

FACTORS AFFECTING NURSE TURNOVER IN
PUBLIC HOSPITALS IN MALE', MALDIVES: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY TO
UNDERSTAND WHY NURSES RESIGN

Dissertation (NUR 625)- Masters of Nursing



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Declaration

I declare that by submitting this dissertation electronically, the entirety of the work is my own and I am the sole author. I have not previously submitted this dissertation to attain any qualification or for any other purpose. Therefore, publication of this dissertation by School of Nursing, Maldives National University will not violate any third-party rights.

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Chapter 1

1.0 Introduction

Nurses leaving their jobs or leaving the profession, commonly known as turnover, is a significant issue of concern universally (Dewanto & Wardhani, 2018). Nationwide, the average registered nurse turnover rate is estimated to be 15% to 36% per year (Halter et al., 2017). Shortages of nurse's due to high turnover lead to burnout and job dissatisfaction among nurses, decreases in staff morale, a decline in consideration for patients, increased errors and patient dissatisfaction related to new inexperienced staff (Gess et al., 2017). Therefore, it is significant for health care organizations to identify the main causes of turnover and promote effective interventions to reduce nurse turnover (Yamaguchia et al., 2016).

The **purpose** of this qualitative, phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of nurses in order to identify the main factors that contributed to leaving their job in public hospitals in Male'. An advantage of identifying these contributing factors is that it could help healthcare organizations to implement successful strategies and workplace solutions in order to improve nurse retention, which will also save organizations costs on nurse recruitment, motivate present employees enhancing their job satisfaction and improve the standard of care given to patients in in public hospitals in Male'. Chapter 1 of this research study will consist of a brief background of the topic along with relevance and justification, problem statement and conceptual definitions of some of the main terms used in the study.

1.1 Background

The background will provide an overview of the research topic investigated. Background of this study consist of the main aim, objectives, research questions along with evidence-based data from various literature worldwide on nurse turnover and factors contributing to turnover.

The main **aim** of the study is to explore the major factors that contributed/influenced nurses' decisions to leave their job at public hospitals in Male'. The main **objectives** of this research are to: 1) analyze the main factors affecting nurse turnover in in public hospitals in Male' by exploring the lived experiences of nurses which contributed to the decision to leave their job and; 2) examine the

workplace factors influencing nurses' decision-making about leaving the job at in public hospitals in Male'. To achieve the aims and objectives of this study, 3 main **research questions** are formulated, 1. What are the main factors that influence nurse turnover in public hospitals in Male?'; 2. What are the lived experiences of nurses contributing to the decision of nurses to leave their job?; 3. How have workplace factors impacted nurses' decision-making about leaving the job at public hospitals in Male'?.

The 3 main research questions will guide the study, and the phenomenological approach will apprehend each nurse's unique experiences and analysis of each nurse's experiences will further provide opportunities to determine the commonalities of the lived experience influencing nurse turnover in public hospitals in Male' and a deeper and more precise understanding of the phenomenon will assist in understanding the major factors influencing nurse turnover.

Nurse turnover is identified as a global concern as the nationwide nurse turnover rate is estimated to be 19.1% (Lisa, 2020). According to a study done by Roche et al (2015) on 11 hospitals in Australia, nurse turnover rate nationally ranges between 15% to 44% which is considered to be high and is identified as a rapidly rising issue of human resources affecting the healthcare sector globally. Factors affecting nurse turnover, especially voluntary turnover has been one of the concerns worldwide and numerous international researchers seek to comprehend the main determinants of nurse turnover as well as its consequences on healthcare organizations and to nurses and patients (Hayward et al., 2016). According to Chachula et al (2015) the recent trends in healthcare indicate that 30% of new nurses choose to leave the profession within three years of employment.

Correspondingly, Wolford et al (2019) revealed that half of the nurse turnover in the US in 2016 was accounted for by new graduate nurses who leave within the first three years due to factors like workload, staff shortage and burnout. In addition, Mazurenko et al (2015) in their study reported that more than 16% of nurses resign from their job within 5 years of employment in the US. By doing systematic review on various online databases, researchers (Brook et al., 2019; Eckerson, 2018; Chachula et al., 2015) state that the nursing shortage compounds as the number of new nurse graduates choose to leave the workforce within the first three years is increasing, mostly due to organizational factors such as lack of management support, lack of recognition and low pay.

Researches done worldwide have acknowledged alarmingly high nurse turnover especially in public hospitals and has indicated it as a significant healthcare issue (Mar´c et al., 2018; Adams et al., 2019; Hung & Lam, 2020). According to a research study done by Hung & Lam (2020) on 1271 nurses of 10 public hospitals in Hong Kong, nurse turnover was recognized as a substantial issue affecting the quality of health service provided by the hospital. Upon investigation, it was identified that the nurses left their job at the public hospital and changed to a private hospital mostly due to organizational factors such as high workload, inadequate staffing, lack of management support and unsatisfactory interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, the main hospital authority of Hong Kong which manages all the public hospitals in Hong Kong (total 43 hospitals) has reported that a total of 1400 nurses resigned from public hospitals in the year 2018 and that they are facing a lot of challenges such as increased organizational costs on nurse recruitment, missed care and incidents of errors related to patient care due to insufficient nurses (Cheung, 2019). These issues caused due to increased nurse turnover and inadequate staff nurses leads hospitals to get temporary staff to fill the gap (Faller et al., 2017).

Temporary nurses account for nearly 30% of the nursing workforce in the US, and recruitment of part-time nurses and temporary travel nurses to fill in the turnover gap leads to decreased productivity, ineffective teamwork and interpersonal relationships between permanent and temporary nurses (Faller et al., 2017). Similarly, in the public hospitals of Male’, Maldives, wage nurses are now being recruited as temporary staff to fill the workforce needs. According to a qualitative, descriptive study done by Taylor & Taylor (2017) on two inpatient hospital units in the Northeastern United States, recruitment of part-time or wage nurses was identified as a factor causing lack of teamwork and harmony among nurses, dissatisfaction, workplace tension and incivility among team members which often lead to aggressive behavior and interprofessional bullying.

Nurses leave the job at public hospitals due to numerous reasons (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015). Research studies identified factors such as limited opportunities for continuing education and professional development, lack of good interpersonal relationships among co-workers and managers, limited job autonomy and unrealistic work demands made of nurses along with insalubrious work environment as the most common factors contributing to turnover in the public hospitals (Black, 2015; Nowrouzi et al., 2016; Bruyneel et al., 2017). Correspondingly, stressful

working environment, job dissatisfaction and impaired physical well-being play a major role in nurse turnover (Rushton et al., 2015; Kenny et al., 2016; Masters & Liu, 2016; Hashish, 2017). Similarly, many researches have recognized inadequate work-family balance as the most common reason for turnover (Chen et al, 2015; Robson & Robson, 2015; Yamaguchi et al, 2016), whereas Masters & Liu (2016) identified inadequate management support as the main reason for nurse turnover.

Nevertheless, according to a study done by Chen (2015), there is limited knowledge on nurse's intention to stay in a workplace and the factors influencing nurse retention. Similarly, Dewanto & Wardhani (2018) in their study identified that notwithstanding the certain high rate of nurse turnover universally, only a very limited data has been published regarding the causes/factors influencing nurse turnover. A study about nurse turnover is relevant as the national population grows and the worldwide nursing shortage continues (Ryan et al., 2017).

1.2 Relevance and justification

Turnover amongst nurses has been globally identified as a major issue in the healthcare system (Yamaguchia et al., 2016). Likewise, nurse turnover is a significant issue hindering quality health service delivery in the Maldives as well (World Health Organization (WHO), 2018). Statistics published by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in 2018 indicates that by March 2018, 2,859 nurses work in the Maldives. WHO reports that 55% of nurses in the Maldives are expatriates, which translates to a heavy dependency on expatriates to fill the gap in service delivery and nurse turnover negatively affects consistency and apt standard of care in the Maldives (Maldives Partnership Forum, 2019). Furthermore, issue of nurse turnover is identified in Maldives health research priority areas for the year 2019 (Ministry of Health, 2019). Despite having nurse staff shortage in the public hospitals of Male', there is no published data of the rate of nurse turnover, the main factors influencing nurse turnover in the Maldives and the solutions to this issue.

By identifying the major reasons why nurses leave their job, nurse turnover rates could be reduced, and costs could be saved in recruitment of nurses. This could improve patient outcomes and improve overall satisfaction of the nurses as well as the patients. Hence, patients, nurses, community, health care organizations (specifically public hospitals in Male') and institutes will potentially benefit from the knowledge derived from this research study. The factors contributing

to nurse's turnover, identified from this research can be used by other healthcare organizations in the Maldives to develop strategies to avert the contributing factors, further promoting nurse retention.

1.3 Problem statement

The high rate of nurse turnover and poor retention of nurses in public hospitals globally is acknowledged as a significant crisis that requires instantaneous attention (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015). Furthermore, due to nurse turnover, maintaining a safe nurse-to-patient ratio by retaining experienced nurses has become more of a struggle for the hospitals (Armmer, 2017). A study by Munnangi et al (2018) identified that when the number of experienced nurses in the workplace are less, it contributed to job stress, fatigue, incivility to the nurses in the workplace and nurse burnout. Nurse turnover undesirably affects healthcare organizations by increasing recruitment and training cost, as well as affecting the quality of health service delivery. Likewise, nurse turnover is a key issue hindering quality care and causing dissatisfaction in nurses, patients as well as overall community (Havaei et al., 2016).

Even though these studies done to identify nurse turnover rate and factors contributing to turnover provides a valuable insight, the exact factors influencing nurse turnover universally is not identified yet as many of the research findings are not congruent with one another (Boulton & Beer, 2018). Therefore, further research related to nurse turnover and retention is necessary to determine the current trends and issues in healthcare organizations which plays a role in nurse turnover (Sinoski, 2020). Likewise, the main factors inducing nurse turnover in public hospitals of Male' is not yet identified and need further research (Ministry of Health, 2019).

Male' is the capital city of Maldives, which results in public hospitals being overburdened with the increasing numbers of patients under its care. The government hospital in Male' is facing a lot of challenges due to lack of nurses and heavy workload, which decreases the nursing performance, quality of care as well as the overall organizational performance (Jeeza et al., 2015). Despite public hospitals in Male' having unremitting nurse shortage and recruiting large numbers of nurses from foreign countries, the actual rate of nurse turnover, the causes and solutions to this issue remain unclear and needs further investigation. Hence, a study to investigate the factors

causing nursing turnover in public hospitals in Male' is deemed necessary to expand the knowledge of factors that hinders and promotes nurse retention.

1.4 Conceptual and operational definitions

In this study, the following terms will be used as defined in this section.

