



Turnover Intention Among School Nurses in Nepal

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Abstract

The “One School One Nurse Program”, initiated by the Government of Nepal is still in the early stage within the school education ecosystem. It is reportedly affected by the high turnover of school nurses. This study assessed the turnover intention of school nurses along with the factors influencing their decisions. A descriptive cross-sectional census survey was conducted among 519 school nurses across seven provinces through a structured questionnaire in the KoBo platform using the turnover intention scale (TIS). The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, ANOVA and regression. It was found that 76% school nurses intended to quit their jobs within next five years. Key factors that might contribute include: permanent government employment (63%), foreign employment (36.4%), and higher education (30%) study. The study identified job security (91.5%), promotion opportunities (63.6%), and higher salaries (62.2%) as the key retention factors. School nurses’ younger age, being unmarried, not having children, holding a bachelor’s degree or higher, and inadequate training were significantly associated factors with higher turnover intention. There is a need to address issues related to contractual insecurity, the lack of career growth, inadequate support at the work place, a competitive incentive and in-service training to enhance retention of schoolnurses.

Keywords: Job retention, one-school-one-nurse, school nurses, turnover intention

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Introduction

Turnover of the employees affects the organizational performance, and it has a larger impact on the overall system of a program. In addition, high turnover increases the expenses for new recruitment and disrupts the continuity of the service. Turnover in the nursing profession is understood as an employee’s conscious and deliberate intention to leave their current job, either within the same organization or profession altogether (Mobley, 1977; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Similarly, Hayes et al. (2012) report turnover intention as an early warning indicator as it predicts resignation, internal transfers, and migration. The desire to leave is shaped by the interaction of “push” factors such as low pay, poor working conditions, and limited organizational support and “pull” factors, including the availability of better job conditions, safer work environments, and more defined career progression opportunities; together, these forces play a decisive role in determining workforce retention and stability (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995).

Employee turnover is triggered by psychological responses to internal and external job-related contexts. It includes

three components: psychological, cognitive, and behavioral. It begins with psychological responses, which reflect negative aspects of the organization or the job. This is followed by the cognitive component, which plays a role in the decision to leave. The behavioral component reflects a tendency to leave the current job or take action-oriented steps towards future opportunities (Takase, 2010).

Turnover intention among school nurses is an internationally recognized workforce issue closely associated with job dissatisfaction, limited professional support, and inadequate working conditions (Hayes et al., 2012; Hu et al., 2022). Other frequently reported factors include high workload, lack of salary, poor working environment within the organization, and low autonomy, which are associated with considering leaving their positions (Carthon et al., 2021; Willgerodt et al., 2024).

Since 2018, the Government of Nepal has implemented the One School One Nurse (OSON) school health program to improve students’ health, well-being, and learning outcomes. The program is implemented according to the guidelines developed by the government initially in 2019 and its revised version in 2024. Both the guidelines mention



the roles and responsibilities of school nurses and their services that they need to deliver to the children's health in the school context. However, the guideline is silent regarding the job security, as the contract has to be renewed every year. There is no clarity regarding their career growth, promotion and higher education opportunities. Also, it is not clear how many students each school nurse is expected to serve. For these reasons, school nurses are leaving their job in search of other permanent and better opportunities. These gaps reflect deficiencies in both hygiene factors (job security, salary, working conditions) and motivator factors (career advancement and professional development), which together amplify job dissatisfaction and turnover intention (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Several articles highlight school nurse turnover. Himal Press (2025, December 25) reported that school nurses feel insecure due to their contractual employment, inadequate salary and benefits, lack of adequate supportive working environments, heavy workloads often with a single nurse serving thousands of students, and limited cooperation from school administrations. Similarly, Kantipur Television (2025, December 21) highlighted that high school nurse turnover in Nepal is primarily influenced by a lack of sustainable provision to retain school nurses on the job, including low remuneration, insecure employment conditions, limited career growth, highly limited workplace facilities, and more attractive professional opportunities abroad.

The existing literature on school nurse program shows that no comprehensive study has been carried out regarding why school nurse turnover is so high in the context of Nepal and what factors are contributing to their turnover intention. Thus, this study assessed turnover intention among school nurses in Nepal using four aspects: (1) intention to remain in the school nursing position in the future, (2) potential opportunities that could trigger leaving, (3) perceived facilitators of job retention, and (4) perceived reasons for leaving. These were examined against the ten background characteristics: age, ethnicity, marital status, parental status, academic qualification, work experience, work setting, number of students, training status, and perceived training adequacy. The main objectives of this study were

(1) to examine turnover intention among school nurses in Nepal.

(2) to identify the strategies to retain school nurses and sustain the national school nurse program.

Methods

This study used a census-design, which included 519 school nurses of Nepal. A descriptive cross-sectional approach was adopted, and data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire administered using the KoBoToolbox platform. We used chi-square analyses to analyze the categorical data, with pre-specified levels (1 = turnover intention; 0 = retention intention). For example, planned service of less than 5 years was coded as turnover intention and five years or more as retention intention. For questions that allowed multiple responses, thresholds were set at approximately 50% of the available options.

