some of the useful techniques for managing stress in the workplace.

Employee retention is not only about compensation for health care organizations anymore. Workforce retention can be strengthened by fostering a work environment that supports psychological safety and acknowledges employees' contributions. Therefore, it is important that HR managers consider including employee wellness programs within the organizational strategy to solve the problem of EE (Nichols et al., 2016).

Inference

From the reviewed literature, EE has emerged as one of the key variables of organizational behavior that influences the attitude of healthcare employees and organizational turnover. Literature has revealed that difficult working conditions, emotional labor, and scarcity of organizational resources are some of the major causes of EE, which can also increase employees' likelihood to quit their organizations. Although previous literature has studied the impact of burnout and TIs, there is limited research regarding the influence of EE on intention to turn over among frontline healthcare employees. Thus, the current research intends to explore this connection and provide recommendations for human resource strategies.

Proposed Method

Research Design

A quantitative research approach will be adopted to examine the association between EE and TI among frontline healthcare workers. This study will employ both descriptive and explanatory methodologies to assess the present condition of emotional tiredness and its impact on employees' intentions to depart from the firm. It is crucial to apply the quantitative approach because of the possibility of objective measurements of the employees' perceptions with the help of certain tools that will be applied during the surveys and analysis of relationships among research variables. The analysis considers EE as the explanatory variable and TI as the response variable.

The general framework of the methodology of this research is illustrated in Fig. 1 below. The framework illustrates the research process systematically starting from the quantitative research design to the target population of the research as being the front-line healthcare workers. The methodological framework covers the sampling strategy, questionnaire-based data collection, measurement of EE and TI, and the statistical techniques used for data analysis. It also presents the proposed research model, where EE is considered the predictor variable and TI is treated as the outcome variable.

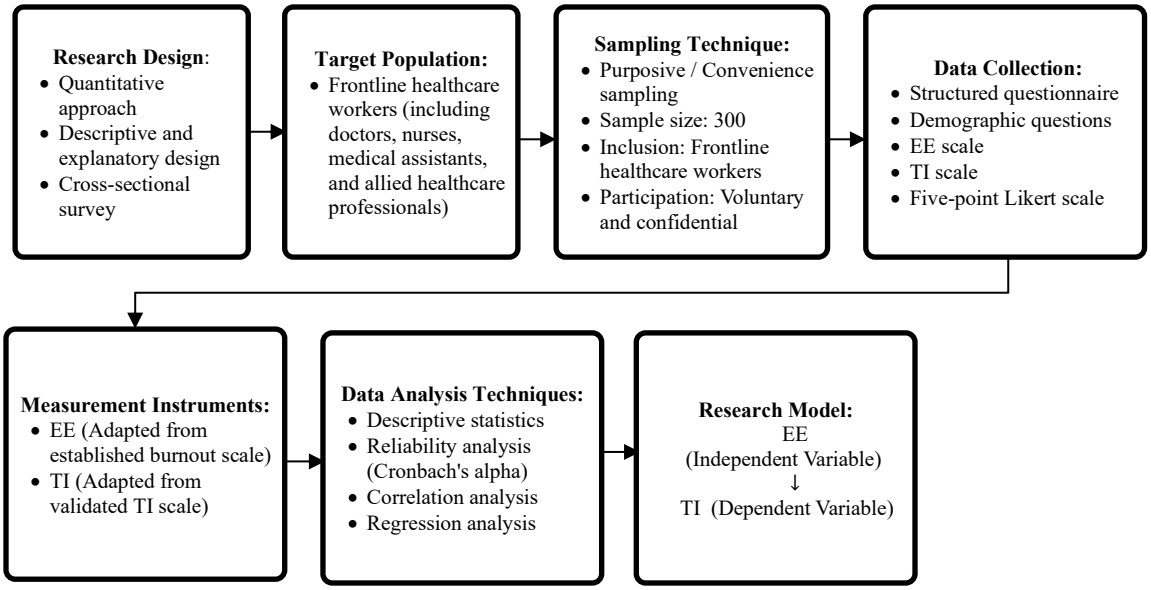


Fig. 1: Research Methodology Framework

Study Population and Sampling

The study focuses on frontline healthcare professionals who are actively engaged in direct patient care, including physicians, nurses, medical assistants, and other allied health personnel. These workers are chosen because they have "day-to-day" contact with patients and have high emotional and work demands. The information was gathered via a systematic questionnaire, which was sent to healthcare practitioners within medical facilities.

