

Determination Of The Influence Of Working Conditions On The Retention Of Registered Nurses In Public Hospitals In Kiambu County, Kenya.

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Abstract

Employee retention is a critical focus for management, requiring strategic identification of influential factors and the application of effective retention rules. This study specifically investigates the impact of motivational strategies on the retention of registered nurses in public hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya. The primary objective is to examine the relationship between working conditions, professional development, remuneration, interpersonal relationships, and the retention of registered nurses in this context. Guided by Herzberg's two-factor theory and Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the research adopts a correlational research design. The study encompasses a population of 450 registered nurses and 11 human resource officers from selected public hospitals in Kiambu County, with a sample size of 211 registered nurses and 11 human resource officers. Data collection involved questionnaires and interviews, and quantitative analysis employed descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlations, linear and stepwise regression, and Chi-square. Key findings reveal a statistically significant influence of working conditions ($p = 0.032$), remuneration ($p = 0.025$), and interpersonal relationships ($p = 0.0086$, $F = 4.430$) on the retention of registered nurses in public hospitals in Kiambu County. Thematic analysis identifies job satisfaction, workload, working hours, professional development, and remuneration as crucial factors impacting nurse retention. Recommendations include the establishment of motivational packages, incentives, and opportunities for professional development to enhance nurse retention. Additionally, strategies should be devised to address the migration trend of registered nurses seeking better opportunities elsewhere. The study emphasizes the need for human resource considerations that prioritize communication, commitment, and fulfillment of agreements to positively influence nurse attitudes, behaviors, and overall institutional performance. Lastly, there is a call for the expedited development of institutional policies to reward registered nurses and break the cycle of poverty and ill health affecting a significant portion of the Kenyan population.

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I. Introduction

Background to the Study

For the last two decades there has been a high rate of migration of registered nurses from public hospital to private, from rural to urban facilities, inter-country and resignation to other professions because of lack of motivation. Frustration leads to high migration of the nursing profession according to (Manongi, Marchant, & Bygbjerg, 2006) leads to shortage of staff, increase of overtime hours and job stress, increase burnout and long patients' waiting list. The migration of registered nurses leads to a rise on recruitment and orientation costs (Lehasa, 2008), it is essential to know the factors that affect registered nurses' motivation and take appropriate action.

A report by World Health Organisation (WHO) of 2010a, states that for quality health care outcomes to be realised a global shortage of 4 million health workers must be met. However, according to records from the (WHO and GHWA, 2014) the shortage rose to 7.2 million and is further predicted to reach 8 million by 2030 and 12.9 million by year 2035 (Misenda et al., 2017). Shortage of registered nurses at any time poses a threat to the achievement of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS). The WHO together with the World Bank did estimates to conclude that about 400 million people across the world do not receive health care services including affordable medicine, with the International Labour Organization adding that about 80% of population from 44 world countries are without any health protection depriving them of their right to health.

Motivation is a process which begins with a physiological or psychological deficiency or need that triggers behaviour or a drive that is aimed at achieving a goal or a need (Poonam-Jasleen, 2015). It refers to the elements that arouse desire and the energy in persons to act under their own volition with a motivation as an element which inspires personnel to work and maintain interests that lead them to innovation and increased

productivity. Herzberg dual factor theory classifies motivation into two categories; that which deal with the content and that which deal with the process. He further explains that the employee motivation is a function of both hygiene and motivational factors. These factors lead an employee towards achievement and recognition. The motivation of employees is both an extrinsic and intrinsic process, any lack of this can cause problems within the organisation (Azar&Shafighi, 2013). Huczynski and Buchanan (2013) argued that motivation is a result of working towards the achievement of stated goals and involves the process of attaining these goals. Furthermore, Peters (2015) says that the underlying concept of motivation is the driving energy that drives individuals to work towards the achievement of stated goals. Motivational processes are intended to drive individuals towards the achievement of these goals.

