

# Challenges Facing Nursing Professionals in Saudi Arabia Today

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## Abstract:

Nursing professionals in Saudi Arabia face several significant challenges that impact their ability to provide high-quality care. One of the primary issues is the shortage of qualified nursing staff, which is exacerbated by high turnover rates and an increasing demand for healthcare services due to the country's growing population and aging demographic. This shortage often leads to increased workloads for existing nurses, resulting in burnout and job dissatisfaction. Furthermore, the nursing profession in Saudi Arabia has historically been undervalued, which can affect recruitment and retention efforts. Cultural perceptions of nursing, often seen as a less prestigious career compared to medicine, contribute to difficulties in attracting new talent to the field. Additionally, nursing professionals in Saudi Arabia encounter barriers related to professional development and training opportunities. While there have been improvements in nursing education and the establishment of nursing colleges, there remains a gap in advanced training programs and specialization options. Many nurses express a desire for continued education and career advancement, yet access to these resources can be limited. Furthermore, regulatory challenges and the need for more supportive policies can hinder nurses' ability to practice to the full extent of their training. Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing the nursing workforce and ensuring that patients receive the best possible care.

**Keywords:** Nursing shortage, Workforce burnout, Job dissatisfaction, Recruitment challenges, Cultural perceptions, Advanced training, Regulatory barriers, Career advancement, Healthcare demand.

## Introduction:

Nursing is a vital component of the healthcare system, playing a critical role in promoting health, preventing illness, and providing care to patients across various settings. In Saudi Arabia, the nursing profession has undergone significant transformation in recent years, driven by the government's commitment to enhancing healthcare services as part of its Vision 2030 initiative. However, despite these advancements, nursing professionals in the country face a myriad of challenges that impact their ability to deliver effective care. This research introduction aims to explore the multifaceted challenges confronting nursing professionals in Saudi Arabia today, including workforce shortages, educational barriers, cultural factors, regulatory issues, and the evolving landscape of healthcare demands [1].

One of the most pressing challenges is the shortage of nursing staff, which has been a longstanding issue in Saudi Arabia. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a nurse-to-population ratio of at least 1:1000 to ensure adequate healthcare delivery. However, Saudi Arabia currently falls short of this benchmark, with a nurse-to-population ratio of approximately 0.7:1000. This shortage is attributed to several factors, including an insufficient number of nursing graduates, high turnover rates, and the migration of skilled nurses to other countries for better opportunities. As the population continues to grow and the demand for healthcare services increases, the existing workforce is stretched thin, leading to increased workloads, burnout, and compromised patient care [2].

Education and training represent another critical challenge for nursing professionals in Saudi Arabia. Although the country has made strides in establishing nursing programs and increasing enrollment, the quality of education remains inconsistent. Many nursing schools face challenges such as a lack of qualified faculty, outdated curricula, and insufficient clinical training opportunities. These gaps in education can hinder the development of competent nursing professionals who are equipped to meet the complexities of modern healthcare. Furthermore, the perception of nursing as a less prestigious profession compared to medicine can deter young individuals from pursuing a career in nursing, exacerbating the workforce shortage [3].

Cultural factors also play a significant role in shaping the nursing profession in Saudi Arabia. The cultural context influences how nursing is perceived, with traditional views often placing a higher value on male-dominated professions such as medicine. This cultural bias can lead to gender disparities within the nursing workforce, as nursing is predominantly a female profession in the country. Additionally, cultural norms regarding gender roles may limit opportunities for female nurses, particularly in leadership positions, thereby affecting their professional

advancement and job satisfaction. Addressing these cultural barriers is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and equitable nursing workforce [4].

Regulatory issues further complicate the landscape for nursing professionals in Saudi Arabia. The nursing profession is governed by various laws and regulations that can sometimes be ambiguous or inadequately enforced. The Saudi Commission for Health Specialties (SCFHS) is responsible for licensing and regulating nursing practice; however, there are ongoing challenges related to the standardization of nursing qualifications and scope of practice. Inconsistent regulations can create confusion among nursing professionals and healthcare institutions, leading to variations in practice and potentially compromising patient safety. Moreover, the lack of a clear career progression framework for nurses can result in job dissatisfaction and hinder retention efforts [5].

As the healthcare landscape in Saudi Arabia continues to evolve, nursing professionals are also faced with the challenge of adapting to new technologies and practices. The integration of electronic health records, telemedicine, and advanced medical technologies into healthcare delivery requires nurses to possess a high level of digital literacy and adaptability. Continuous professional development and training are essential to ensure that nursing professionals are equipped with the necessary skills to navigate these changes effectively. However, access to ongoing education and training opportunities can be limited, particularly in rural areas, further exacerbating the challenges faced by nursing professionals [6].