To gather the opinions of participants who fulfilled the study parameters, a suitable sampling technique was used. All participants received information about the research purpose and chose to participate willingly. The gathered responses were examined to investigate the correlation between emotional fatigue and the desire to resign among frontline healthcare professionals.

Table 1: Cohort Characteristics of Participants

Category	Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	132	44.0
	Female	168	56.0
Age	Below 30 years	96	32.0
	30–40 years	128	42.7
	Above 40 years	76	25.3
Experience	Below 5 years	114	38.0
	5–10 years	108	36.0
	Above 10 years	78	26.0
Profession	Doctor	72	24.0
	Nurse	156	52.0
	Allied Healthcare Staff	72	24.0

Demographic details of the 300 frontline healthcare workers who contributed in the study are summarized in Table 1. The demographic profile contains important demographics, including gender, age band, professional experience, and occupation. The distribution of respondents gives an overview of the composition of respondents and background characteristics of the respondents that were considered for analyzing EE and the intention to turnover. These demographic characteristics give background information on the workforce characteristics and help to interpret the later statistical analysis.

Research Variables and Measurement Instruments

The study consists of two constructs, EE and TI. EE denotes to the level of emotional fatigue, low energy, and psychological depletion experienced by health care workers after enduring the constant stress of their work. TIs are the employees' decisions or predispositions to leave the organization.

The items of the measurement are derived from the existing measurement instruments of burnout, especially on emotional fatigue and work-related fatigue. The items of the TI measure assess the employee's thoughts, plans, and intentions for changing jobs outside the company.

Table 2: Measurement Constructs and Indicators

Construct	Description	Measurement Scale
EE	Psychological fatigue resulting from continuous workplace demands	Five-point Likert Scale
TI	Employee willingness or intention to leave the organization	Five-point Likert Scale

Table 2 presents the key constructs used in the study to assess EE and TI among frontline healthcare workers. EE reflects the psychological and mental depletion that may arise from persistent job-related demands and prolonged workplace pressure. TI refers to an employee's conscious tendency or consideration to leave the current organization. Both constructs were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, enabling participants to indicate their level of agreement with the corresponding measurement statements. The chosen constructs offer a structured approach for analyzing the effect of emotional strain occurring at work on the retention behavior of employees.

Data Collection Procedure

The methodology adopted in collecting information from the frontline health care personnel was the use of a questionnaire survey technique. The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions and EE and TI scales. All participants were adequately briefed about the research purpose, and their responses were protected to ensure confidentiality throughout the study.

All responses obtained were checked for completeness before the process of statistical analysis. The collected data were statistically analyzed to examine the validity of the data, the descriptive nature, relationship between the variables, and the predictive effect of EE on quitting intentions.

Data Analysis Techniques

These are the statistics that were used for the analysis of the data collected and which are suitable for the analysis of employee behavior and organizational relationship:

- Descriptive statistics were applied to summarize the respondents' characteristics and provide an overall understanding of the study variables.
- Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the measurement scales.
- Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of the association between EE and TI.
- Regression analysis was performed to examine whether EE significantly predicts TI among frontline healthcare workers.

Results and Analysis

The findings that were generated through the statistical analysis of the feedback collected from 300 frontline healthcare workers have been presented in this section. The analysis was carried out in order to find the level of emotional fatigue of healthcare professionals and the impact of emotional fatigue on their willingness to quit the profession. Statistical tools can be used to check the reliability of the metrics used in forming the constructs and the relationship between emotional fatigue and the employees' desire to quit their organization.