- **Factors:** Factors are defined as any circumstances or facts that contribute towards a result (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015). In this research study, “factors” refer to the contributing factors which influences nurse turnover such as Organizational factors, Staff developmental factors, Reward factors and Personal factors.
- **Turnover:** It is the rate at which employees leave the workforce and are replaced with new staff members in an organization (Halter et al., 2017).
- **Involuntary turnover:** It is a process where the employee leaves the organization based on decisions beyond the individual’s control. Some of the reasons for involuntary turnover are family reasons and ill health (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015).
- **Voluntary turnover:** It is a process where the individual nurse independently decides to move out of the organization. According to Herzberg’s Theory, voluntary turnover can usually be due to intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The extrinsic factors are conditions surrounding the job such as dissatisfaction with salary and dissatisfaction with organization and administration policies. Intrinsic factors are relating directly to the job such as nurses’ dissatisfaction, irregular promotions, lack of recognition by doctors and lack of management support (Ann et al., 2018).
- **Nursing shortage:** Nursing shortage can be defined as having an insufficient workforce of qualified nurses when the increased demand for nurses exceeds the available supply in healthcare (Raju, 2017).
- **Nurse retention:** Nurse retention mainly emphasize on promoting strategies to motivate nurses to stay in the workplace without leaving their job (Raju, 2017).

Chapter 2

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The literature review of this study comprises of a brief introduction about nurse turnover, and factors affecting turnover worldwide as well as in Maldives. Nurse turnover for this study is referred to as nurses leaving their job for another nursing or non-nursing job at another organization (Halter et al., 2017). Nurses are one of the most vital resources to the health-care industry, however, high turnover of nurses has become a main issue of concern for all health care systems worldwide with at least 57 countries reporting critical workforce shortages (Walani, 2015). According to Pagilagan (2017) more than 40% of nurses are unsatisfied with their job and approximately 21% of them leave their job voluntarily. Therefore, to mitigate nurse turnover, it is crucial to investigate the major factors contributing to nurse's turnover (Chen, 2015).

According to a study done by Collini et al (2015) across ten hospitals in the USA, the average rate of nurse turnover in healthcare industry between the year 2010 and 2015 is 14% and is an issue of concern as healthcare industries incur financial losses due to turnover. Dempsey & Reilly (2016) reinforces this finding as in their research which was done on hospitals of United States it was identified that average hospitals of US suffer financial losses up to \$8,000,000 yearly due to nurse turnover. The healthcare industry is extremely labor intensive and requires a lot of nursing personnel to promote patient care. Hence, it is important for healthcare organizations to promote strategies to retain nurses to reduce the financial losses incurred by turnover (Nayak et al., 2016).

2.2 Nurse Turnover

Nurse turnover is most commonly defined as nurses leaving their employment or profession (Halter et al., 2017). Nurse turnover can impact an organization negatively as well as positively. If skilled and experienced nurses leave an organization leading to increased organizational recruitment/training cost, decreased performance and quality of care, then the nurse turnover is negatively affecting the organization. However, if a poor performing nurse is replaced by a better

performing nurse leading to increased productivity and quality of care, then the organization is positively affected by nurse turnover (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015).

From a global perspective, nurse turnover rates are reported at about 20% in Canada, 12% to 21% in European and 10% in England (Nejati et al., 2016). Moreover, retention of nurses is recognized as a worldwide priority by the World Health Organization (2011), as several countries face a shortage of nursing staffs (Alotaibi et al., 2016).

Numerous literatures were reviewed on nurse turnover and intentions of nurses leaving their employment and a conceptual model (Figure 1) was developed by modifying the diagrammatical representation of the conceptual framework by Momanyi & Kaimenyi (2015).

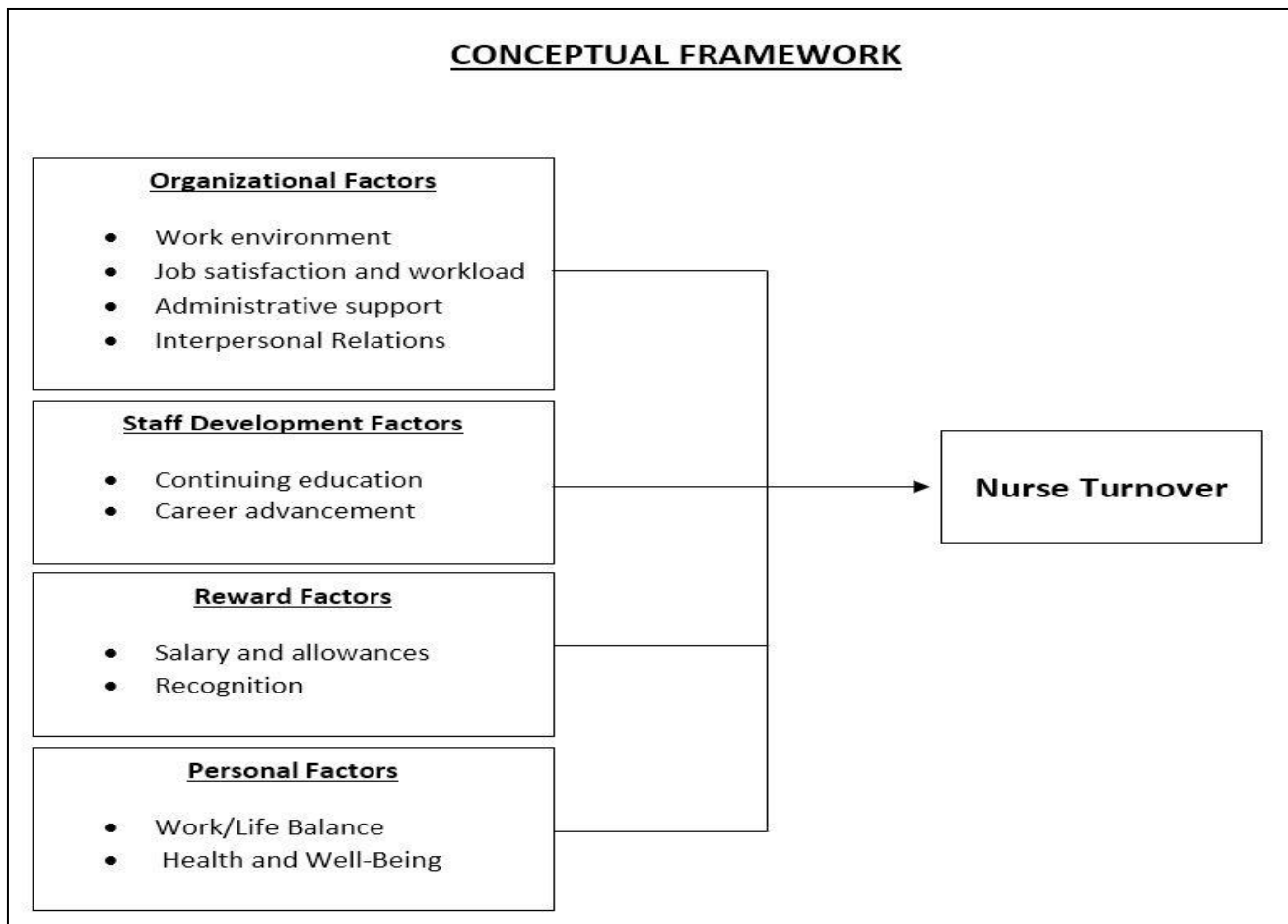


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2.3 Factors Causing Nursing Turnover

Factors causing nurse turnover are the reasons why nurses intend to leave their job. Nurses leave their job due to various reasons such as organizational factors, staff development factors, reward or compensation practices and personal factors (Yang et al., 2017). Nurses' intentions to leave the job are multifactorial and they may leave due to several reasons such as lack of recognition/promotion, low pay, duty scheduling and timing, lack of opportunity for staff development and difficulties posed by family responsibilities (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015).

According to Han et al (2015) lack of support from peers and superiors and job dissatisfaction are the main reasons why nurses leave their employment. In contrast, Boamah & Laschinger (2016) in their studies recognized burnout and work-life interference as the main factor leading to nurse turnover. Likewise, Yang et al (2017) identified limited career advancement opportunities, inadequate salary and availability of plentiful other career opportunities as the common factors influencing nurse turnover.

Researches revealed that often nurses leave their job due to work related factors such as limited education and career advancement opportunities, job dissatisfaction, inadequate job autonomy at work environment and lack of good workplace relationships contributing to turnover in public hospitals (Black, 2015; Rushton et al., 2015; Kenny et al., 2016). While many of the research studies acknowledged work-related factors as the major contributors influencing nurse turnover, Dubey et al (2016) on the other hand states that both external and personal factors such as age, education level, work-life balance and attitude plays an equal role as work-related factors like job satisfaction, pay level and organizational commitment.

According to WHO (2018) shortage of nurses, high nurse turnover and overdependence on expatriate nurses is identified as significant healthcare issues in Maldives. Some of the reasons for nurse turnover in Maldives identified by WHO (2018) were ineffective management, lack of opportunities to continue education, lack of career and professional development opportunities. However, the main factors influencing nurse turnover in the Maldives is not yet identified and need further research. Therefore, by comprising the information regarding factors affecting nurse turnover worldwide and in Maldives, main 4 factors (organizational, staff development, reward and personal factors) were identified and discussed next in the literature review.

2.3.1 Organizational Factors

i. Work environment

From the recent studies it is found that a positive work environment can contribute to fewer medical errors, better patient outcomes and nurse's satisfaction at work (Murray et al., 2019). Likewise, Wang et al (2015) stated that work environment is one of the main factors that can directly associate with nurse turnover rate. Some of the work environment factors that can affect nurse turnover includes; lack of professionalism at workplace, absence or improper conflict resolving framework, inadequate dedication and support from colleague nurses and other healthcare workers (Black, 2015).

In contrast, Nei et al (2015) acknowledged that job characteristics such as work schedule, flexibility and autonomy at workplace influences nurse turnover rate mostly. Rai et al (2017) supports this statement as in their study they highlight that the relationship between work engagement and job characteristics plays a major role in nurse turnover. According to Rai et al (2017) factors related to job characteristics influences the level of work engagement among nurses and contributes to their decision making to leave or stay at the job.

On the other hand, according to Belaid et al (2017), poor infrastructure, insufficient stock, lack of support from management and stressful work environment are the factors reported by nurses as the major factors affecting nurse turnover. In order to reduce nurse turnover related to work environment, it is vital to provide a supportive work environment along with flexible work schedule/timings and adequate administrative support that could enhance nurse's satisfaction at their work environment (Nei et al., 2015).

ii. Job satisfaction and workload

Job satisfaction and burnout due to high workload are identified as the major contributing factors for nurses to leave their job (Nagaya, 2018). High workload and stressful work environment can lead to job dissatisfaction, which increases the nurses desire to leave the job and seek alternative employment. Allan et al (2016) conducted research on job satisfaction and turnover intentions and concluded that job satisfaction has a potential influence in turnover intentions. Later in a similar

study done by Ferreira et al (2017) to explore the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions also concluded that job satisfaction is a factor affecting turnover intention. Similar results have been highlighted in some other studies as well (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015; Valizadeh et al., 2016; Rai et al., 2017).

Dissatisfaction of the work may result from interpersonal conflicts, inadequate support and help from colleague nurses and management, inadequate career advancement opportunities, low pay and lack of recognition (Nagaya, 2018). High workload may result due to staff shortage, inappropriate nurse: patient ratio and might lead to burnout in nurses. Likewise, a lack of cooperation among nurses and other health care professionals within the work environments can contribute to burnout and job dissatisfaction, which further impact to nurse turnover (Murray et al., 2019).