### **Current Workforce Dynamics and Shortages:**

The healthcare sector is undergoing significant transformations, driven by demographic changes, technological advancements, and evolving patient needs. Among the many challenges facing this sector, the nursing workforce shortage stands out as a critical issue that impacts the quality of care delivered to patients. As the backbone of healthcare, nurses play a vital role in patient outcomes, yet they are increasingly stretched thin due to a variety of factors [7].

Workforce dynamics refer to the patterns and trends that influence the labor market, particularly the supply and demand for workers in various sectors. In healthcare, these dynamics are shaped by several factors, including population demographics, economic conditions, educational opportunities, and technological advancements. The interplay of these elements has profound implications for the nursing workforce [7].

One of the most significant factors influencing workforce dynamics is the aging population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of Americans aged 65 and older is projected to reach 94.7 million by 2060, nearly doubling from 52 million in 2018. This demographic shift increases the demand for healthcare services, particularly in areas such as chronic disease management, long-term care, and palliative care, all of which require skilled nursing professionals [8].

Simultaneously, the nursing workforce itself is aging. A substantial portion of the current nursing workforce is nearing retirement age, which exacerbates the shortage. The American Nurses Association (ANA) reports that nearly one-third of registered nurses (RNs) in the United States are over the age of 50. As these experienced nurses retire, the healthcare system faces a dual challenge: meeting the rising demand for nursing care while simultaneously losing a significant number of seasoned professionals [9].

Economic conditions also play a crucial role in workforce dynamics. During economic downturns, the healthcare sector often experiences budget cuts, leading to hiring freezes and reduced staffing levels. Conversely, during periods of economic growth, healthcare organizations may struggle to compete with other industries for talent, particularly in a tight labor market. The COVID-19 pandemic further complicated these dynamics, as hospitals and healthcare facilities faced unprecedented challenges that increased the demand for nursing staff while simultaneously straining resources [10].

The education and training pipeline for nurses is another critical factor in workforce dynamics. The nursing profession requires a significant investment of time and resources for education and training, which can deter potential candidates from entering the field. Although nursing programs have expanded in recent years, they often face challenges such as limited clinical placements, faculty shortages, and funding constraints. These barriers can restrict the number of new nurses entering the workforce, contributing to the overall shortage.

Technological advancements in healthcare have the potential to improve efficiency and patient care but can also create new challenges for the nursing workforce. The integration of electronic health records (EHRs), telehealth services, and advanced medical technologies requires nurses to develop new skills and adapt to changing workflows. While technology can alleviate some of the burdens on nurses, it can also lead to increased stress and job dissatisfaction if not implemented thoughtfully [10].

The nursing workforce shortage is a multifaceted issue that poses significant challenges to the healthcare system. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the U.S. is projected to experience a

shortage of registered nurses ranging from 37,000 to 124,000 by 2030. This shortage is particularly pronounced in specific areas, such as rural and underserved communities, where access to healthcare services is already limited.

The nursing shortage has serious implications for patient care and outcomes. Research has shown that inadequate nurse staffing levels are associated with higher rates of patient complications, increased hospital readmission rates, and lower patient satisfaction scores. Nurses are essential in monitoring patient conditions, administering medications, and providing education and support to patients and their families. When nurses are overworked and stretched thin, the quality of care can suffer, putting patients at risk [11].

Moreover, the nursing shortage can lead to increased burnout among existing staff. The demands placed on nurses can result in high turnover rates, further exacerbating the shortage and creating a cycle of stress and attrition. Addressing the nursing workforce shortage is not only essential for improving patient care but also for fostering a healthier work environment for nurses.

To mitigate the nursing workforce shortage, a multifaceted approach is needed. Several strategies can be implemented to address the root causes of the shortage and ensure a sustainable nursing workforce for the future.

One of the most effective ways to address the nursing shortage is to expand educational opportunities for aspiring nurses. This includes increasing the number of nursing programs, enhancing access to clinical placements, and providing financial support for nursing students. Initiatives such as scholarships, loan forgiveness programs, and partnerships with healthcare organizations can help attract more individuals to the nursing profession [12].

Retention strategies are equally important in addressing the nursing shortage. Healthcare organizations must prioritize creating supportive work environments that promote nurse well-being and job satisfaction. This can include offering competitive salaries, providing opportunities for professional development, and implementing programs to reduce burnout and stress. Additionally, fostering a culture of recognition and appreciation can help retain experienced nurses and encourage them to mentor new graduates.