Reliability Analysis

Measurement instrument accuracy and reliability was investigated. The instruments used in the research were tested for validity and reliability. The reliability of the measurement scales was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient ; if the measure is greater than the acceptable level, then it implies high coherence between the test items. EE and intention to turn-over measures exhibited high reliability, implying that the test items are valid measures of the constructs.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis of Study Constructs

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
EE	5	0.89
TI	4	0.86

Table 3 presents the reliability results for the constructs examined in the study. EE recorded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.89, while TI achieved a value of 0.86, indicating strong internal consistency for both measurement scales. The

reliability values of these two scores are very high and exceed the recommended level of reliability, implying that there is a high degree of correlation among the items on the questionnaire. The results of this study indicate the suitability of these measures for statistical analysis.

Descriptive Statistics Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to assess the overall levels of EE and TI among the healthcare professionals included in the study. Mean and SD values provide an understanding of the level of psychological fatigue experienced and the likelihood of leaving one's organization by respondents.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation
EE	3.82	0.74
TI	3.54	0.81

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables examined in the study. The frontline healthcare workers' EE mean value was 3.82, which showed that they were suffering from a significant degree of emotional fatigue as a result of the demands of their work. The mean of TI was 3.54, which indicates that employees tend to think about leaving their organizations moderately. The standard deviations are all within acceptable limits for the range of responses of the respondents.

Correlation Analysis

The association between EE and TI was evaluated using Pearson's correlation analysis. This statistical technique was applied to determine whether the two variables move together and to assess both the strength and direction of their association.

Table 5: Correlation Between EE and TI

Variables	EE	TI
EE	1.000	
TI	0.642**	1.000

Note: $p < 0.01$

Table 5 presents the association between EE and TI among frontline healthcare workers. The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables ($r = 0.642$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that higher levels of EE are generally accompanied by stronger intentions to leave the organization. The findings therefore confirm that EE is closely associated with TI among frontline healthcare professionals. The more psychologically exhausted employees are, the higher the likelihood of their intention to leave their employer.

Regression Analysis

Linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether EE influences TI among healthcare professionals. The analysis was used to determine the predictive effect and statistical significance of EE in explaining employees' intention to leave the organization. Emotional fatigue served as an independent variable, whereas TI was the dependent variable.

Table 6: Regression Analysis Predicting TI

Predictor	β Value	t Value	Significance
EE	0.642	14.52	<0.001

Table 6 presents the regression findings concerning the effect of EE on TI. The results indicate that EE is a statistically significant predictor of employees' intention to leave ($\beta = 0.642$, $p < 0.001$). The regression model explains 41.2% of the variation in TI($R^2 = 0.412$), demonstrating that EE contributes substantially to employees' consideration of leaving the organization. These findings suggest that higher levels of EE are associated with stronger TIs among frontline healthcare workers. Thus, it may be concluded that the findings confirm the hypothesis about the link between emotional fatigue and TIs.

Summary of Findings

The results suggest that greater EE is linked to a stronger intention to leave among FHCWs. It is therefore essential that there be a move towards adopting effective human resource management practices that consider employee welfare and workload issues as a way of improving their retention in hospitals.

Discussion

The findings provide useful evidence regarding the influence of EE on TI among frontline healthcare workers. The results reveal a strong association between increased EE and employees' greater willingness to leave their organization. This relationship highlights the importance of promoting psychological well-being and reducing work-related emotional strain within healthcare environments to support employee retention and workforce stability. The environment under which the frontline health services workers operate may prove to be quite difficult, including heavy workload, emotional engagements with patients, lengthy hours of work and responsibility towards patients' welfare. All these elements in the environment may cause depletion of the emotional energy of the employees leading to fatigue.

The observed relationship between EE and TI suggests that persistent psychological strain may increase employees' inclination to consider leaving their organization. This result can be interpreted through the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, which proposes that excessive job pressures combined with insufficient workplace support and resources can deplete employees' energy, intensify exhaustion, and encourage withdrawal-related responses. In this case, health care professionals who believe that there are more demands at the workplace than they have personal resources will suffer from detachment from their professions and other employment possibilities.

The results further highlight the role of organizational support in reducing employee turnover. While workplace stress experiences are unique, organizational factors like leadership support, workload distribution, recognition, and employee assistance programs can have a important role on employees' ability to manage workplace stressors. Limited organizational resources, an unsupportive work setting, and communication gaps can contribute to employee stress and reduce work commitment.

