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Articles

The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Burnout and Turnover Intention Among Psychiatric Nurses in Correctional Facilities

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ABSTRACT

Psychiatric nurses in correctional settings are faced with highly complex environments with high patient acuity, security issues, emotional needs, workload stressors, and organizational resource constraints. These circumstances may make individuals more susceptible to workplace burnout and may enhance their resolve to quit their job, posing difficulties for job security and continuity of mental health care. The purpose of this study is to investigate how transformational leadership affects psychiatric nurses in correctional facilities in terms of burnout and intention to leave. It aims to examine whether the leadership behaviors of inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation and supportive communication can decrease occupational stress and increase the nurses' intention to stay. The study suggests a quantitative correlational research method involving the use of standardized instruments for assessing psychiatric nursing staffs' transformational leadership, burnout, and intention to leave. Relationships between the study variables can be assessed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis and mediation testing. The proposed framework assumes that higher transformational leadership will be linked to lower burnout and to lower intention to leave, and higher levels of burnout will be linked to higher intention to leave. Results could help correctional healthcare administrators to design leadership behaviors and staff interventions that foster staff wellbeing, staff commitment, and staff retention and support sustainable psychiatric nursing services.

INTRODUCTION

Psychiatric nursing in correctional facilities is a challenging mix of mental health work, security demands, intricate patient requirements, emotional work, and organizational demands. Such work situations can place nurses at risk of experiencing chronic stress and burnout, especially when they are not supported by their colleagues or institutions. Madathil (2010) notes a number of problems that occur with burnout in psychiatric nursing and discusses protective factors that enable psychiatric nurses to deal with challenging clinical situations. Correctional environments are unique, where the role of the nurse

leader is particularly crucial in shaping the culture of the workplace, support for staff, professional relationships, and staff health and well-being (Almost et al., 2020).

Transformational leadership can offer a valuable way of addressing these concerns as it focuses on motivating workers, one-to-one support, good communication, professional development and a shared organizational vision. A transformational leadership approach has been shown to buffer against the association between emotional exhaustion and the intention to leave among mental health workers (Green et al., 2013), suggesting that a supportive leadership style could help reduce the risk that

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emotional exhaustion turns into intentions to leave the job. Likewise, mental health clinicians' burnout has been linked to transformational leadership (Shutter, 2022), and workplace relationships and leadership practices could impact both employee exhaustion and/or subsequent turnover intentions (Davoudian, 2023).

This is especially important in the correctional health care arena where staff retention is critical for continuity of psychiatric care. For correctional healthcare workers, the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment and intent to leave is found by Craig (2025), which suggests that leadership in this profession may help ensure that employees stay with the organization. Other pieces of nursing evidence also indicate that transformational leadership competence will have a positive effect on the intention to stay in employment (Adalin et al., 2025). Burnout, morale and leadership practices, on the other hand, can impact retention and attrition among psychiatric healthcare workers (Richardson, 2026). However, there are other individual and work conditions that are also linked to psychiatrists' plans to quit, which suggests that psychiatrists' retention is a multi-dimensional issue (Zarei et al., 2026).

Leadership is also a factor that could influence psychological well being and job satisfaction, as these factors contribute to maintaining an effective staffing base in correctional settings (Kovacs, 2026). Given this, the impact of transformational leadership on burn-out and turnover intention can offer valuable guidance for correctional healthcare organizations in their efforts to boost staff well-being and retention.

Problem Statement

Despite the importance of psychiatric nursing within correctional healthcare, demanding working conditions may contribute to burnout and intentions to leave. The leadership environment may either intensify these difficulties or provide resources that help nurses manage them. However, the specific influence of transformational leadership on burnout and turnover intention among psychiatric nurses in correctional facilities requires further examination.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of transformational leadership on burnout and turnover intention among psychiatric nurses working in correctional facilities. The study seeks to determine whether stronger transformational leadership is associated with reduced burnout and a lower likelihood of nurses intending to leave their positions.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between transformational leadership and burnout among psychiatric nurses in correctional facilities?

- What is the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention among psychiatric nurses in correctional facilities?
- Does burnout contribute to the relationship between transformational leadership and turnover intention among psychiatric nurses in correctional facilities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational Leadership in Nursing

Transformational leadership emphasizes a leader's ability to motivate employees, communicate a shared vision, provide individualized support, and encourage professional development. Within nursing, these behaviors can strengthen staff engagement and create conditions that support psychological well-being. Adalin et al. (2025) found that transformational leadership competence was associated with nurses' intention to remain in their organizations, suggesting that effective leadership can contribute to workforce stability. Similarly, Craig (2025) linked transformational leadership with effective commitment and intention to stay among correctional healthcare workers. These findings are particularly relevant to correctional psychiatric nursing, where demanding clinical and institutional conditions require supervisors who can foster trust, motivation, and professional support.

