

Planning to Leave?

Assessing Post-Pandemic Healthcare Worker Satisfaction

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Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare workers have been instrumental to the helping save the lives of hundreds of thousands of infected patients. However, there has been an increase in concerns regarding the number of healthcare workers considering leaving healthcare due to burnout and stress caused by this pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the importance of primary care and the need for greater support for healthcare workers. Healthcare workers play a particularly important role as they are often the first point-of-contact for patients and their families. However, support given to healthcare workers over the last few years remains a principal concern. Existing research has suggested that after the COVID-19 pandemic has brought declines in mental health and the accumulation of physical and mental exhaustion. Nurse turnover is high and there is an increases shortages. This study analyzes survey results from the Morning Consult which looks at healthcare workers who have worked during the pandemic. It explores the mental and physical health conditions of healthcare

professionals as well as aspects of their work and personal life. This data was then used to is then used to draw insights regarding healthcare worker job satisfaction after the pandemic.

Keywords

Healthcare Workers, COVID-19, Turnover, Mental-Health

1 Introduction

The imbalances in accessibility to healthcare have become more apparent due to COVID-19. There are growing concerns about the state of the healthcare system and the support devoted to trained healthcare professionals. Support for trained healthcare professionals has drastically dwindled especially after the experiences of COVID and its effects on a global scale. COVID is not the only factor to blame for the growing disparity, these problems existed well before 2019. In fact, low retention and shortages have been reported for the past 20 years (Bae, 2022). There are multiple contributing factors within pre-established healthcare systems that lead to decreases in primary care responders.

This study will follow these trained

professionals and their experiences after the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthcare workers are involved in patient care through a number of ways. They tend to hospital administrative duties and also are a key point of contact for patients. A few of the contributing factors highlighted within this article are the patient to worker ratio and links to social interaction outside work, workload expectations, exhaustion, job dissatisfaction and healthcare worker turnover. With these interconnected factors it is easier to visualize healthcare worker turnover rate.

Turnover explains the admission and exiting of personnel within an organization (Bae, 2022). High turnover of qualified trained healthcare workers also shows a loss in intellectual capital and productivity (Li Jones, 2013). Research suggests that healthcare workers are particularly susceptible to burnout, which is often characterized by long-term exhaustion and a growing lack of interest in work (Embriaco, et al., 2007). Experiencing burnout and high levels of stress has been known to contribute to thoughts of leaving the healthcare sector and/or decreasing work hours (Grunfeld et al., 2000). This is concerning considering patient needs are still high as people recover from the long term effects of the pandemic (Vervohen et al., 2020). The dataset provided shows the physical and mental responses of healthcare workers after the COVID-19 pandemic.

2 Materials & Methods

This report analyzes the responses from a survey conducted by the Morning Consult. The Morning Consult conducted online interviews among a sample of 1000 Health Care Workers working throughout the United States. The data was weighted to approximate a target sample of Health Care Workers based on age, gender, and race. The survey asked a

variety of questions related to how the mental health and physical health, relationships and job satisfaction of Health Care Workers have changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, the survey asked Health Care Workers to characterize their experiences as either “Gotten Much Better,” “Gotten Somewhat Better,” “Gotten Somewhat Worse,” “Gotten Much Worse,” “Gotten Much Worse,” “Stayed the Same,” or “Don’t Know/No Opinion.” Thus, this report aims to analyze how the sentiments of healthcare workers have changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to analyze the data presented within the Morning Consult Survey, Excel was used to create the data visualization listed in Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3.

3 Results

3.1 Health of Healthcare Workers

Overall, the Morning Consult survey indicates that the overall reported health of Healthcare workers has declined as the result of the pandemic. The survey asked health care professionals to describe how their mental health, physical health, diet and day-to-day life has changed as a result of the pandemic. As shown in *Figure 1*, the survey results are negatively-skewed and a large majority of the healthcare workers reported that these aspects of their health have either gotten much worse, gotten somewhat worse or stayed the same.