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive

statistics were summarized for variable distributions, and chi-square tests and cross-tabulations were used to examine the associations between turnover intention indicators against the background variables. Differences in the composite turnover intention score across background characteristics were tested using one-way ANOVA. Statistical significance was set at the limit of $p < .05$. Ethical approvals was received from the Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC) on 29 September 2023 and protocol Registration N: 517/2023. Respondents were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and confidentiality was strictly maintained.

Results

The study assessed the turnover intention across four major items: (a) intention to continue their job based on planned years of service, (b) opportunities that may trigger turnover, (c) factors that support retention, and (d) perceived reasons for leaving the position.

Intention for Job Continuity as a School Health Nurse

School nurses indicated their turnover intentions with respect to their plans to stay in the service for a certain period. The categories were less than 2 years (40%), 2–5 years (36%), 5–10 years (14.3%), and more than 10 years (9.1%). To run the analysis, these categories were grouped into two broader categories: nurses intending to work for less than 5 years were assigned a score of one, which represents turnover intention, and those planning to remain for 5 years or more were assigned a score of 0, indicating their intention to continue the job. In these two categories, 398 (76.7%) nurses indicated their turnover intention, and those with retention intention accounted for 221 (23.3%).

The relationship between turnover intention and ten background variables viz. age, ethnicity, marital status (with and without children), academic qualification, work experience, work setting, number of students, training, and training adequacy were assessed by using a chi-square test and cross-tabulation analysis (Table 1). Age, marital status, and having children were found to be statistically significant factors of turnover intention.

Majority (76.7%) of school nurses intend to work for fewer than five years in their current positions, whereas only 23.3% want to remain as school nurses for five years or more. Age was a significant factor of turnover intention ($p = <0.001$). Among nurses between 20 and 25 years of age, 82.6% reported their intention to leave their positions early, while only 17.4% wanted to remain. Similarly, among nurses aged 25–30, 80.4% reported turnover intention. In contrast, nurses over the age of 30 reported a lower intention to turnover (58.1%). By age, younger nurses were found to have a higher intention to turnover, whereas older nurses with a lower one.

Marriage was also significantly associated with turnover intention ($p = 0.016$). Married nurses were more likely stay in their jobs (27%) compared to unmarried nurses (17.9%). This suggests that marital status may influence long-term job commitment (Rouleau et al., 2012). Similarly, among nurses without children, 80.8% expressed turnover intention, while 19.2% intended to stay in their positions ($P=0.006$).

Conversely, nurses with children reported a lower intention to turnover (70.4%) and a higher intention to retain (29.6%).

The other remaining variables did not show statistically significant associations with turnover intention ($p = 0.298$).

Table 1: *Intention for Job Continuity based on Service Years as a School Nurse (N = 519)*

Variables	1 (Turnover intention)	0 (Retention intention)	p-value
	N (%)	N (%)	
Age			
20-25 years	161(82.6)	34(17.4)	<0.001
25-30 years	176(80.40)	43(19.6)	
Above 30 years	61(58.1)	44(41.9)	
Caste/Ethnicity			
Brahmin/Chhetri	212(80)	53(20.0)	0.06
Janajati	142(75.5)	46(24.5)	
Other ethnicities (Muslim, Dalit, and Madhesi)	44(66.7)	22(33.3)	
Marital Status			
Unmarried	174(82.2)	38(17.9)	0.01
Married	224(70)	83(27)	
Children			
Without children	253(80.8)	60(19.2)	<0.001
With children	145(70.4)	61(29.6)	
Academic qualifications			
PCL Level	280(76.5)	86(23.5)	0.87
Bachelor or Higher	118(77.1)	35(22.9)	
Work experience			
6-24 months	192(79)	51(21)	0.24
More than 24 months	206(74.6)	70(25.4)	
Work Setting			
Urban	209(74.4)	72(25.6)	0.17
Rural	189(79.4)	49(20.6)	
Number of students			
Less than 300	101(78.3)	28(21.7)	0.25
300-500	113(81.3)	26(18.7)	
500-700	62(70.7)	26(29.5)	
More than 700	122(74.8)	41(25.2)	
Training			
Not received	164(80.4)	40(19.6)	0.10
Received	234(74.3)	81(25.7)	
Training Adequacy			
No adequacy	173(75.5)	56(24.5)	0.29
Adequacy	60(69.48)	26(30.2)	
Total	398(76.7)	121(23.3)	

Potential Opportunity that may Trigger Turnover

Six potential factors were identified for driving school nurses' decisions to leave their jobs. They would like to quit if they: i) get a permanent job in a government office or hospital, ii) get a chance to higher study, iii) get a higher-paying job in another organization, iv) get employment abroad, v) get an opportunity to study abroad, and vi) get a job in a private hospital. Participants were allowed to select multiple responses to capture the diverse factors contributing to their intention to leave.

