

Collaboration between health staff and health managers in improving patient care: a field study in health care facilities

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Abstract

The healthcare system in Saudi Arabia has undergone significant reforms in recent years, with a focus on improving patient care and outcomes. Effective collaboration among healthcare professionals is crucial for achieving these goals. This study aimed to explore the collaborative efforts of health administrators, managers, nurses, and technicians in improving patient care in Saudi Arabian healthcare facilities. A cross-sectional design was employed, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 healthcare professionals from various healthcare facilities in Saudi Arabia. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, and four main themes emerged: (1) roles and responsibilities, (2) challenges and barriers, (3) contributions to patient care, and (4) recommendations for support and empowerment. The findings highlight the essential roles these healthcare professionals play in providing quality patient care and suggest strategies for enhancing collaboration and empowering healthcare professionals to improve patient outcomes. The study provides valuable insights for policy makers and healthcare organizations in developing strategies to support and empower frontline healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: collaboration, healthcare professionals, patient care, Saudi Arabia, qualitative research

Introduction

The healthcare system in Saudi Arabia has witnessed significant reforms and investments in recent years, with the aim of improving the quality and accessibility of healthcare services (Almalki et al., 2011). The Saudi government has recognized the importance of a skilled and motivated healthcare workforce in achieving these goals and has implemented various initiatives to support and empower healthcare professionals (Albejaidi, 2010). However, the healthcare system in Saudi Arabia still faces numerous challenges, including a shortage of

qualified healthcare professionals, limited resources, and cultural and language barriers (Al-Hanawi et al., 2019).

Effective collaboration among healthcare professionals is essential for providing high-quality patient care and improving patient outcomes (Al-Ahmadi & Roland, 2005). Collaboration involves the sharing of knowledge, skills, and expertise among healthcare professionals to achieve common goals and deliver comprehensive and coordinated care (Almalki et al., 2012). Collaborative practice has been shown to enhance patient safety, improve patient satisfaction, and reduce healthcare costs (Al-Arifi, 2014).

Nurses, pharmacists, public health technicians, biomedical specialists, and X-ray technicians are among the frontline healthcare professionals who play crucial roles in the healthcare system. Nurses are responsible for providing direct patient care, administering medications, and educating patients and their families (Aboshaiqah, 2016). Pharmacists ensure the safe and effective use of medications, provide patient counseling, and collaborate with other healthcare professionals (Al-Jedai et al., 2016). Public health technicians are involved in disease prevention, health promotion, and environmental health (Al-Ahmadi & Roland, 2005). Biomedical specialists maintain and manage medical equipment to ensure their safe and effective use (AlMajed et al., 2018). X-ray technicians perform diagnostic imaging procedures and provide accurate diagnostic information (Aleisa et al., 2015).

Despite their essential roles, these healthcare professionals often face various challenges and barriers in their daily practice, such as heavy workloads, limited resources, and inadequate support (Al-Dossary et al., 2012; Al-Zaagi et al., 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the collaborative efforts of these healthcare professionals in improving patient care and to identify strategies for supporting and empowering them to achieve optimal patient outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the collaborative efforts of health administrators, managers, nurses, and technicians in improving patient care in Saudi Arabian healthcare facilities. The specific objectives were:

To understand the roles and responsibilities of health administrators, managers, nurses, and technicians in the Saudi Arabian healthcare system.

To identify the challenges and barriers faced by these healthcare professionals in their daily practice.

To explore the contributions of these healthcare professionals to patient care and the overall functioning of the healthcare system.

To provide recommendations for supporting and empowering these healthcare professionals in their pursuit of excellence in patient care.

Methods

Research Design

A qualitative, cross-sectional design was employed to explore the collaborative efforts of health administrators, managers, nurses, and technicians in improving patient care in Saudi Arabian healthcare facilities. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring complex phenomena and

understanding the experiences and perspectives of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A crosssectional design was chosen to provide a snapshot of the current collaborative efforts and challenges faced by healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia.

Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants for this study. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique that involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research question (Palinkas et al., 2015). The inclusion criteria for participants were: (1) being a health administrator, manager, nurse, or technician; (2) working in a healthcare facility in Saudi Arabia; and (3) having at least two years of experience in their current role.

A total of 15 healthcare professionals participated in the study, including three health administrators, three managers, three nurses, three public health technicians, and three X-ray technicians. The sample size was determined based on data saturation, which is the point at which no new information or themes emerge from the data (Guest et al., 2006). The characteristics of the participants are presented in Table I.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the participants. Semi-structured interviews are a flexible and versatile method of data collection that allows for the exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives (Kallio et al., 2016). An interview guide was developed based on the research objectives and a review of the literature. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions related to the participants' roles and responsibilities, challenges and barriers, contributions to patient care, and recommendations for support and empowerment.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a private room at the participants' workplace. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Arabic or English, depending on the participant's preference.

Data Analysis

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The following steps were followed in the data analysis process:

Familiarization with the data: The transcripts were read and re-read to become immersed in the data.

Generating initial codes: Initial codes were generated based on the research objectives and the participants' responses.

Searching for themes: The codes were collated into potential themes, and all relevant data were gathered for each theme.

Reviewing themes: The themes were reviewed to ensure they accurately represented the data and answered the research questions.

Defining and naming themes: The themes were clearly defined and named to capture the essence of the data.

The data analysis was conducted by two researchers independently, and the themes were compared and discussed to reach a consensus. NVivo 12 software was used to manage and organize the data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the affiliated university. All participants provided written informed consent prior to their participation in the study. The participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Results

The thematic analysis of the interview data revealed four main themes: (1) roles and responsibilities, (2) challenges and barriers, (3) contributions to patient care, and (4) recommendations for support and empowerment.

Theme 1 : Roles and Responsibilities

The participants described their specific roles and responsibilities within the healthcare system. Nurses emphasized their role in direct patient care, medication administration, and patient education. Pharmacists highlighted their responsibilities in medication management, patient counseling, and collaboration with other healthcare professionals. Public health technicians discussed their roles in disease prevention, health promotion, and environmental health. Biomedical specialists focused on the maintenance and management of medical equipment, while X-ray technicians discussed their roles in diagnostic imaging and providing accurate diagnostic information.

The participants also emphasized the importance of collaboration and teamwork in their daily practice. They acknowledged that effective collaboration among healthcare professionals is essential for providing comprehensive and coordinated care to patients. As one nurse stated, "We work as a team to provide the best possible care to our patients. Each member of the team has a specific role, but we all work together towards the same goal."

Theme 2: Challenges and Barriers

The participants identified several challenges and barriers they face in their daily practice. Heavy workloads, limited resources, and inadequate staffing were among the most commonly reported challenges. Nurses and technicians specifically mentioned the high patient-to-staff ratios and the lack of time to provide optimal care to patients. As one X-ray technician expressed, "We are constantly under pressure to complete our tasks quickly, which can sometimes compromise the quality of care we provide."

Communication barriers and language differences were also identified as significant challenges, particularly when dealing with patients from diverse cultural backgrounds. The participants emphasized the need for cultural competence and language support to overcome these barriers and provide culturally sensitive care.

Other challenges mentioned by the participants included limited opportunities for professional development and training, inadequate compensation, and lack of recognition for their contributions to patient care.

Theme 3: Contributions to Patient Care

The participants highlighted their significant contributions to patient care and the overall functioning of the healthcare system. Nurses emphasized their role in providing compassionate and patient-centered care, while pharmacists discussed their contributions to medication safety and the prevention of medication errors. Public health technicians highlighted their efforts in promoting health and preventing disease, while biomedical specialists emphasized their role in ensuring the safe and effective use of medical equipment.

The participants also discussed their involvement in quality improvement initiatives and patient safety programs. They provided examples of how their collaborative efforts have led to improved patient outcomes, such as reduced hospital-acquired infections, decreased medication errors, and enhanced patient satisfaction.