3.2 Work Satisfaction of Healthcare Workers

In addition, the Morning Consult survey also indicates that the job satisfaction of

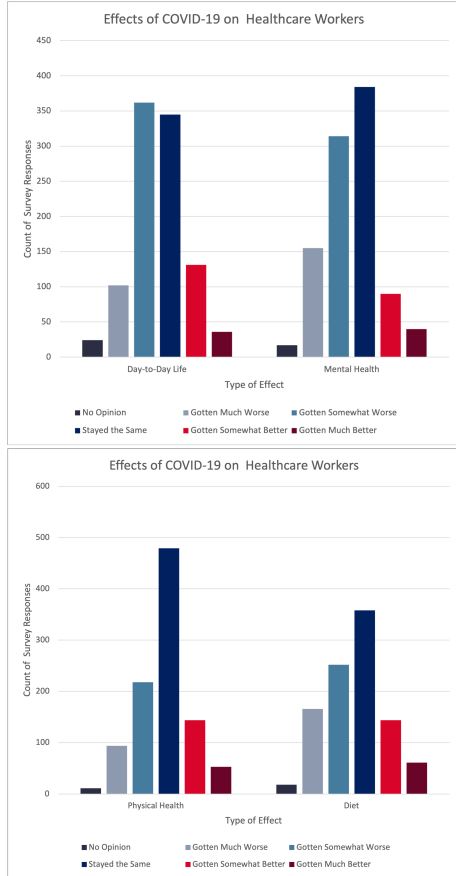


Figure 1: Histogram of the survey results when healthcare professionals were asked to describe how their day-to-day life, mental health, physical health and diet have changed as a result of the pandemic

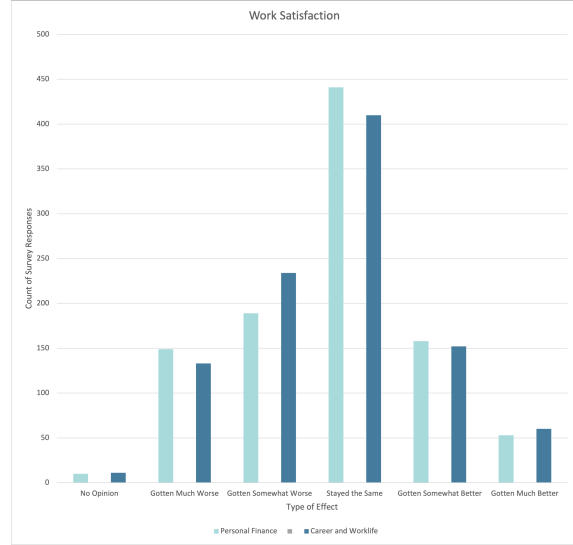


Figure 2: Histogram of the survey results when healthcare professionals were asked to describe how their personal finance and career and work life changed as a result of the pandemic

healthcare workers has declined as the result of the pandemic. The survey asked health care professionals to describe how their personal finance and career and work life has changed as a result of the pandemic. As shown in *Figure 2*, the survey results are negatively-skewed and most of the healthcare workers surveyed reported that these aspects of their job have either gotten much worse, gotten somewhat worse or stayed the same.

3.3 Effects on the Relationships of Healthcare Workers

Lastly, the Morning Consult survey asked health care professionals to describe how the dynamics of their relationships have changed as a result of the pandemic. As shown in *Figure 3*, the survey results indicate that in most cases the pandemic did not significantly negatively effected the relationships of healthcare workers with their friends,

families or romantic partner.

4 Discussion

Based on responses in the survey, 25% of currently working healthcare workers already planned to quit their job and discontinue their work in the healthcare field (Morning Consult, 2021). Data shows that many healthcare workers experienced major mental stressors during COVID that led to mental physical exhaustion but their relationships and social aspects stayed the same. Symptoms of burnout may not be immediately visible but the effects are felt not only within the individual but throughout the healthcare sector. With continual increases in work stressors there can be increases in error, thus endangering the lives of patients which is the opposite goal of primary care. Decision making is drastically impaired due to physical and mental handicapping (Aiken et al., 2002). Social relationships staying the same is a cause for concern (Morning consult, 2021), this can indicate that during their particularly stressful moments their emotional regulation shows no signs of change, they are too accustomed to the heavy workload resulting in desensitization.

