

tropEd Masters Programme in International Health

**Predicting Turnover of
Medical Doctors in the Humanitarian Sector
at Time of Selection**

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Abstract

Background: The retention of volunteers working in the humanitarian sector is a problem but especially among medical doctors. Several studies have been carried out in order to investigate the reasons of turnover among expatriates. However no studies in the humanitarian field have investigated if there is a relationship between factors known at the time of recruitment and turnover. This study was undertaken among medical doctors within 'Médecins sans Frontières' (MSF)-Austria to investigate whether there is a relationship between factors known at time of selection and turnover.

Method: The primary data comes from the review of employment records of 58 general medical doctors and looks at demographic factors, previous experience and motivation before their first field mission, comparing medical doctors who completed one mission and others who completed several. Secondary data comes from the literature review.

Findings: Results of the statistical analysis show that medical doctors who had *dependent children* had a significantly higher representation in doctors who completed one mission, compared to doctors who completed several missions. Other demographic factors did not show a difference between the two groups. The experience factors *individual travel experience*, *preparation course* and *assessment centre* were more highly represented in the group of doctors who completed several missions, with results not being significant however. The motivational factor of *cultural learning* showed a significant result, being more highly represented in the group of medical doctors who completed several missions. Individuals mentioning a *longstanding motivation* were also more highly represented in the group who completed several missions, however only on the border of being significant.

Conclusions: MSF-Austria should be aware that when hiring expatriates who have dependent children that they are unlikely to complete several missions, unless family friendly policies are put in place. Good preparation and realistic expectations gained in the *assessment centre*, in the *preparation course* and *individual travel experience* can influence the expatriate to stay for several missions. Motivation collected through review of motivation letters is difficult to interpret; therefore the results in this category are not conclusive.