While technology can contribute to the nursing shortage by increasing demands on staff, it can also be leveraged to improve efficiency and support nurses in their roles. Implementing user-friendly EHR systems, providing training on new technologies, and utilizing telehealth services can help alleviate some of the burdens on nurses. By streamlining administrative tasks and enhancing communication, technology can enable nurses to focus more on patient care [13].

Promoting diversity and inclusion within the nursing workforce is essential for addressing the shortage and improving patient care. Encouraging individuals from diverse backgrounds to pursue nursing careers can help create a more representative workforce that is better equipped to meet the needs of diverse patient populations. Initiatives aimed at recruiting underrepresented groups into nursing programs and providing mentorship opportunities can help foster a more inclusive nursing workforce [14].

Finally, advocating for policies that support the nursing workforce is crucial for addressing the shortage. This includes lobbying for increased funding for nursing education, advocating for nurse-to-patient ratio regulations, and supporting initiatives that promote the nursing profession. Engaging policymakers and stakeholders in discussions about the importance of nursing can help raise awareness of the issue and foster collaborative efforts to find solutions [14].

### **Impact of Cultural Perceptions on the Nursing Profession:**

The nursing profession has historically been shaped by a myriad of factors—medical advancements, technological progress, and evolving healthcare systems being among the most significant. However, one of the most profound influences on nursing, often overlooked in discussions surrounding the profession's evolution, is culture. Cultural perceptions not only shape the values and beliefs of nurses but also influence patient care, interprofessional collaboration, and the overall healthcare environment [15].

Cultural perceptions are the collective beliefs, values, and norms shared by a group of people. These perceptions shape how individuals view health, illness, and the healthcare system itself. In nursing, these cultural viewpoints can manifest in various ways, from how nurses care for patients to their interactions with colleagues and the broader healthcare framework within which they operate. The nursing workforce is incredibly diverse, comprising individuals from various ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This diversity enriches nursing practice but can also lead to misunderstandings or conflicts if cultural differences are not adequately recognized and managed [15].

At the foundation of nursing practice lies the principle of cultural competence—an essential component that enables healthcare practitioners to deliver effective care in a multicultural environment. Cultural competence involves understanding and respecting patients' beliefs, values, and practices related to health and illness. Nurses equipped with cultural competence can bridge communication gaps, assess patient needs more accurately, and develop trust, which is paramount in healthcare settings.

The impact of cultural perceptions on nursing practice is particularly evident in the realm of patient interactions. For instance, cultural backgrounds influence patients' responses to illness, their health-seeking behaviors, and their decision-making processes regarding treatment. A nurse who acknowledges and respects these cultural differences can provide care that is not only clinically effective but also aligns with the patients' values and preferences, thereby enhancing health outcomes [15].

Conversely, a lack of cultural awareness can lead to misunderstandings that may jeopardize patient safety. For example, a patient from a culture that values family involvement may feel alienated if nursing practices do not incorporate family members as part of the care process. Similarly, cultural differences in expressing pain or discomfort can result in under-treatment or miscommunication during assessments. Thus, cultural perceptions significantly affect patient care and the patient's overall satisfaction with their healthcare experience.

Cultural perceptions extend beyond patient care to encompass the dynamics of interdisciplinary collaboration. In modern healthcare practice, effective collaboration among healthcare providers is crucial for ensuring holistic patient care. However, diverse cultural backgrounds can lead to different communication styles, work ethics, and approaches to problem-solving. For instance, some cultures may prioritize collectivism and team consensus, while others may value individualism and assertive decision-making [16].

Nurses who are attuned to these differences can foster more effective teamwork, leading to improved patient care. On the other hand, a failure to appreciate cultural diversity in interprofessional settings can breed conflict, hinder collaboration, and ultimately impede the delivery of comprehensive care. To navigate these complexities, nursing education increasingly emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity and effective communication within healthcare teams.

Cultural perceptions also influence the healthcare system's structure and policies. Systems that reflect the cultural values of the population they serve are more likely to succeed in promoting community health and wellness. For example, hospitals that employ culturally competent staff and implement policies catering to diverse populations can enhance trust in healthcare services and ensure that care is accessible and effective for all individuals, regardless of their background [17].

Moreover, cultural perceptions can shape public health initiatives, health education programs, and community outreach efforts. By integrating cultural values into health promotion strategies, organizations can effectively address health disparities and improve overall community health outcomes. Nurses play a critical role in advocating for such culturally sensitive approaches to healthcare, pushing for policies that consider the diverse backgrounds of the communities served.