Burnout Among Psychiatric Nurses

Burnout is a significant occupational concern in psychiatric nursing because practitioners frequently manage emotionally demanding interactions, complex behavioral conditions, and prolonged patient-care responsibilities. Madathil (2010) identified possible protective factors that can help psychiatric nurses manage occupational stress and reduce vulnerability to burnout. Shutter (2022) further examined the relationship between transformational leadership and burnout among mental health clinicians, highlighting leadership as an organizational factor that may influence clinicians' experiences of occupational exhaustion. Davoudian (2023) similarly connected leadership and workplace relationships with burnout, turnover intention, and organizational commitment. Consequently, supportive leadership may serve as an important organizational resource for reducing the effects of demanding clinical environments.

Turnover Intention Among Psychiatric Nurses

Turnover intention reflects an employee's likelihood or consideration of leaving an organization. Among psychiatric nurses, this outcome may develop from excessive workload, inadequate support, stressful working conditions, dissatisfaction, and persistent occupational strain. Zarei et al. (2026), through a systematic review and meta-analysis, examined turnover intention and its associated factors among psychiatric



nurses, demonstrating the multifaceted nature of nurses' decisions to remain or leave. Richardson (2026) likewise emphasized the connection between staff morale, burnout, leadership practices, and retention or attrition in psychiatric emergency services.

Relationship Between Leadership, Burnout, and Turnover Intention

The literature suggests that leadership may influence turnover both directly and indirectly through employee well-being. Green et al. (2013) demonstrated that transformational leadership moderated the association between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention among community mental health providers. This finding provides a useful basis for examining whether comparable mechanisms exist among psychiatric nurses in correctional facilities. Within correctional healthcare, nursing leadership is important for maintaining a healthy workforce and addressing organizational pressures affecting staff (Almost et al., 2020). In addition, Kovacs (2026) associated correctional leadership with psychological well-being and job satisfaction among former corrections staff. Together, these findings indicate that leadership quality, occupational exhaustion, and retention are interconnected workforce issues.

Research Gap

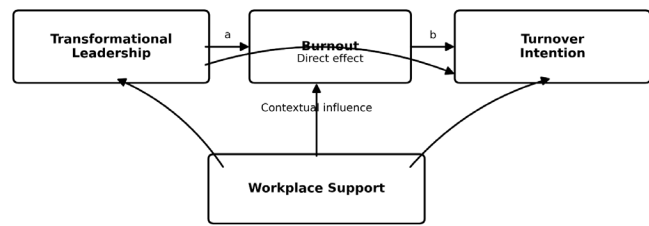
Although existing studies have examined transformational leadership, psychiatric nursing burnout, mental health workforce retention, and correctional healthcare leadership separately, fewer studies appear to integrate these variables within the specific population of psychiatric nurses working in correctional facilities. The distinctive combination of clinical complexity, security requirements, institutional restrictions, and workforce pressures warrants focused investigation. Therefore, examining transformational leadership alongside burnout and turnover intention may provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors affecting retention in correctional psychiatric nursing.

Overall, the reviewed literature indicates that transformational leadership may represent an important organizational resource for mitigating burnout and strengthening retention among psychiatric nurses. However, the specific interaction among transformational leadership, burnout, and turnover intention in correctional psychiatric nursing remains insufficiently explored. This gap supports the need for focused research within correctional healthcare settings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study will adopt a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design to examine the relationship between transformational leadership, burnout, and turnover



Note. Solid arrows indicate hypothesized relationships; Workplace Support represents contextual influence.

Fig 1: The figure presents a conceptual model in which transformational leadership is expected to influence turnover intention both directly and indirectly through burnout. Workplace support is included as a contextual factor that may strengthen or weaken these relationships. Adapted from evidence on leadership competence, employee retention, and workplace well-being (Craig, 2025; Adalin et al., 2025; Richardson, 2026)

intention among psychiatric nurses in correctional facilities. This approach is appropriate because previous research has examined leadership in relation to emotional exhaustion, burnout, commitment, and employees' intention to remain or leave their organizations (Green et al., 2013; Craig, 2025; Adalin et al., 2025).