Statement of the Problem

In the past two decades, a significant challenge has emerged in the healthcare sector, with registered nurses migrating from their work stations to more promising environments. This migration has led to a shortage of healthcare workers in hospitals. According to the Kenya Healthcare Workforce report, there is a severe deficit of nurses, with a current ratio of only 8.3 practicing nurses per 10,000 population, compared to the World Health Organization's recommended ratio of 25 nurses per 10,000 patients.

Kenya faces a dual challenge of nurses migrating from rural to urban areas and from the public to private healthcare sectors. The Kenya Health Workforce Information System (KHWIS) indicates that there are 19,591 registered nurses deployed across 4,187 healthcare facilities, including private and faith-based institutions. However, the number of registered nurses working in private hospitals is not officially reported to the Ministry of Health.

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study was to give the statistical significance on the influence of motivational strategies on the retention of registered nurses that may enable policy makers; build a more accruing body of knowledge that will have the facts to enlighten them of future plans on the retention of registered nurses in the public hospitals for both theory and practice. This would enable the hospital management to be able to improve on or search for motivational strategies that will bring about answers to matters affecting registered nurses and behavioural results in regards to retention or migration.

This could also inform the management as to how to sustainably make the nurses fully motivated and engaged, to attain the established goals by having the nurses settled in their working stations as the handlers of hospital's wealth. The study allows policy makers to take institutional audit of promissory chatty acts anticipated by the registered nurses' payoffs promised in the Common Bargain Agreement had their expectations.

II. Literature Review

Working Conditions and Retention of Registered Nurses in Public Hospitals

The organizational internal work environment is an important element in the retention of registered nurses. The heavy workload and work schedule assigned to the registered nurses can negatively affect retention of quality personnel and also affect the delivery of quality care. Russo (2012) posit that work conditions affect individual nurses satisfaction such as, balancing between work and family life which includes taking care of their children and in-service training, consistent and continuous service delivery, career development and institutions culture. It has been also established that bulky duties can lead to medical misdiagnosis and be associated to nurses' stress and burnout, nurse absenteeism and high number of nurses leaving the institution (Sassa2017, Teuchi, 2010, Wiskow and Pietro, 2010). By the government improving the working environment and conditions, stress levels in nurses will reduce and they will be motivated to provide quality health care to the public according to Davey (2009). The workplace should be safe with a healthy environment that is free from any forms of emotional abuse.

It is the nurses' employers who should provide good working conditions free from harmful hazards physically, psychologically and emotionally. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration Act lays down some general rules and standards that apply to all organizations and industries such as, provision of safety gear kit and protection from toxic chemical Kroon (2013). It also sets specific industry standards, especially for fields that tend to be dangerous such as construction and fishing and laboratory services. Workers and supervisors are required to report accidents and any grievances on the working conditions to the unions and can also go to court when their grievances are not met. Ellet, Ellis, Westbrook and Dews, (2007) Loan-Clarke (2010) says that flexibility of managers plays a vital role, in the retention of health workers. In regards to moral distress, nurses continue to witness triaging of equipment to those who has a chance to live, patients dying without family able to be with them, due to visit restrictions, experience cumulative loss, suffer from exhaustion due to workload and schedule changes, struggle with the worry about their own health and exposure to family while balancing professional obligations Gardener (2004). Findings from a study done in the United Kingdom indicate that nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (UKCC) showed that registered nurses who work in the private sector

had better working conditions than those employed in the government sector. The report reveals that there is an overlap in the activities of the organisation across the two sectors which are responsible for increasing the registered nurses' workload across the two sectors (UKCC 2002) that causes a number of registered nurses to quit the profession or leave the government sector to join the private sector (Andrews 2003:404). The identification of these influences could lead to recommendations for improving the health sector. Conducive working environment includes protection from physical, psychological and emotional harm such as the right to an environment free from harassment and discrimination based on gender, religion, race and disability. Mita, Aarti and Rauveeta, (2014) defined the retention of employees as a practice adopted by institutions to sustain an efficient workforce and meet functional requirements. The National Policy-makers together with other stakeholders have a role to play of developing national plans to attract, motivate and retain the registered nurses which should be conducted through evidence-based decision making Cardy (2011). Nowadays, fair balance between work and social life is a central issue influencing registered nurses' decision to work and stay in an institution, flexible work schedules gives them an opportunity for personal and professional growth Ellen Becker (2004). Mita, Aarti & Ranveeta (2014) observed a direct relationship between employee's work-social life balance and the desire to stay or leave. In Australia a number of factors that are commonly cited on retention of employees are personal developmental opportunities, stress at work, compensation, promotion and personal career development opportunities Davies et al., (2006).

