

The invisible workforce: Examining the roles and significance of health support workers in caring for older Canadians

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Background

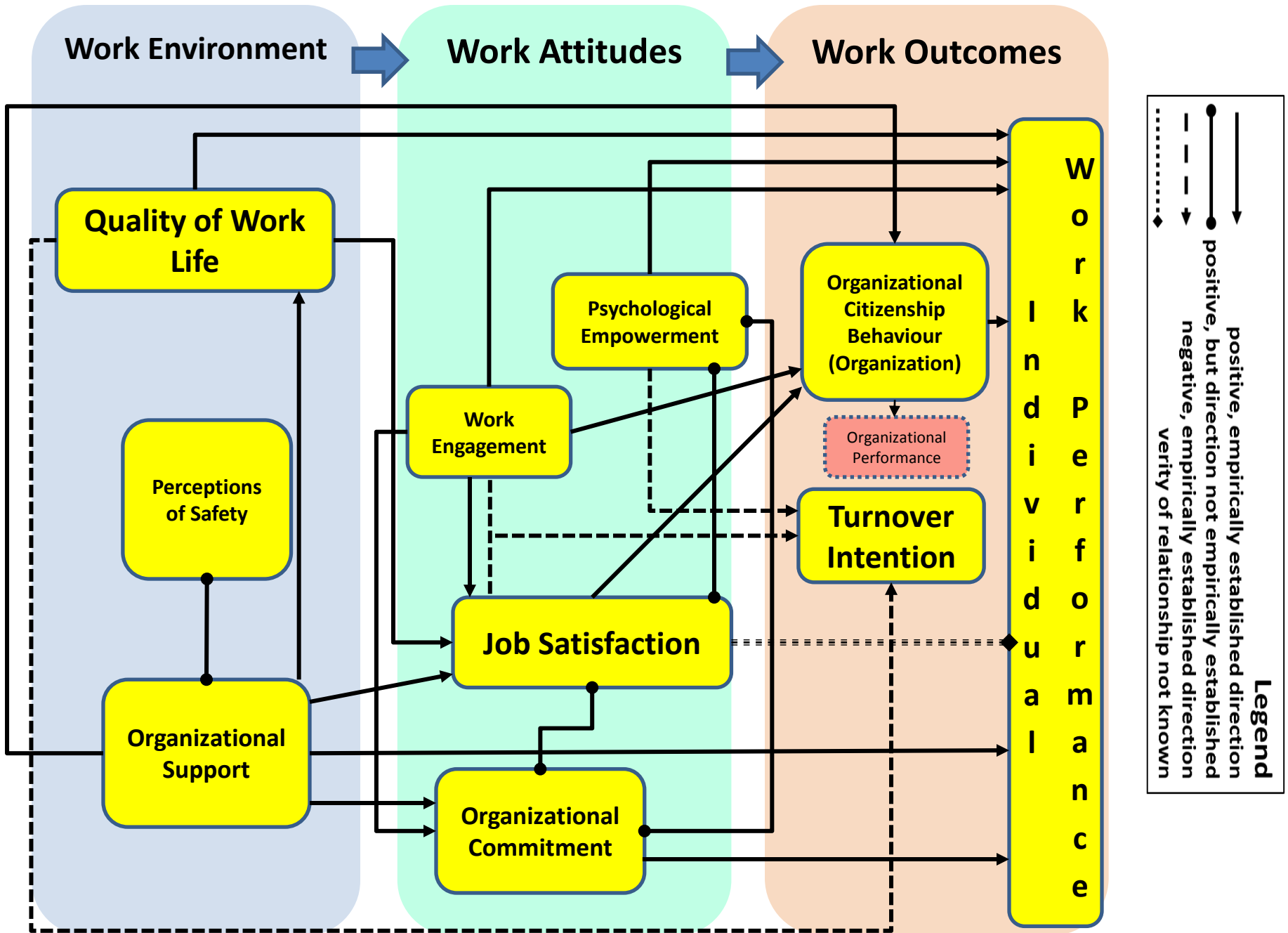
- Health support workers (HSWs) are increasingly important for delivering care to vulnerable older Canadians in their homes and communities, and in long-term care facilities.¹⁻²
- HSWs represent a significant component of the Canadian health care workforce, with approximately 100,000 HSWs working in Ontario.³⁻⁴
- Although they provide the majority of direct care to residents /clients, as a workforce HSWs have received little research attention.⁵



Study Purpose

To understand the relationships among the work environments, work attitudes and work outcomes of unregulated health support workers engaged in caring for older Canadians in the long-term care and home and community care sectors, and to develop a forecasting model for the HSW workforce for health human resources planning.