Table 2: *Triggering Factors for Nurses Turnover Intention (N=519)*

Variables	N	Percent
Permanent job in a government office/ hospital	344	63.3
Opportunity to go for foreign employment	189	36.4
Higher study	154	29.7
Higher-paying job in another organization	131	25.2
Opportunity to study abroad	84	16.2
Job in a private hospital	12	2.3

*Respondents were allowed to select multiple responses

Four key factors were found to be linked to turnover intention. Firstly, it is the opportunity to secure a permanent position in a government office or hospital (63.3%). This means school nurses are concerned for their job security, stability, and the benefits for their employment. Secondly, school nurses also see the opportunity for foreign employment (36.4%), which could potentially be due to the dissatisfaction with low salaries, poor working environment, and lack of further professional growth in their current roles. The possibility of better wages, improved working environments, and enhanced career development abroad makes foreign employment an attractive option.

Thirdly, school nurses want to pursue higher education (29.7%) and grow academically. Provision of study leaves, scholarships or fellowships, or financial support for further education could help retain nurses by supporting them to upgrade their qualifications while remaining in their roles. Additionally, a higher-paying job offer from elsewhere (25.2%) is another possible reason for turnover, reflecting dissatisfaction with current salary and incentives. This suggests that revising salary frameworks, implementing performance-based incentives, and creating long-term financial growth opportunities could improve job satisfaction and promote retention. Remaining factors, such as opportunities to study abroad (16.2%) and employment in private hospitals (2.3%), did not have as large an impact on turnover.

The scores were based on the codes as 1 and 0. Respondents who selected more than three options (50% of the available choices) were assigned 1, which indicated the turnover. Those who selected up to three possibilities received a score of 0, representing retention intention. Based on this, 139 (28.6%) nurses were categorized as having turnover intention, while 380 (73.2%) were categorized as having retention intention. Table 3 shows the relationship between turnover intention and the demographic factors using frequency and percentage distributions.

Table 3: Potential Opportunity that may Trigger Turnover (N = 519)

Variables	1 (Turnover intention)	0 (Retention intention)	p-value
	N (%)	N (%)	
Age			
20-25 years	53(27.2)	142(72.8)	0.57
25-30 years	62(28.3)	157(71.7)	
Above 30 years	24(22.9)	81(77.1)	
	139(28.6)	380(73.2)	
Ethnicity			
Brahmin/Chhetri	70(26.4)	195(73.6)	0.08
Janaajati	58(30.9)	130(69.1)	
Other ethnicity (Muslim, Dalit and Madhesi)	11(16.7)	55(83.3)	
Marital Status			
Unmarried	63(29.7)	149(70.3)	0.21
Married	76(24.8)	231(75.2)	
Children			
With children	94(30)	219(70)	0.03
Without children	45(21.8)	161(78.2)	
Academic Qualifications			
PCL Level	86(23.5)	280(76.5)	<0.001
Bachelor or Higher	53(34.6)	100(65.4)	
Previous Work Experience			
6-24 months	65(26.7)	178(73.3)	0.98
More than 24 months	74(26.8)	202(73.2)	
Work Setting			
Urban	83(29.5)	198(70.5)	0.12
Rural	56(23.5)	182(76.5)	
Number of Students			
Less than 300	31(24.0)	98(76.0)	0.35
300-500	32(23.0)	107(77.0)	
500-700	28(31.8)	60(86.2)	
More than 700	48(29.4)	115(70.6)	
Training			
Not received	51(25.0)	153(75)	0.46
Received	88(27.9)	227(72.1)	
Training Adequacy			
No adequacy	71(31.0)	158(69.0)	0.03
Adequacy	17(19.8)	69(80.2)	

About 28.6% of respondents reported turnover intention, whereas 73.2% expressed retention intention. Having children ($p = 0.039$), academic qualification ($p = 0.009$),

and perceived training adequacy ($p = 0.039$) were found to have been statistically significantly associated with turnover intention.

Nurses without children reported a higher intention to turnover (30%) compared to those with children (21.8%). It shows that family responsibilities may positively contribute to job retention. Similarly, academic qualifications were found to play a critical role, as nurses with a PCL-level qualification had a lower intention to turnover (23.5%) compared to those with a bachelor's degree or higher (34.6%). Additionally, training adequacy as they perceived it influenced turnover intention, indicating that nurses who perceived their training as inadequate reported higher turnover intention (31%) than those who considered their training adequate (19.8%). In contrast, age ($p = 0.577$), ethnicity ($p = 0.08$), marital status ($p = 0.21$), previous work experience ($p = 0.987$), work setting ($p = 0.124$), number of students ($p = 0.358$), and general training status ($p = 0.461$) did not show statistically significant associations with turnover intention.

Supportive Factors for Retention

Job retention among school nurses is influenced by multiple factors that enhance their commitment to the profession and reduce turnover intention. In this regard, the researcher identified 12 major options. Those were job security, promotion in job, handsome salary, get opportunity for higher study, good physical environment in school, professional development opportunities, have good relationships with school community, get good family support, have an opportunity to transfer in other school, supportive policies for employee (good incentives, awards and leave), personal freedom in decision making in work (health related area), socially respected job. Respondents were allowed to select multiple responses to capture the diverse factors contributing to their intention to leave.

