

Study on the Causes and Countermeasures of Medical Staff Turnover in County Public Hospitals from the Perspective of Developmental Psychology

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the causes of medical staff turnover in county public hospitals from the perspective of developmental psychology and put forward effective countermeasures. Through qualitative research method, a semi-structured in-depth interview was conducted with 23 medical staff in Liannan County Hospital to analyze the current situation and influencing factors of their loss. The study found that difficult working environment, lack of career development opportunities, poor sociocultural adaptation and inconsistency between personal values and organizational goals were the main reasons leading to the turnover of medical staff. In response to these problems, the research puts forward countermeasures and suggestions to improve the working environment, provide career development platform, strengthen social and cultural support, and promote the integration of individual values with organizational goals. The results of this study provide a new perspective for understanding and solving the problem of medical staff turnover in county public hospitals, and provide a reference for relevant policy formulation and hospital management practice.

Keywords: Developmental Psychology; The Loss of Medical Staff; County Public Hospital; Retention Strategy; Medical Human Resource Management

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

County public hospitals, as time-honored brands in China's healthcare system, have long been the backbone of primary healthcare services. However, these hospitals' established brands have not brought corresponding stability but rather exposed numerous drawbacks. Liannan County Hospital, as a typical county public hospital, boasts a rich history and profound cultural heritage. Yet, in the rapid development of modern society, it faces issues such as lack of vitality and insufficient innovation. These problems not only impair medical service quality but also lead to a high turnover rate of medical staff. Factors such as the hospital's geographical location, economic conditions, and sociocultural environment collectively influence medical staff's decisions to stay, posing significant challenges for the hospital in attracting and retaining talent.

1.2 Research Significance

Currently, China is in the depths of healthcare reform, with improving medical service quality and efficiency being top priorities. County public hospitals, as crucial medical hubs connecting urban and rural areas, have their medical staff's stability directly related to the quality and accessibility of primary healthcare services [2]. Therefore, researching and addressing the issue of medical staff turnover in county public hospitals is of great practical significance for advancing healthcare reform, optimizing medical resource allocation, and enhancing medical service levels. Furthermore, exploring the underlying causes of medical staff

turnover is of important guiding value for improving hospital management systems and enhancing employee satisfaction and loyalty.

1.3 Literature Review

Although previous studies have focused on medical staff turnover, most have concentrated on large urban hospitals, with relatively little research on county public hospitals as a specific group. Existing literature primarily approaches the impact of factors such as compensation and benefits, career development, and working environment on medical staff retention from perspectives like human resource management and organizational behavior. However, from the perspective of developmental psychology, systematic analysis of medical staff turnover in county public hospitals is still rare. Developmental psychology focuses on individuals' psychological needs and behavioral changes at different life stages, providing a new theoretical perspective for understanding medical staff's career development, job satisfaction, and willingness to stay.

1.4 Research Objectives and Questions

This study aims to explore the causes of medical staff turnover in county public hospitals from the perspective of developmental psychology and propose effective retention strategies. The research primarily addresses the following questions: What is the current situation of medical staff turnover in county public hospitals? What are the main factors influencing their retention? How do these factors interact with individuals' developmental stages and psychological needs? Based on these questions, this study adopts a qualitative research method, using in-depth interviews and case

analysis to uncover the underlying mechanisms of medical staff turnover and propose targeted retention strategies for county public hospitals, aiming to provide a reference for hospital management practice.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Overview of Developmental Psychology Theory

Developmental psychology theory emphasizes the psychological and behavioral changes of individuals at different life stages. In the professional context, this theory focuses on how healthcare professionals adjust their career goals and work motivations over time and with accumulated experience. County public hospitals, as providers of traditional medical services, often lack the necessary flexibility and innovation due to their established brands, resulting in a rigid work environment that fails to meet the needs of employees at different developmental stages. For example, one of the challenges faced by Liannan County Hospital is its aging organizational structure, which restricts the professional growth and self-actualization of young healthcare professionals, thereby affecting their willingness to stay. Developmental psychology theory provides an important perspective for understanding the career development of healthcare professionals in county public hospitals, helping to reveal how individuals interact with the organizational environment and how this interaction influences their job satisfaction and retention decisions.

2.2 Career Development Theory

Career development theory explores how individuals plan and manage their careers to achieve personal goals and career satisfaction. In county public hospitals, especially established ones like Liannan County Hospital, the lack of career development opportunities often leads healthcare professionals to feel stagnant and frustrated in their careers. This theory provides a framework to understand how healthcare professionals assess and respond to challenges in their career development by analyzing processes such as career choice, career preparation, career advancement, and career transition. Through this theoretical perspective, key career development factors that influence healthcare professionals' retention can be identified, such as opportunities for career growth, clarity of career paths, and alignment between personal career goals and organizational goals.

2.3 Psychological Contract Theory

Psychological contract theory focuses on the informal expectations and commitments between employees and employers, as well as the impact on employee behavior when these expectations are not met. In established county public hospitals like Liannan County Hospital, employees may have a traditional sense of loyalty to the hospital, expecting it to provide stable work and career development support. However, when the hospital fails to meet these expectations, employees may feel betrayed, thereby increasing their willingness to leave. This study aims to uncover how breaches in the psychological contract affect the retention decisions of healthcare professionals in county public hospitals. This theory provides an important tool for understanding and improving the relationship between healthcare professionals and the hospital.