Despite the clear benefits of integrating cultural competence into nursing practice, several challenges persist. Chief among these are the potential biases that nurses may hold, often subconsciously. Personal cultural perceptions can shape how nurses perceive their patients and the care they require. Therefore, ongoing education, training, and reflective practice are essential for nurses to challenge their biases and embrace cultural diversity positively [18].

Healthcare institutions also play a pivotal role in fostering an environment that values cultural competence. By providing training programs on cultural awareness and promoting a diverse workforce, organizations can nurture a culture of inclusivity and respect. Additionally, systems that establish protocols for gathering and incorporating patient demographic data into care models can further enhance cultural competence within the nursing profession [18].

### **Burnout and Job Satisfaction Among Nurses:**

In the fast-paced and often high-stakes environment of healthcare, nursing stands as one of the most demanding professions. While nurses are the backbone of the healthcare system—providing essential services, patient care, and advocacy—they frequently encounter challenges that can lead to high levels of stress, burnout, and diminished job satisfaction. Understanding the interplay between burnout and job satisfaction among nurses is crucial for improving not only the well-being of these healthcare practitioners but also the overall quality of patient care [19].

Burnout in nursing is characterized by a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by prolonged and excessive stress. According to the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the three core components of burnout include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion refers to the feeling of being emotionally drained and depleted of resources. Depersonalization, on the other hand, is characterized by a negative, cynical attitude toward patients, often leading caregivers to see patients as objects rather than individuals. Finally, a reduced sense of personal accomplishment signifies a decline in feelings of competence and achievement at work [19].

Several factors contribute to burnout among nurses. Key among them are long working hours, emotional toll from patient care, lack of autonomy, inadequate staffing ratios, and the challenging nature of clinical environments. Additionally, exposure to distressing situations, such as critical illnesses or end-of-life care, can exacerbate feelings

of helplessness and frustration. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, has intensified these stressors, leading to unprecedented levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout among healthcare workers, particularly nurses [20].

Job satisfaction is an employee's general attitude toward their job. It encompasses a range of factors, including job role clarity, work environment, recognition, professional development opportunities, and workload. Theories of job satisfaction emphasize its multifaceted nature; aspects such as intrinsic motivation, work relationships, and career advancement opportunities play significant roles in determining how satisfied nurses feel in their roles. Job satisfaction among nurses is not only vital for their own well-being, but it also influences patient care, retention rates, and overall organizational effectiveness.

Research indicates a strong correlation between job satisfaction and various variables, including the quality of leadership and management, team dynamics, and the level of support received from colleagues and administration. Satisfied nurses are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and committed to their work, which directly enhances patient outcomes and organizational efficacy [21].

The relationship between burnout and job satisfaction among nurses is complex and interrelated. High levels of burnout often lead to reduced job satisfaction, resulting in a negative cyclical pattern. When nurses experience emotional exhaustion, they may develop a detached attitude toward their work and patients—reducing their intrinsic motivation and overall satisfaction. Conversely, low job satisfaction can lead to increased stress and feelings of inefficacy, ultimately heightening the risk of burnout [22].

Several studies support this connection. For instance, a study published in the "International Journal of Nursing Studies" found that nurses facing high levels of burnout reported significantly lower job satisfaction. Moreover, work environments characterized by poor communication, inadequate resources, and lack of support from management are fertile grounds for both burnout and low job satisfaction. Conversely, supportive work environments with collegial relationships, appropriate staffing levels, and recognition of nurses' contributions can mitigate the effects of burnout and foster greater job satisfaction [22].

Addressing burnout and enhancing job satisfaction among nurses requires a multi-faceted approach. First, healthcare organizations must recognize the importance of creating a supportive work environment. This includes fostering open communication, promoting teamwork, and ensuring that nurses have access to mental health resources. Regular check-ins with staff to gauge their emotional well-being can help identify those at risk for burnout and provide necessary interventions before the situation escalates.

Continuous education and professional development opportunities can also play a pivotal role in enhancing job satisfaction. Empowering nurses through training, mentorship, and leadership opportunities not only improves their skills but also instills a sense of accomplishment and purpose in their roles. Additionally, research shows that participatory decision-making—where nurses are included in decisions that impact their work—can significantly improve job satisfaction and reduce burnout [23].

Moreover, the implementation of employee wellness programs designed to support mental health and reduce stress levels can yield considerable benefits. Offering programs focused on mindfulness, resilience, and work-life balance can help nurses manage stress more effectively. Additionally, addressing systemic issues that contribute to burnout, such as high patient-to-nurse ratios and excessive administrative tasks, is crucial. Streamlining administrative duties and ensuring an adequate nurse staffing level allows nurses to concentrate on patient care rather than being overwhelmed by non-patient-related responsibilities [24].