In Pakistan a study conducted by Khowaja (2005) indicated that the registered nurses from 2000 to 2004 had remained at 30% due to migration of nurses to the UK. A study by Chicago-based Career Builders (2011) in Becker's hospital noted that lack of professional advancement opportunities, lack of in-house skills training, education reimbursement, and technical training recognition for work done, posed a challenge in their stay in the hospitals. This has become a challenge for hospital administrators to motivate to retain registered nurses in the nation. Mid-Level Providers (MLPS) provide clinical care services as alternatives.

According to Ghapanchi, and Aurum, (2011) salaries, fair treatment and training opportunities fair and equal treatment influences job retention in the registered nursing profession. Kenya has an acute shortage of human resource for health due to migration of registered nurses from rural to urban health facilities, to private practice and others out migrating for better work conditions with good terms according to a report by Kenya Demographic and health survey, 2014. This study will be to determine whether the variable of the working environment can influence the retention of nurses in public hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya.

III. Research Methodology

The study adopted a Correlational research design. The research was conducted in Kiambu County, Kenya. Kiambu County is in the former Central Province of Kenya. Kiambu borders Machakos in the East, Murang'a to the North, Nyandarua to the North, Kajiado and Nairobi from the South. Kiambu County is well located bordering Nairobi the capital city of Kenya. Kiambu County is densely populated with an estimate population of 2,489,179 people. The study targets a population of 1800 registered nurses and 11 human resource officers from selected public hospitals in Kiambu County spreading across 110 health facilities. A questionnaire and an interview schedule were used for data collection. The filled questionnaires were collected by the assistant researcher and checked for completeness before they are received by the researcher to do final verification.

IV. Results and Discussions

Descriptive analysis on the influence of Working Conditions on Retention of Registered Nurses in Public Hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya

Responses were presented with statements regarding the working conditions of nurses in public hospitals of Kiambu County, Kenya. Through a Likert scale, the respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement on the statements. The findings are as shown in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Working Conditions on Retention of Nurses

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Registered nurses are not well equipped with PPE's as security measure when at workplace to handle patients	5 (1.7%)	12 (4.0%)	34 (11.5%)	151(50.6%)	96 (32.2%)
Work-life balance during pandemic has no influences on the retention of registered nurses.	36 (12.1%)	103 (34.5%)	52 (17.2%)	60 (20.1%)	48(16.1%)
Job satisfaction does not influence the retention of registered nurses.	67 (22.4%)	127 (42.5%)	24 (8.0%)	44 (14.9%)	36 (12.1%)
Workload does not influence the retention of registered nurses	72 (24.1%)	128 (43.1%)	14 (4.6%)	46 (15.5%)	38 (12.6%)

Work schedule given to registered nurses, does not give them enough time to relax.	10 (3.4%)	43 (14.4%)	29 (9.8%)	77 (25.9%)	139 (46.6%)
Working hours do not influence registered nurses' retention at their workplace.	58 (19.5%)	113 (37.9%)	31 (10.3%)	57 (19.0%)	39 (13.2%)
Registered nurses are not well secured against stressful working hours with patients.	10 (2.9%)	15 (5.2%)	15 (5.2%)	118 (39.7%)	140 (47.1%)

Source: Research Data (2022)

According to table 1 above, more than half of the respondent agreed that registered nurses are not well equipped with PPE's as security measure when at workplace to handle patients with a respondent rate of 151(50.6%), and those that strongly agreed were 96(32.2%). A small percentage strongly disagreed as the rate was 5(1.7%), 12(4.0%) disagreed and 34(11.5%) were unsure or neutral.