Table 4: Job Retention Supportive Factors of School Nurses (N=519)

Variables	N	Percent
Job security	475	91.5
Promotion in job	330	63.6
Opportunity for higher study	324	62.4
Handsome salary	323	62.2
Supportive policies for employees (good incentives, awards, and leave)	300	57.8
Socially respected job	256	49.3
Good physical environment in school	247	47.6
Opportunity to transfer to another school	232	44.7
Good relationships with the school community	191	36.6
Personal freedom in decision-making at work	181	34.9
Good family support	113	21.8
Professional development opportunities	102	19.7

*Respondents were allowed to select multiple responses to capture the diverse factors contributing to their intention to leave.

Table four presents the twelve potential job retention factors that participants were asked to select as multiple responses to indicate the various elements influencing their decision to remain in their positions. Job security was found to be the most important factor, with 91.5% (n = 475) for their continued role as school nurses. School nurses have given importance to opportunities for promotion (63.6%, n = 330) and provision for further education (62.4%, n = 324). This suggests that prospects for career advancement influence job retention. Financial incentives are also important, with 62.2% (n = 323) for the school nurses indicating that salary is an important factor in their decision to leave or stay. Supportive workplace policies, including incentives, awards, and leave benefits, are important to 57.8% (n = 300) of respondents. The social recognition and respect associated with the nursing profession is also a key factor, with 49.3% (n = 256) acknowledging its importance.

Appropriate work environment is the key for any job and supportive working atmosphere positively contributes to job retention. School nurses have emphasized that good physical environment in schools was important as recorded by 47.6% (n = 247) of nurses, while the opportunity to transfer to another school was also found to be significant by 44.7% (n = 232). Interpersonal relationships also seem important, with 36.6% (n = 191) of respondents indicating that positive relationships with the school community matter for staying in the job. Being able to make decisions i.e., autonomy in decision-making, was also highlighted by 34.9% (n = 181) of the respondents. This indicates that nurses have valued their personal freedom and autonomy in the decision-making process regarding their work-related matters. In addition, family support contributes to job retention for 21.8% (n = 113) of participants. Lastly, professional development opportunities are considered significant by 19.7% (n = 102) of school nurses. These findings indicate that several factors, such as financial security, career advancement, workplace policies, social recognition, and work environment, play important roles in job retention among school nurses.

Table 5 provides the details of the relationship between turnover intention and the demographic factors, as shown in frequency and percentage distributions. If respondents select up to seven options provided (50% of the available choices), they are given a score of 1, which indicates turnover intention. Those selecting more than seven options receive a score of 0, representing retention intention. Chi-square tests and cross-tabulation analyses were conducted to examine the association between turnover intention and 10 background variables: age, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, academic qualification, work experience, work setting, number of students, training, and perceived training adequacy.

It was found that 48.6% of school nurses reported turnover intention, whereas 51.5% expressed retention intention. Among the ten background variables, academic qualification (p = 0.001) and perceived training adequacy (p = 0.002) were statistically significant factors for turnover intention.

Moreover, nurses with a PCL-level qualification were more likely to remain in their job (56.0%) compared to those with a bachelor's degree or higher (40.5%), with a statistically significant p-value of 0.001. Higher academic qualifications

may be associated with an increased likelihood of turnover, potentially due to greater job opportunities elsewhere either in Nepal and/or abroad. Adequate training is crucial for profession like school nurse and this was also identified as a significant factor in this study. Nurses who thought that their training as adequate were more likely to stay in their roles (65.1%) than those who found it inadequate (45.4%) (p=0.002).

Table 5: Job retention supportive factors for the school health nurse job (N = 519)

Variables	1 (Turnover intention) N (%)	0 (Retention intention) N (%)	P-value
Age			
20-25 years	90(46.2)	105(53.8)	0.585
25-30 years	107(48.9)	112(51.1)	
Above 30 years	55(52.4)	50(47.6)	
	252(48.6)	267(51.4)	
Ethnicity			
Brahmin/Chhetri	125(47.2)	140(52.8)	0.422
Janajati	98(52.1)	90(47.9)	
Other ethnicity (Muslim, Dalit and Madhesi)	29(43.9)	37(56.1)	
Marital Status			
Unmarried	104(49.1)	108(50.9)	0.849
Married	148(48.2)	159(51.8)	
Children			
With children	157(50.2)	156(49.8)	0.367
Without children	95(46.1)	111(53.9)	
Academic Qualifications			
PCL Level	161(44.0)	205(56.0)	<0.001
Bachelor or Higher	91(59.5)	62(40.5)	
Work Experience			
6-24 months	112(46.1)	131(53.9)	0.292
More than 24 months	140(50.7)	136(49.3)	
Work Setting			
Urban	130(46.3)	151(53.7)	0.256
Rural	122(51.3)	116(48.7)	
Number of Students			
Less than 300	55(42.6)	74(57.4)	0.39
300-500	67(48.2)	72(51.8)	
500-700	47(53.4)	41(46.6)	
More than 700	83(50.9)	80(49.1)	
Training			
Not received	97(47.5)	107(52.5)	0.712
Received	155(49.2)	160(50.8)	
Training Adequacy			
No adequacy	125(54.6)	104(45.4)	0.002
Adequacy	30(34.9)	56(65.1)	

However, age (p = 0.585), ethnicity (p = 0.422), marital status (p = 0.849), parental status (p = 0.367), work

experience ($p = 0.292$), work setting ($p = 0.256$), number of students ($p = 0.39$), and training ($p = 0.712$) were not significantly important for turnover intention. While there are some differences across these variables, they were not that important enough to indicate a meaningful impact on school nurses' decisions to leave.