According to a study done by Sharma and Dhar (2016) on 349 nurses working in public hospitals of India, job satisfaction and burnout directly affects the nurse's commitment towards the job and influenced turnover. Therefore, to reduce nurse turnover due to high work load and job dissatisfaction, proper measures should be taken by the hospital management. Nurses should be valued, and they should know that their contributions are essential to the success of the organization. Nurses should be provided with a supportive and fair work environment which would further enhance mental and physical satisfaction of the nurses and reduce nurse turnover (Sharma & Dhar, 2016). Workload can also be reduced by eliminating unnecessary jobs and recruitment of more nurses can decrease burnout in nurses further reducing nurse turnover (Sharma & Dhar, 2016).

iii. Administrative support

The amount of support nurses receive from nursing administration may negate the nurse's intention to leave the organization (Goswami et al., 2016). Hauff & Richter (2015) in their research study stated that the level of support and connection between managers and nurses can enhance job satisfaction further improving the commitment of the nurses towards the organization. Nevertheless, nurses are likely to leave the job in the absence of adequate support from top management (Hauff & Richter, 2015). Allen et al (2016) further strengthens this statement as they

state that supportive managers facilitate high motivation and work engagement of the nurses which develops a sense of belongingness and assurance for the nurses with the work and organization.

According to a study done by Feather et al (2015) most of the nurse's desire respect from their managers and they expect to be involved in communication process and decision-making process of patient-care. Nurses want their ideas and opinions to be considered when formulating organization protocols, policies and while implementing the changes to the specific ward or unit. If nurses realize that they get adequate administrative support and are involved in decision making processes, nurses will feel that their opinions are valued in the organization and they will be more committed towards the organization further promoting nurse retention (Feather et al., 2015).

Furthermore, lack of support from managers might lead to demotivation of the nursing staffs. If managers do not listen to nurses' concerns and problems, nurses will be dissatisfied with their job and may seek employment with another organization. Poor communication from managers, coworkers and other healthcare professionals can lead to discontent of nurses further leading to nurse turnover. In a similar study, it is identified that emotional, moral and instrumental support (providing necessary resources) from nurse managers, other healthcare workers and hospital management correlate positively with job satisfaction and organizational commitment of nurses (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015).

iv. Interpersonal Relations

For an organization to improve their quality of care and to improve workers commitment towards the organization, it is necessary for all the workers of the organization to promote good interpersonal relationship with each other (Collini et al., 2015). Correspondingly, nurses and other healthcare professionals should maintain a therapeutic interpersonal relationship with each other so that they will be more satisfied and happier to work at the hospital environment. If the relationship among the co-workers is good, nurses and other healthcare professionals tend to enjoy their work and have a higher level of jobs satisfaction (Oktizulvia et al., 2017).

Good interpersonal relationship can promote a positive working environment further making the work less stressful. This can also motivate the nurses and improve their performance and standard of care (Collini et al., 2015). Similarly, Allan et al (2016) in their study highlighted

that effective interpersonal relationship between co-workers and supervisors can reduce nurse's burnout and can decrease nurse intention to quit the work. Organizational climate that encourages good interpersonal relationship and peer support can promote positive job and organizational attitudes. It is also identified that co-worker's cooperation and friendliness were found to explain the variation in nurse turnover intentions (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015).

2.3.2 Staff Development factors

i. Continuing Education

In a profession like nursing, where vast amount of information is required, and different new knowledge and practices are adapted, continuing education is vital. Nursing care is progressively improving and changing along with the advancement in healthcare sectors. Hence, nurses need to continue their education and keep their knowledge up to date. According to Price & Reichert (2017) nurses expect the healthcare organization to provide adequate opportunities for continuing education and develop knowledge to keep up to date with the best practices. And if fair opportunities are not given to nurses to continue education, nurses often leave the job and seek employment at another healthcare organization where the needs and expectation of the nurses are met (Price & Reichert, 2017). Likewise, DiMattio & Spegman (2019) in their study has also found out that nurses expect their work environments to supply them with adequate opportunities for staff development such as education, training and workshops.

Education and development programs can affect nurse's work and behavior by directly improving their skills further improving the quality of patient care. Continuing education will promote the expansion of nurse's knowledge, skills and attitudes for the enhancement of nursing practice (Chamanga et al., 2020). Nurses can continue their education by participating in nursing related courses, workshops, trainings and in-service classes arranged by the organization. Another benefit from continuing education is that it increases nurse's self-efficacy. For nurses to be able to take charge in their work environment, ongoing education and development should be available (Chamanga et al., 2020). A study done in the Southport Institute, identified that if an organization have an educational program in place for its personnel, the more likely it was to experience lower turnover and improved morale (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015). Similarly, Maurits et al (2015) in

their study claims that resignations can increase if nurses are not trained properly and if they don't get equal opportunities to continue their education.

ii. Career Advancement

Limited opportunities for career advancement have been reported to impact nurses' attitudes and behaviors. Nurses who perceived that they have been treated fairly and equal opportunities for career development are given for all staffs exhibited higher job affection, displayed greater organizational commitment, and experienced lower turnover (Yang et al., 2015). It is found that promotion opportunities that promote career advancement and impartial reward system have significant effects on nurse turnover rate (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015). Promotional chances and other favorable rewards (e.g., improved income, status, award, allowance) foster nurse's commitment and improves nurse retention (Hoeve et al., 2019).

Nurses want to work in organizations that offer opportunities for growth and advancement. Hung & Lam (2020) reported that the strongest organizational factors related to nurse turnover rates were low motivation and dissatisfaction due to lack of internal promotion and career advancement opportunity. As per the recent Qualitative Descriptive study done by Hung & Lam (2020) on a total of 18 registered nurses who had resigned from public hospitals in Hong Kong, 13 nurses highly valued career development opportunities and stated that limited self and career development opportunities at their work as demotivated them to continue their job as a nurse in public hospital.

2.3.3 Reward or Compensation Practices

i. Salary and allowances

The pay and benefits provided by a firm are extremely important to both new and existing employees (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015). The compensation received from work is a major reason why most people seek employment and the same goes for nursing staff in the health industry. The compensation provides the staff with sustenance and allows them to satisfy their materialistic and recreational needs as well as serves their ego and self-esteem needs. According to a study done in England to identify factors affecting nurse turnover, 67% (n=52) of study participants reported that

inadequate salary or remuneration system is one of the factors that influences why nurses leave the public hospitals and change to private hospitals (Washeya, 2018).

Good pay can be the most significant motivation factor which encourages nurses to stay at job and pay dissatisfaction and employees perception on practices of inequitable compensation levels can be used to predict absenteeism and turnover in an organization (Alhamwan et al., 2015). Similarly, Wu et al (2018) in their study highlighted that despite heavy workloads nurses are more willing to remain in their jobs and perform their duties if a good salary and allowance are provided. Alhamwan et al (2015) support this statement as in their study, good compensation and allowance system of the healthcare organization is emphasized to be the most important factor for nurse retention in public hospitals.

In contrast, studies have also found that a good salary does not necessarily imply staff retention, but it does correlate with other conditions of service (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015). Employees will stay in an organization as long as their self-interests are met, and good salaries can offer such motives, but it cannot motivate an employee to stay with a firm by itself (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015). Likewise, some nurses felt their low pay was allayed by good working conditions and for some nurses the salary does not affect the work or influence the decision of leaving the job (Halcomb & Ashley, 2016).

ii. Recognition/Rewards

Reduced recognition or no rewards in an organization may cause dissatisfaction among the employees further contributing to turnover (Aliliu et al., 2016). In hospital environment, if nurses do not receive any recognition or rewards, they might feel they are not appreciated by the organization and they might get frustrated and disinterested by the job (Aliliu et al., 2016). If nurses perceive that their hard work and efforts are being appreciated by the organization, and if nurses are provided with appropriate rewards, they will be motivated and more interested in doing their job. Therefore, organizations should have proper recognition and reward practices and should provide more realistic expectations (Allan et al., 2016).

Moreover, rewards and recognition can make nurses feel contented and this may lead to high performance of nurses further improving patient care. Rubel & Kee (2015) in their study stated

that if the reward and recognition system is perceived as being equitable, the organization commitment of the nurses tends to increase; and lack of recognition and lack of reward systems contributes to employee turnover in an organization. In a similar study it was found that lack of recognition by the nurse managers is one of the main reasons for nurse turnover and most of the nurses were dissatisfied with the reward system of the organization (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015).

To satisfy the need for high reputation and prestige from others, nurses needed more recognition and if the organization and managers appreciate the work of nurses and provide adequate gratitude, acknowledgement and respect, nurse's morale and self-esteem tend to increase (Maurits et al., 2015). Nurses can be recognized and rewarded in several ways. For example, giving yearly bonus, having a formal recognition program like 'employ of the month award' and praising can make nurses build high self-esteem and improve the quality of care they give.

According to a recent study done by Hung & Lam (2020) 17 out of 18 nurses who had resigned from public hospitals in Hong Kong, agreed that reward and recognition is a strong motivator which is necessary for nurse retention, nevertheless they were not provided with adequate recognition and rewards at their organization which highly contributed to their decision of leaving the job. In addition, 7 of the study participants stated that despite their commitment and loyalty towards the organization, the possibility of getting any type of reward or recognition was quite low as they gave an example of a nurse who worked in that hospital for 11 years and resigned did not get any reward or recognition from the organization.

Similarly, Aliliu et al (2016) in their research study found that many nurses feel neglected and demotivated as the organization lack adequate recognition and rewards system and it significantly influences nurses' intention to leave their job. Therefore, adequate nurses' recognition and reward system appeared to be inevitable to retain nurses within the healthcare organization without a voluntary turnover (Allan et al., 2016).

2.3.4 Personal Factors

i. Work/Life Balance

In literature, the word 'balance' is interrelated with enhancement and conflict at the job and personal life (Liu et al., 2019). Nurse's ability to balance both the work and life domains can impact

on nurse's intention to leave the job (Raza et al., 2018). Balancing work and life require management of personal life and work by the nurse in the desired/appropriate proportion. If the nurse does not get adequate support from family, and if issues/problems are going on in private life, nurse's ability to focus on the work is reduced (Yang et al., 2017). An imbalance of work and private life may lead to stress, dissatisfaction and poor performance, further contributing to the nurse's intention to leave the job (Boamah & Lashchinger, 2016).

According to Chamanga et al (2020) nurses are found to be discontented with their work-life balance as they face a lot of challenges in meeting family and work demands which at last leads to nurse turnover due to emotional exhaustion and inability to cope with the work-life imbalance. Hai-Xia et al (2015) supports this statement as in their study they state that often due to high family responsibilities and workload at home (personal life), nurses feel mentally exhausted which makes them want to leave their job as they face difficulties in managing both life and work.

Many nurses with work-life issues work under pressure and can't concentrate properly at work leading to compromised patient care, decreased morale and exhaustion, further leading to nurse turnover (Fazio, et al., 2017). Therefore, maintaining an adequate balance between work and life is acknowledged as one of the suitable practices that can be adopted to decrease nurse turnover (Raza et al., 2018). Similarly, health and well-being of nurses has become a major point of interest as many nurses feel tired, stressed and burnout by their work and work environment leading to a high nurse turnover rate.

ii. Health and Well-Being:

Nurses' physical, mental and general health can overall impact on the nurse's intention to leave their employment (Takase et al., 2016). In an analysis of newly registered nurses, individual health related factors such as psychological distress due to stressful working environment and cumulative fatigue to heavy workload related to staff shortage are recognized as the most common intention for nurses to leave their profession (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015). When the overall health and wellbeing of nurses are impaired, it effects the quality of care and causes dissatisfaction leading to inadequate organizational commitment of nurses (Gragano et al., 2020).