Work-life balance during pandemic has no influences on the retention of registered nurse, 36(12.1%) strongly disagreed with this and 103(34.5%) disagreed with this statement. 52(17.2%) were not sure of whether to agree or disagree with this, 60(20.1%) agreed with this statement while 48(16.1%) strongly agreed with this statement.

Job satisfaction does not influence the retention of registered nurses, most of the respondent disagreed with this statement since they were 127(42.5%) making the highest percentage, 67(22.4%) strongly disagreed. Respondent that neither disagreed nor agreed were 24(8.0%), those that agreed were 44(14.9%) and those that strongly agreed were 36(12.1%).

Workload does not influence the retention of registered nurses, most of the respondent disagreed with this statement as 128(43.1%) disagreed, 72(24.1%) strongly disagreed. 14(4.6%) of the respondent were neutral, 46(15.5%) respondent agreed and 38(12.6%) strongly agreed.

Work schedule given to registered nurses, does not give them enough time to relax, this is true since most of the respondent strongly agreed with a rate of 139(46.6%) and 77(25.9%) agreed. Next disagreed at a rate of 43(14.4%), followed by those respondents that were neutral at a rate of 29(9.8%) and finally those that strongly disagreed with a rate of 10(3.4%).

Working hours do not influence registered nurses' retention at their workplace, most of the respondent disagreed with a rate 113(37.9%) and 58(19.5%) strongly disagreed. 57(19.0%) agreed while 39(13.2%) strongly agreed. That respondent that neither agreed nor disagreed were 31(10.3%).

Registered nurses are not well secured against stressful working hours with patients, this is true because majority of the respondent strongly agreed at a rate of 140(47.1%) and 118(39.7%) agreed. Respondent that disagreed and those that were neutral were 15(5.2%) each and 10(2.9%) strongly disagreed.

Inferential Analysis on the Influence of Working Conditions on Retention of Registered Nurses in Public Hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya

Inferential statistics was conducted to determine the influence of Working Conditions on Retention of Registered Nurses in Public Hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study results were presented on 3 tables which composed of Model Summary, ANOVA summary and regression analysis on table 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 2: Model summary influence of Working Conditions on Retention of Registered Nurses in Public Hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.735 ^a	.540	.080	1.2475694

Source: Research Data (2022)

According to Table 2, the study found that the value of R was 0.735. This indicates a higher correlation between the retention of registered nurses in public hospitals in Kiambu County and the influence of working conditions on the retention of registered nurses in public hospitals. The value of R square was 0.54, which is greater than 0.5. This indicates goodness in model fitting.

Table 3: Two-way ANOVA summary on the influence of Working Conditions on Retention of Registered Nurses in Public Hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya

ANOVA ^a						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.138	298	1.828	1.174	.032 ^b
	Residual	7.782	5	1.556		
	Total	16.920	305			

Source: Research Data (2022)

The study found that there existed a statistical relationship influence of working condition on retention of registered nurses in public hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya since the p value obtained was 0.032 which was less than the p = 0.05 at 95% level of confidence hence we fail to reject since there was a statistical relationship. The study further achieved an F – value of 1.174 which is greater than 1 this indicates that the study yields efficient model for the analysis this was represented on table 4 above.

Table 4: Regression Analysis on the influence of Working Conditions on Retention of Registered Nurses in Public Hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya

Model		Coefficients ^a			t	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.363	2.211		1.521	.189
	Registered nurses are not well equipped with PPE's as security measure when at workplace to handle patients	1.519	1.073	.610	1.416	.216
	Work-life balance during pandemic has no influences on the retention of registered nurses.	.132	.066	.932	1.989	.103
	Job satisfaction does not influence the retention of registered nurses.	-.290	.696	-.172	-.416	.695
	Workload does not influence the retention of registered nurses	-.639	.487	-.513	-1.312	.246
	Work schedule given to registered nurses, does not give them enough time to relax.	-.540	.713	-.251	-.758	.483

Source: Research Data (2022)

A multiple linear regression was performed to determine the coefficient of the various parameters used to determine the influence of working conditions on retention of registered nurses and the following linear regression was formulated

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \beta_4x_4 + \beta_5x_5 + \varepsilon$$

$$Y = 3.363 + 1.519x_1 + 0.132x_2 - 0.290x_3 - 0.639x_4 - 0.540x_5 + \varepsilon$$

Where x1 = Registered nurses are not well equipped with PPE's as security measure when at workplace to handle patients

X2 = Work-life balance during pandemic has no influences on the retention of registered nurses.