The study stresses on the significance of taking preemptive steps to avert the consequences of EE resulting in the phenomenon of employee turnover. The traditional approaches to retention such as reward based and recruitment driven initiatives may lack the ability to overcome the psychological aspects affecting the decision-making process of employees. Therefore, it is recommended that healthcare services providers introduce employee wellness, stress management, counseling services, and flexible work arrangements.

This research provides valuable information in relation to the organizational behavior literature since it demonstrates how emotions are involved in employee retention. Health care front-line staff members are very sensitive individuals who can impact the quality of care, relationships in the work place, and the effectiveness of the organization when they experience emotional instability. Therefore, the significance of this research is the importance of incorporating the reduction of EE in human resource management strategies.

Managerial Implications

These findings have many implications for health care managers and human resource specialists in the sense that there is need to address the EE dimension of employee retention as one of the drivers. Healthcare professionals operate under emotional and occupational pressures all the time and thus there is need to put in place a framework that helps to enhance the health and wellbeing of the employees and thus reduce psychological distress.

Organizations can support employee well-being through formal initiatives such as counseling support, stress-reduction programs, and employee assistance services. There will be need to conduct regular assessments of the wellbeing of the employees which will help the managers in detecting signs of EE and address them appropriately. This will help in enhancing their skills in coping with work-related stress.

Furthermore, the study findings may be useful in managing the workloads of healthcare personnel effectively. Employees can experience psychological weariness because of overwork, long working hours, and insufficient staff availability. Therefore, the administrators of healthcare organizations should consider managing the staffing process, adopting balanced shifts, task distribution, and sufficient breaks for their employees to minimize stress in the workplace. Creating the optimal working environment will lead to increasing job satisfaction among employees and decreasing turnover rate. The study stresses the importance of supportive leadership in order to retain employees. Management with a sense of empathy, understanding the worth of the contribution by the employees, offering opportunities for free exchange of information, and including the employees in decision-making could help in enhancing the organizational commitment among the employees. Therefore, leadership development programs would include management that would consider not only the operational but also the emotional aspects.

Besides, more activities could be undertaken within human resource management and development in order to motivate and strengthen organizational attachment among the employees. Offering the opportunity for learning and

recognition would lead to greater satisfaction among the employees and would reduce the chances of them leaving. Overall, it is suggested that the healthcare organization implement various programs in its human resources framework to prevent emotional burnout among its employees. Such measures may include employee wellness programs, leadership development programs, workload management, and more.

Conclusion

The correlation between EE and TIs was assessed in this research among healthcare professionals in terms of frontline workers using the dataset of 300 healthcare professionals. It was shown that EE is a crucial variable that affects the intention of employees to quit. Analysis of reliability showed a very high level of internal consistency of both variables with alpha value of 0.89 and 0.86 for EE and TI correspondingly. Correlation analysis has shown that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between EE and TIs ($r = 0.642$, $p < 0.01$), meaning that employees who are more emotionally exhausted are more likely to think about quitting their jobs. Regression analysis confirmed the findings by showing that EE can predict TIs ($\beta = 0.642$, $p < 0.001$) and explain 41.2% of their variability ($R^2 = 0.412$). These findings show that sustained psychological stress as a result of stressful working conditions can have an impact on the stability of the workforce in healthcare institutions. As such, HRM should go beyond conventional retention strategies to focus more on the emotional health of workers. Healthcare institutions can solve the problem by focusing on workload management, strong leadership, recognition policies, career development, counseling and stress management. Provision of adequate workplace resources and communication can also minimize the emotional strain. The study will make a contribution to OB and HRM by showing the role of psychological well-being in studying retention of employees within the health care industry. The results will provide insights to health care managers on how to avoid preventable turnover among employees. Further research can focus on organization's support, job satisfaction, resilience, work-life balance, and leadership styles as potential mediators or moderators. longitudinal studies that involve multiple organizations can further explain the development of EE and TIamong employees in the health care industry.

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