

# Factors Influencing Job Retention Amongst Certified Care Workers

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*(Accepted Nov. 12, 2012)*

Key words: Kaigo-Fukushishi, job retention

## Introduction

In Japan, where the population is rapidly aging, certified care workers, called “Kaigo-Fukushishi”, were established in 1987 to play a central role in elderly care. In all, about 900,000 certified care workers have been successfully certified [1]. It was hoped that every certified care worker would settle into a stable, satisfying, and long-term career at a care service facility. However, the present situation for certified care workers differs greatly from that originally envisioned for them. About half of all these workers are not currently employed in any care service facility [2]. Furthermore, they have a high turnover rate [3]. In short, few certified care workers have achieved long-term, care service careers. Consequently, we believe that their employment condition may eventually contribute to a worsening quality of care at many Japanese facilities. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the factors related to certified care workers job retention.

An understanding of factors related to certified care workers job retention will permit us to respond to the employment situation of these workers and to address the issues related of the staffing and quality of care services. In order to answer this question, we must first consider the most suitable approach to studying these factors.

In our approach, the research team assumed that stable employment and job satisfaction are essential in retaining jobs and that both are minimum requisites for good elderly care. Thus, we selected certified care workers who have been stably employed at care service facilities and focused on their job satisfaction. We discussed the success in retaining care positions by identifying the positive and negative factors related to job satisfaction in our target group. Finally, we probed suggestions in order to identify some factors that will contribute to retaining more certified care workers in the future.

## Methods

### 1. Participants and Procedures

We mailed questionnaires to 396 certified care workers between October and December 2009. These 396 participants were certified care workers who had approximately five years of specified service and who were judged to have had long careers by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare [4]. We received completed questionnaires from 107 participants.

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## 2. Measures

We assumed that job satisfaction was closely connected with a “life course” that is, an individual pathway including training, work, and private events. Our questionnaire was designed to ask about episodes related to job satisfaction. First, we prepared the sub-themes of a life course by referring to Hosyo [5]; we then asked participants to react positively or negatively to the sub-themes that related to job satisfaction. Finally, we asked participants to describe specific episodes linked to these sub-themes.

## Results

Of the 107 respondents, 26 certified care workers (two males and 24 females) had more than five years of service. We counted and ranked the life course sub-themes chosen by these 26 careworkers. Those mentioned five or more times were ranked, and we chose the three most often occurring sub-themes.

### 1. Training Events

#### 1.1 Positive events

The top-ranked factor was “Impressive Training” (14 events), e.g., “When I first attended on-the-job training, I was highly aware of certified care workers responsibilities, and the elderly were pleased with my awareness and job performance”. It was followed by “An Encounter with an Impressive Classmate” (nine events), e.g., “An encounter with an important person gave me a productive day”. The third positive event was “Impressive Academic Experience” (six events), e.g., “I was able to study effectively under a favorite teacher”.

#### 1.2 Negative events

As for top-ranked negative events, we found a tie for “Impressive Academic Experience” (six events), e.g., “I should have eagerly studied ‘Introduction to Social Welfare’” and “Impressive Training” (six events), e.g., “I could not finish successfully formulating a care plan in on-the-job training”. No other sub-theme was recounted in five or more episodes.

### 2. Work Events

#### 2.1 Positive events

The top-ranked work event was “An Encounter with Impressive Co-Workers” (31 events), e.g., “I met very professional nurses and care workers who took the time to instruct me carefully”. “Climbing the certified care workers employment ‘Ladder’” gained second place (16 events), e.g., “Attaining one’s current position”. The third position was occupied by “Job Relocation” (15 events), e.g., “transferring from elder day care to a full-service, care facility”.

#### 2.2 Negative events

The sub-theme “Ability as a careworker” was top-ranked (17 events), e.g., “I was reminded of my unskillfulness in the incident caused by my mistake, when I changed an elderly person’s diaper”. It was followed by “Working Conditions” (15 events), e.g., “Shortage of staff forced me to work unpaid overtime” and in third place by “An Encounter with Impressive Co-Workers” (13 events), e.g., “There was no boss on whom I could count”.

### 3. Private Events

#### 3.1 Positive events

The sub-theme “Relations with Friends” was most highly ranked (43, events), e.g., “As there was a friend who joined the same institution that year, I was able to perform better in the workplace”. “Family Relations” was ranked second (10 events), e.g., “I could do my best at work by virtue of family support”, and followed by “Family Care” (9 events), e.g., “A grandparent became ill and also required geriatric care”.

#### 3.2 Negative events

The top-rated negative event was “Health” (10 events), e.g., “I fell ill with uveitis because of fatigue”. “Relations with Friends” was ranked second (nine events), e.g., “I grew apart from friends because I was busy at work” and “Family Relations” was ranked third (five events), e.g., “It was difficult for me to keep working while nurturing two children”.

### Discussion

Beginning with top-ranked positive sub-themes and episodes, firstly, it can be seen that on-the-job training is an important experience for most certified care workers [6] and is crucial for job retention. Secondly, certified care workers usually work in team settings. Encounters with impressive co-workers may enrich their professional lives and facilitate job retention. Thirdly, those who have settled into long-term careers tend to work with supportive friends who have joined the same institution at the same time and who have experienced similar, private events.

In addition, the top three positive sub-themes and episodes are consistent with findings from other studies researching factors in supporting care workers [7,8]. Accordingly, they may serve as useful references in discussing job retention.

As for top-ranked negative sub-themes and episodes, the causes of the inertia of certified care workers in the training process are, firstly, individual. However, it may be necessary for teachers to address this issue in order to improve the job retention rate. Secondly, we surmise that certified care workers overcome their lack of skills not only by striving hard, but also by experiencing a variety of workplace settings. Hence, a supportive work environment may contribute to their retention of jobs. Finally, certified care workers found it hard to settle into a stable position if they were in poor health; thus, job stability would be enhanced by ensuring the good health of these workers.

These top-ranked negative sub-themes and episodes were experienced by long-term certified care workers. This group may have found ways of coping with them so that they did not strongly affect job retention. The second and third ranked negative sub-themes and episodes may have been handled by these workers in a similar manner. “Impressing Training”, “Impressive Academic Experience”, “An Encounter with Impressive Co-Workers”, “Relations with Friends”, and “Family Relation” were, however, also cited as positive sub-themes and episodes. Thus, these should be taken into consideration in discussing job retention.

### Conclusion

We supposed that both stable employment and job satisfaction were essential for certified care workers job retention. Accordingly, we selected certified care workers who have held positions at care service facilities for long periods as the subjects of this study. We hope that these findings will contribute to employment stability and the improvement of elderly care. In our next study, we will reclassify the three most frequently occurring positive and negative sub-themes and episodes and continue our analysis.

### Acknowledgement

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI (21530647).

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