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## Abstract

The understanding of issues related to staff retention in long-term care requires a systematic and holistic examination of the care environment. Guided by the joining of two theoretical perspectives, human ecology and community capacity, we compared workers' responses to a series of questions designed to assess individual, family and community influences on worker retention. Data were gathered from 156 direct care and support services staff members employed at a 120-bed facility. Over an 18-month period, 53% of the employees left the facility. Compared to employees who remained at the facility, those who left were significantly more likely to be younger, have a lower family income, and report feeling less prepared for the responsibilities associated with their job, less of a sense of work community connections, and less collective competence. No significant differences were found in the responses of the leavers by job position. Within positions, nurses who left reported significantly more family worries than those who stayed. CNAs who left were significantly younger than those who stayed. For support staff (i.e., dietary, housekeeping), leavers reported less work community connections, were less prepared for their jobs, and were less committed to their jobs. Employment intentions for employees who left were explained by job match, job commitment and feeling rewarded. Employment intentions for employees who stayed were explained by family support, community connections, and employment-based outcomes. Findings suggest that multiple contextual and community-oriented factors influence retention of nursing home staff, and ultimately the quality of care of older adults.

## Conceptual Framework

A blending of two perspectives in the social and behavioral sciences inform our research on nursing home retention: human ecology and community and social organization.

❖ Ecological perspectives suggest that there are multiple contexts that influence how people behave, how they think, and how they feel. Moreover, individuals participate in each of these multiple contexts.

❖ The social capital and community capacity literature discuss community with regard to physical infrastructure, social and demographic infrastructure, institutional resources, and social organization. A primary assumption we make is that various aspects of community will have a substantial influence on workers' decisions to stay in a particular environment.

## Sample & Methods

- Study Site:** 120-bed nursing home located in rural area
- Participants:** 156 direct care and support services staff members
- ~ 67% Less than 40 years old
  - ~ 85% Females
  - ~ 44% Married
  - ~ 40% Children under age 18 living in home
  - ~ 39% High School Education; 14% four-years college
  - ~ 21% Nurses; 40% CNAs; 39% Support Staff
  - ~ 53% Left Facility During the Study Period

### Self-Report Structured Questions

- Individual: Age, Gender, Health, Marital Status, Psychological Well Being
- Family: Size, Responsibilities, Supportiveness, Financial Needs
- Community (workplace): Position, Job Demands, Closeness to residents, Feeling Appreciated, Rewarded, Conflict, Affinity for Coworkers, Coworker Cohesion, Sense of Belonging, Shared Responsibility, Collective Competence
- Employment Outcomes: Competence, Commitment, Employment Intentions, Job Satisfaction

**Response Rate:** 90%

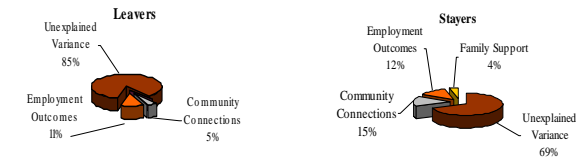
## Leavers - Position Differences

No significant differences in the responses of the leavers by job position.

Within positions, a comparison of leavers to stayers revealed:

- Nurses reported more family worries ( $M_s = 25.0$  &  $21.9$ ,  $t = 2.05$ ,  $p = .05$ )
- CNAs were younger ( $M_s = 28.1$  &  $34.4$ ,  $t = -2.07$ ,  $p = .05$ )
- Support Staff expressed
  - fewer work community connections ( $M_s = 16.5$  &  $18.3$ ,  $t = -2.24$ ,  $p = .05$ )
  - fewer job competencies ( $M_s = 8.2$  &  $9.3$ ,  $t = -2.73$ ,  $p = .01$ )
  - lower job commitment ( $M_s = 21.8$  &  $23.57$ ,  $t = -2.19$ ,  $p = .05$ )

## Employment Intentions



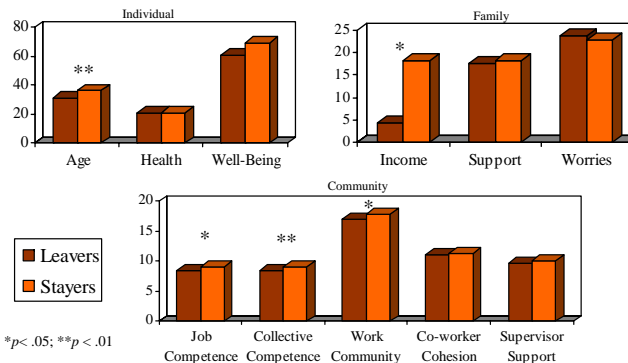
A small amount of variance in employment intention for leavers is explained primarily by how satisfied they are with their employment. In contrast, employment intention for stayers is explained by community connections, and employment outcomes, and family support.

## Conclusions

To meet the growing demand for long-term care services, it is critical not only to attract new workers committed to careers in long-term care, but also to retain existing direct care workers. Our study findings suggest:

- ❑ Multiple contextual and community oriented factors influence retention of nursing home staff.
- ❑ Community level variables may have the greatest influence on decisions to maintain employment at a facility.
- ❑ The utility of an ecological model for identifying key variables and relationships among variables that influence employee retention.

## Leavers vs. Stayers



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