Methods

- A mixed methods, three phased study.
- A survey was administered to HSWs in the LTC and HCC settings in Ontario over Summer-Fall 2015.
- We used LISREL 8.8 (including PRELIS) to generate descriptive statistics of respondent data and to complete a path analysis.

Phase 1

- HSW worklife survey

Phase 2

- Discussion of survey findings with managers and other key stakeholders

Phase 3

- Develop a forecasting model for HSW workforce



	Concept	Measure Source
Work Environment	Quality of Work Life	Quality of Work Life Measure (Sirgy et al., 2001; 16 items) ⁶
	Organizational Support	Context-specific; developed based on 8-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) (Eisenberger et al., 1986) 2 items ⁷
	Perceptions of Workplace Safety	7 items from the 29-item Western Health Risk Assessment Screening Tool (WHRASST) (Hutchings et al., 2011) ⁸ appropriate for both LTC and HCC settings
Work Attitudes	Work Engagement	Utrecht Work Engagement Survey-9 (UWES-9) (Schaufeli et al., 2006; 9 items) ⁹ Used extensively in various work settings and countries; Cronbach's alpha > 0.70
	Organizational Commitment	Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Porter et al.; 9 items) ¹⁰
	Job Satisfaction	Subscale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (MOAQ-JSS) (Cammann et al., 1983; 3 items) ¹¹
	Psychological Empowerment	Psychological Empowerment Instrument (Spreitzer, 1995; 12 items) ¹²
Work Outcomes	Turnover Intention	Global measure (based on Beecroft et al., 2008; 1 item) ¹³
	Organizational Citizenship Behaviours - Organization	Measures of OCB (Podsakoff et al., 2000) 4 items ¹⁴ for Individual Initiative/OCB-O (see Choi, 2007)
	Quality of Care	Context-specific; developed in consultation with Collaborators (2 items)