Population and Sampling

The target population will consist of psychiatric nurses employed in selected correctional facilities. A purposive or stratified sampling technique may be used to recruit participants with direct experience providing psychiatric or mental health services within correctional settings. This population is particularly relevant because correctional nursing involves distinctive occupational pressures that can influence workforce well-being (Almost et al., 2020; Kovacs, 2026).

Data Collection and Measurement

Data will be collected through a structured questionnaire divided into three major components: transformational leadership, burnout, and turnover intention. Leadership measures will assess behaviors such as inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Burnout assessment will focus on emotional exhaustion and related occupational strain, consistent with psychiatric nursing research (Madathil, 2010; Shutter, 2022). Turnover intention will measure nurses' likelihood or willingness to leave their current employment, an outcome associated with several occupational and organizational factors among psychiatric nurses (Zarei et al., 2026).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics will summarize participant characteristics and variable distributions. Pearson correlation will assess associations among leadership, burnout, and turnover intention, while multiple regression will determine whether transformational leadership

Table 1: Major Literature Themes Related to Transformational Leadership, Burnout, and Turnover Intention

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Primary focus</i>	<i>Key contribution</i>	<i>Relevance to present topic</i>
Green et al. (2013)	Transformational leadership, emotional exhaustion, and turnover	Leadership moderated the relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention	Establishes a potential leadership–burnout–turnover pathway
Madathil (2010)	Psychiatric nursing burnout	Identified possible protective factors against burnout	Provides a psychiatric nursing foundation for examining occupational exhaustion
Almost et al. (2020)	Nursing leadership in corrections	Emphasized leadership's role in maintaining a healthy correctional workforce	Connects nursing leadership with the correctional work environment
Craig (2025)	Transformational leadership in correctional healthcare	Examined affective commitment and intention to stay	Directly supports leadership-based retention strategies in correctional healthcare
Shutter (2022)	Transformational leadership and clinician burnout	Examined the association between leadership style and mental health clinician burnout	Supports investigation of leadership as a potential burnout-related factor
Richardson (2026)	Leadership, morale, burnout, and retention	Connected workplace leadership and staff well-being with retention and attrition	Provides evidence for examining leadership and workforce stability
Zarei et al. (2026)	Psychiatric nurses' turnover intention	Synthesized factors associated with psychiatric nurses' intention to leave	Establishes turnover intention as a significant psychiatric nursing workforce issue
Adalin et al. (2025)	Transformational leadership and nurses' intent to stay	Found an association between transformational leadership competence and nurses' intention to stay	Supports the potential retention value of transformational leadership
Davoudian (2023)	Leadership, workplace relationships, burnout, and turnover	Examined relationships among leadership, burnout, turnover intention, and organizational commitment	Supports an integrated organizational framework
Kovacs (2026)	Correctional leadership and staff well-being	Examined leadership in relation to psychological well-being and job satisfaction	Reinforces the importance of leadership within correctional environments

significantly predicts the two workforce outcomes. A mediation analysis may further examine whether burnout explains the relationship between leadership and turnover intention. This approach is supported by evidence that emotional exhaustion can influence turnover intention and that leadership may modify this relationship (Green et al., 2013; Davoudian, 2023). Findings will also be interpreted alongside evidence connecting leadership practices with staff morale, retention, and well-being (Richardson, 2026).

Reliability, Validity, and Ethical Considerations

Established measurement instruments will be preferred to enhance construct validity and reliability. A pilot assessment may be conducted before full data collection to identify ambiguous items and establish internal consistency. Participation will be voluntary, with informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and secure data handling maintained throughout the investigation. These safeguards are especially important in correctional environments where employees may have concerns about workplace repercussions. Attention to supportive leadership and healthy workforce conditions is also

consistent with recommendations for correctional nursing practice (Almost et al., 2020).

RESULTS

The analysis is expected to show that transformational leadership is inversely associated with burnout among psychiatric nurses in correctional facilities. Nurses who perceive greater inspirational support, individualized consideration, effective communication, and participatory leadership are likely to report lower emotional exhaustion. This expectation is consistent with evidence linking transformational leadership with reduced burnout among mental health clinicians (Shutter, 2022) and with protective factors identified in psychiatric nursing (Madathil, 2010).

