

## The effect of career anchors, job-esteem, and work engagement on retention intention in hospital nurses

Kim Miran<sup>1</sup>, Song Ji-Ah<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>College of Nursing, Konyang University; jasang@konyang.ac.kr (S.J.A.).

**Abstract:** This descriptive study aimed to analyze the effect of career anchors, job esteem, and work engagement on retention intention among hospital nurses while identifying factors contributing to retention intention in this group. The study involved 174 nurses with over six months of clinical experience employed at three general hospitals. The dominant career anchor among hospital nurses was security/stability (4.59), followed by life-style (4.52), technical/functional competence (4.13), and service/dedication (4.12). Hospital nurses' retention intention was predicted by the entrepreneurial creativity ( $\beta=0.289$ ,  $p<.001$ ), job-esteem ( $\beta=0.268$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and job engagement ( $\beta=-0.295$ ,  $p<.001$ ) of career anchors. These factors collectively accounted for 35.2% of the variance ( $F=10.360$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Conclusion: In the future, we aim to conduct studies analyzing factors influencing retention intention and extract trends based on career anchor types and sample groups. This will inform detailed career development and personnel management policies.

**Keywords:** Career mobility, Intention, Nurses, Respect, Work engagement.

### 1. Introduction

As of 2020, the turnover rate of nurses in Korea is 14.2%, and the average working years of all nurses is reported to be about 7.6 years, making it difficult to solve the underlying shortage of nurses if the retention of nurses by inducing long-term service is not addressed [1]. In addition, when experienced nurses leave the organization, it is necessary to spend a lot of money on recruitment, selection, and training of new nursing personnel, and it can act as a vicious cycle that increases the turnover rate of remaining nurses by increasing the workload of colleagues [2].

Therefore, hospital organizations and nursing managers should identify the actual influencing factors of retention intentions and devise strategic measures for organizational management to strengthen them in order to secure competent nursing staff and provide quality nursing care.

Retention intention refers to a nurse's intention to stop looking for a new job or to stay in their current nursing practice [3]. Previous studies have shown that various factors affect retention, such as nurses' job satisfaction and work engagement were correlated with retention intention [4], the higher the manager's perceived authentic leadership, the more innovation-oriented, relationship-oriented, and task-oriented the nursing organizational culture, the higher the retention intention [5]. And job esteem among general hospital nurses was found to be the most significant influence on retention intention [6], and work engagement was analyzed as a psycho-emotional factor that directly affects retention intention [7]. Overseas studies have suggested various variables as influencing factors of retention intention, such as age and job attendance [8], age, job satisfaction, work experience, and teamwork [9] as variables related to retention intention.

Job esteem refers to the beliefs and values associated with one's job, such as positivity and pride in one's work, perceptions of job reward and life [10]. Higher levels of job esteem among nurses are associated with higher retention intentions and job satisfaction, which ultimately enables nurses to

provide quality nursing care [11]. It has also been shown that higher levels of job esteem, in which nurses feel professional and competent, are recognized in their jobs, and respect their professional values, result in higher retention intentions [12]. As such, it has been analyzed as a factor that not only improves nursing performance but also enables nurse retention.

Whereas, work engagement refers to a positive, energetic, and committed state of mind toward one's work and is a state of being fully engaged in one's job, using high levels of energy while investing effort and time in one's job with a positive attitude and a strong sense of belonging [13]. When nurses feel positive and confident about their job and their work through the perception of the value of their work, they are motivated to do their job and experience well-being [14]. Therefore, increasing work engagement enhances positive feelings and perceptions of the nursing job [7], which in turn increases retention intentions.

In recent years, the concept of career anchors for self-directed career management of individuals has gained importance due to the increasingly diverse and complex healthcare environment and increased competition. These career anchors are defined as competencies, motivations, and values that shape professional self-concept, serve as consistent guides in nursing job selection and career planning, and are stable, job-related behaviors that do not lead to job abandonment [15]. In addition, career anchors are categorized into eight types by Schein, a leading theorist, based on an individual's preferences and values such as job, salary, and career system: 1) technical/functional competence anchor, 2) general managerial competence anchor, 3) autonomy/independence anchor, 4) security/stability anchor, 5) entrepreneurial creativity anchor, 6) service/dedication anchor, 7) pure challenge anchor, and 8) lifestyle anchor [16]. Previous studies on career anchors include analyzing career anchors and educational needs for career development [17], analyzing the relationship between career anchors, job disposition, career motivation, and retention intention [18]. Previous studies have reported that individuals are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs when they are performing tasks that are consistent with their career anchors, and as a result, they are more likely to stay in the organization [19], so it is predicted that the concept of career anchors is related to retention intention.

Therefore, this study aimed to identify the degree of career anchor type, job esteem, and work engagement of hospital nurses, which are predicted to influence nurses' retention intention, and to identify the relationship between career anchor type, job esteem, work engagement, and retention intention to provide evidence for nurses' career development and efficient nursing manpower management.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Study Design

This study is a descriptive survey study to identify the extent and relationship between career anchor and job esteem, work engagement, and retention intention among hospital nurses, and to analyze the factors that affect retention intention.

### 2.2. Participants

The sample size was calculated using the G\*power 3.1.9.7 program developed according to Cohen's sampling formula to calculate the size required for multiple regression analysis. With an effect size of .15, a significance level of .05, a power of .95, and 10 predictors including career anchor, job respect, and job enthusiasm, excluding general characteristics, the sample size was calculated to be 172, and a total of 192 questionnaires were distributed considering a 10% dropout rate. A total of 174 questionnaires were used for the final data analysis after excluding incomplete responses.

### 2.3. Research Tools

#### 2.3.1. Career Anchor

Career anchors were measured using the Career Orientation Inventory tool developed by Schein (1990) and modified and supplemented by Yoon (2004) [20]. Responses to each item are on a 6-point

Likert scale ranging from 1 for "never" to 6 for "always," with higher scores indicating the type of career anchor the individual values. In Yoon's study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .79$ , in this study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .86$ .

### 2.3.2. Job-Esteem

Job-esteem was measured with the standardized Job-Esteem Scale for Hospital Nurse (JES-HN) developed by Choi and Jung (2020) [21]. This is a 28-item instrument each item is answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for "not at all true" to 5 for "very true," with higher scores indicating higher levels of professional respect. Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$  at the time of development and Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$  in this study.

### 2.3.3. Work Engagement

Work engagement was measured by using the Utercht Work Engagement Scale developed by Schaufeli & Bakker (2003) [22] and the tool used by Song (2017) for nurses [23]. The instrument consists of 17 items, and is a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for 'never' to 7 for 'always', with higher scores indicating higher job engagement. In Song's (2017) study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$ , and in this study, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ .

### 2.3.4. Retention Intention

Retention intention was measured with the Nurse's Retention Index developed by Cowin [4] and modified and supplemented by Kim (2006) [24]. The instrument consists of 6 items, each with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for 'not at all' to 5 for 'very much so'. Negative items 3 and 6 were reverse-phrased, and scores ranged from 6 to 30, with higher scores indicating higher retention intentions. Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$  in Kim (2006) and Cronbach's  $\alpha = .90$  in this study.

## 2.4. Data Collection and Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of K University (\*\*\*-\*\*\*-\*\*\*-\*\*\*). The data collection period was from December 5, 2022 to December 17, 2022. With the help of the head of the nursing department of the institution, the questionnaire was distributed to the subjects who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study after giving them sufficient understanding and explanation of the study.

## 2.5. Data Analysis Method

The collected data was analyzed using SPSS 28.0 Program. The general characteristics of the study subjects were analyzed by frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The relationship between nurses' career anchor, job esteem, work engagement, and retention intention was analyzed by Pearson correlation coefficient, and the factors affecting retention intention were analyzed by multiple regression.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Participants' General Characteristics and Career Anchors, Job-Esteem, Work Engagement, And Retention Intentions

The general characteristics of the subjects, such as age and clinical experience (Table 1), as well as their career anchor scores, are shown below (Table 2).

