

Migration Of Healthcare Professionals In Albania: Insights From A Survey Of Doctors And Nurses

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ABSTRACT

The migration of healthcare professionals plays serious challenges to healthcare systems worldwide, and Albania is experiencing a significant outflow of its doctors and nurses. This study examines the factors that influence healthcare professionals' decisions to migrate, based on data collected from 460 participants in Albania. A structured questionnaire was used to gather information about the participants' demographics, factors related to migration risks, and their intentions to leave the country. The results provide important insights into the different motivations and concerns that drive doctors and nurses to consider migration. These motivations include better career opportunities, higher salaries, and improved working conditions. The findings also highlight the impact of local challenges, such as low wages, heavy workloads, and limited professional development options, which contribute to the desire to migrate. Understanding these issues is crucial for creating policies aimed at retaining healthcare professionals in Albania. By addressing the main concerns of doctors and nurses, such as improving salary levels, reducing workload, and providing more opportunities for career growth, it may be possible to reduce the rate of migration and strengthen the local healthcare system.

KEYWORDS

Healthcare professional, Migration, Doctors, Nurses, Albania, Risk factors

Introduction

The migration of healthcare professionals is a worldwide issue that affects healthcare systems in both the countries they leave and the ones they move to [1]. This movement is often caused by several factors, such as economic differences, better job opportunities, and the search for improved working conditions. This situation, known as "brain drain," creates problems for countries with fewer resources, which find it difficult to keep their doctors and nurses [2]. In Albania, many doctors and nurses are leaving for better opportunities abroad, raising concerns about the quality of healthcare services and the future stability of the health system. Studies show that the migration of healthcare workers from Albania has increased in the past ten years due to different reasons [3].

In Albania, low salary, heavy workloads, and limited chances for career advancement are common reasons why healthcare professionals choose to leave. The public healthcare system is especially affected, as many doctors and nurses are moving to other European countries where they can earn better salaries, work in improved conditions, and find more opportunities for career growth. This has put a lot of pressure on the healthcare system in Albania [4], leading to shortages of skilled workers, longer waiting times for patients, and fewer medical services available in rural areas. Understanding why healthcare professionals decide to leave is important for creating policies that can help keep them in the country. Solutions like better working conditions, higher salaries, more opportunities for training, and modern healthcare facilities could help address some of the reasons why healthcare workers are leaving [5]. Additionally, efforts to create a positive work environment and recognize the importance of healthcare professionals in society can help increase job satisfaction and reduce the desire to migrate.

Objectives

This study aims to look at the factors that influence doctors and nurses in Albania to consider leaving the country. By identifying these reasons, policymakers can find ways to keep healthcare professionals in the country and improve the overall quality of healthcare.

Scope and Methodology

This is a cross-sectional study used to explore the factors influencing the migration intentions of healthcare professionals in Albania. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data from doctors and nurses across the country. A total of 460 healthcare professionals, including both doctors and nurses, participated in the study. Participants were recruited from various healthcare facilities in Albania, including public hospitals, private clinics, and rural health centers. Our aim was to collect data from a diverse sample representing different professional experiences, healthcare settings, and geographic areas. Participants were selected randomly, and the participants were willing to participate in the study. All the participants were actively employed as doctors or nurses in Albania. A structured questionnaire was organized covering three main areas: demographic information, migration risk factors and migration intentions.

The demographic section collected data on age, gender, profession (doctor or nurse), years of work experience, type of healthcare institution (public, private, or rural), and location of the workplace (urban or rural). To assess migration risk factors, the questionnaire used Likert scale items (ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree") to measure participants' views on various aspects that could influence their decision to migrate. These factors included: salary, working conditions, career opportunities, quality of life, political stability and professional recognition. The questionnaire included specific items that assessed healthcare professionals' plans to migrate within the next five years. It also looked at the main reasons why they would consider migrating, such as better payment, more chances for career growth, and an improved quality of life.

The data collection took place over three months. Questionnaires were distributed both in person and online, depending on the accessibility of participants. For in-person distribution, questionnaires were handed out at healthcare facilities with the assistance of administrative staff who helped to facilitate the process. For online distribution, a digital version of the questionnaire was shared via email and social media platforms used by healthcare professionals in Albania. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and asked to provide informed consent before completing the questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Demographic data were summarized to provide an overview of the sample's characteristics.

Result

The results of the study are presented in a series of tables, each showing different aspects of the findings related to the migration intentions and factors influencing healthcare professionals in Albania. The tables include demographic characteristics of the participants, key migration risk factors, and the intentions to migrate.