3 Research Method

3.1 Research Design and Research Subjects

This study employs a qualitative research design to deeply explore the issue of medical staff turnover in county public hospitals. The research subjects are medical staff from Liannan County Hospital. As a typical county public hospital with a long history, this hospital faces issues such as aging facilities, rigid management mechanisms, and insufficient innovation capacity, leading to a high staff turnover rate. The research aims to understand, from the employees' perspective, their perceptions of the working environment, career development, and organizational culture, as well as how these factors influence their retention decisions.

3.2 Sample Selection and Data Collection Methods

The research samples were selected through purposeful sampling to ensure representation across different ages, genders, positions, and years of service. A total of 23 medical staff, including doctors, nurses, and administrative personnel, were selected for semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interviews focused on their work experiences, views on the hospital, and reasons for staying or leaving. The interviews were conducted using audio recordings and notetaking to ensure data integrity and accuracy.

4 Analysis of the Current Situation of Medical Staff Turnover in County Public Hospitals

4.1 Scale and Characteristics of Staff Turnover

In Liannan County Hospital, a county public hospital with a profound historical background, the issue of medical staff turnover has gradually emerged, becoming a constraint on the hospital's development. There is a saying among the staff of Liannan Hospital that it has a nickname of "Bachelor's Degree Killer," meaning it cannot retain undergraduates. The annual turnover rate of the hospital remains at 5%-8%, reflecting the unstable state of its talent pool. The turnover is concentrated mostly among young medical staff under 30 years old, a highly mobile group that typically is in the stage of career exploration and development and has more urgent needs for personal growth and career advancement. However, the hospital's traditional management model and limited resource allocation fail to provide sufficient growth space for young medical staff, leading them to seek work environments with more vitality and development potential.

4.2 Characteristic Analysis of Turnover Personnel

The characteristic analysis of turnover personnel reveals the structural issues of talent loss in Liannan County Hospital. Data shows that among the medical staff who left, those with bachelor's degrees or higher account for up to 70%, indicating that the hospital has failed to effectively retain highly educated talent. Additionally, most of the departing staff have been employed for less than five years and are in a critical period of career development. In terms of gender distribution, the male-to-female ratio is balanced, but female medical staff, under the dual pressure of family and career, are more susceptible to external environmental influences. The

turnover covers multiple positions such as clinical, nursing, and medical technology, reflecting problems at multiple levels within the hospital.

5 Analysis of Turnover Causes from the Perspective of Developmental Psychology

5.1 Career Development and Adult Development Stages

From the perspective of developmental psychology, an individual's career development is closely related to the stage characteristics of adult development. County public hospitals, such as Liannan County Hospital, as established medical institutions, should provide corresponding growth and development space for adults at different stages. However, in reality, these hospitals often struggle to meet the needs of young medical staff for professional skill enhancement and career role expansion due to rigid organizational structures. Meanwhile, for medical staff in middle age, the hospital fails to provide sufficient career stability and development space, leading them to choose to leave when facing multiple pressures from life and career. This mismatch between career development and adult development stages exacerbates the turnover of medical staff.

5.2 Matching of Work Environment and Psychological Needs

From the perspective of developmental psychology, the work environment should match individuals' psychological needs to promote their mental health and enhance job satisfaction. Medical staff at Liannan County Hospital generally feel a significant gap between the work environment and their inner needs. Young medical staff crave challenges and innovation, but the hospital's traditional work patterns and conservative management philosophy limit their creativity. For middle-aged medical staff, they pay more attention to emotional support and respect in the work environment but often experience professional fatigue and undervaluation. This mismatch between the work environment and psychological needs leads to a decline in the intrinsic motivation of medical staff, thereby increasing the turnover rate.

5.3 Gap Between Organizational Support and Personal Expectations

Organizational support theory emphasizes that when employees feel supported by the organization, they will be more loyal and willing to stay. However, at Liannan County Hospital, medical staff generally feel insufficient organizational support, with a clear gap from their personal expectations. They expect the hospital to provide more career development resources, better compensation and benefits, and more humane management measures, but these expectations often fall short in reality. This gap not only affects the work engagement and satisfaction of medical staff but also weakens their trust and sense of belonging to the hospital, prompting them to seek more supportive work environments.

5.4 Relationship Between Life Stages and Job Satisfaction

There is a close connection between an individual's life stage and job satisfaction. Medical staff at county public hospitals have different work needs and life priorities at different life stages. For example, young medical staff may focus more on career growth and work challenges, while middle-aged medical staff may prioritize

work-life balance. Liannan County Hospital fails to fully consider these differences, leading to inadequacies in meeting the specific needs of medical staff at different life stages, thereby exacerbating the turnover issue.