Health and wellbeing factors play a major role in nurse turnover. It has been strongly suggested that improving the health and well-being of nursing staffs could improve standard of patient care and enhance better patient outcome further reducing the rate of nurse turnover (Gragnano et al., 2020). Furthermore, according to a study done by Heijden et al (2019) it was identified that nurses identified their work to be physically demanding and complains of impaired physical health due to heavy workload, bending, heavy lifting and frequent transferring of patients. Many nurses are unable to cope with the physical demands of the job which leads to nurses leaving the job and seeking alternative job (Heijden et al., 2019).

In a similar study done by Hayward et al (2016) have recognized many health-related problems faced by nurses due to heavy workload and physical demands of the job such as anxiety, cardiovascular symptoms, skin conditions and musculoskeletal pain/injuries, which contributes to nurse turnover. Moreover, not only physical health, mental well-being is acknowledged to be equally important by nurses and many nurses complains that due to working conditions their psychological wellbeing is impaired (Pélissier et al., 2018). For example, nurses have identified working on shift duties, especially night shifts have caused health issues such as exhaustion, digestive problems, fatigue, insomnia and other sleeping disorders which significantly influences nurse's decision to leave their job (Hayward et al., 2016).

Many nurses consider the impact of the job-related factors on their personal health and well-being, and often the health deterioration and physical symptoms due to work factors on nurses' decision of staying or leaving the job (Takase et al., 2016). Therefore, creating a therapeutic work environment where the physical and psychological health of the nurses are taken care of is imperative to reduce nurse turnover in public hospitals (Pélissier et al., 2018).

The literature review mainly discussed regarding the definition of nurse turnover, common factors affecting turnover, and comprehensive description of the main 4 factors (organizational, staff development, reward and personal factors) which were identified from various literatures worldwide and in Maldives. The following chapter of this research will be looking at the methodology used in this study.

Chapter 3

3.0 Methodology

The methodology of this research consists of the research design, sample recruitment, population, inclusion and exclusion criteria, data collection, a pilot study, data analysis, rigor and interpretation, trustworthiness of the data using Lincoln and Guba's Framework, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research design:

Qualitative research methods are exploratory and helps to determine how individuals experience a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Descriptive phenomenology is the research design that was used for this study. Phenomenology provides significant information to emphasize on the perceptions of the research participants and enhances the understanding of their lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Descriptive phenomenology as a qualitative inquiry helped to gather relevant narrative data from study participants point of view which promoted person-centered approach, further enhancing in-depth understanding of the lived experience of the participants that contributed to the decision to leave their job.

Utilization of descriptive phenomenological design was advantageous for this study as the researcher aims to explore the major factors that contributed/influenced nurses' decisions to leave their job at public hospitals in Male', and descriptive phenomenology is an appropriate method of inquiry to and gain a better understanding and insight on the perspectives and actions of the study participants and discover the connotation and significance of the phenomena by reflecting on the data collected (Burns et al., 2017; Astroth & Chung, 2018). Additionally, by using descriptive phenomenology, answers were obtained for the research questions and objectives as it helped to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of nurses contributing to the decision to leave their job at public hospitals in Male', while identifying the main factors affecting nurse turnover as well as the workplace factors influencing nurses to leave their job at public hospitals in Male' (Holloway & Galvin, 2017).

3.2 Sampling

3.2.1 Population:

A target population is a group of individuals with similar characteristics, from which samples are taken for measurement (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015). Target population is identified as the intended audience for particular research. The target population for this study consists of local nurses who worked in various wards/departments of public hospitals in Male' for more than 1 year and left their work from January 2019 to December 2020 (2 years). As the inclusion criteria, nurses who resigned in both 2019 and 2020 is selected because a new virus called SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19 was reported in Maldives on 7th March 2020 and this worldwide healthcare crisis significantly affected the healthcare system of Maldives (Hussain et al., 2020).

Nurses working in the public hospitals in Male' faced major challenges due to COVID outbreak such as psychological distress, high workload and burnout, leading to nurse turnover (Hassan, 2020). Furthermore, due to long working hours, impaired work-life balance, increased risk and exposure to the virus, bullying and harassment, eviction from residence due to fear in public and anxiety due to lack of knowledge regarding the new virus caused many nurses to leave their jobs at public hospitals (Koh, 2020). Therefore, by including nurses who resigned in both 2019 and 2020 gave a fair chance to explore the most recent factors contributing to nurse turnover as well as pre and post pandemic factors affecting nurse turnover in public hospitals of Male'. Local registered nurses of all age and gender were included in the target population to ensure fair sample selection including all the demographic categories.

3.2.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria for this study consists of the nurses who worked for more than 1 year in public hospitals in Male' and resigned in the year 2019 and 2020. Exclusion criteria includes the nurses who have less than 1 year of work experience in public hospitals in Male'. This would ensure that all the study participants have a minimum of 1-year of work experience at public hospitals in Male', thus, providing more accurate factors and issues regarding the nurse turnover.

3.2.3 Participant recruitment and Sample

For a phenomenological study there is no fixed ideal sample size, however, Creswell suggests three to ten participants and indicates that an increase in sample size will improve reliability (Burns et al., 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, a **sample size of 8** participants (4 participants who resigned in 2019 and 4 participants who resigned in 2020) was used for this study as it can be adequate to reach data saturation. Samples were selected using **convenience snowball sampling method** as it can aid in identifying participants for the research who have the experience and knowledge and are willing to share their experiences which contributed to the decision to leave their job. All of the 8 study participants were contacted by the researcher via phone call and email to request participation and to provide necessary information regarding the research (*Appendix 4*) and to obtain consent (*Appendix 5*).

3.3 Data collection

The data collection method used for this study was via face-to-face semi-structured interviews as this allowed the researcher to gather in-depth information including each participants perception and experiences at public hospitals in Male' which influenced them to leave their job. If face-to-face interviews were not possible, telephone interviews were to be conducted. The interviews with the participants would take approximately 15 to 30 minutes and was conducted in a setting which was free from distraction. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted on a convenient date, time and venue preferred by participants as it would enable great flexibility and helps to build a good rapport with the participants while uncovering their honest views and concerns (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

An interview guide (*Appendix 3*) was used to collect data and each participant was asked 5 main open-ended questions and 6 probing questions which allowed them to discuss their personal experiences and detail elaboration of the factors contributing to resignation from public hospitals in Male'. Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step process of inductive reduction of data was used as a guide to formulate the interview guide as well as for data analysis for this thesis. Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step process of inductive reduction of data are most widely used in qualitative researches to interpret data and to identify the emergent themes from the collected data. They provide seven simple steps

for identifying, analyzing, and reporting qualitative data using thematic analysis. In view of the seven steps of Colaizzi's (1978) thematic analysis, interview questions were formulated, so that the data analysis process can be easier and more associated with the data collection process.

Each of the interview questions were aligned with the research objectives and purpose. Semi-structured interviews were used for this study which enabled great flexibility and helps to build a good rapport with the participants while uncovering their honest views, concerns and further exploring the meaning of their responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher asked the same 5 questions in the exact order to all participants, in order to collect data in a similar manner and to guide the interview session further enabling descriptive narrative from the study participants. For more clarification, additional probing questions were asked to participants according to their responses.

Data collection process was conducted between April 2021 to October 2021 (6 months). Each participant was given a different name during the interview to protect anonymity. Only the researcher had access to the list of participants and their alternative names. After getting consent from the participants, the whole interview was audio recorded to capture all the verbal data and to ensure that no data is missed. Interviews was continued till data saturation is reached. During the interview if any participant has any psychological distress, the interviewer would contact Cyma Care Clinic (+960 7901920) for counselling services. However, none of the participants experienced any psychological distress throughout the interview process.

All data were treated in a confidential and anonymous manner. Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was maintained by ensuring that the participants responses will not in any way be linked directly to them. The researcher also ensured secured storage of the data collected by storing in an encrypted folder in the personal laptop. All the research materials will be destroyed/deleted after 3 months of publication. Furthermore, according to Creswell & Poth (2018) verification of the transcribed data by the participants increases the validity and reliability of the data. Therefore, researcher transcribed all the audio recordings and electronically sent to all the study participants a copy of their transcribed data to verify the data in order to enhance the validity and transparency.

3.4 Pilot study

A pilot study was done where face-to-face semi-structured interview was conducted, and data was collected from 1 study participant after providing an information sheet and giving necessary information about the research as well as the research participants rights and subsequently obtaining consent from the participant. The whole interview was audio recorded after obtaining participants consent. Following data collection all the data were transcribed and by using Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step process of inductive reduction data was analyzed, manually coded and the main themes were identified. Next, the interview transcripts and fundamental statements was shared with the research participant to ensure if the essence and truth of the lived experiences were captured.

Finally, the pilot study done was shared with my supervisor to confirm if the data collection and analysis process was conducted properly and to identify if any research question or any other aspect of the data collection and analysis needs to be amended. Once the pilot study done on 1 research participant was reviewed and confirmed to be accurate by supervisor, the rest of the data collection and analysis with the remaining study participants was done.

3.5 Data Analysis

Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step process of inductive reduction of data was used for data analysis after the participants confirm the accuracy of the interview data. Applying Colaizzi's process after manually coding the information to prepare narratives aided in obtaining significant statements from the interview as well as group formulated meanings (Colaizzi, 1978). Following the first step in Collaizzi's process, the interview transcripts were read multiple times to become familiar with the data (Morrow et al., 2015). For the second step, significant statements from each transcript which relate to the phenomenon under study were highlighted. Next, in the third step of the process, meanings from the significant statements were formulated after intentionally bracketing any personal researcher bias and including observations and insights from the interview process (Morrow et al., 2015).

Similar or common themes identified from the interview were then clustered in the fourth step of Colaizzi's process. Then, in the fifth step, the identified phenomenon was described in detail. Subsequently, the phenomenon was condensed into short, fundamental statements in the sixth step

of the process to capture the essential aspects of the phenomenon (Morrow et al., 2015). Following the last step of Colaizzi's seven-step process, the fundamental statements were shared with the research participants to determine if the essence and truth of the lived experiences were captured (Morrow et al., 2015). A systematic analysis that follows a step-by-step process ensured completeness and made it easier for the participants and audience to understand the themes as well as to categorize the data (Morrow et al., 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.6 Rigor and interpretation

In order to promote trustworthiness of the data and to uphold the rigor of the research study, maintaining reliability and validity is significant in any research (Burns et al., 2017). Rigor and accurate interpretation of the data was maintained throughout the research process of this study. To enhance the rigor, reliability and validity as well as to minimize research bias during interview question construction and data collection, the interview questions were reviewed and appraised by a subject expert.

Furthermore, participant interviews and journal entries during the interviews are some strategies which were used in this study to increase internal validity. External validity was maintained by using the same main 5 questions in the interview guide and the same process of data collection from each participant and by allowing data saturation to occur with each interview.

3.7 Trustworthiness of the data (using Lincoln and Guba's Framework)

In order to evaluate the qualitative content analysis of the research, the most extensively used framework is Lincoln and Guba's Framework (Forero et al., 2018). Using Lincoln and Guba's Framework the trustworthiness of the data can be appraised and there are four main criteria which is used to assess the trustworthiness of qualitative research, which are, credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability (Forero et al., 2018).

