

Challenges facing nurses: An applied study on workers at Al-Nuzhah Health Center in Riyadh

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Abstract

Nurses are the backbone of the health system and play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of healthcare provided to patients. This study aims to explore the challenges facing nurses in Saudi Arabia, in the context of the country's health transformations under Saudi Vision 2030. A descriptive quantitative design (a cross-sectional study) was used to collect data from 114 nurses working at Al-Nuzhah Health Center in Riyadh during the period from October 2024 to November 2024. Data was collected using a questionnaire. The results showed that the greatest administrative challenges were related to administrative duality and conflict between physicians' and patients' expectations, while economic challenges focused on low salaries and their incompatibility with the nature of the work. Regarding social challenges, the study showed that poor English language skills and negative societal perceptions of nurses were a major concern for participants. The results also showed that psychological stress was among the most prominent psychological challenges. These findings provide evidence of the urgent need to improve the work environment for nurses in Saudi Arabia by developing administrative policies, enhancing career advancement opportunities, providing psychological support, and improving financial conditions. Responding to these challenges will have a positive impact on raising the level of healthcare and achieving the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

Keywords: Nursing, Challenges, Administrative, Economic, Psychological, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Vision 2030.

Introduction:

Nursing care plays a vital role in the delivery of primary health care services to patients. Primary health care nurses use their skills to care for patients and provide health and educational services, especially for patients with chronic diseases [1].

Nursing is a fundamental pillar of health care, and ensuring the quality of nursing practice is one of the most important aspects of the quality of health care provided to the patient [2]. The nursing profession is one of the basic professions in the health field, and the success of workers in this profession is reflected in the success of the health system. Accordingly, the health sector, with its institutions and systems, is interested in the nursing profession, its development and advancement [3]. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is witnessing a major national transformation, through a process known as Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to raise the level of health and the health of individuals within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia [4]. Nurses constitute the largest group of health professionals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and they are essential to all aspects of care [5]. Therefore, reforming Saudi nursing will be crucial to the success of this transformation. The nursing profession is one of the professions that includes a considerable amount of hardship and pressure due to the many situations that nurses face [6,7]. The nature of work in the nursing field is characterized by a set of intertwined relationships that affect the achievement of psychological compatibility and

professional satisfaction [8]. The higher the compatibility and satisfaction with the profession, the more distinguished the performance, giving and success in work [9]

There are some challenges facing the nursing profession in the Kingdom, like many regions of the world, where it faces a chronic shortage of nursing, and with the ongoing reforms [10], Saudi nursing has the opportunity to transform into a global and leading model in the region for a satisfactory career path, providing effective and high-quality health care for every Saudi citizen [5,11].

In this context, this study came to examine the challenges facing the nursing sector in at Al-Nuzhah Health Center in Riyadh, to shed light on this sector, come up with the necessary recommendations and help decision-makers improve the status of the nursing profession and its workers.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

The current study is a quantitative descriptive cross-sectional study through an online survey to examine the challenges facing the nursing sector in Al-Nuzhah Health Center in Riyadh.

Study participants

The study Participants included all nurses working in Al-Nuzhah Health Center in Riyadh during the period from October 2024 to November 2024. The total number of nurses working in PHC units during this period was 114 nurses.

Study instruments

A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire items for this study were developed with the help of nursing experts, and based on a literature review [12,13]. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part was designed to obtain the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, income, educational level, etc. The second part included 26 items and explored the administrative, cultural, and social challenges. A five-point Likert scale (strongly agree - strongly disagree) was used.

Data collection

The survey was distributed electronically through online channels, including email and social media platforms (WhatsApp and Facebook groups). Participants were informed that participation was voluntary, and participants' identities were kept confidential to encourage open and honest responses.

Data analysis

Statistical analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA), version 26. Frequency and percentages were obtained for the categorical variables, while mean and standard deviation (SD) were calculated for the scale variables. Various inferential statistical tests were employed to identify significant variations within the study groups, including the independent *t*-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Result

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

A total of 114 responses from nurses were collected. The study group falls within the age group of 18-60 years. About (7.2%) of the participants are less than 25 years old, (18.6%) are between 25 – 30 years, followed by (32.8%) are between 31 – 40 years. Among the study groups, (55.6%) male, (54.4%) Female. Most respondents were working as Nurse Specialist (68.2%), Nurse (27.3%), Nurse Manager (4.5%). Nearly (26.7%) of the nurses had 1-3 years of experience, (35.1%) more than 7 years of experience. Besides, the majority of participants hold bachelor's degree Education (60.7%), as shown in table (1).

Table 1. demographic traits of participants (n=114)

	Categories	Frequency	Percent %
Age (years)	< 25 years old	8	7.20%
	25-30 years old	21	18.60%
	31-40 years old	37	32.80%
	> 40 years	47	41.40%
sex	male	63	55.60%
	Female	62	54.40%
Academic Qualifications	Diploma	25	22.10%
	Bachelor's degree	69	60.70%
	MSc	20	17.20%
Occupation	Nurse	31	27.30%
	Nurse Specialist	78	68.20%
	Nurse Manager	5	4.50%
Years of experience	1-3 years	30	26.70%
	4-6 years	44	38.20%
	≥ 7 years	40	35.10%

Administrative challenges analysis

The results in Table (2) show that the paragraph that reads “Administrative duplication causes confusion for nurses in their work” obtained first place with an arithmetic mean of (4.44), and that the paragraph that reads “The shift system and the number of working hours is applied arbitrarily” obtained last place with an arithmetic mean of (3.88). In addition, p-values for all Paragraph are less than 0.05, which means that all of these issues are statistically significant, and that the study participants consider these challenges to be important.