Variable	Doctors (n=230)	Nurses (n=230)	Total (n=460)
Gender			
Male	120 (52%)	70 (30%)	190 (41%)
Female	110 (48%)	160 (70%)	270 (59%)
Age (years)			
25-34	60 (26%)	80 (35%)	140 (30%)
35-44	100 (43%)	90 (39%)	190 (41%)
45 and above	70 (31%)	60 (26%)	130 (28%)
Work Experience (years)			
1-5	50 (22%)	80 (35%)	130 (28%)
6-15	90 (39%)	90 (39%)	180 (39%)
More than 15	90 (39%)	60 (26%)	150 (33%)

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants

Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of the study participants. There were equal numbers of doctors and nurses (230 each). Females made up 59% of the total participants, with a higher proportion of nurses being female (70%). Participants aged 35-44 were the largest age group (41%). Most participants had between 6 and 15 years of work experience (39%), with fewer having over 15 years.

Risk Factor	Doctors	Nurses
Salary	4.5	4.3
Working Conditions	4.2	4.0
Career Opportunities	4.3	4.1
Quality of Life	3.9	4.0
Political Stability	3.8	3.7
Professional Recognition	4.1	4.0

Table 2. Migration risk factors (mean score on Likert scale)

Table 2 illustrates the mean scores for different migration risk factors on a 5-point Likert scale. Both doctors and nurses rated salaries as the most significant factor influencing their migration intentions, followed by career opportunities and working conditions. Political stability and quality of life were rated lower but still important.

Demographic Group	Considering Migration (%)
Gender	
Male	70%
Female	60%
Age (years)	
25-34	80%
35-44	65%
45 and above	50%
Work Experience (years)	
1-5	75%
6-15	65%
More than 15	50%

Table 3. Migration Intentions by demographic group.

Table 3 shows the percentage of participants who are considering migration based on demographic factors. Younger professionals (25-34 years) and those with less experience (1-5 years) had the highest migration intentions, suggesting that early-career healthcare workers may be more inclined to seek opportunities abroad. Male participants also reported higher migration intentions than females.

Reason	Frequency (n)
Better Salary	320
Improved Working Conditions	280
Career Development Opportunities	270
Quality of Life Improvements	210
Political Instability	150
Recognition and Respect in Profession	140

Table 4. Common reason for Migration

Table 4 summarizes the most frequent reasons for migration based on open-ended responses. Better salaries emerged as the top reason. Improved working conditions and career development opportunities were also prominent factors driving the decision to migrate.

These results provide insights into the factors influencing migration intentions among healthcare professionals in Albania, highlighting key areas where policy changes could help improve retention.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that the migration of healthcare professionals in Albania is significantly influenced by multiple factors, including salary, career opportunities, and working conditions. A majority of the participants indicated that low wages were a primary driver of migration intentions, aligning with previous research that has shown economic disparities as a significant "push" factor in healthcare worker migration [6][12]. The high scores for salary and

compensation in this study suggest that addressing financial incentives could play a critical role in reducing migration rates [16] [18].

Working conditions also emerged as crucial factors affecting healthcare professionals' decisions to migrate. The stressful working environment, characterized by long hours and inadequate resources, creates significant barriers to providing quality care and contributes to professional dissatisfaction [7] [8]. Improving these conditions may not only enhance job satisfaction but also strengthen the retention of healthcare professionals.

The desire for better career development opportunities was another key factor, with both doctors and nurses seeking more structured pathways for professional growth. This trend mirrors broader patterns observed in other low- and middle-income countries where limited opportunities for advancement encourage migration to higher-income nations that offer better training and career prospects [8]. Investing in continuing education and career progression programs within Albania could help mitigate this trend.

Interestingly, younger healthcare workers (aged 25-34) and those with fewer years of experience (1-5 years) were more likely to consider migration. This aligns with the idea that early-career professionals are more mobile and willing to explore opportunities abroad [9] [14] [17]. Retention strategies for younger staff should therefore focus on creating appealing entry-level packages, mentorship programs, and early-career development initiatives. [11] [13].

Political instability and a lack of professional recognition were also highlighted as factors contributing to migration intentions. These issues suggest a need for systemic changes in the healthcare sector, including policy reforms to stabilize the working environment and improve the status of healthcare professionals [10][15]. Strengthening the healthcare infrastructure, increasing funding for medical resources, and acknowledging the contributions of doctors and nurses may foster a more supportive work atmosphere and reduce the migration tendency.

Conflict of interest:

Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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