### **Barriers to Professional Development and Training:**

Nursing is a dynamic and evolving profession that plays a crucial role in healthcare systems worldwide. As the healthcare landscape shifts due to advances in technology, changes in patient demographics, and evolving disease patterns, the demand for continual professional development among nurses has never been more critical. However, several barriers hinder effective professional development and training for nurses. Understanding these obstacles is crucial for healthcare organizations, policymakers, and educational institutions to foster a supportive environment that promotes lifelong learning in nursing [25].

One of the most significant barriers to nursing professional development is financial constraints. The cost associated with advanced education, certifications, or continuing education courses can be prohibitive for many nurses. Tuition fees, registration costs for conferences, and costs of essential materials can add up, especially for those already burdened with student loans and living expenses. Moreover, many healthcare facilities may not provide sufficient financial support or reimbursement for employees seeking professional development opportunities, thereby disincentivizing further education [26].

The demanding nature of nursing schedules presents another barrier. Nurses often work long hours and may have rotating shifts, making it challenging for them to find time for additional training or education. The pressure of their responsibilities can make it difficult for nurses to commit to evening or weekend classes, attend conferences, or

participate in online training sessions. The constant state of workload and the potential for burnout can further deter nurses from seeking opportunities for professional growth [27].

In some cases, healthcare institutions may lack a culture that actively encourages professional development. When organizational leadership does not prioritize training or fails to recognize the importance of ongoing education, nurses may feel unsupported in their quest for professional growth. Furthermore, when nursing leadership is not engaged in mentoring or facilitating opportunities for professional development, new and existing nurses may struggle to find guidance on how to advance their careers effectively. Organizations must recognize that investing in the continuing education of their staff not only improves nurse competency but also enhances patient care outcomes [28].

Access to resources is another hurdle in the path toward nursing professional development. In rural or underserved areas, opportunities for training and education may be scarce. When nurses are located in geographic regions where educational institutions or professional development workshops are lacking, they may face additional challenges in pursuing advancement. Moreover, the rise of online education has not completely mitigated this issue, as some remote areas often have limited access to reliable internet services or sufficient technology to engage effectively with online learning platforms [29].

The transition from the educational environment to clinical practice can be daunting for novice nurses. A lack of mentorship and support can create a barrier to professional development, making it difficult for new nurses to navigate their roles effectively. Skilled mentors play a crucial role in guiding less experienced nurses through their professional journey, offering invaluable insights and encouragement. However, not all institutions foster a culture of mentorship, which may result in newer nurses feeling isolated and uncertain in their practice. Without proper guidance, they may struggle to identify areas in which they need further training or development, stalling their professional growth.

The nursing profession offers various specialization areas and advancement opportunities; however, the pathways to advancement can be unclear. Many nurses may not be fully aware of the options available to them, including certifications, advanced practice roles, or leadership positions. Lacking this clarity can lead to confusion and frustration, with nurses potentially feeling trapped in their current roles with no clear direction for growth. If nursing leaders and educational institutions do not provide clear outlines of career trajectories and the necessary steps to achieve specific goals, many nurses may abandon their pursuit of further development altogether [30].

Another barrier can be the inherent resistance to change that may exist within healthcare organizations. The field of nursing is continuously evolving, and some nurses may be hesitant to adopt new practices, technologies, or training methods. This resistance can stem from a variety of sources, including a lack of confidence in new technologies, fear of failure, or discomfort with changing established routines. For a workforce to thrive and embrace professional development, fostering an environment that celebrates innovation and encourages the exploration of new approaches is essential [31].

### **Regulatory and Policy Challenges in Nursing Practice:**

Nursing is a vital component of the healthcare system, providing essential services that promote patient care, advocacy, and overall health outcomes. However, nursing practice is profoundly influenced by a complex landscape of regulations and policies that dictate how nurses can operate within the healthcare framework. As the healthcare landscape continues to evolve, particularly in light of advancements in medical technology, changing patient demographics, and global health challenges, nurses face a unique set of regulatory and policy challenges that can significantly impact their practice [32].

Regulatory bodies, such as state boards of nursing in the United States or nursing councils in other countries, are responsible for establishing the guidelines and standards that govern nursing practice. These regulations are designed to ensure public safety, protect the welfare of patients, and maintain professional integrity. However, the rigidity of regulatory frameworks can sometimes hinder nurses' ability to practice effectively and efficiently [33].