Perceived Reasons for Leaving the Job

In order to measure turnover intention, fourteen potential reasons were identified for leaving their job. These reasons included lack of promotion opportunities, job insecurity, limited opportunities for further studies, an unsuitable working environment, insufficient professional skills for the school health program, feelings of loneliness, family-related issues, personal health issues, job opportunities abroad, opportunities for studying abroad, get a job in government hospitals, get a job in private hospitals, distance from family, and low salary.

Table 6 lists the fourteen potential reasons for leaving the job, which capture the various factors influencing their decision to leave their job as a school nurse. The table shows the frequency and percentage distribution of these factors, highlighting their relative significance. The most common reason for leaving was the lack of job security, cited by 90.0% ($n = 467$) of respondents, highlighting instability as a primary concern. 64% ($n = 332$) of participants indicated that the absence of promotion to higher position was a significant factor, suggesting that limited career growth contributes to job dissatisfaction. An unsuitable working environment (55.1%, $n = 286$) and a lack of opportunities for higher education (54.7%, $n = 284$) were frequently mentioned suggesting the importance of workplace conditions and professional development for job retention.

Table 6: Perceived Reasons for Leaving the Job ($N=519$)

Variables	No.	Percent
No job security	467	90.0
No opportunity for promotion at work	332	64.0
Not suitable working environment	286	55.1
No opportunities for higher study	284	54.7
Get job in government hospital	276	53.2
Get study opportunity for abroad	252	48.6
Lack of professional skills for school health program	244	47.0
Get employment abroad	243	46.8
Low salary	227	43.7
Living far away from family	171	32.9
Loneliness	146	28.1
Due to Family problem	114	22.0
Due to personal health problem	99	19.1
Get job in private hospital	35	6.7

*Respondents were allowed to select multiple responses to capture the diverse factors contributing to their intention to leave.

Job opportunities outside the school system was also an

important turnover factor. More than half (53.2%) of the nurses left for employment in government hospitals, while 48.6% mentioned study opportunities abroad as a motivating factor. Additionally, 47.0% of participants indicated a lack of professional skills required for school health programs, and 46.8% showed a preference for employment abroad. This indicates that many school nurses seek alternative career paths with better job prospects.

Lack of adequate salary or financial incentives were also important, as 43.7% ($n = 227$) of respondents indicated low salaries as a reason for leaving. Factors related to their personal and social life were also reported as contributors to their decisions to leave, with 32.9% ($n = 171$) citing the challenge to be living far from family, 28.1% ($n = 146$) experiencing loneliness, 22.0% ($n = 114$) facing family-related issues, and 19.1% ($n = 99$) leaving because of personal health problems. It was found that only 6.7% ($n = 35$) of respondents reported leaving their job to work in private hospitals, including job security, career advancement, work environment, financial stability and personal circumstances. Addressing these can help in improving retention and stability within the profession.

Table 7 provides the association between turnover intention and these demographic factors, analyzed based on frequency and percentage distributions.

Table 7: Perceived Reason for Leaving Job ($N = 519$)

Variables	1 (Turnover intention)	0 (Retention intension)	p-value
	N (%)	N (%)	
Age			
20-25 years	83(42.6)	112(57.4)	0.25
25-30 years	103(47.0)	116(53.0)	
Above 30 years	55(52.4)	50(47.6)	
	241(46.4)	278(53.6)	
Ethnicity			
Brahmin/Chhetri	118(44.5)	147(55.5)	0.24
Janajati	96(51.1)	92(48.9)	
Other ethnicity (Muslim, Dalit and Madhesi)	27(40.9)	39(59.1)	
Marital Status			
Unmarried	106(50.0)	106(50.0)	0.17
Married	135(44.0)	172(56.0)	
Children			
Have not	149(47.6)	164(52.4)	0.51
Have	92(44.7)	114(55.3)	
Academic qualifications			
PCL Level	150(41.0)	216(59.0)	<0.001
Bachelor or Higher	91(59.5)	62(40.5)	
Work Experience			

6-24 months	107(44.0)	136(56.0)	0.30
More than 24 months	134(48.6)	142(51.6)	
Work Setting			
Urban	129(45.9)	152(54.1)	0.79
Rural	112(47.1)	126(52.9)	
Number of Students			
Less than 300	55(42.6)	74(57.4)	0.39
300-500	60(43.2)	79(56.8)	
500-700	46(52.3)	42(47.7)	
More than 700	80(49.1)	83(50.9)	
Training			
Not received	89(43.6)	115(56.4)	0.30
Received	152(48.3)	163(51.7)	
Training Adequacy			
No adequacy	114(49.8)	115(50.2)	0.37
Adequacy	38(42.2)	48(55.8)	

The findings indicate that 46.4% of respondents reported turnover intention, whereas 53.6% reported retention intention. Among the background variables analyzed, academic qualification is the only statistically significant factor ($p = 0.000$). Specifically, nurses with a Certificate-level qualification are more likely to remain in their positions (59.0%) than those with a Bachelor's degree or higher (40.5%). Higher academic qualifications may be associated with an increased likelihood of turnover, possibly due to better employment opportunities elsewhere. In this context, academic qualifications are both statistically significant ($p = 0.000$) and not statistically significant. Nurses with PCL level education tend to be more likely to stay in their jobs (59.0%) compared to those with a Bachelor's degree or higher (40.5%), ($p = 0.001$) indicating that higher academic qualifications may be associated with a higher likelihood of turnover, possibly due to better job opportunities elsewhere.

