

# Reasons why novice nurses leave the nursing profession: a qualitative approach

J.H.A.M. Kox, RN, MSc<sup>1,2</sup>, J.H. Groenewoud, PhD<sup>1</sup>, E.J.M. Bakker, RN, MSc<sup>1,4</sup>, Prof. S.M.A. Bierma-Zeinstra, PhD<sup>2,3</sup>, J. Runhaar, PhD<sup>2</sup>, H.S. Miedema, PhD<sup>1</sup>, P.D.D.M. Roelofs, PhD<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, Innovations in Care, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

<sup>2</sup>Erasmus Medical Center, Department of General Practice, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

<sup>3</sup>Erasmus Medical Center, Department of Orthopaedics, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

<sup>4</sup>Amsterdam UMC, VU Amsterdam, Department of Public and Occupational Health, Amsterdam Public Health research institute, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

## BACKGROUND

Professional turnover among novice nurses is a current issue. The reasons for professional turnover vary. Considering the worldwide nursing shortages, it is imperative to understand why novice nurses are leaving the nursing profession. This study therefore explores novice nurses' motives for leaving.

*"Create a bit of acceptance in the workplace, I would say. Well, so that nurses and nursing assistants accept each other's disabilities, so to say. Instead of having to carry on."*

## AIM

This study aimed to unravel former novice nurses' experiences and the circumstances that contributed to them leaving the nursing profession or career.

*"And that you realise that you've made mistakes, because you didn't have time to think, because you have to act very quickly... because there's no time."*

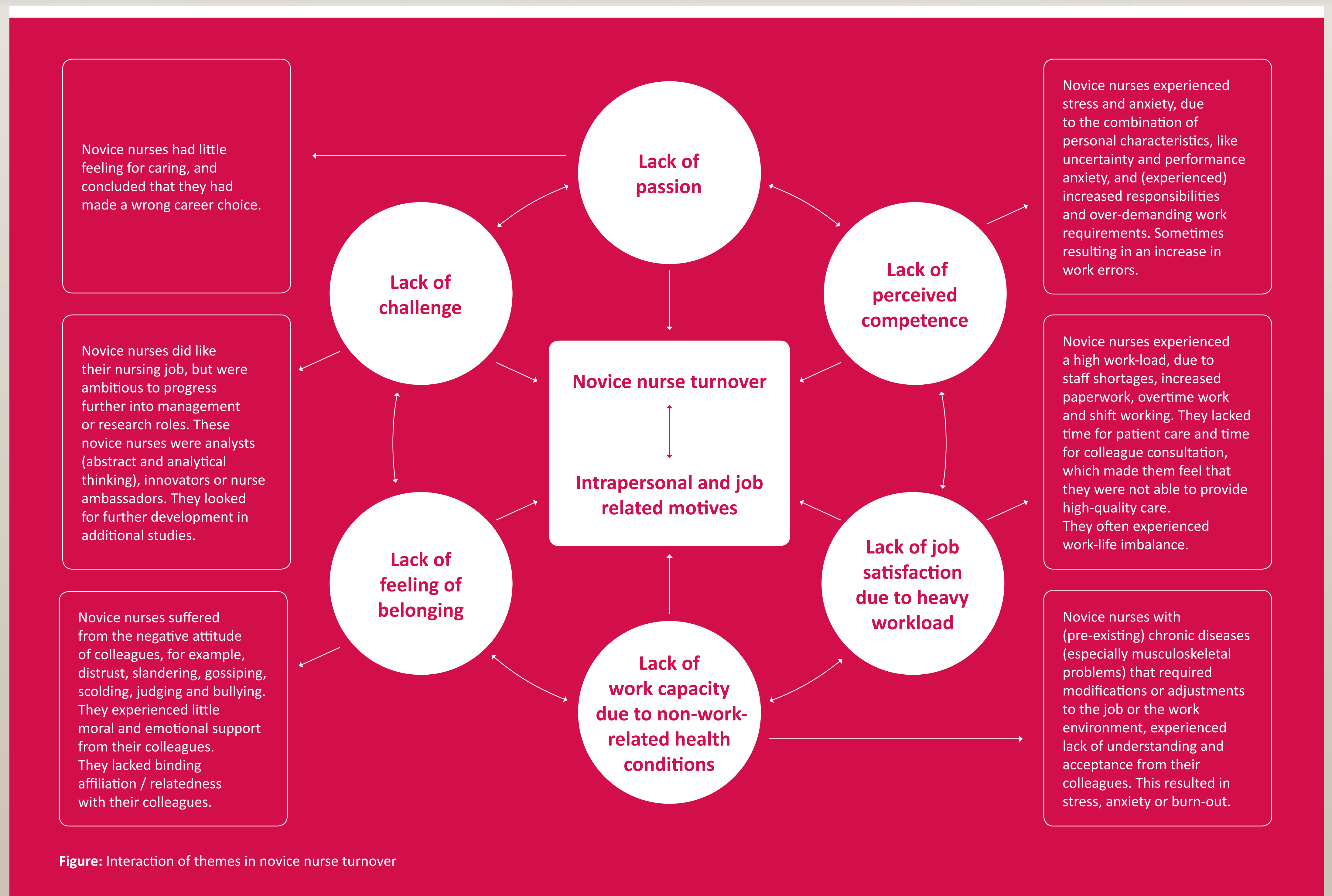
## METHODS

A phenomenological qualitative study using semi-structured interviews was done with 17 Dutch former novice nurses who had decided to leave the nursing profession within two years after graduation. Data was collected and analysed in an iterative process using thematic analysis.

## RESULTS

Six main themes emerged from the analysis.

1. Lack of challenge; no support in, or discouragement from, abstract thinking.
2. Lack of passion; no feeling of passion for patient care.
3. Lack of perceived competence; feeling not "up to the challenge".
4. Lack of job satisfaction due to heavy workload; due to increased work pressure and staff shortages.
5. Lack of work capacity due to non-work-related health conditions; physical or mental health problems combined with the heavy workload and the lack of colleague support.
6. Lack of feeling of belonging; suffering from a negative attitude of colleagues to one another.



## CONCLUSION

The reasons for professional turnover among novice nurses are diverse and involve multiple factors. To prevent novice nurse turnover, various measures could be taken, such as capacity building, supervisor support and the development of a tailored personal development plan. Support from colleagues and supervisors is important in making novice nurses feel safe and reassured. Such measures require thoughtful implementation and evaluation.

## CONTACT

**Jos Kox**  
j.kox@erasmusmc.nl  
koxjh@hr.nl  
hr.nl/spring

applied research

SPRING Starting Strong in Nursing

Erasmus MC University Medical Center Rotterdam

Research Centre Innovations in Care

ROTTERDAM UNIVERSITY UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

This project is funded by:

Regieorgaan SIA