For instance, many states operate under a nurse practice act that delineates the scope of practice for various nursing roles, including registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical nurses (LPNs), and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs). Variations in these acts across states can create confusion and inconsistency in practice. Nurses who move from one state to another may find themselves navigating different laws and regulations, which can lead to challenges in delivering care or even result in legal repercussions if they inadvertently violate state-specific practice regulations.

Additionally, evolving healthcare delivery models, such as telehealth and integrated care teams, present regulatory challenges. Many existing regulations were crafted before the advent of telemedicine, and as such, may not adequately address the nuances of remote patient care. This gap can stifle innovation and limit patient access to

necessary services. Nurses who wish to implement or participate in these models may encounter bureaucratic obstacles that can impede their ability to deliver timely care [34].

Another significant regulatory challenge relates to the scope of practice for nurses, particularly for APRNs. The scope of practice defines what healthcare providers can do based on their education, training, and competencies. While many states have moved towards granting APRNs greater autonomy, the persistent existence of restrictive scopes of practice remains a prominent issue. In some jurisdictions, nurse practitioners may have limited prescribing power or may require physician oversight, which can disrupt the continuity of care and impede nurses' ability to respond swiftly to patient needs [35].

Such limitations on practice not only impact patient care but also contribute to wider issues within the healthcare system. As the demand for healthcare services increases due to an aging population and the prevalence of healthcare disparities, the inability of highly trained nurse practitioners to practice to the full extent of their education poses a significant challenge. Advocates for the nursing profession argue that removing these barriers would enhance healthcare access and optimize resource allocation by allowing nurse practitioners to provide care for patients in underserved areas, thereby improving public health outcomes.

Regulatory policies also play a critical role in shaping the nursing workforce. Current shortages in nursing staff are exacerbated by factors such as burnout, high turnover rates, and an aging workforce. During crisis situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, these issues became acutely visible as healthcare systems struggled to maintain adequate staffing levels. Regulatory policies can contribute to these challenges. For example, rigid requirements for nurse education and licensure can limit the number of new nurses entering the workforce. In response, some nursing organizations advocate for expedited pathways to licensure for qualified applicants, including the consideration of international nurses who could help alleviate workforce shortages [36].

Additionally, regulatory policies surrounding nurse education, such as accreditation standards for nursing programs, can affect the number of graduates entering the profession. Changes in these standards, while essential for ensuring quality education, can inadvertently lead to delays in graduation and increased barriers to entry. As the demand for nurses grows, it is crucial that educational institutions and regulatory bodies work collaboratively to ensure a robust pipeline of qualified nurses [37].

Healthcare reimbursement policies also significantly affect nursing practice. In many healthcare systems, reimbursement models historically focus on physician-driven services, often leading to an undervaluation of nursing contributions in patient care. Nurses frequently engage in essential activities that influence patient outcomes, yet they may not receive adequate compensation for these services. Additionally, the shift towards value-based care—a reimbursement model that rewards quality rather than quantity of care—puts further pressure on nurses to demonstrate the effectiveness and value of their services.

This landscape poses challenges for nurses in advocating for their roles and securing appropriate compensation for their work. Regulatory policies and reimbursement structures must evolve to acknowledge and reimburse nursing services effectively, ensuring that nurses can be compensated for the full range of services they provide, from direct care to patient education and care coordination [38].

Licensure and credentialing are further regulatory hurdles that nurses must navigate throughout their careers. Differences in licensure requirements from state to state can complicate practice for nurses who relocate. In particular, nursing is a profession where interstate mobility is common. The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) was established to facilitate this mobility by allowing R.N.s to practice in multiple compact states with a single license. However, not all states participate in the NLC, which may limit the options available to nurses looking to practice across state lines [39].

Credentialing is another aspect of regulatory oversight that can be burdensome for nurses, especially for those seeking specialized certifications that require rigorous testing and ongoing education. While ensuring that only qualified individuals provide care is essential, the complexities and costs associated with credentialing can be prohibitive. The time and financial investment needed to maintain credentials may deter some qualified nurses from pursuing advanced practice roles, further exacerbating workforce shortages [40].

### **The Role of Technology in Nursing Care Delivery:**

The integration of technology into healthcare has revolutionized the way nursing care is delivered. As healthcare systems continue to evolve, the nursing profession has adapted to harness innovative tools and practices that enhance patient outcomes, improve efficiency, and facilitate comprehensive care [41].

One of the most significant advances in nursing care delivery is the use of technology to enhance patient care. Electronic Health Records (EHRs) represent a hallmark of this transformation, enabling nurses to access patient information seamlessly and share data with other healthcare providers. EHRs facilitate real-time updates, allowing nurses to make informed decisions quickly and collaboratively. This integrated approach not only reduces the risk of

medical errors but also enhances the continuity of care, especially in settings where various specialists are involved [42].