The remaining nine factors were found to be insignificant. Those were age ($p = 0.259$), ethnicity ($p = 0.245$), marital status ($p = 0.176$), children have or have not (0.511), work experience ($p = 0.303$), work setting ($p = 0.793$), number of students ($p = 0.39$), training (0.302) and training adequacy ($p = 0.376$) did not exhibit statistically significant associations with turnover intention. Although variations are observed among these variables, they are not statistically significant and do not meaningfully influence school nurses' decisions to leave their positions.

Turnover Intention Based on Composite Score

Turnover intention was assessed using four items that included: (a) intention for job continuity based on planned years of service, (b) opportunities that may trigger turnover, (c) supportive factors for job retention, and (d) perceived reasons for leaving the position. The figure 1 illustrates the distribution of school nurses across five turnover intention categories based on four-item composite score measured level of turnover intention in their current job. Only 8.7% of school nurses reported no intention to leave (T10I) in all four items. At the same time, 91% expressed at least one indicator of turnover intention. Among them, 32.6%

reported Turnover Intention in One Item (T11I).

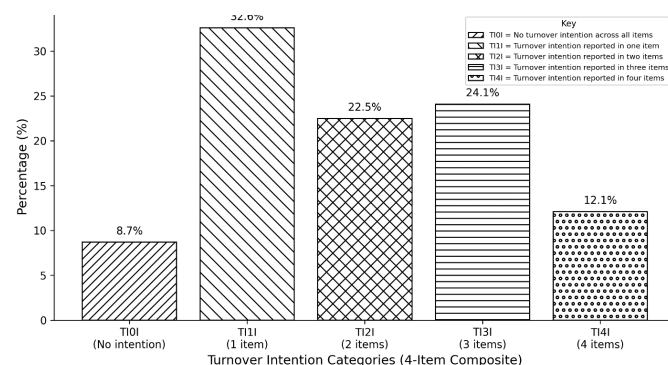


Figure 1: Turnover Intention among School Nurses based on four-item Composite Score by using chi-square test (N=519)

A high proportion of school nurses (58.7%) fell into moderate to high turnover intention categories. The data indicate that turnover intention is not only widespread but also increasing. A large proportion of nurses' turnover intention align with national guideline and media reports, such as contractual appointments (existing government policy), limited career progression, inadequate or unfair salary, poor working environment (Dahal & Poudel, January 14, 2026; Government of Nepal, 2081; Himal Press, 2025, December 25; Kantipur Television, 2025, December 21). Data reflected extensive job instability within the school nurse program.

Composite Score on School Nurse Turnover Intention

This study assessed turnover intention among school nurses using four specific items. Initially, each item was analyzed separately to examine its association with ten demographic variables using the chi-square test and cross-tabulation. Subsequently, the combined results of all four items were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA to examine associations with 10 variables, overall turnover intention among school nurses (Table 8).

The analysis of turnover intention among 519 respondents reveals several statistically significant relationships between background characteristics and the composite score of turnover intention, with higher values indicating greater intention to leave, among these ten variables, ethnicity, marital status, and whether individuals have academic qualifications and adequate training were significant.

Ethnicity was a significant predictor ($p = 0.05$), with Janajati respondents reporting the highest turnover intention (Mean = 2.09), followed by Brahman/Chhetri (Mean = 1.98). Additionally, post-hoc test results reveal a significant difference between Janajati ($p = 0.03$) and other ethnicities (Muslim, Dalit, Madhesi) ($p = 0.03$), whereas this result was significant for Brahmin and Chhetri. Marital status was significantly associated with turnover intention ($p = 0.047$), with unmarried individuals exhibiting higher turnover intention (Mean = 2.10) than married individuals (Mean = 1.89).

Table 8: Composite Turnover Intention Scores by Background Characteristics of School Nurses using ANOVA test (N=519)

Background variables	No.	Mean	p-value
Age			
20-25	195	1.98	0.407
25-30	119	2.04	
Above 30	105	1.85	
Ethnicity			
Brahman/Chhetri	265	1.98	0.05
Janajati	188	2.09	
Other ethnicity (Muslim, Dalit and Madhesi)	66	1.68	
Marital Status			
Unmarried	212	2.1	0.04
Married	307	1.89	
Children			
Without children	313	2.08	0.01
With children	206	1.83	
Academic Qualifications			
PCL Level	366	1.84	<0.001
Bachelor or Higher	153	2.03	
Work Experience			
6-24 months	243	1.95	0.64
More than 24 months	276	2.00	
Work Setting			
Urban	281	1.96	0.62
Rural	238	2.01	
Number of Students			
Less than 300	129	1.87	0.54
300-500	139	1.95	
500-700	88	2.07	
More than 700	163	2.04	
Training			
Not received	204	1.96	0.77
Received	315	1.99	
Training Adequacy			
No adequacy	229	2.109	0.004
Adequacy	86	1.68	