To maintain the credibility of the research there should be a "fit" between study participants views and the researcher's depiction of them and the researcher should establish confidence in the

truth of the research findings with correct interpretation of the data collected from the study participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In order to uphold credibility of this research study, transcripts of the data collected during interviews were provided to the participants to validate the accuracy of data as well as the interpretation of the findings.

Confirmability refers to the data's accuracy, relevance, without researcher's biases with accurate interpretation of the participants views (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, dependability is ensured by maintaining constancy of data over time and recording the research steps taken from the start of a research project to the development of the research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The confirmability and dependability of the study was established by providing accurately construed data from the participants without researcher prejudice and by maintaining an audit trail using an electronic journal throughout the study which included comprehensive description of all the steps in the research process.

Transferability means to being able to generalize the research findings to other contexts or settings (Forero et al., 2018). In qualitative research studies transferability is a substantial concern as with the limited study participants and limited data researcher cannot ensure the generalizability of the research findings to other contexts; however, the researcher can provide thick descriptions so that the people who seek to transfer the research findings to their own context can judge transferability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Therefore, to promote transferability of this study, thick descriptions of the research participants are highlighted under findings/results.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration in research involves explaining the study to participants and giving information about voluntary participation and consenting to such participation without any compulsion (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this research, the rights of participants were safeguarded. The participants were informed that the information they provide will be strictly confidential and that the respondents will remain anonymous. To ensure this each participant was assigned a pseudonym for use throughout the study. Maintaining anonymity throughout the research process protects the privacy of the research participants further encouraging them to speak

honestly and freely (Burns & Grove, 2017). Participants were given full autonomy to decide voluntary participation and termination from this study at any time.

After giving necessary information to the participants about the research as well as the research participants rights via face-to-face meeting or phone call and email, they were provided with an information sheet and they were requested to sign the consent form if they wish to participate in the research voluntarily. The principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy and respect for participants privacy was maintained throughout the study. In this study there were no risk for physical or psychological harm of participants resulting from the interview. The researcher's contact number was provided to all participants if they wish to discuss any aspect. The researcher fully disclosed the nature of the study, risks and benefits to all participants before data collection.

The researcher engaged in bracketing throughout the study. The researcher also ensured secure and confidential storage of participant data by having an encrypted secured folder with password in the laptop and the transcribed interviews will be deleted 3 months after publishing. Furthermore, ethical approvals for this study were obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of MNU (*Appendix 1*) before data collection.

After the discussion of the methodology used in this study, the next chapter of this research will be looking at the results and findings of this study.

Chapter 4

4.0 Findings/Results

Chapter 4 is about the research findings and results of this study. This chapter includes demographic details of the participants, main themes and subthemes along with significant statements of the participants.

Following the research proposal approval from Research Ethics Committee of MNU, face-to-face semi-structured interview was conducted after obtaining consent from the study participants. Total 8 participants were interviewed as data saturation was reached with the interview of the 8th participant. Following data collection all the data were transcribed and the interview transcripts and fundamental statements was shared with the research participant to ensure if the essence and truth of the lived experiences were captured.

The demographic information of the participants is summarized below in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information of the research participants

Participant No	Research participant	Name (changed for confidentiality)	Age	Gender	Educational level (highest)	Nursing experience (years) at the public hospital	Year resigned
1	A	Aisha	28	Female	Bachelor	2 years	2019
2	B	Aminath	29	Female	Bachelor	5 years	2019
3	C	Mariyam	30	Female	Diploma	4 years	2019
4	D	Fathimath	35	Female	Bachelor	5 years	2019
5	E	Hana	31	Female	Diploma	5 years	2020
6	F	Fazeela	29	Female	Diploma	5 years	2020
7	G	Reema	35	Female	Diploma	8 years	2020
8	H	Leesha	34	Female	Bachelor	6 years	2020

Data from Table 1 indicated that eight of the study participants, 100% were female registered nurses between the age group 25-35 years. 4 participants were between 25-30 years and the remaining 4 participants were between 31-35 years. The years of work experience of the participants at the public hospital in Male' was between 2 to 8 years. All study participants met the minimum requirement of 1 year of nursing experience in the public hospital in Male'.

After the data analysis process using Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step process of inductive reduction, **three** main themes were identified (1) job dissatisfaction due to ineffective work environment, (2) low motivation due to limited education and career development opportunities, (3) inability to maintain proper work-life balance.

4.1 Clustered themes and subthemes

Organizational factors

(1) Job dissatisfaction due to ineffective work environment

i. Ineffective work environment:

Workplace environment issues a substantial factor identified by the study participants as a substantial factor to leave their job at the public hospital in Male'. Ineffective work environment and workplace constraints are one of the common challenges faced by nurses worldwide. Some of the workplace constraints faced to nurses include shortage of nurses, inadequate resources, excessive workload and job dissatisfaction.

From the interviews, it was identified that majority of participants were not happy with the work environment and because of it nurses were frustrated and discontented with the work, further contributing to the decision to leave the job. The dissatisfaction of the nurses due to ineffective work environment was recognized from most of the interviews. **Seven** out of eight participants mentioned that they were dissatisfied due to ineffective work environment. Staff shortage, workload, burnout, lack of flexibility, long work hours and call duty, lack of good interpersonal

relationships and inadequate management support are the sub themes identified from the interviews of the study participants.

Participant B described her dissatisfaction with the work environment as she said

“Not entirely satisfied with the job and work environment because we are most of the time we are with the shortage of staff. And sometimes we have to take three four patients that is in ICU setting actually we are supposed to take 1 is to 1 so sometimes I think I might not be doing the best for my patients.” (Participant B)

Participant E also mentioned the main factors due to which she was dissatisfied with the work environment

“Due to factors like lack of recognition, lack of management support and lack of opportunities for education and career development made me very dissatisfied with the work environment and job dissatisfaction did contribute to my decision to leave the job.” (Participant E)

ii. Job dissatisfaction

Job satisfaction is a very important factor for nurse retention (Nagaya, 2018). Due to workplace factors like staff shortage, high workload and burnout, nurses are dissatisfied with their work environment and it is a major factor contributing to nurse turnover (Nagaya, 2018). According to a recent Qualitative Descriptive study done by Hung & Lam (2020) on a total of 18 registered nurses who had resigned from public hospitals in Hong Kong, majority of the study participants (16 out of 18) expressed their dissatisfaction towards the work environment and highlighted that due to stressful work environment and heavy workload are the main reason why they were dissatisfied with the work environment which contributed to their decision of leaving the job. A similar finding was identified from this study as majority of participants (seven out of eight participants) had job dissatisfaction and stated that it influenced on their decision to leave the job.

Some of the main reasons for job dissatisfaction identified by the study participants are staff shortage, workload, inability to provide quality patient care due to insufficient time and improper

nurse patient ratio, lack of flexibility, burnout, long work hours and call duty, inadequate management support and lack of good interpersonal relationship with coworkers.

One of the study participants expressed her dissatisfaction towards work environment as she said

“I was not satisfied with my work environment due to factors like high workload and staff shortage, lack of teamwork, lack of management support and lack of opportunities to study. Being unsatisfied with the job did influence my decision to leave the job.” (Participant H)

According to participant A, she was dissatisfied with the work environment as she is unable to provide the best care for the patients due to workplace factors.

“Being a nurse, I always want to provide quality care for all the patients and due to staff shortage and heavy workload I am unable to do so and it makes me dissatisfied and unhappy”. (Participant A)

Likewise, participant B also specified the main issues with the work environment due to which she was dissatisfied and also stated that the manager was unfair and did not treat all staffs equally, which contributed to her decision to leave the job.

“Due to factors like high nurse patient ration and high workload I was not satisfied with the work. Sometimes the nurse manager is not willing to listen to the nurse’s concerns and work is not distributed equally among all the nurses too. So, because of all these things I was dissatisfied with the work environment and it did contribute to my decision to leave.” (Participant B)

iii. Staff shortage

Nursing staff shortage negatively effects the healthcare delivery system and causes decreased quality of patient care, stressful work environment, improper nurse-patient ratio and burnout in nursing staffs (Saikia, 2018). According to the World Health Statistics report of 2016, worldwide there is nurse shortage and there is a shortfall of more than 9 million nurses globally

(WHO, 2016). Similarly, nurse turnover remains a key issue hindering quality health service delivery in the Maldives too (World Health Organization (WHO), 2018). After the interviews it was apparent that majority of the study participants highlighted that there was inadequate staffing. Seven out of eight participants stated that they had high workload at the public hospital due to staff shortage which caused burnout in nurses further contributing to the decision to leave the job.

Participant E expressed her concerns due to staff shortage and the need to do call duties.

“In the public hospital that I worked there was always issues with staff shortage and had to do many call duties and overtime.” (Participant E)

Similarly, Participant A mentioned about the difficulties in providing quality patientcare due to staff shortage, as well as the need to do call duties and duty on off days.

“Due to staff shortage, I am unable to provide quality care for all the patients. In order to provide care to the patients with the available limited staff nurses, we have to do double duties, call duties and sometimes get only one off per week”. (Participant A)

Furthermore, participant C talked about burnout and exhaustion due to staff shortage and call duties.

“Most of the time ward is short staffed due to which we don’t get offs and have to stay on call duties which makes me really tired physically and mentally and in every other way”. (Participant C)

Additionally, Participant B being a breastfeeding mother at the time she resigned from public hospital in Male’, expressed her concerns due to inability to go home to feed baby due to staff shortage and workload. She stated that due to pending works, limited staffs and time, it was difficult to go home for feeding break due to which she was frustrated as she feels that she is unable to care for her baby due to work responsibilities.

“I have seen my colleagues who were breastfeeding mothers, they did not get time to feed their babies due to staff shortage and workload. They had joined back to work when their babies were three or four months old, but they did not get time to go home to feed their babies. And we are the people who advocate most for exclusive breastfeeding, yet we don’t get time to go breastfeed our babies”. (Participant B)

iv. Workload

Excessive workload is a common factor due to which nurses have physical and mental exhaustion and prolong exhaustion due to workload influence nurses to leave their job (Sharma & Dhar, 2016). Along with patient care nurses have many other tasks such as computer works, service entering, charting, indent, maintaining registers and other clerical works. Due to staff shortage nurses are already having a heavy workload and these additional works cause burnout and fatigue in them which eventually leads to nurses leaving their job. Increased workload can also be due to workplace factors like staff shortage, improper nurse-patient ratio, unsupportive and unhelpful coworkers (Hung & Lam, 2020).

According to a research study done by Hung and Lam (2020) 14 out of 18 study participants stated that scope of practice of a registered nurse is very vague and unclear and that they have to do many additional tasks along with providing patient care which burdens them and influences on their decision to leave the job. Similar finding has been identified from this study as well. Seven out of eight participants mentioned that they are having excessive workload at the work which causes severe fatigue and finally when they are unable to deal with the workload and burnout, they decide to leave the job.

For example, one participant said the following.

“The workload was very very high, and I was personally unable to cope with the pressure and was having severe anxiety and stress.” (Participant H)

Participant G stated that workload was high at the public hospital in Male’ which she worked before and identified workload as one of the common reason due to which nurses have burnout and leave the job at that hospital.