6 In-depth Analysis of Influencing Factors

6.1 Working Environment and Conditions

In Liannan County Hospital, a county-level public hospital with a long history, the working environment and conditions have a significant impact on the retention of medical staff. Developmental psychology points out that individuals seek a suitable working environment in their careers to meet their ever-changing psychological and physiological needs. However, the working environment of this hospital has failed to keep pace with the times, lacking modern medical facilities and comfortable working spaces. This is contrary to the expectations of medical staff for a professional growth environment, making them more inclined to seek medical institutions that can provide better working conditions and psychological support.

6.2 Career Development and Promotion Opportunities

The lack of career development and promotion opportunities is another key factor in the turnover of medical staff at Liannan County Hospital. From the perspective of developmental psychology, individuals pursue continuous growth and the realization of self-potential in their careers. Although Liannan County Hospital, as an established hospital, has a certain reputation, its rigid promotion mechanism and limited career positions restrict the personal development of medical staff. Younger medical staff, in particular, feel frustrated as they aspire to achieve career advancements through continuous learning and skill enhancement, but the hospital fails to provide sufficient development platforms and training resources.

6.3 Sociocultural Factors

Sociocultural factors play a crucial role in the turnover of medical staff at Liannan County Hospital. Developmental psychology emphasizes that individuals' career choices and job satisfaction are deeply influenced by the sociocultural background. At this hospital, medical staff experience a decline in professional status and a lack of identity compared to their urban counterparts. Furthermore, the hospital's culture fails to fully respect and integrate the cultural characteristics of the local ethnic minorities, leading some medical staff to feel culturally alienated and a lack of belonging. These sociocultural factors affect the work engagement and loyalty of medical staff, subsequently influencing their decisions to stay.

6.4 Personal Values and Expectations

The inconsistency between personal values and organizational values is another important factor leading to the turnover of medical staff at Liannan County Hospital. From the perspective of developmental psychology, individuals pursue work content and organizational environments that match their values in their careers. However, many medical staff find that their pursuit of work meaning, career achievements, and quality of life differs from the hospital's values and goals. They expect to work in an environment

that provides fair competition, continuous learning opportunities, and a good work-life balance, but the hospital's traditional management model and conservative cultural atmosphere fail to meet these expectations.

7 Countermeasures and Suggestions

7.1 Improve Working Environment and Conditions

To address the issues of the working environment and conditions at Liannan County Hospital and other established county-level public hospitals, it is recommended to first carry out modernization renovations of the infrastructure, introducing advanced medical equipment and information technology to improve work efficiency and service quality. At the same time, workflows should be optimized to reduce unnecessary administrative burdens and ensure that medical staff can focus on providing medical services. Additionally, hospital management should prioritize employees' mental health, providing stress management and psychological counseling resources, as well as creating a positive and healthy work atmosphere. These measures can enhance medical staff's job satisfaction and reduce turnover due to poor working conditions.

7.2 Enhance Career Development Opportunities

To meet the career needs of medical staff at different stages of development, Liannan County Hospital should establish a transparent and fair career development system. This includes providing customized career planning services, organizing regular professional training and skill enhancement courses, as well as providing promotion opportunities and leadership development programs for outstanding employees. The hospital can also collaborate with medical schools and research institutions to provide opportunities for academic research and exchanges for employees. Through these measures, medical staff can achieve personal career goals, enhancing their loyalty and willingness to stay at the hospital.

7.3 Strengthen Sociocultural Support

To strengthen sociocultural support, Liannan County Hospital should actively integrate into the local community, establishing good relationships with patients and residents. The hospital can enhance its image and status in the local society by hosting health education activities, community service projects, and cultural celebration events. Furthermore, the hospital should respect and

embrace multiculturalism, providing equal work opportunities and cultural adaptation support for employees from different cultural backgrounds. Through these efforts, the sense of social belonging and cultural identity of medical staff can be enhanced, thereby improving their job satisfaction and retention rate.

7.4 Promoting Consistency Between Personal Values and Organizational Goals

To foster consistency between the personal values of medical staff and the organizational goals of the hospital, Liannan County Hospital needs to clarify its mission, vision, and core values, and integrate them into daily operations and decision-making processes. The hospital should encourage employee participation in decision-making, allowing them to feel their contributions and influence on the hospital's development. At the same time, the hospital should provide a diverse range of work environments and projects, enabling employees to choose work content based on their interests and talents. Through these measures, employees can achieve self-worth, enhancing their engagement in their work and loyalty to the hospital.

8 Conclusion

This study analyzes the issue of medical staff turnover in county public hospitals from the perspective of developmental psychology, revealing the impact of four key factors—working environment, career development, sociocultural support, and consistency between personal values and organizational goals—on medical staff's willingness to stay. The study finds that older medical institutions such as Liannan County Hospital are inadequate in providing growth space, working conditions, sociocultural integration, and value realization for employees, leading to medical staff turnover. To address this challenge, it is recommended that hospitals improve infrastructure, establish career development platforms, strengthen community and cultural integration, and adjust management strategies to align with employees' personal values. These measures aim to enhance medical staff's job satisfaction and retention rates, ensuring the stability and continuity of primary medical services. Through these initiatives, a more harmonious, supportive, and motivating work environment can be created for medical staff, thereby promoting the long-term development of the hospital and the improvement of medical service quality.

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