Moreover, telehealth technologies have emerged as critical tools in nursing, particularly in a post-pandemic world where remote care has become more prevalent. Telehealth enables nurses to conduct virtual assessments, follow-ups, and patient education sessions, expanding access to healthcare for individuals in underserved or remote areas. The convenience of virtual consultations has increased patient engagement and adherence to treatment plans, significantly impacting overall health outcomes.

Additionally, the incorporation of advanced monitoring devices has improved the ability to track patient vitals and conditions. Wearable technology, such as heart rate monitors, glucose tracking devices, and smartwatches, empowers patients to take an active role in their health management. Nurses can use data from these devices to identify potential issues early, enabling timely interventions that can prevent complications or hospitalizations [43]. Effective communication among healthcare team members is vital for delivering high-quality nursing care. In an era where interprofessional collaboration is paramount, technology facilitates better communication between nurses and other healthcare professionals. Secure messaging systems and collaboration platforms enable rapid information exchange, allowing for quick discussions about patient care plans and interventions.

Nurses can leverage communication technologies to coordinate care more effectively, ensuring that patients receive comprehensive and well-rounded treatment. The use of teleconferencing tools allows for multi-disciplinary meetings where nurses can actively participate in discussions about care strategies and outcomes. This collaborative approach fosters a culture of teamwork, which is essential for navigating the complexities of patient care in modern healthcare environments [44].

Furthermore, mobile applications tailored for nurses can boost communication efficiency. These apps can provide instant access to drug information, clinical guidelines, and peer-reviewed research. As a result, nurses are better equipped to make evidence-based decisions in real time, enhancing the quality of care they provide.

Data management is another critical aspect of nursing care that technology has significantly improved. The ability to collect, analyze, and utilize vast amounts of patient data is essential for both quality improvement initiatives and clinical decision-making. Nursing informatics, the intersection of nursing, computer science, and information management, plays a pivotal role in this area [45].

With advanced data analytics, healthcare organizations can identify trends, monitor patient outcomes, and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Nurses who are proficient in nursing informatics can contribute to quality improvement projects by analyzing data pertinent to patient care, ultimately leading to the development of evidence-based practices that enhance care delivery [46].

Moreover, technology also aids in reducing paperwork and administrative burdens often associated with nursing duties. Automated documentation systems allow nurses to focus more on direct patient care rather than time-consuming paperwork. This streamlined approach not only improves job satisfaction among nurses but also leads to better patient experiences by allowing nurses to dedicate more time to their needs.

The integration of technology into nursing education has transformed how future nurses acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for delivering high-quality care. Simulation labs equipped with advanced technologies allow nursing students to practice clinical skills in a safe, controlled environment. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) simulations offer immersive experiences where students can encounter various clinical scenarios, enhancing their critical thinking and decision-making skills [47].

Additionally, online and blended learning platforms have made nursing education more accessible. Students can pursue online courses, webinars, and virtual workshops that fit their individual schedules. This flexibility not only broadens access to nursing education but also allows for lifelong learning, with practicing nurses able to update their knowledge and skills as new technologies and practices emerge.

The use of digital resources, such as e-books and online databases, also enriches the learning experience for nursing students and professionals. Access to a wide array of literature and research insights enables nurses to stay informed about the latest advancements in healthcare, patient care techniques, and evidence-based practices [48].

### **Strategies for Improving Nursing Recruitment and Retention:**

The nursing profession is vital to the healthcare system, providing essential care and services to patients across various settings. However, the nursing field faces significant challenges regarding recruitment and retention, exacerbated by factors such as an aging workforce, increasing healthcare demands, and burnout. To ensure that healthcare facilities can maintain high standards of patient care and address the evolving needs of communities, it is crucial to implement effective strategies for improving nursing recruitment and retention [49].

Before addressing recruitment and retention strategies, it is important to understand the current landscape of nursing. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates a global shortage of nurses, with projections indicating a deficit of



18 million health workers by 2030, primarily in low- and middle-income countries. In developed nations, such as the United States, factors like the Baby Boomer phenomenon and increased chronic illness prevalence are placing greater demands on nursing professionals. These trends underscore the urgency of improving the recruitment and retention of nurses [50].

### **Recruitment Strategies**

#### **1. Creating a Positive Work Environment**

A supportive and collaborative work environment is essential in attracting new nurses. Healthcare organizations should emphasize a culture of respect, inclusion, and teamwork. Providing mentorship programs where experienced nurses guide and support new recruits can help foster a sense of belonging and decrease the initial stresses associated with the job [51].