“The nurse turnover public hospital in Male’ that I worked before is mainly because of staff shortage and high workload. And because of that, nurses are really exhausted and many of the nurses leave the job because of that.” (Participant G)

Likewise, Participant B mentioned that workload was one of the reasons why her colleague nurses left the job at the public hospital in Male’ which she worked before.

“My colleagues, almost everybody has quit. Due to inflexibility and workload.” (Participant B)

v. *Inappropriate staffing and scheduling/ Improper nurse-patient ratio*

Inappropriate staffing and scheduling of nurses have caused diminished quality of patient care, adverse patient care outcomes and increased incidents (Griffiths et al., 2016). Due to improper staffing and scheduling, and unreasonable nurse-patient ration, nurses don’t get adequate time to provide the best patient care to all the patients equally. From research it is identified that low nurse staffing levels and improper nurse-patient ratio has raised to adverse occurrences such as missed nursing care and limited care further increasing mortality rates (Griffiths et al., 2016).

According to Department for Professional Employees (DPE) (2016), nurse patient ratio greater than 1:4 can increase the hospital mortality rate by 7% and can compromise patient care further causing severe adverse effect to patients such as bedsore, infection, hospital acquired pneumonia and accidental death. Furthermore, understaffing and high patient to nurse ratio leads to occupational hazards as well as poor patient outcomes. (DPE, 2016). Comparable finding has been identified from this study as some participants mentioned that they had issues with improper staffing and scheduling, and improper nurse-patient ratio at the public hospital in Male’ that they worked before.

One of the study participants stated

“When compared to the number of patients seeking care at public hospitals, the number of nurses are very limited which results in busy scheduling and heavy work overload”. (Participant A)

Additionally, Participant A also expressed her dissatisfaction with unreasonable nurse-patient ratio due to which she was unable to provide quality patient care.

“I believe that nurse patient ratio is not reasonable sometimes. Sometimes we are allocated with 3 or more very critical patients and we do not get time to even sit or eat peacefully as we have a lot of pending works. A few times I have failed to provide best care to patients because of the unacceptable nurse to patient ratio”. (Participant A)

Moreover, Participant B also voiced her disappointment with improper nurse-patient ratio as she stated

“Due to factors like high patient-nurse ratio and high workload I was not satisfied with the work.” (Participant B)

vi. *Lack of flexibility*

Lack of flexibility is one of the reason due to which nurses decide to leave a job. According to a study done by Leineweber et al (2016) it was identified that lack of flexible working hours for nurses increased job dissatisfaction, absenteeism and low motivation in nurses. Also, it was identified that inflexibility of nurses working schedule and shift duties caused nurses to leave the job (Leineweber et al., 2016). Correspondingly, it was identified from this study that nurses have difficulties in doing duties due to inflexible work hours and eventually leads to nurse turnover.

One of the participants stated that lack of flexible work hours is one of the reasons why she left her job.

“Organizations do not allow the nurses to work flexible hours. We had to work 10 to 12 hours straight sometimes. With the baby I can't work like that. That's why when our unit head is not willing to give me flexible hours, I thought I can't contribute to my work leaving my child behind.” (Participant B)

Likewise, participant C expressed her concerns with managing work and private life due to lack of flexible work hours.

“Without no flexibility, having to juggle both work and personal life would be difficult to do the job because at the end of the day family also matters a lot”. (Participant C)

vii. *Long work hours, call duty*

Long duty hours, call duty and overtime can negatively affect the physical and mental health of nurses and it is one of the reasons why nurses leave the job (Santana, 2020). According to a study done by Dall’Ora (2019) it was identified that long shift duties and extra duties or call duties can cause burnout and fatigue, stress and anxiety, and work-related musculoskeletal disorders. Due to these negative effects on overall health of nurses due to long duty hours and call duties, absenteeism is increased among nurses and job satisfaction is decreased which eventually leads to nurse turnover (Dall’Ora, 2019).

Similarly, majority of the study participants of this study recognized long work hours and call duties as one of the reasons they were dissatisfied with the job and decided to leave the job.

Participant D expressed her concerns towards long work hours and how difficult it was for her to do long duties after having a baby.

“After getting a baby it was very difficult to go to duties and do long duties so decided to leave the job. Due to staff shortage, there is no one else to release me so I have to wait for 2 or more hours after duty” (Participant D)

Participant A blamed hospital management and held responsible for the long work hours, overtime and call duties.

“The nurse managers and other people of the hospital management expect us to work for long hours/overtime, call duties, take responsibilities of many patients during one shift. The hospital management does not care about how much we suffer or how much workload we have.”
(Participant A)

viii. *Burnout*

Burnout is a chronic response to stress related to work which causes physical and mental exhaustion and it is a substantial issue effecting approximately 70% of nurses in the work environment (Fuente, et al., 2015). According to a study done by Nagaya (2018), job dissatisfaction due to burnout is identified as a major contributing factor for nurses to leave their job. Furthermore,

as per study participants of this research, majority of participants (seven out of eight participants) stated that they had burnout at the public hospital and it did influence on the decision to leave the job.

Participant C stated that she was exhausted from work for a very long time when she worked in the public hospital in Male' before due to which always had consideration for leaving the job and having a career change.

“Because of being drained of for such a long term we start to find work boring and that eventually leads to us having second thoughts about the job and end up considering going to another career.”
(Participant C)

Participant A also expressed her feelings as she stated

“Nurses are also humans. We also get tired and sick. But the nurse managers expect us to work for long hours and also not take sick leaves or family responsibility leaves”. (Participant A)

Participant G mentioned that nurses have to do many additional tasks and clerical works along with patient care due to which nurses have burnout and decide to leave the job.

“We nurse’s already have a lot of works related to patient care. But along with giving patient care, we also have to do many, many additional tasks at the workplace. While giving patient care if the nurse has to attend phone calls and bells and do other clerical works then it will be very difficult. Due to this, nurses complain of burnout and due to the stress and fatigue might decide to leave the job.” (Participant G)

ix. Inadequate management support

The amount of support nurses receives from nurse managers as well as hospital management is associated with job fulfillment of nurse’s (Goswami et al., 2016). Lack of management support might lead to demotivation of the nursing staffs. If managers do not listen to nurses’ concerns and problems, nurses will be dissatisfied with their job and may seek employment with another organization (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015). Furthermore, poor communication from managers,

coworkers and other healthcare professionals can lead to discontent of nurses further leading to nurse turnover.

As per the findings of this study, it was acknowledged that majority of study participants believe that they did not get enough support from managers at the public hospital in Male' that they worked before. Six out of eight participants mentioned that they did not get adequate support from hospital management and ward managers which influenced on their decision to leave the job.

Participant D stated that managers do not communicate appropriately with nurses and that management can be more considerate.

“Managers don't communicate well with the nurses and they don't even ask about our individual issues and concerns, not even in a ward meeting. Management can be more supportive than that. They can give us some flexibility or for nurses with kids some leniency so that we don't have to resign and can manage both work and life.” (Participant D)

Participant E expressed her discontent on inadequate management support and stated that managers always tried to find fault in nurses and does not listen to them due to which she had less confidence in nurse managers.

“Managers are not at all supportive and always tries to find fault of junior nurses specially. If anything occurs, any problem or incident, managers only hear the story of one side and does not hear my side of story. This kind of experiences make me unsure if I will get support and help from managers in difficult situations. I'm not confident if the managers will support me during any problem.” (Participant D)

x. Lack of good interpersonal relationship

Having a good relationship between nurses and other coworkers such as doctors, patients and other hospital staffs can increase job satisfaction, harmony, reduced job stress, team work and improved cooperation further promoting nurse retention (Mahvar et al., 2020). Inappropriate interpersonal relationships can cause negative emotions in nurses including stress, anger, insult and finally deciding to leave the job (Mahvar et al., 2020).

Four of eight study participant agreed that there was lack of interpersonal relationship between coworkers and it did influence on the decision to leave the job. Some of the nurse's complaint of having lack of interpersonal relationship with managers and other colleague nurses while few nurses mentioned that some doctors don't maintain a good relationship.

Participant H expressed her negative emotions due to lack of good interpersonal relationship with other nurses and managers

“There was lack of good interpersonal relationship and support from other nurses and managers too. Some of them are not supportive and not helpful, always tries to find mistakes and insult me in front of others and also, they gossip and talk behind my back. And overall, there was not much teamwork, everyone kind of works for themselves and does not care about other person and are not helping each other. Sometimes I get very frustrated because of lack of good interpersonal relationship among coworkers.” (Participant H)

Furthermore, Participant D discuss about the hesitation to communicate to mangers regarding concerns and difficulties at work due to lack of interpersonal relationship with them.

“I really wanted to talk to the management regarding my concerns and to find out if there is any way I can do a flexible duty cox I really didn't wanted to leave the job. But since there is no interpersonal relationship with the management, I hesitated to communicate to them. If I had a good interpersonal relationship with them then I will be more encouraged to go to them and talk about my concerns and probably get a better solution which could have prevented my resignation.” (Participant D)

Additionally, participant D further described the stressful time with doctors as she stated

“Nurses are also facing a stressful time with the doctors. Sometimes it's very difficult to work with the doctors, they shout at us, they say rude things and sometimes we get unnecessary scolding even without making a mistake or you know just like that”. (Participant D)

Similarly, participant G also mentioned that doctors didn't maintain a good relationship with nurses and shared some experiences with doctors due to which nurses were unhappy.

“The doctors are not maintaining such a good relationship with the nurses, some doctors. So, sometimes they may come and shout and then just go or maybe shout for no reason, and then does not behave well with the nurses then of course, then nurses will not be happy with the work environment. There was lack of interpersonal relationships among nurse managers and coworkers too.” (Participant G)

Staff Development factors:

(2) Low motivation due to limited education and career development opportunities

Nurses expect healthcare organization to provide opportunities for education and career advancement (DiMattio & Spegman, 2019). Nurses who get fair opportunities for career development will be more motivated and satisfied with the job further promoting nurse retention (Yang et al., 2015). Moreover, nurses often decide to leave it education and career advancement opportunities are not given equally to all the staffs (Price & Reichert, 2017).

All the study participants were questioned regarding the importance of career development and education opportunities and asked if they got adequate opportunities. All the study participants agreed that career development and education opportunities are very important for nurse retention and five out of eight participants stated that they did not get opportunities for continuing education and did not get adequate career development opportunities and it did influence on the decision to leave the job.

Participant E described not getting education opportunity for almost 4 years and finally deciding to leave the job due to lack of opportunities.

“I wasted 3 to 4 years waiting for the opportunity to study but I was not given permission from the hospital to start my studies. So, after waiting for 4 years I felt like I'm never going to get any opportunity to continue my studies and was hopeless that I will get permission to start studying any

sooner. I knew that I can't continue my studies while I'm at job at that hospital, so I did not want to waste more time and decided to resign.” (Participant E)

Participant E further states that these opportunities were given unfairly and most of the training opportunities are given to senior nurses.

“Training and career development opportunities were not given equally. Mostly opportunities are given to senior nurses, not senior registered nurses the nurses who worked there for long duration are given opportunities mostly. For us very very few opportunities are given.” (Participant E)

Furthermore, participant G discussed regarding the stressful experiences she had due to lack of opportunity to continue education.