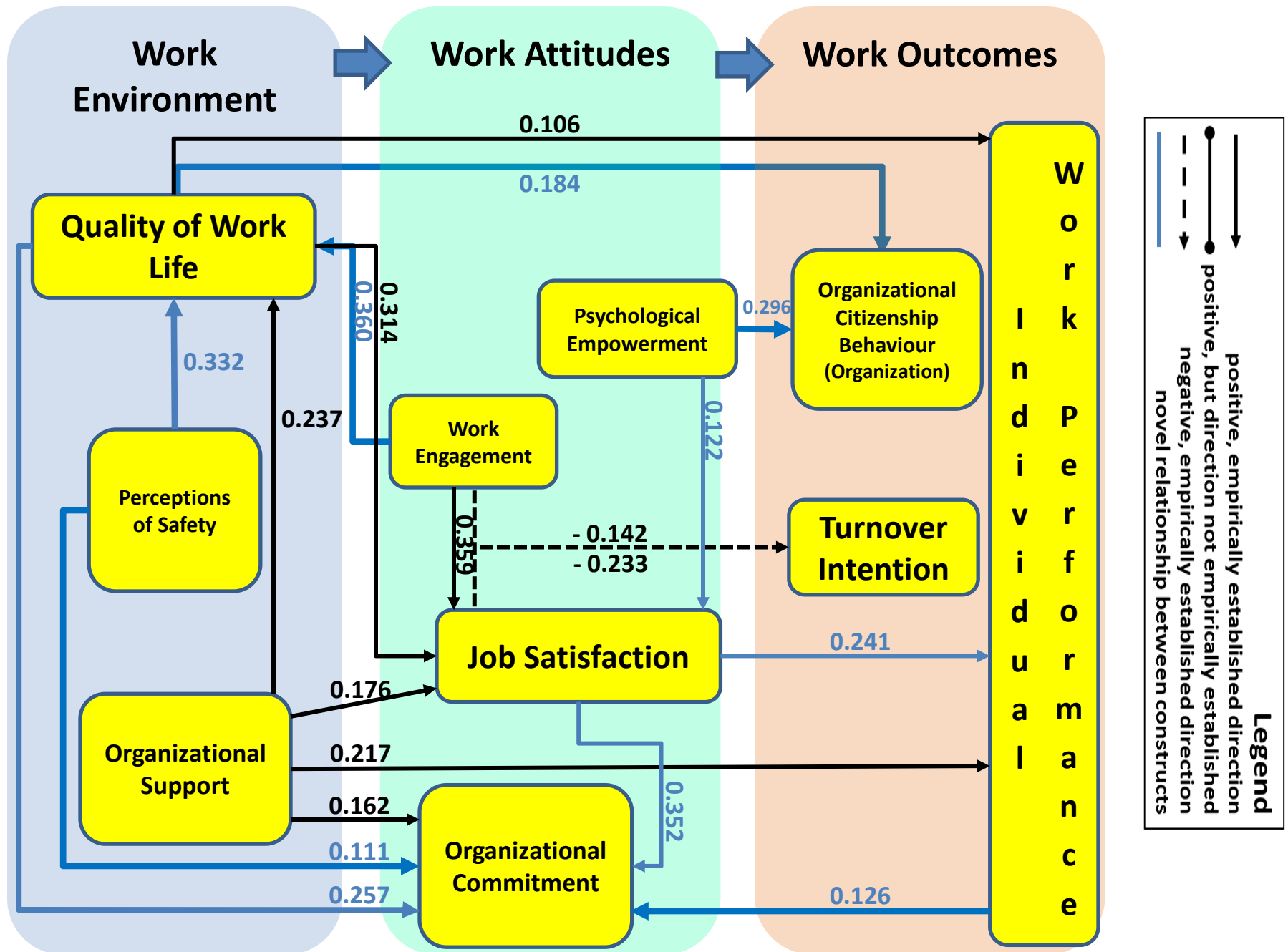
Respondent Characteristics	Total Sample % N=460	LTC Sample % n=276	HCC Sample % n=184
Age			
▪ ≤ 24 years	6.3%	8.5%	2.9%
▪ 25-29 years	6.9%	6.9%	7.0%
▪ 30-34 years	7.2%	6.9%	7.6%
▪ 35-39 years	9.5%	8.5%	11.0%
▪ 40-44 years	14.4%	15.8%	12.2%
▪ 45-49 years	11.8%	14.2%	8.1%
▪ 50-54 years	20.4%	17.7%	24.4%
▪ 55-59 years	15.0%	14.6%	15.7%
▪ ≥60 years	8.6%	6.9%	11.0%
Female	92.6%	92.3%	93%
Immigrant to Canada	35.3%	28.2%	46.0%
ESL	45.5%	54.3%	32.0%
Work Experience			
▪ < 1 year	4.6%	4.5%	4.6%
▪ 1-2 years	8.4%	6.4%	11.5%
▪ 3-4 years	11.2%	9.4%	13.8%
▪ 5-10 years	26.9%	23.4%	32.2%
▪ 10-20 years	33.0%	37.4%	26.4%
▪ > 20 years	15.9%	18.9%	11.5%
Training & Education			
▪ HCA Certification	43.1%	43.3%	42.3%
▪ Grade School	1.8%	1.1%	2.9%
▪ High School	24.9%	27.4%	21.1%
▪ College	62.8%	65.0%	59.4%
▪ University	10.4%	6.4%	16.6%
Years with Employer			
▪ Less than 1 year	8.9%	9.8%	7.6%
▪ 1-9 years	48.6%	38.5%	62.0%
▪ 10-19 years	25.7%	31.1%	18.5%
▪ 20-29 years	9.4%	12.3%	5.4%
▪ 30-35 years	3.3%	4.1%	2.2%
▪ Unanswered	4.2%	4.1%	4.4%



	LTC		HCC		t-test Results (2-tailed)
	Mean (SD)	N	Mean (SD)	N	
Individual Work Performance	1.6054 (0.642)	272	1.5624 (0.485)	179	t(449)=0.764, p=0.445
Turnover Intention	3.7169 (0.722)	272	3.730 (0.714)	181	t(451)=-0.179, p=0.858
Organizational Citizenship Behaviours	3.5357 (1.196)	273	3.6772 (1.012)	182	t(453)=-1.313, p=-.190
Psychological Empowerment	2.9129 (1.260)	268	2.8738 (1.177)	179	t(445)=0.330, p=0.742
Work Engagement	1.0688 (0.997)	265	0.7049 (0.833)	180	t(443)=4.033, p=0.000
Job Satisfaction	1.9380 (0.844)	274	1.8962 (0.827)	274	t(455)=0.523, 0.601
Organizational Commitment	2.1728 (0.779)	272	2.0904 (0.726)	182	t(452)=1.135, p=0.257
Quality of Work Life	2.6964 (0.650)	247	2.6126 (0.631)	175	t(420)=1.321, p=0.187
Perceptions of Workplace Safety	2.98 (0.765)	268	2.54 (0.554)	171	t(437)=6.528, p=0.000
Perceived Organizational Support	1.9887 (0.622)	265	2.1404 (0.701)	178	t(441)=-2.386, p=0.017

p>0.01





Policy implications

- Understanding individual and workplace factors that influence HSWs' efforts to deliver quality care is a policy priority.
- Study findings highlight important differences in the HSW workforce between LTC and HCC sectors.
- There are a number of levers within the purview of managers and health human resource decision-makers by which work attitudes, work performance and intentions to leave might be influenced.

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Questions?

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