X3 = Job satisfaction does not influence the retention of registered nurses.

X4 = Workload does not influence the retention of registered nurses

X5 = Work schedule given to registered nurses, does not give them enough time to relax.

Table 8 provides insights into the correlation between various factors and the engagement of registered nurses in handling patients during the pandemic. The study concludes that there is a positive correlation, with the highest coefficient (1.519), when registered nurses are not well-equipped with personal protective equipment (PPEs) as a security measure at the workplace. On the other hand, work-life balance during the pandemic shows no significant influence on the retention of registered nurses, indicated by a coefficient of 0.132. The remaining parameters exhibit a negative correlation, suggesting that they are not given much consideration in the influence of working conditions on the retention of registered nurses in public hospitals in Kiambu.

Thematic Analysis on the Influence of Working Conditions on Retention of Registered Nurses in Public Hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya

Thematic analysis was conducted to explore the impact of Working Conditions on the retention of registered nurses in public hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study elicited insights from respondents on aspects such as the safety perceptions of registered nurses when handling patients with airborne diseases like COVID-19. Below are some of the key comments provided by the study participants.

“The statement emphasized the necessity for specific guidelines for healthcare personnel, including registered nurses (RNs), involved in the care of patients with COVID-19. These guidelines were said to encompass the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves, gowns, and eye protection. Additionally, healthcare providers were reported to be advised to follow strict infection control measures, including thorough hand hygiene and the proper cleaning and disinfection of equipment and surfaces.”

“Furthermore, it was mentioned that hospitals and healthcare facilities were urged to implement additional measures to safeguard the well-being of RNs and other healthcare personnel. This reportedly included pre-screening patients for COVID-19 symptoms before entry, isolating individuals with suspected or confirmed cases, and providing ongoing training and education on effective infection control practices.”

“Despite the implemented measures, the risk of contracting the disease was highlighted for RNs and healthcare personnel caring for COVID-19 patients. The reported statement stressed the importance of strictly adhering to all recommended precautions to minimize the risk of infection and protect both patients and colleagues.”

“In an additional report, healthcare facilities were reported to have instituted rigorous infection control protocols to mitigate the risk of exposure to airborne diseases like COVID-19. This reportedly included isolating infected patients, utilizing personal protective equipment (PPE), and consistently practicing proper hand hygiene.”

This leads to the conclusion that a registered nurse should undergo training to effectively manage patients with infectious diseases, possessing the necessary knowledge, skills, and protective equipment to minimize the risk of contracting and spreading the disease. It's important to note that while protective measures and equipment are crucial, they cannot guarantee 100% safety. Therefore, it is imperative for nurses to adhere to infection control protocols and uphold high standards of hygiene to mitigate the risk of transmission.

Furthermore, there should be a thoughtful consideration of the work-life balance for registered nurses during the transition of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the issues addressed by the nurses include:

“In tackling this challenge, healthcare facilities and employers are urged to implement a range of measures aimed at enhancing nurses' work-life balance amid the pandemic. Proposed mechanisms include the provision of supplementary resources to support nurses' mental health, encompassing counseling services, stress management programs, and wellness activities. Additionally, some facilities have introduced flexible scheduling, affording nurses the flexibility to select shifts that align with their personal needs and family responsibilities.”

“The intensified workloads, extended hours, and heightened stress levels resulting from the demands of managing the pandemic have significantly impacted nurses' work-life balance, adversely affecting both their physical and mental well-being.”