“I did not get education opportunities. I tried a lot for a long time. I requested from the management for the permission to study, but they did not give. I think it is not fair because nowadays, the nursing studies are mostly part-time and mostly the classes conducted once a month. I think the public hospital which I worked before, they are not encouraging to study and does not want us to study higher. Because even when we are able to study on our own by requesting and adjusting duties and even without causing any difficulties for the work, they are still not allowing us to study. It was very frustrating that from the hospital management side they were not allowing us to continue education.” (Participant G)

Additionally, participant G stated that all the good trainings and workshop opportunities are given to senior nurses and ward in-charges.

“Even for the career development opportunities, always the good trainings and workshops will be attended by the ward managers or the senior staffs. If there's an in-service class in our ward, then those classes we will be asked to attend. I don't think I got enough career development opportunities.” (Participant G)

Similarly, participant F also agrees to it as she mentioned that only the ward in-charges get trainings and workshop opportunities.

“Every now and then trainings and workshops were conducted but for those kinds of things only the ward in charges go. Only they get that opportunity. I never got those kinds of opportunities.”

(Participant F)

Personal Factors:

(3) Inability to maintain proper work-life balance

Nurses have a lot of responsibilities in work as well as in private life. Nurses being unable to balance both work and private life will cause poor performance and decreased quality of patient care and also cause emotional exhaustion and family problems (Chamanga et al., 2020). Inability to maintain proper work-life balance can cause physical and mental exhaustion and job dissatisfaction further leading to nurse turnover (Boamah & Lashchinger, 2016).

Majority of participants (seven out of eight participants) stated that they were having difficulties in balancing work and life and it did influence on the decision to leave the job. Almost all the study participants mentioned that due to long duty hours they are unable to spend quality time with family and due to heavy workload, they are very tired after duty and are unable to do house works or personal works.

Participant F described inability to maintain work-life balance as one of the reasons why she had to leave the job and stated that due to workload at the public hospital that she worked before, she was too tired to do any other work after coming home.

“I also had issues with balancing work and life and it also did influence my decision a little bit. Cox at that public hospital workload was so much and we can't even get any time to relax, it was so hard and stressful. Also, I'm unable to do any house works or personal works because of lack of time and because I'm too tired after doing busy duties”. (Participant F)

A similar statement was given by Participant H as she described how sleepy and exhausted, she was after duties due to which she was unable to give time for family or do house works. She also mentioned that due to inability to maintain work-life balance she had family problems.

“Due to busy duties and work overload, even after duties when I come home, I will be too tired and does not want to do any work or can’t spend quality time with family coz I will be sleepy and tired so want to rest. I’m unable to give enough time for the family and kids due to which we had family issues too.” (Participant H)

Likewise, Participant G mentioned that sometimes she had to extend duties for 2 to 3 hours due to workload and this caused fatigue due to which she was unable to do any other work at home or spend time with family.

“Sometimes due to high workload, I was not able to come home on time. I had to stay for a long, long time, even after finishing duty. Some days I go home 2 or 3 hours late, so it was very difficult to give time for my family. And sometimes when I get home, I will be too tired to do anything. I was physically and mentally tired and it did influence my decision.” (Participant G)

Furthermore, participant C expressed her dissatisfaction as she was unable to give time for family due to work and sometimes had to cancel family plans and go to call duty on off duties.

“There were situations where I would make plans with my family and all of a sudden off duty change into a call duty so it is difficult to manage it. Also due to the duty schedule and long work hours it was very difficult to spend quality time with family or even do the house works” (Participant C)

Chapter 5

5.0 Discussion and Recommendation of findings/results

Chapter 5 comprises of discussion of the main findings of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study, and recommendations for practice and education.

5.1 Discussion

This study was done to explore the major factors that influenced nurses to leave their job at the public hospitals in Male'. This study provides insight into lived experiences of the nurses and understanding their issues and concerns at the public hospital where they worked before, due to which they decided to leave the job. Furthermore, hospitals can utilize the research findings of this study to bring positive changes to workplace and to address issues and concerns of nurses, which could promote nurse retention.

According to literature, nurses leave the job due to various reasons such as ineffective work environment, lack of support from managers and coworkers, lack of recognition/promotion, low pay, inflexible duty scheduling and timing, lack of opportunity for staff development and difficulties posed by family responsibilities (Kenny et al., 2016; Belaid et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2017; Rai et al., 2017; Hung & Lam, 2020). Furthermore, according to numerous literature reviews done on nurse turnover it was acknowledged that nurses usually leave the job due to organizational factors, career development factors and personal factors (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015; Schoeb, 2016; Dubey et al., 2016; Cheung, 2019).

In line with the literature, similar findings were identified from this research study. The study participants acknowledged organizational factors, staff development factors and personal factors as the most common reason why nurses leave the job at public hospitals in Male'. Furthermore, majority of the study participants identified inappropriate work environment, job dissatisfaction, workload, burnout, inadequate management support, lack of good interpersonal relationship, lack of opportunities for continuing education & career development and inability to maintain proper work-life balance.

Moreover, literatures suggest that impaired health and wellbeing due to work is another common personal factor which contributes to nurse turnover (Gragnano et al., 2020; Pélissier et al., 2018; Heijden et al., 2019). Many nurses consider the impact of the job-related factors on their personal health and well-being, and often the health deterioration and physical symptoms due to work factors on nurses' decision of staying or leaving the job (Takase et al., 2016). Nevertheless, the findings of this study are not congruent with many of the literatures. Only 2 study participants stated that they had severe health issues related to work which influenced their decision to leave the job. Majority of the study participants (6 out of 8) mentioned that they had some of the health issues related to work such as back pain, muscle pain, anxiety and stress, but also stated that the health issues were not so severe that it would contribute to their decision to leave the job.

On the other hand, some of the findings of this study were inconsistent with numerous literatures. For instance, from several literatures, reward or compensation practices and low pay were identified as a common reason why nurses were dissatisfied with the work and decided to leave the job (Momanyi & Kaimenyi, 2015; Rubel & Kee, 2015; Halcomb & Ashley, 2016; Washeya, 2018; Wu et al., 2018). Literatures propose that if a firm's compensation system is viewed as inadequate, nurses may reject the organizations employment offers and current employees may choose to leave the organization, resulting in nurse turnover (Shakeel & But, 2015; Allan et al., 2016; Aliliu et al., 2016).

However, according to the research findings of this study, majority of the participants were satisfied with the reward and compensation practices and salary. Except 1 study participant, all the other stated that they were recognized by the patients, managers, nurses, and other coworkers due to which they were happy, and the compensation practices and recognition was not a factor contributing to their decision to leave the job. Likewise, except 1 participant, all the others mentioned that salary did not influence the decision to leave the job.

Furthermore, after the COVID pandemic started in Maldives on March 2020, the healthcare organizations of Maldives, especially public hospitals were very much affected (Hussain et al., 2020). With the existing shortage of nurses in the public hospitals in Male', nurses faced major challenges due to COVID outbreak such as workover load, extra duties with one off, psychological distress and burnout (Hassan, 2020). 2 participants of this research study stated that there was a

lack of nursing staff at their ward, so they had to take on extra workload due to COVID and it was very hectic and stressful. Furthermore, they mentioned that many nurses were released to the COVID facilities at different islands and at Hulhumale', where they had to stay for months without coming home and since they had kids, they were not able to go and had to resign as there was no other choice.

From the research findings of this study, it was identified that among the 4 study participants who resigned after the COVID pandemic during 2020, 2 study participants recognized COVID pandemic as a factor contributing to their decision to leave the job while the other 2 staffs stated that COVID pandemic did not influence their decision to leave the job in any way. Therefore, further research is required to confirm whether the COVID pandemic is a significant factor affecting nurse turnover in the public hospitals in Male'.

5.2 Limitations and delimitations of the study

There are various ways that the researcher strengthened the results achieved from a study. First, by choosing a descriptive phenomenological design for this study, the researcher was able to examine the phenomena in-depth and gain a deeper understanding and insight on the lived experiences of the research participants (Burns et al., 2017). Similarly, face-to-face semi structured interview allowed the researcher to gather more detailed information and experiences of the nurses along with the non-verbal cues. Furthermore, the inclusion criteria ensured that all the study participants have a minimum of 1-year of work experience at public hospitals in Male', thus, providing more accurate factors and issues regarding the nurse turnover.

Additionally, the target population of this study consists of local nurses who worked in various wards/departments of public hospitals in Male' and left their work from January 2019 to December 2020. This can be a strength, as the nurses (study participants) worked in different departments will have different experience and reason of leaving, further proving a broad range of information from various wards/departments that would strengthen the findings. Moreover, the participants were allowed to verify the transcribed interview data, further increasing the validity and reliability of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Furthermore, samples selection was done using convenience snowball sampling method which can be recognized as a strength as it can aid in identifying potential participants for the research who have the experience and knowledge and are willing to share their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). On the other hand, it can also be identified as a limitation as the use of convenience snowball sampling method will allow the researcher to have little control over the sampling method, might cause sample bias and the representativeness of the sample is also not guaranteed (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Besides, there are other limitations for the study as well. The limited number of study participants (samples) will make it difficult to generalize the study findings and can cause unreliability. With the small sample of 8 study participants, there is possibility of under- or over-representation of the population (Burns et al., 2017). Moreover, the researcher of the study has previously worked as a nurse at a public hospital in Male' and resigned during 2019, which could result in biasness. Nevertheless, the researcher engaged in bracketing throughout the study. Furthermore, the data collection and analysis were very time consuming too.

Despite having few limitations, the findings of this study will aid in understanding the main factors why the nurses decide to leave the job in public hospitals in Male' from the perspective of nurses who actually resigned.

5.3 Implications for practice/recommendations

i. Maintaining an effective work environment and job satisfaction

Job dissatisfaction due to ineffective work environment is identified by the study participants as a substantial factor to leave their job at the public hospital in Male'. Staff shortage, workload, burnout, lack of flexibility, long work hours and call duty, lack of good interpersonal relationships and inadequate management support are the main work environment factors recognized by the study participants as the contributing factors to leave the job. In order to promote job satisfaction and nurse retention, it is important to implement strategies to avert the challenges faced to the nurses at the work environment such as staff shortage, workload and burnout.

There are several implications for practice which can be used to retain nurse. Firstly, workload due to staff shortage can be reduced by eliminating unnecessary jobs and recruitment of more nurses which can decrease burnout in nurses further reducing nurse turnover (Sharma & Dhar, 2016). Furthermore, flexible duties and easy work hours can be given to nurses so that they won't be over exhausted. Similarly, 2 offs can be given weekly to all the staffs and call duties should be minimized as much as possible so that they can relax and have some quality personal time as well as family time.

Moreover, adequate supplies and personal protective equipment's should be available at the work environment so that they can perform the tasks and procedures more easily and efficiently. Additionally, nurses should be valued, and they should know that their contributions are essential to the success of the organization. Also, creating a safe work environment with facilities such as counselling, relaxation and meditation room and group wellness sessions with other nurses may increase retention (Botha et al., 2015).