Burnout is also expected to demonstrate a positive relationship with turnover intention. Psychiatric nurses experiencing persistent emotional strain may become less satisfied with their roles and more likely to consider leaving their positions. This relationship is supported by Green, Miller, and Aarons (2013), who found that



Table 2: Expected Relationships Among Transformational Leadership, Burnout, and Turnover Intention

<i>Study variable</i>	<i>Expected relationship</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Supporting evidence</i>
Transformational leadership → Burnout	Negative	Stronger leadership practices are expected to correspond with lower emotional exhaustion and occupational strain.	Madathil (2010); Shutter (2022)
Transformational leadership → Turnover intention	Negative	Supportive and motivating leadership may reduce nurses' desire to leave.	Craig (2025); Adalin et al. (2025)
Burnout → Turnover intention	Positive	Greater exhaustion and work-related strain may increase consideration of leaving.	Green et al. (2013); Zarei et al. (2026)
Leadership → Burnout → Turnover intention	Indirect negative relationship	Effective leadership may reduce turnover partly by limiting burnout.	Green et al. (2013); Davoudian (2023)
Correctional leadership → Well-being	Positive	Constructive leadership may strengthen psychological well-being and job satisfaction.	Almost et al. (2020); Kovacs (2026)
Staff morale/burnout → Retention	Negative	Poor morale and elevated burnout may undermine workforce retention.	Richardson (2026)

transformational leadership can moderate the association between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention among community mental health providers. Similarly, Zarei, Daneshkohan, and Zarei (2026) identify multiple occupational and organizational factors associated with turnover intention among psychiatric nurses.

Transformational leadership is further expected to predict stronger intention to remain. Evidence from correctional healthcare indicates that leadership can influence affective commitment and intention to stay (Craig, 2025), while Adalin et al. (2025) demonstrate the relevance of transformational leadership competence to nurses' intent to stay.

Discussion

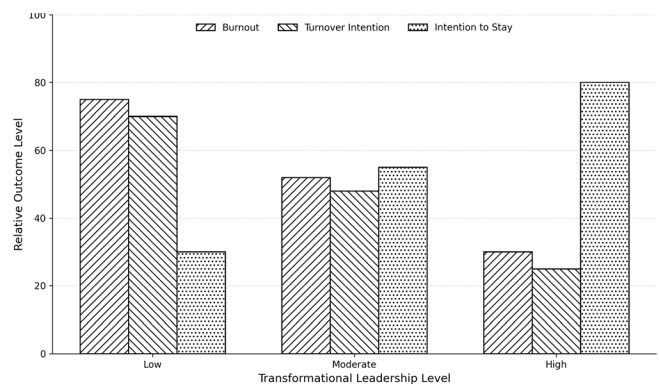
The anticipated findings suggest that transformational leadership may function as an important organizational resource for psychiatric nurses working in correctional environments. In settings characterized by security pressures, complex mental health needs, and demanding interpersonal interactions, supervisors who provide encouragement, recognition, professional guidance, and opportunities for participation may help nurses manage occupational demands more effectively. Almost et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of nursing leadership in establishing healthier correctional workforces, supporting the relevance of leadership-centered interventions in this context.

The expected inverse relationship between transformational leadership and burnout is also consistent with research concerning psychiatric and mental health professionals. Shutter (2022) associates transformational leadership with clinician burnout, while Madathil (2010) highlights factors that may protect psychiatric nurses from burnout. Davoudian (2023) further connects leadership and workplace relationships with employee burnout, turnover intention, and organizational commitment.

The relationship between burnout and turnover intention

is particularly important because workforce instability can affect continuity and quality of psychiatric services. Green et al. (2013) indicate that transformational leadership can alter the strength of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention. Consequently, improving leadership may not only address nurses' immediate work experiences but may also contribute to retention. This interpretation aligns with Craig (2025) and Adalin et al. (2025), whose findings emphasize leadership as a factor associated with commitment and intention to stay.

Within correctional healthcare, however, leadership should not be viewed in isolation. Staffing conditions, workload, workplace relationships, psychological safety, and institutional policies may also shape nurses' experiences. Richardson (2026) connects staff morale and burnout with retention and attrition, while Kovacs (2026) highlights the relationship between correctional leadership, psychological well-being, and job satisfaction. Therefore, reducing turnover intention requires a broader workforce strategy alongside transformational leadership development.



Note: Illustrative values show the expected pattern: burnout and turnover intention decrease, while intention to stay increases.