**Table 1.**  
General characteristics of participants.

(N=174)		
Characteristics	Categories	n(%) or M±SD
Age (yr)		32.2±8.56
Total career (Month)		99.76±92.04
Marital status	Single	112 (64.4)
	Married	62 (35.6)
Education degree	Associate	25 (14.4)
	Bachelor	136 (78.1)
	Master or higher	13 (7.5)
Department	Ward	117 (67.2)
	Etc.	57 (32.8)
Position	Nurse	132 (75.9)
	Charge nurse	26 (14.9)
	Head nurse	16 (9.2)
Work type	Shift work	130 (74.7)
	Full-time	44 (25.3)
Experience job change	Yes	92 (52.9)
	No	82 (47.1)

**Note:** M=Mean; SD=Standard deviation.

**Table 2.**  
Career anchor, job-esteem, work engagement, retention of participants.

(N=174)				
Characteristics	Categories	M±SD	Range	MR±SD
Career anchor	TF	16.53±3.19	4~24	4.13±0.80
	GM	12.50±3.70	4~24	3.13±0.92
	AU	15.81±3.45	4~24	3.95±0.86
	SE	18.36±2.82	4~24	4.59±0.71
	EC	9.63±3.11	3~18	3.21±1.04
	SV	16.48±3.49	4~24	4.12±0.87
	CH	10.45±3.03	3~18	3.48±1.01
	LS	22.61±3.68	5~30	4.52±0.74
	Total	122.38±14.06	31~186	
Job-esteem		62.63±14.44	28~140	
Work engagement		63.98±16.59	17~119	
Retention		16.22±4.95	6~30	

**Note:** M=Mean; MR=Mean Rating; SD=Standard deviation; TF=Technical/Functional Competence; GM=General Managerial Competence; AU=Autonomy/Independence; SE=Security/Stability; EC=Entrepreneurial Creativity; SV=Service/Dedication to a Cause; CH=Pure Challenge; LS=Life-style.

**Table 3.**  
Correlations among view of the career anchor, job-esteem, work engagement, retention.

(N=174)

Variables	Career anchor								Job-esteem	Work engagement	Retention
	TF	GM	AU	SE	EC	SV	CH	LS			
TF	1										
GM	0.361**	1									
AU	0.060	.240**	1								
SE	0.209**	-0.077	0.214**	1							
EC	0.368**	0.499**	0.210**	-0.059	1						
SV	0.361**	0.143	-0.111	0.153*	0.233**	1					
CH	0.367**	0.420**	-0.043	-0.088	0.484**	0.484**	1				
LS	-0.053	-0.065	0.315**	0.414**	-0.091	0.168*	-0.073	1			
Job-esteem	-0.355**	-0.067	0.130	-0.287**	0.024	-0.294**	-0.119	-0.114	1		
Work engagement	0.423**	0.252**	-0.152*	0.176*	0.180*	0.412**	0.334**	-0.004	-0.567**	1	
Retention	-0.277**	-0.082	0.159*	-0.182*	0.168*	-0.216**	-0.054	0.024	0.506**	-0.488**	1

**Note:** TF=Technical/Functional Competence; GM=General Managerial Competence; AU=Autonomy/Independence; SE=Security/Stability; EC=Entrepreneurial Creativity; SV=Service/Dedication to a Cause; CH=Pure Challenge; LS=Life-style;  
\* = Significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ); \*\* = Significant difference ( $p < 0.01$ )

### 3.2. Correlations Between Career Anchors, Job Esteem, Work Engagement, And Retention Intentions of Subjects

The results of the correlation analysis between the eight sub-domains of career anchor, which are the variables of this study, and job esteem, work engagement, and retention intention are as follows (Table 3).

### 3.3. Influence of Subjects' Career Anchor, Job Esteem, and Work Engagement on Retention Intention

The multiple regression analysis showed that the career anchor subscales entrepreneurial creativity ( $p<.001$ ), job esteem ( $p<.001$ ), and work engagement ( $p<.001$ ) had a significant effect on retention intention. The higher the entrepreneurial creativity ( $B=.460$ ) and job esteem ( $B=.092$ ) items and the lower the work engagement ( $B=-.088$ ), the higher the retention intention, with 35.2% of the explanatory power of these variables. work engagement ( $\beta=-.295$ ) had the largest impact on retention. (Table 4).

**Table 4.**  
Influencing factors on retention.

(N=174)						
Variable	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	VIF
Constant	14.841	4.213		3.523	<0.001	
Entrepreneurial creativity	0.460	0.124	0.289	3.719	<0.001	1.606
Job-esteem	0.092	0.027	0.268	3.370	<0.001	1.683
Work engagement	-0.088	0.025	-0.295	-3.535	<0.001	1.852

**Note:** Adj  $R^2=0.352$ ,  $F=10.360$ ,  $p<0.001$ .

## 4. Discussion

The subjects' career anchor type scores were as follows: security/stability 4.59 out of 6, lifestyle 4.52, technical/functional 4.13, and service/dedication 4.12. This is similar to the results of a study of hospital nurses that found the top career anchor types to be technical/functional, safe/stable, autonomous/independent, and lifestyle [25], and other previous studies that found the top career anchor types to be safe/stable, functional, lifestyle, and service/dedication [18]. In addition, a study of nursing students found that overall, nurses' top career anchor types were similar to our results [17]. These results confirm the existence of career anchor types representative of the nursing profession in other studies, and suggest that hospital organizations and nurse managers need to further analyze and understand the characteristics and needs for career development according to career anchor types.