The item 'with or without children' was also reported to have a significant relationship ($p = 0.016$), with nurses without children reporting higher turnover intention (Mean = 2.08) than those with children (Mean = 1.83). A strong relationship was observed with academic qualifications ($p < 0.001$), where those holding a Bachelor's degree or higher had greater turnover intention (Mean = 2.03) than those with only a PCL level qualification (Mean = 1.84). Lastly, training adequacy was significantly related to turnover

intention ($p = 0.004$), with participants who perceived their training as inadequate reporting higher turnover intention (Mean = 2.11) than those who perceived it as adequate (Mean = 1.68). The remaining five characteristics, age ($p = 0.40$), number of students ($p = 0.54$), work experience ($p = 0.64$), work setting ($p = 0.62$), and training status (received vs. not received) ($p = 0.77$), were found to be insignificant.

Discussion

Turnover intention includes plans to resign, plans to resign, transfer to another organization, migrate abroad, or leave the profession altogether (Hayes et al., 2012). The results indicate that turnover is a serious issue in the school nurse program in Nepal. The researcher also observed high turnover during the data collection phase, as she contacted all school nurses to request completion of the survey. During the telephone conversation, many school nurses reported that some of their colleagues had already left for foreign employment or were applying for possible migration through consultancy services. According to recent data, 52,000 nurses emigrated in the past 23 years in Nepal (Dahal & Poudel, January 14, 2026). This significant migration to the UK, Australia, the USA, and other European countries, as well as large-scale brain drain, is also indicated by other studies (Chhetri & Koirala, 2017).

Efforts were made in this study to determine the turnover intention of school nurses and the associated factors. A lack of job security was identified as the primary driver of school nurse turnover in Nepal. Nurses reported that their colleagues left the job in search of permanent positions, either in hospitals or government offices. As for turnover intention, it was particularly high among school nurses who were young, unmarried, or without children. Other factors that were found to have contributed to the high turnover of school nurses include employment opportunities in foreign countries, attractive incentives elsewhere, and opportunities for professional growth (Adhikari, 2024; Kantipur Television, 2025, December 21).

School nurses reported that permanent appointment, promotion opportunities like those for schoolteachers, higher education opportunities, and additional incentives could enhance their retention in schools. All school nurses strongly felt that their presence in school and their services have contributed positively to students' health and behaviors. According to them, students approach them to share their health concerns, and their support helps students improve their health.

This global shortage of nurses has become a primary concern for school nurse programs (Maughan & Baltag, 2024). As this study indicates, the salaries of Nepali nurses are exceptionally low compared with those in other developed countries. Adhikari (2024) highlights that Nepali nurses are leaving their jobs because they feel overworked and underpaid. A new program in the United Kingdom that recruits Nepali nurses has exacerbated nurse shortages in Nepal by attracting nurses with the promise of higher pay and improved working conditions in the UK. Such a recruitment practice has raised concerns about the severe shortage of nurses in Nepal.

Studies show that job satisfaction plays an important role in turnover intention (Khan et al., 2020). Factors such as lack of job security, limited career opportunities, and inadequate training opportunities (Murrells et al., 2008) reduce satisfaction and affect program sustainability (Sharma et al., 2025). In this study, around one-third (36.4%) of school nurses have indicated an intention to migrate, and many are already leaving the country to find better opportunities abroad. Studies conducted at Chitwan Teaching Hospital (Sharma et al., 2024) and Lalitpur Patan (Shrestha et al., 2024) found that 57% and 50% of nurses, respectively, intended to leave. A meta-study by Elfios et al. (2024) reported turnover intention among Ethiopian nurses ranging from 31% to 81% because of resource constraints, infrastructure limitations, and disparities in healthcare access. A recent study among school nurses in the Bagmati Province (Tuitui et al., 2025) reports a turnover rate of 6.4%.

The turnover rate among novice nurses in the United States ranges from 35% to 60%. The main factors influencing turnover in this case are salary, workload, and work hours (Bohlender, 2014; Brady, 2007; Zborowska-Dulat et al., 2018). In Ghana, 69% health workers reported turnover intention (Bonenberger et al., 2014). Several studies have shown that nurses with low job satisfaction are more likely to leave the organization as soon as possible (Aiken et al., 2011; Coomber & Barriball, 2007; Hayes et al., 2006; Heinen et al., 2013). Similarly, Nenko and Vata (2014) reported that 84% of health professionals intended to leave due to low pay.

Decisions to leave are influenced by both personal and organizational factors. Commonly reported reasons include job dissatisfaction, limited opportunities for career advancement, poor work-life balance, insufficient compensation, and unfavorable working conditions (Hom & Griffeth, 1995). Employees may also seek other opportunities with stronger financial incentives, such as increased salaries or improved benefits (Allen, 2008). A lack of professional growth or career advancement opportunities in their current roles can also encourage individuals to pursue positions with more promising career opportunities (Harrison & Hubbard, 2013). Additionally, limited availability of resources for nurses, which affects both their psychological and physical well-being, may influence them to consider leaving the organization or the profession completely (de Oliveira et al., 2017).