This suggests that healthcare facilities and employers have acknowledged the significance of bolstering nurses' work-life balance amid the pandemic. They have taken steps to implement measures aimed at alleviating the impact of the pandemic on nurses' well-being.

Concerning the provision of safe environments in healthcare facilities for registered nurses handling patients before, during, and after pandemics, nurses in hospitals emphasized several key aspects, including:

“Before pandemics, healthcare facilities implement strict infection control measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, such as regular cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, proper hand hygiene, and isolation precautions for patients with contagious diseases. During pandemics, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare facilities have implemented additional infection control protocols, such as wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), screening patients for symptoms, and isolating infected patients.”

“Despite that the healthcare facilities are generally considered safe environments; there is always a risk of exposure to infectious diseases when working with patients. Registered nurses are trained to take precautions to reduce the risk of infection, such as following proper hand hygiene, using PPE, and adhering to infection control protocols.”

Overall, healthcare facilities are safe environments for registered nurses to handle patients, but it's crucial that they follow infection control protocols and take precautions to reduce the risk of exposure to infectious diseases.

The following are some of the aspects indicated on the motivation and maintain the professionalism of registered nurses;

“The hospital management should provide professional development opportunities where the healthcare organizations can offer professional development opportunities such as continuing education, workshops, and conferences to help nurses stay up-to-date on the latest research and best practices in their field.”

“They should recognize and reward excellence where by recognizing and rewarding nurses for their excellence can boost their motivation and maintain their professionalism. Employers can recognize excellence through awards, bonuses, or promotions.”

“There should be provide support and resources by providing nurses with support and resources, such as counselling services, wellness programs, and resources for work-life balance, can help them maintain their professionalism and prevent burnout.”

“there should be an encouraging open communication and feedback can help nurses feel valued and supported, which can motivate them to maintain their professionalism and provide high-quality care to their patients.”

This indicates that the motivating and maintaining the professionalism of registered nurses is essential to ensure high-quality patient care. By providing professional development opportunities, recognizing excellence, fostering teamwork, providing support and resources, and fostering a culture of communication and feedback, healthcare organizations can help maintain the professionalism of their nurses.

V. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

From the descriptive statistics, majority of the respondents (slightly more than four fifths) agreed that registered nurses are not well equipped with PPEs in the workplace. Further, it is evident from the findings that majority of the respondents, in excess of three fifths, were of the opinion that job satisfaction has an influence on retention of registered nurses. Moreover, most of the respondents agreed that workload influences the retention of registered nurses. Loan-Clarke (2010) says that flexibility of managers plays a vital role, in the retention of health workers. In regards to moral distress, nurses continue to witness triaging of equipment to those who has a chance to live, patients dying without family able to be with them, due to visit restrictions, experience cumulative loss, suffer from exhaustion due to workload and schedule changes, struggle with the worry about their own health and exposure to family while balancing professional obligations Gardener (2004). According to majority of nurses, the schedule for the workload does not offer them sufficient time for relaxation. Slightly more than half of the respondents agreed that working hours have no influence on retention of registered nurses. Also widely held by the respondents was that registered nurses are not well secured against stressful working hours with patients? The National Policy-makers together with other stakeholders have a role to play of developing national plans to attract, motivate and retain the registered nurses which should be conducted through evidence-based decision making Cardy (2011). Overall analysis showed that the working conditions in public hospitals in Kiambu County were poor.

Conclusion

The study concluded the following:

- i. That workplace conditions such as availability of protective clothing, work life balance, secure and favourable living conditions and workload have a high statistically significant influence on retention of registered nurses.
- ii. That professional development such as presence of training for intellectual growth, and promotion opportunities significantly influences retention of registered nurses.
- iii. That remuneration has a statistically significant influence on retention of registered nurses.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

- i. All Health workers attending seminars, workshops and further trainings need be facilitated.
- ii. Health care institutions need to immediately institute incentives, allowances on services and performance.
- iii. Trend of the effects of loss of health services as a result of external migration of the registered nurses
- iv. Health care institutions needs to expedite development of institutional policies on rewarding the registered nurses

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