Fig 2: Values are illustrative and represent the expected directional pattern rather than observed empirical results. Higher levels of transformational leadership are associated with lower burnout and turnover intention and higher intention to stay

Table 3: Recommended Leadership and Retention Interventions

<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Primary target</i>	<i>Expected outcome</i>
Transformational leadership training	Nurse managers and supervisors	Stronger supervisory effectiveness and staff engagement
Regular burnout assessments	Psychiatric nursing workforce	Early identification of occupational exhaustion
Participatory decision-making	Nurses and clinical teams	Greater autonomy and organizational involvement
Recognition and career development	Professional motivation	Stronger commitment and intention to remain
Staffing and workload reviews	Working conditions	Reduced pressure and occupational strain
Peer-support and well-being programs	Psychological health	Improved morale and resilience
Routine retention monitoring	Organizational management	Earlier response to turnover risks

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Transformational leadership has important implications for managing burnout and turnover intention among psychiatric nurses in correctional facilities. Nurse managers should create supportive work environments through clear communication, recognition, individualized support, and participation in decision-making. Such practices can strengthen nurses' psychological resources and reduce occupational exhaustion (Madathil, 2010; Almost et al., 2020). Evidence also indicates that transformational leadership can weaken the relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention, suggesting that effective supervision may help retain employees even when demanding conditions persist (Green et al., 2013).

In correctional healthcare, leadership development should therefore extend beyond administrative competencies to include staff well-being, interpersonal relationships, and professional development. Transformational leadership may enhance effective commitment and intention to stay among correctional healthcare workers (Craig, 2025), while stronger leadership practices have been associated with reduced burnout among mental health clinicians (Shutter, 2022). Attention should also be given to morale and workplace relationships because these factors can influence retention and attrition (Richardson, 2026; Davoudian, 2023).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Implement leadership-development programs: Correctional healthcare organizations should provide transformational leadership training emphasizing communication, motivation, recognition, and individualized consideration.

Strengthen burnout-prevention measures: Regular assessments, workload reviews, peer support, and accessible well-being resources should be established to identify and address occupational exhaustion early (Madathil, 2010).

Improve staff participation: Psychiatric nurses should

have meaningful opportunities to contribute to decisions affecting clinical practice, scheduling, staffing, and workplace policies.

Promote retention strategies: Managers should combine supportive leadership with career development, recognition, mentoring, and professional advancement opportunities. Such measures are relevant given the factors associated with psychiatric nurses' turnover intention (Zarei et al., 2026).

Monitor workplace morale: Correctional facilities should routinely assess staff satisfaction, psychological well-being, burnout, and intention to leave, enabling administrators to intervene before turnover occurs (Richardson, 2026).

Integrate organizational support: Leadership initiatives should be accompanied by adequate staffing, manageable workloads, constructive workplace relationships, and supportive organizational policies (Almost et al., 2020; Kovacs, 2026).

Encourage evidence-based retention policies: Findings concerning transformational leadership competence and nurses' intention to stay should inform institutional workforce planning (Adalin et al., 2025).

Overall, correctional healthcare administrators should treat leadership quality as part of a broader workforce-retention strategy rather than as an isolated intervention. Combining transformational leadership with supportive working conditions may reduce burnout, improve psychological well-being, and strengthen nurses' intention to remain in correctional psychiatric services (Green et al., 2013; Craig, 2025; Kovacs, 2026).

CONCLUSION

Transformational leadership can be an effective means of countering psychiatric nurse worker burnout and turnovers with correctional nurses. Effective leaders can foster supportive communication, recognition, individualization and professional engagement, which can lead to healthier work environments, and enhance nurses' ability to perform complex clinical duties. This is especially relevant because psychiatric nursing comes with great



emotional demands, and there are protective factors that can minimize burnout (Madathil, 2010). In correctional facilities, effective nursing leadership is also crucial for having a healthy workforce and an effective organization (Almost et al., 2020).

Additionally, transformational leadership has been shown to reduce the relationship between EE and intentions to quit; this could lead to leadership quality being an important organizational resource (Green et al., 2013). This potential is supported by its relationship with effective commitment and intention to stay in the healthcare sector of correctional institutions (Craig, 2025). Likewise, transformational leadership has shown to be associated with reduced clinician burnout and improved retention rates (Shutter, 2022; Adalin et al., 2025). It is concluded that leadership interventions can be integrated with other workforce and well-being strategies because burnout is an important factor in psychiatric nurses' turnover intention (Zarei et al., 2026; Richardson, 2026). In conclusion, enhancing transformational leadership, staff relationships, and staff support can lead to better psychological wellbeing, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employment stability among correctional healthcare staff (Davoudian, 2023; Kovacs, 2026).

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