Factors related to the workplace also influence turnover decisions significantly. Inadequate support from the management, high work-related stress, poor interpersonal relationships, and organizational instability are some critical factors that can negatively affect job satisfaction and make employees consider leaving (Griffeth et al., 2000). Some personal reasons, which include the need to relocate, family responsibilities, or the desire to pursue one's education, can also impact the turnover decision (Mobley, 1977). Understanding the primary reasons behind job leaving is essential for organizations, as it helps identify areas that need improvement. Addressing factors such as pay, incentives, career opportunities, and organizational support can help employers reduce turnover and improve overall job satisfaction (Tett & Meyer, 1993).

The existing mode of appointment through a short-term contractual basis and the absence of long-term job security led to reduced job satisfaction (Sharma et al., 2025), which in turn contributes to increased turnover intention. Limited career growth opportunities further contribute to this dissatisfaction, particularly among nurses with bachelor's or higher qualifications, who often look for employment more appropriate to their academic qualifications. Getie et al. (2015) found that 59% of school nurses indicated an intention to leave their job due to low salaries, limited training opportunities, and limited promotion possibilities. Graduate nurses were found to have had a higher intention-to-turnover rate than nurses with a diploma.

Literature on school nurses shows that they have difficulty to make adjustment in the educational setting (Maughan & Baltag, 2024) in the school context. Unlike in the hospital context, where health workers typically work in teams and rely on peer support for most of the decision-making, school nurses have to work in isolation, and they often have to serve as the sole health professional within a school. This kind of isolation might contribute to feelings of loneliness and detachment from their profession. Moreover, in the initial phase of their role as school nurses, they experienced anxiety to manage the complex health issues in school, and they needed to independently handle diverse health conditions without immediate consultation or collegial support. Such a situation highlights the transition difficulties nurses face as they move from collaborative hospital environments to relatively autonomous roles in school health services. This shows that job satisfaction does not necessarily lead to strong motivation for exceptional performance and the productivity of organizational workers appears to have little or no connection to the personal goals they pursue (Brayfield & Crockett, 1955).

A Policy Dialogue on Institutionalizing Health-Promoting Schools and Comprehensive Sexuality Education was jointly organized by the Ministry of Health & Population, in collaboration with other development partners, on September 5, 2025. The author was also a part of this dialogue. In this event, the school nurse program was a key agenda and most participants, including government officials, head teachers, and representatives of development partners, had a consensus that a school nurse program is absolutely needed in Nepal, however they raised concerns regarding the program's sustainability, particularly in reducing school nurse turnover. The school nurse program may appear somewhat expensive from a resource perspective initially, but the absence of a school nurse will be more costly in the long run for the country. This highlights the need to recognize the importance of the school nurse program among all its key stakeholders.

Conclusion

Findings of this study demonstrate that school nurse retention is a critical issue with only 8.7% (n=45) reporting no intention to leave their jobs. A high majority (91%) report at least one indicator of turnover intention, with 32.6% reporting one item, 22.5% two items, 24.1% three items, and 12.1% indicating all four turnover-intention items.

There is a significant association in age ($p = 0.005$), ethnicity ($p = 0.019$), parental status ($p = 0.001$), academic

qualification ($p = 0.001$), and perceived training adequacy ($p = 0.032$), with younger nurses having higher levels of qualifications, and nurses without children reporting a higher possibility of leaving. However, older nurses and those with family responsibilities show relatively greater job stability and want to continue as school nurses. Work setting (urban/rural), workload to serve more children, prior work experience, and training are not significantly associated with turnover intention ($p > 0.05$), indicating that turnover risk is driven more by other factors related to employment and professional development than by workload or geographical locations. The results indicate that retention is influenced more by personal circumstances than by favorable employment conditions, suggesting that without reforms to job security, career growth opportunities, meaningful professional development, and salary increases, retention will not improve.

Implications

As a very low percentage of nurses have indicated their plan to continue in their jobs, such a high turnover intention indicates a big retention issue posing a threat to the continuity and sustainability of school health services within Nepal's One School, One Nurse program, under the broader school health program framework.

Findings of this study also highlight the need for policy reforms to address the retention issue among school nurses and to motivate them to continue in their roles. They should consider strategies in some key areas, such as establishing permanent positions, introducing career ladders, and linking professional development to promotion opportunities. These provisions are essential to retain highly qualified nurses in Nepal and support the children in schools. Furthermore, school nurse training programs should be made competency-based and it needs to be aligned with actual school health service needs. This will then support the children in their educational journey.

It is now time to think of the retention strategies that should target younger and highly educated nurses, who appear to be positive about the program's future sustainability. Unless the critical areas such as job security, professional recognition, and career advancement opportunities are addressed, the One School One Nurse program is likely to face and experience high school nurse turnover, jeopardizing the service continuity, which will then affect the student health, and learning outcomes.

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Authorship

MGG: Design of the study, data collection, analysis, interpretation and drafting. BD: Review, editing, and critical

revision to finalize the manuscript.

Availability of Data

Data will be available upon a valid request.

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