In a related study, it was reported that specifically reflecting the evaluation of individual employees in career development has a positive effect on employees' career anchors [26]. This means that career development should be developed to match the development direction of nurses by utilizing the characteristics of the department they work in.

Retention intentions were statistically significantly positively correlated with job esteem and negatively correlated with the autonomous/independent and entrepreneurial creativity subdomains of the career anchors, and negatively correlated with the technical/functional, security/stability, and service/dedication subdomains. This differs from a previous study of hospital nurses in which retention intention was positively correlated with job fit and career motivation, but not with career anchors [18].

Other previous studies have also reported a relationship between an individual's career anchor type and career growth [20], and it can be inferred that as individuals recognize their career anchor type, set career goals, and strive to achieve them with career attachment, their sense of job esteem is strengthened, which may ultimately lead to retention intention. In addition, it is necessary for individuals to align their careers with organizational values and strive for continuous learning and

career development, and it is thought that nurses who are more passionate about their work in the nursing field will eventually contribute to the improvement of quality nursing services.

The entrepreneurial creativity item, job respect, and work engagement, which are subscales of the career anchors of hospital nurses, had a significant effect on retention intention ( $p < .001$ ), explaining 35.2% of hospital nurses' retention intention. This is different from previous studies that found that entrepreneurial creativity items were more self-directed but did not have a high degree of career commitment [17], and this study suggests that entrepreneurial creativity items have the characteristics of wanting to be promoted in management positions and have a job with a high level of responsibility. Since they want to become managers at a higher level than functional jobs and ultimately want jobs where they can exercise their problem analysis skills, human relations skills, and emotional self-control as managers [27], it is believed that placing them in challenging and autonomous jobs and ensuring fair promotions based on objective data will be a way to increase their retention intention.

In addition, an unusual finding in this study was that the lower the work engagement, the higher the retention intention, which is contrary to the results of many previous studies that reported low turnover and high organizational performance in groups with high work engagement [28]. This suggests that it is necessary to clearly understand the concept of work engagement in Korean nursing organizations, where it is essential to secure excellent nursing personnel, and to evaluate whether it is being measured appropriately and to identify the concept of work engagement appropriate to nursing organizations to establish accurate perceptions of hospital nurses. In addition, it is necessary to be cautious about the generalization of the results because they may represent the characteristics of the medical institution population and job characteristics that are limited to the subjects of this study, so it is necessary to verify them through a repeat study with other subjects using the same measurement tool in the future.

## Copyright:

© 2024 by the authors. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## References