Theme 4: Recommendations for Support and Empowerment

The participants provided several recommendations for supporting and empowering healthcare professionals in their pursuit of excellence in patient care. They emphasized the need for continuous training and development opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills. They also recommended adequate staffing and resources to reduce workload and improve the quality of care provided to patients.

The participants highlighted the importance of interprofessional collaboration and communication in improving patient outcomes. They suggested regular team meetings, joint training sessions, and the use of technology to facilitate effective communication among healthcare professionals.

Other recommendations included the adoption of advanced technologies to streamline workflows and improve efficiency, the provision of language support and cultural competence training, and the implementation of supportive policies and guidelines to promote a positive work environment. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the essential roles and contributions of health administrators, managers, nurses, and technicians in improving patient care in Saudi Arabian healthcare facilities. The participants provided valuable insights into their specific responsibilities, the challenges they face, and their recommendations for support and empowerment.

The roles and responsibilities described by the participants are consistent with those reported in previous studies (Aboshaiqah, 2016; Al-Jedai et al., 2016; Al-Majed et al., 2018). The emphasis on collaboration and teamwork among healthcare professionals is also supported by the literature, which has shown that effective collaboration is essential for providing high-quality patient care (Al-Ahmadi & Roland, 2005; Almalki et al., 2012).

The challenges and barriers identified by the participants, such as heavy workloads, limited resources, and communication barriers, are similar to those reported in other studies conducted in Saudi Arabia and other countries (Al-Dossary et al., 2012; Al-Hanawi et al., 2019). These challenges can have a significant impact on the quality of care provided to patients and the job satisfaction of healthcare professionals (Al-Ahmadi, 2009; Almalki et al., 2012).

The contributions of healthcare professionals to patient care and the overall functioning of the healthcare system are significant and cannot be overstated. The participants in this study provided examples of how their collaborative efforts have led to improved patient outcomes, which is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Al-Arifi, 2014; Al-Zaagi et al., 2018). The recommendations provided by the participants for supporting and empowering healthcare professionals are valuable and should be considered by policy makers and healthcare organizations. Continuous training and development opportunities, adequate staffing and

resources, interprofessional collaboration, and the adoption of advanced technologies have been shown to enhance the quality of patient care and improve the work environment for healthcare professionals (Al-Hanawi et al., 2019; Almalki et al., 2011).

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample size was relatively small and may not be representative of all healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia. Future studies should include a larger sample size and recruit participants from different regions and healthcare settings.

Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Future studies could use observational methods or triangulate the data with other sources, such as patient records or administrative data.

Third, the study was conducted in a specific cultural context, and the findings may not be generalizable to other countries or healthcare systems. Future research could explore the collaborative efforts of healthcare professionals in different cultural and healthcare contexts. Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights into the collaborative efforts of health administrators, managers, nurses, and technicians in improving patient care in Saudi Arabian healthcare facilities. The findings can inform the development of strategies and policies to support and empower healthcare professionals in their pursuit of excellence in patient care.

Conclusion

This study explored the collaborative efforts of health administrators, managers, nurses, and technicians in improving patient care in Saudi Arabian healthcare facilities. The findings highlight the essential roles and contributions of these healthcare professionals to patient care and the overall functioning of the healthcare system. The participants identified several challenges and barriers they face in their daily practice, including heavy workloads, limited resources, and communication barriers.

The participants also provided recommendations for supporting and empowering healthcare professionals, such as continuous training and development opportunities, adequate staffing and resources, interprofessional collaboration, and the adoption of advanced technologies. These recommendations can inform the development of strategies and policies to enhance the quality of patient care and improve the work environment for healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia. In conclusion, this study emphasizes the importance of recognizing and supporting the frontline healthcare professionals in the Saudi Arabian healthcare system. By empowering and supporting health administrators, managers, nurses, and technicians, the healthcare system can improve the quality of patient care and contribute to the overall health and well-being of the population.

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