#### **2. Utilizing Technology**

Innovative technology can streamline the recruitment process and enhance the nursing experience. Utilizing applicant tracking systems can help organizations manage applications more efficiently, while virtual reality simulations can showcase the dynamic nursing environment and give potential recruits a glimpse of their future roles [51].

#### **3. Competitive Compensation Packages**

Offering competitive salaries and benefits is crucial for drawing talent into the nursing profession. Organizations must conduct market analyses to ensure their compensation packages are attractive, including signing bonuses, relocation assistance, and student loan repayment programs, which can significantly influence a candidate's decision to accept a position.

#### **4. Flexible Work Options**

The introduction of flexible work schedules can make nursing positions more appealing. Many prospective nurses seek work-life balance, which can be addressed by offering part-time positions, job sharing, or home-health roles. Adapting to the preferences of a younger workforce that prioritizes flexibility can enhance recruitment efforts [52].

#### **5. University Partnerships and Internships**

Collaborating with educational institutions to create internship and clinical rotation opportunities can help strengthen the pipeline of new nurses entering the workforce. Clinical experiences allow students to gain hands-on experience while fostering relationships with potential employers. Establishing scholarships or funding programs aimed at nursing students can also encourage entry into the field [52].

### **Retention Strategies**

#### **1. Addressing Burnout and Workload**

To retain nursing staff, healthcare organizations must focus on burnout prevention and workload management. Implementing staffing ratios that allow for appropriate patient care, along with providing mental health resources, can help mitigate stress. Regularly assessing staff workload and soliciting feedback can identify areas prone to burnout and allow organizations to proactively implement solutions [53].

#### **2. Career Development Opportunities**

Providing ongoing professional development can be a significant factor in retaining nursing staff. Encouraging participation in continuing education, certification programs, and leadership training can empower nurses to pursue their career aspirations, making them feel valued and promoting loyalty to the organization [54].

#### **3. Recognition and Reward Programs**

Implementation of recognition and reward systems can significantly impact nurse retention. Celebrating achievements, both big and small, fosters a positive work culture and motivates staff. Regularly acknowledging the hard work and dedication of nursing professionals can help reduce turnover rates and encourage a sense of pride in their contributions to patient care [55].

#### **4. Clear Communication Channels**

Establishing open and transparent communication between management and nursing staff is essential for retention. Regular meetings, suggestion boxes, and anonymous surveys provide nursing professionals with opportunities to share their thoughts and concerns. When staff feel heard and valued, they are more likely to remain committed to their roles [56].

#### **5. Fostering Leadership and Mentorship**

Encouraging a culture of leadership and mentorship can enhance retention. Creating pathways for nurses to take on leadership roles allows them to see a future within the organization and fosters a sense of ownership over their work. Mentorship programs can also support novice nurses, providing guidance as they navigate the challenges of the profession [57].

## Conclusion:

The study "Challenges Facing Nursing Professionals in Saudi Arabia Today" highlights several critical issues impacting the nursing workforce in the country. Key challenges identified include high turnover rates, insufficient staffing levels, inadequate training and professional development opportunities, and the need for improved working conditions. Additionally, cultural factors and the evolving healthcare landscape under Saudi Vision 2030 present both obstacles and opportunities for nursing professionals.

In conclusion, addressing these challenges is essential for enhancing the quality of healthcare in Saudi Arabia. Strategic initiatives, such as implementing targeted retention strategies, increasing investment in nursing education, and fostering a supportive work environment, are crucial. By prioritizing the needs and well-being of nursing professionals, the healthcare system can ensure a more sustainable and effective workforce, ultimately leading to improved patient outcomes and satisfaction. Collaborative efforts among policymakers, healthcare institutions, and nursing professionals will be vital in overcoming these challenges and advancing the nursing profession in Saudi Arabia.

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## Conclusion:

In conclusion, the study highlights several critical challenges facing nursing professionals in Saudi Arabia, including workforce shortages, inadequate training and professional development opportunities, high levels of job stress, and limited recognition of the nursing role within the healthcare system. These challenges not only impact the well-being and job satisfaction of nurses but also affect the overall quality of patient care.

Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach: enhancing educational programs to better prepare nurses for the demands of the profession, implementing supportive workplace policies to reduce burnout, and fostering a culture that values and recognizes the contributions of nursing staff. By prioritizing these areas, Saudi Arabia can strengthen its nursing workforce, ultimately leading to improved healthcare outcomes for the population.

Further research is essential to explore innovative solutions and to monitor the effectiveness of interventions aimed at mitigating these challenges, ensuring that nursing professionals can thrive in their vital roles within the healthcare system.