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation for the Administrative challenges statement

Parag	Mean	Std. Deviation	p-value
Administrative duplication causes confusion for nurses in their work	4.44	0.82	
There is a constant conflict between nurses resulting from doctors' expectations and patients' expectations	4.30	0.89	
Lack of administrative opportunities available for nurses to assume administrative positions	4.24	0.95	
Nurses' failure to participate in the decision-making process leads to a decrease in the level of performance	4.23	0.96	
The shift system and the number of working hours is applied arbitrarily	3.88	1.36	

Socio-cultural challenges

The results in Table (3) show that the paragraph that reads “Poor knowledge and skills of nurses in English and medical terminology” obtained first place with an arithmetic mean of (4.40), and that the paragraph that reads “Negative view of society towards female nurses” obtained last place with an arithmetic mean of (4.23). In addition, p-values for all Paragraph are less than 0.05, which means that all of these issues are statistically significant, and that the study participants consider these challenges to be important

Table 3. Mean and Standard Deviation for the Socio-cultural challenges statement

	Parag	Mean	Std. Deviation	p-value
Poor knowledge and skills of nurses in English and medical terminology		4.40	0.84	
Lack of appreciation and respect for nurses by patients		4.31	0.89	
Lack of psychological support for nurses in the hospital		4.24	0.95	
Negative view of society towards female nurses		4.23	0.96	

Economic challenges

The results in Table (4) show that the paragraph that reads “Nurses' salaries are low and do not match the nature of the work” obtained first place with an arithmetic mean of (4.44), and that the paragraph that reads “There is a clear and effective system of incentives and promotions” obtained last place with an arithmetic mean of (3.75). In addition, p-values for all Paragraph are less than 0.05, which means that all of these issues are statistically significant, and that the study participants consider these challenges to be important

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation for the Economic challenges statement

	Parag	Mean	Std. Deviation	p-value
Nurses' salaries are low and do not match the nature of the work.		4.44	0.85	
There is a clear and effective system of incentives and promotions		3.75	1.46	
The hospital has medical devices and equipment that contribute to increasing the effectiveness of performance among nurses		4.24	0.95	

Psychological challenges

The results in Table (5) show that the paragraph that reads “Nurses in the hospital fear any professional error” obtained first place with an arithmetic mean of (4.29), and that the paragraph that reads “Nurses are harassed by patients or colleagues, which causes them psychological suffering” obtained last place with an arithmetic mean of (4.01). In addition, p-values for all Paragraph are less than 0.05, which means that all of these issues are statistically significant, and that the study participants consider these challenges to be important

Table 5. Mean and Standard Deviation for the Psychological challenges statement

	Parag	Mean	Std. Deviation	p-value
Nurses in the hospital fear any professional error.		4.29	0.96	
Nurses in the hospital fear the possibility of contracting infectious diseases due to working in the department.		4.11	1.06	
The work system in the hospital causes inconvenience to nurses		4.16	1.08	
Competent nurses feel that the incentive and wage system is unfair because they receive equal wages with those who are less skilled in the work.		4.26	0.91	
Nurses are harassed by patients or colleagues, which causes them psychological suffering		4.01	1.11	

Discussion:

The nursing profession is the backbone of the healthcare system, which must be given attention to advance the health sector. However, the nursing profession in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia faces many challenges, such as administrative, social, cultural, psychological, and others, some of which are common to healthcare systems around the world, and some of which are specific to our country [5,10]. The results of the study indicate the significant impact of administrative, cultural, economic and psychological challenges on the reality of the nursing profession and professional performance.

Administrative challenges were the most prominent issues that nurses suffer from, such as "administrative repetition that causes confusion for nurses", which indicates that ineffective administrative practices lead to an unfavorable work environment, which affects nurses' ability to provide high-quality health care. This is consistent with the literature indicating that administrative challenges negatively affect nurses' performance and reduce their effectiveness in providing care [14].

In addition, the study showed that "nurses' failure to participate in decision-making leads to a decrease in the level of performance", which reflects the results of the study () which confirmed that empowering nurses in decision-making enhances overall performance and the quality of health care [15]. From a socio-cultural perspective, the study indicated that "nurses' poor knowledge of English and medical terminology" constitutes a major challenge, which is in line with previous studies that have shown that nurses' lack of language skills hinders effective communication with patients and multinational teams [16]. The current findings are also consistent with studies that have shown that society's negative view of nurses contributes to reducing their level of respect and appreciation, which negatively affects their motivation at work [17]. As for economic challenges, "low salaries and their mismatch with the nature of the work" were the most influential, a common problem that has been pointed out in many previous studies that have confirmed that low wages compared to job requirements are one of the main reasons that drive many nurses to leave the profession or look for alternative jobs [18]. The results also indicate the need for clear and fair policies for incentives and promotions. In addition, the results of the current study agree on the fear of making professional mistakes, which constitutes psychological pressure on nurses.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study is consistent with many previous studies that have indicated the existence of similar challenges in the profession, including administrative, economic and psychological pressures that affect nurses. These studies have emphasized the importance of improving the work environment for nurses by simplifying administrative procedures, providing appropriate psychological and professional support, and increasing salaries in line with work requirements. In addition to the importance of enhancing opportunities for professional advancement and raising the level of social appreciation for nurses in the Kingdom.

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