Healthcare workers also reported depersonalization, an out of body phenomenon that leads to autonomous actions (Xie et al., 2011). They feel like they are moving on auto pilot, this is fairly dangerous as this decreases the human emotional aspect of professional healthcare and their presence of mind. A depersonalized worker is not in tune with their emotions because they have been exhausted to the point where they move based on training. Autonomous behavior can be detrimental when aiming to provide the best care or initiating a diagnosis. It should not be a regular occurrence as no human should be expected to work

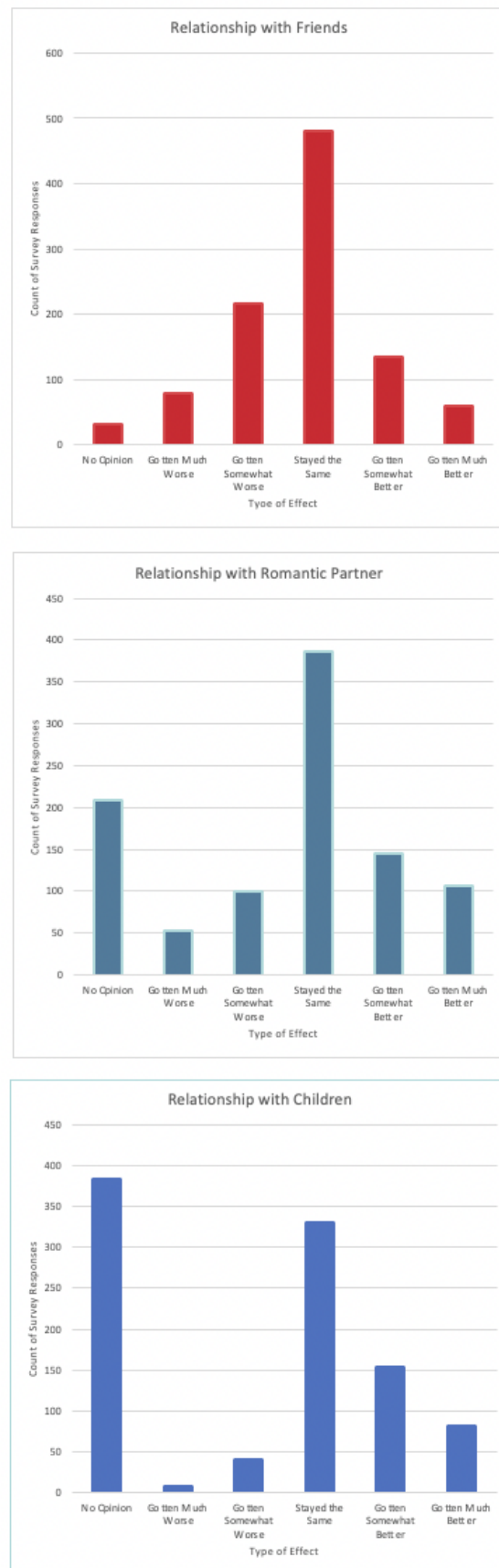


Figure 3: Histogram of the survey results when healthcare professionals were asked to describe how their relationships have changed as a result of the pandemic

increasing hours or deliver treatment in cases where they are not 100% attentive. This can lead to lawsuits or complaints about inadequate care in an already declining field. There is also concern with primary care and vacancies, due to shortages, healthcare workers that may not meet the required acute care qualification are allocated to areas that require acute care.

With the lack of qualified healthcare workers and constant vacancies, unemployment increases, this indicates that healthcare workers would rather be unemployed and maintain unemployment benefits than fill their roles in hospitals or transfer to other departments. This has very adverse effects on the economy, first unemployment provided by the government is supposed to be momentary; if healthcare workers aren't actively looking for work the unemployment rate increases in the relative area. Those that choose not to work can become reliant on benefits. COVID has shown that government spending is at an all time high, because of this inflation has increased. Markets remain unpredictable with high volatility and no definitive timeline on when it will end. The debt ratio of the nation will increase placing a stronger emphasis on legislative reform for the future. Second, inflation erodes purchasing power, with the ability for the dollar to buy less, wages must increase in an attempt to salvage the economy. This is a cyclic issue, if wages go up there is an expectation of increased demand for the occupation but this is not the case. As previously described the adverse effects of COVID-19 are apparent in the healthcare industry, healthcare workers are unwilling to go back to work which leaves the country in a peculiar position. Increasing wages also does not guarantee the shortage will decrease, if job satisfaction is still low then nothing has changed in the industry to cause them to want to

come back.

Conclusions

Overall, the results of the Morning Consult survey suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to decreases in the overall health and job satisfaction of healthcare workers. This would include measures for workload, mental health and job satisfaction. It is important to take into account these conditions of front-line workers when developing policies and practices. Doing so is essential, as they remain the most equipped to handle medical dilemmas, if another pandemic occurs who would lead our nation in primary care?

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