- [1] Survey of hospital nursing personnel deployment status [Internet]. Seoul: Hospital Nurses Association; 2021 [cited 2021 Jun 16]. Available from: [https://khna.or.kr/home/pds/utilities.php?bo\\_table=board1&wr\\_id=8115](https://khna.or.kr/home/pds/utilities.php?bo_table=board1&wr_id=8115)
- [2] Lee E H, Cho KS, Son HM. A Study of hospital nurse's intention to keep nursing job. *Journal of Korean Clinical Nursing Research*. 2014;20(1):15-27. <http://doi.org/10.22650/JKCNR.2014.20.1.15>
- [3] Cowin L. The effects of nurses' job satisfaction on retention: an Australian perspective. *Journal of Nursing Administration*. 2002;32(5):283-291.
- [4] Son HM, Lee EH, Cho KS. Affecting factors of new nurse's intention to retention in hospitals, *Journal of Muscle and Joint Health*. 2017;24(3):205-216. <http://doi.org/10.5953/JMJH.2017.24.3.205>
- [5] Park JH, Kim JA. Effects of emotional labor and work environment on retention intention in nurses. *Asian Journal of Beauty and Cosmetology*. 2016;14(4):437-448. <http://doi.org/10.20402/ajbc.2016.0077>
- [6] No JY. Factors affecting the retention to work as nurses in general hospitals [master's thesis]. Pusan: Pusan National University; 2022.
- [7] Lee MK. A Structural equation model for nurse's intention to stay: focusing on psycho-emotional factors [dissertation]. Daejeon: Eulji University; 2022.
- [8] Reitz OE, Anderson MA, Hill PD. Job embeddedness and nurse retention. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*. 2010;34(3):190-200. <http://doi.org/10.1097/NAQ.0b013e3181e702b7>
- [9] Tourangeau AE, Cranley LA. Nurse intention to remain employed: Understanding and strengthening determinants. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 2006;55(4):497-509. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2006.03934.x>
- [10] Miller DG. Effect of values-based training on job-esteem and hospitality values of front-line hotel employees [master's thesis]. Salt Lake City: Utah University; 1999.
- [11] Choi HJ, Jung KI. Concept analysis of hospital nurses' job-esteem. *Journal of Korean Academy of Nursing Administration*. 2019;25(4):302-316. <http://doi.org/10.1111/jkana.2019.25.4.302>
- [12] Lee YN. Effects of Nursing Work Environment, Career Motivation, Job-esteem on Intention to Stay of Hospital Nurses [master's thesis]. Cheonungju: Chungbuk University; 2020.
- [13] Schaufeli WB, Salanova M, González-Romá V, Bakker AB. The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness studies*. 2002;3(1):71-92.

- [14] Choi SY, Lee MA. Embeddedness and nursing professionalism on intent to stay in hospital nurses. *Journal of Korean Academy of Nursing Administration*. 2018;24(3):234-244. <http://doi.org/10.11111/jkana.2018.24.3.234>
- [15] Oh JW, Kim MR. Conceptual analysis of career anchors of nurses. *Journal of Korean Academy of Nursing*. 2023;53(1):28-38. <http://doi.org/10.4040/jkan.22091>
- [16] Schein EH. Career anchors revisited: Implications for career development in the 21st century. *Academy of Management Executive*. 1996;10(4): 80-88. <http://doi.org/10.5465/ame.1996.3145321>
- [17] Lee JA, Park SH. Analysis of educational needs for career anchor and career development of nursing student. *Journal of the Korea Academia-Industrial Cooperation Society*. 2018;19(4): 293-300. <http://doi.org/10.6762/KAIS.2018.19.4.293>
- [18] Oh JW, Kim MR. Analysis of the relationship between career anchors, job embeddedness, career motivation, and retention intention of clinical nurses. *Journal of Industrial Convergence*. 2023;21(7): 105-114. <http://doi.org/10.22678/JIC.2023.21.7.105>
- [19] Feldman DC, Bolino MC. Careers within careers: reconceptualizing the nature of career anchors and their consequences. *Human Resource Management Review*. 1996;6(2):89-112.
- [20] Yoon HJ. Relationship between career anchor types and Enneagram personality types. *Journal of Enneagram Studies*. 2004;1(2):33-64.
- [21] Choi HJ, Jung KI. Development of job-esteem scale for Korean nurses. *Journal of Korean Academy of Nursing*. 2020;50(3):444-458. <http://doi.org/10.4040/jkan.19209>
- [22] Schaufeli WB, Bakker AB, Salanova M. Utrecht work engagement scale-9. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*. 2006[Database record]. <http://doi.org/10.1037/t05561-000>
- [23] Song EJ. Mediating effects of job satisfaction and work engagement in the relationship between nursing workplace spirituality and nursing job performance [master's thesis]. Seoul: Sahmyook University; 2017.
- [24] Kim MJ. The effect of nursing organizational culture on nurses' intention of retention [master's thesis]. Seoul: Hanyang University; 2006.
- [25] Lee SM, Kim HG. Relationships between nurses' career orientation and organizational commitment: an empirical analysis. *Journal of Human Resource Management Research*. 2010;17(1):151-171.
- [26] Shim YK, Seo WS. A study on influence of organizational effectiveness through career anchor and career effectiveness according to the direction of CDP (Career Development Program). *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism*. 2009;18(1):39-57.
- [27] Kim SY. Career anchor and organizational effectiveness [master's thesis]. Seoul: Dongguk University; 1995.
- [28] Abdelhadi N, Drach-Zahavy A. Promoting patient care: work engagement as a mediator between ward service climate and patient-centred care. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 2012;68(6):1276-87.