Nurses should be provided with a supportive and fair work environment which would further enhance mental and physical satisfaction of the nurses and reduce nurse turnover.

ii. Providing adequate staffing and flexible duty scheduling

High workload and burnout due to inadequate staffing and improper scheduling is one of the common reasons why nurses leave the job. Hence, it is vital to promote different approaches to overcome these issues in the work environment in order to reduce turnover. Adequate nursing staffs can be recruited so that the workload can be reduced further preventing fatigue and burnout in nurses. If not getting enough nurses, then clerical staffs can be hired so that the work will be less for the nurses and they will be able to focus on giving patient care other than doing clerical works such as service entering, attending phone calls and bells, updating registers, undertaking indent works and making memos.

Moreover, many times nurses have to resign due to inability to balance work and life due to improper duty scheduling. Thus, easy duty scheduling can be made for the nurses and shift duties can be given equally to all the nurses. Also, nurses can be asked about the difficulties that they are faced due to duty schedule and the schedule can be made considering the nurses requests as much

as possible. These implications can be used by the public hospitals in Male' to reduce nurse turnover.

iii. Providing adequate management support

Lack of support from managers is a main reason why nurses are demotivated and discontented with the work and decides to leave the job. If managers do not listen to nurses' concerns and problems, nurses will be dissatisfied with their job and may seek employment with another organization. Even majority of the study participants identified inadequate management support as a significant factor which contributed to their decision to leave the job at the public hospital in Male'. Therefore, it is vital for the organization, especially nurse administrators to have an appropriate system in place to provide support for nurses, further improving job satisfaction and retention of nurses.

Positive humor, direct supervisory feedback and adequate support from organizational leaders and managers promote positive sentiments of nurses at work and boosts the work engagement further preventing nurse turnover (Rai et al., 2017). Furthermore, maintaining a good interpersonal relationship with the nurses, motivating them, making shared decisions at the workplace, asking nurses opinion and concerns, recognizing their efforts and providing positive feedbacks can be a good strategy for the managers to keep the nurses satisfied further promoting nurse retention (Goswami et al., 2016).

iv. Promoting adequate education and career development opportunities

Resignations can increase if nurses are not trained properly and if they don't get equal opportunities to continue their education. Organizations that provide formal career development opportunities will improve productivity and enhance employee satisfaction further reducing the turnover (Anitha & Kumar, 2016). Moreover, regular promotions and performance appraisals are imperative as these allow nurses to develop their career, improve performance and will also aid in developing individuals' career development strategies (Rubel & Kee, 2015). Fair education and career development opportunities can be given regularly to the nurses which can make them feel

like they are accomplishing something, and they will feel the growth and advancement in them, further promoting nurse retention.

These recommendations can be used by the hospital managements to retain nurses. Nevertheless, the exact reason or the rate of nurse turnover in the public hospitals in Male' cannot be confirmed, as qualitative research is not adequate to get a bigger picture of the real issue. Therefore, further research in the area is recommended.

6.0 Conclusion

Nurse turnover is a global concern as nationwide nurse turnover rate is estimated to be 44% and is anticipated as a rapidly rising issue of human resources affecting the healthcare sector globally (Roche et al., 2015; Lisa, 2020; Hung & Lam, 2020). Nurse turnover remains a key issue hindering quality health service delivery in the Maldives as well and healthcare organizations of Maldives faces a lot of challenges due to high nurse turnover (WHO, 2018). However, the main factors influencing nurse turnover in the Maldives is not yet identified and solutions to this issue remain uncertain and need further investigation.

The main **aim** of the study was to explore the major factors that contributed/influenced nurses' decisions to leave their job at public hospitals in Male'. The main **objectives** of this research are to analyze the main factors affecting nurse turnover in in public hospitals in Male', explore the lived experiences of nurses contributing to the decision to leave their job and examine the workplace factors influencing nurses' decision-making about leaving the job at in public hospitals in Male'. A descriptive phenomenological design was used in this study as it can be a good method of inquiry and can gain a better understanding on the perspectives and actions of the study participants and discover the connotation and significance of the phenomena by reflecting on the data collected (Astroth & Chung, 2018).

A **sample size** of 8 participants was selected using convenience snowball **sampling method** and data saturation was reached with the interview of the 8th participant. The target population of this study consist of local nurses who worked in various wards/departments of public hospitals in Male' for more than 1 year and left their work from January 2019 to December 2020. The inclusion criteria include the nurses who worked for more than 1 year in public hospitals in Male' and

resigned in the year 2019 and 2020. Furthermore, data was collected by conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews for approximately 30 minutes and an interview guide (*Appendix 3*) was used to collect data. The whole interview was audio recorded after obtaining participants consent.

Following data collection all the data were transcribed and by using Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step process of inductive reduction, data was analyzed, manually coded and the main themes ((1) job dissatisfaction due to ineffective work environment, (2) low motivation due to limited education and career development opportunities, (3) inability to maintain proper work-life balance) and significant statements were identified.

Considering to the study findings, there are several implications for practice which can be used to retain nurse. Firstly, nurses can be provided with a supportive and fair work environment with adequate staffing and scheduling along with appropriate nurse-patient ratio. Furthermore, flexible duties can be given to nurses and call duties should be minimized as much as possible so that nurses won't be over exhausted. Moreover, regular supervisory feedback and adequate support from managers should be provided to nurses at work and a good interpersonal relationship should be maintained with the nurses to keep them satisfied and motivated. Additionally, fair education and career development opportunities can be given regularly to the nurses so that they will be contented with the job which will promote nurse retention.

The research outcomes and findings were shared with all the participants. To make the outcomes of the research more widely available, the research findings will be presented to the Maldives National University (MNU) and can be published in Nursing Journals in Maldives. Furthermore, this study will be presented to health care organizations in the Maldives. Additionally, the information presented in this study can be shared on online platforms through social media and news publications in the website.

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8.0 Appendices

8.1 Appendix-1

Approval letter from MNU

The MNU Research Ethics Committee has given approval to the application made for the research project but subjective to the following suggestions:
Factors affecting nurse turnover in public hospitals
in Male', Maldives: A Phenomenological study to
understand why nurses leave their job"

The ethics approval number is **RE/2021/C-04**

Please quote this number for any further reference or clarifications.

Thank you
Rifaath



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8.2 Appendix-2

Timeline/GANNT chart

Timeline															
	Months														
Activity	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	Expected Outcome
	a	e	a	p	a	u	u	u	e	c	o	e	a	e	
	n	b	r	r	y	n	l	g	p	t	v	c	n	b	
1. Meeting with supervisor and finalizing the topic for dissertation		✓													Finalizing the topic for dissertation
2. Proposal writing		✓													Completing the proposal and submitting the proposal to supervisor for feedback
3. Filling Form C and submitting to MNU research ethics committee after supervisors' approval		✓													Obtaining MNU research ethics clearance
4. Submitting final proposal to supervisor after bringing changes according to supervisors' feedback			✓												Final proposal submission
5. Writing chapter 1				✓											Completing chapter 1 and submitting to supervisor for feedback
6. Writing chapter 2				✓											Completing chapter 2 and submitting to supervisor for feedback
7. Writing chapter 3				✓											Completing chapter 3 and submitting to supervisor for feedback
8. Sample selection, meeting with study participants and signing consent				✓											Sample selection by convenience snowball sampling, meeting with the participants and obtaining consent
9. Pilot study (participant 1)					✓	✓									Conducting a pilot study with participant 1
10. Submitting updated dissertation to supervisor with completed 3 chapters & pilot study of participant 1							✓								Submitting 3 chapters and pilot study to supervisor for feedback

11. Data Coll & Anal (participant 2-5)								✓	✓	✓								Conducting interview-data collection & analysis participant 2-5
12. Submitting transcriptions and analyzed data of participants 2-5 to supervisor										✓								Submitting transcriptions and analyzed data to supervisor for feedback
13. Data Coll & Anal (participant 5-10)										✓	✓							Conducting interview-data collection & analysis participant 5-10
14. Submitting transcriptions and analyzed data of participants 5-10 to supervisor											✓							Submitting transcriptions and analyzed data to supervisor for feedback
15. Writing chapter 4 & 5												✓						Completing chapter 4 & 5 and submitting to supervisor for feedback
16. Writing final report												✓						Final report writing and dissertation submission
17. Preparing presentation													✓					Preparing presentation and mailing to supervisor for feedback
18. Presenting final thesis (ppt)														✓				Final presentation of thesis
15. Dissemination																	2 0 2 2	Dissemination of the research study

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Questions:

1. What factors do you believe to be the most important in making a decision to stay or leave an employment?
Explain why you have indicated these factors as most important.
2. Could you please tell me the main reason for quitting the job at the public hospital that you worked before?
3. What are your lived experiences contributing to the decision to leave the job?
4. What are the factors that you believe influence nurse turnover in public hospitals in Male'?
5. How have workplace factors impacted your decision-making about leaving the job at public hospitals in Male'?

Probing questions:

6. Do you believe that there is a high nurse turnover in public hospitals in Male'? Why do you believe so?
7. Do you believe that opportunities for career development, training and continuing education are important influence on nurse retention?

Did you get enough career development or education opportunities?

So did lack of career development or education opportunities contributed to your decision to leave the job?
8. Does lack of administrative or management support and lack of interpersonal relationship among coworkers contribute to nurse's intention to leave their job at public hospitals in Male'?
9. Does the salary and allowances provided by the public hospitals contribute to nurse's intention to leave or stay at their job?

What about recognition? Do you believe recognition is important for nurses?

Did you get enough recognition at you job and did it influence your decision to leave the job?
10. Do personal factors such as imbalance of work and private life, impaired health and wellbeing of nurses play a major role in nurse turnover? In your opinion nurse's intention to leave public hospitals in Male' is mostly because of personal factors or organizational factors?
11. Lastly, do you believe job satisfaction is important for nurses to stay in the job? Were you satisfied with the job and work environment at you job?



INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to participate as a subject in the research project [**Factors affecting nurse turnover in public hospitals in Male’, Maldives: A Phenomenological study to understand why nurses leave their job**].

The aim of this project is to explore the major factors that contributed/influenced nurses’ decisions to leave their job at public hospitals in Male’.

Your involvement in this project will be *to discuss about your personal experiences and detail elaboration of the factors contributing to resignation from public hospitals in Male’ during face-to-face semi-structured interviews of 15-30 minutes and to verify the transcribed data of the audio recordings of the interviews*, and the right to withdraw from the project at any time, including withdrawal of any information provided without any penalty.

In the performance of the tasks and application of the procedures there are no physical or psychological risks/ harms anticipated for the participants. However, *during the interview if any participant has any psychological distress, the interviewer has contact information for counselling services which will be provided to the participants when requested.*

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be made

public without their consent. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, *researcher will not disclose any personal or private information of the participants and the responses will not in any way be linked directly to the participants. Only the researcher will have access to the personal data and each participant will be given a different name during the interview to protect anonymity.*

The project being carried out as a requirement for Master in Nursing course, dissertation subject by the student under the supervision of (lecturer), who can be contacted at [+960 3346563]. We both will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

The project has been reviewed ***and approved*** by the Maldives National University Ethics Committee.



...../ S039714

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23/02/2021

CONSENT FORM

Name of Project: Factors affecting nurse turnover in public hospitals in Male', Maldives: A Phenomenological study to understand why nurses leave their job.

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.

I understand also that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

I note that the project has been reviewed *and approved* by The Maldives National University Ethics Committee.

Name (please print)

Signature:

Date: