

Exploring the Experiences of Nursing Technicians and Midwives in KSA in Promoting Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors Among Patients: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This qualitative study aimed to explore the experiences of nursing technicians and midwives in Saudi Arabia in promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors among patients.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 nursing technicians and midwives working in various healthcare settings across Saudi Arabia. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes and subthemes from the interview data.

Results: Four main themes emerged: 1) The role of nursing technicians and midwives in promoting healthy lifestyles, 2) Strategies used to encourage healthy behaviors, 3) Barriers and challenges faced in promoting lifestyle changes, and 4) Recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of lifestyle promotion interventions. Participants recognized the importance of their role in promoting healthy living and utilized various strategies such as patient education, goal-setting, and motivational interviewing. However, they also encountered barriers including time constraints, cultural factors, and lack of patient readiness for change.

Conclusion: Nursing technicians and midwives in Saudi Arabia play a crucial role in promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors among patients. Providing additional training, resources, and support for nursing staff can enhance their capacity to effectively facilitate lifestyle modifications and improve patient outcomes.

1. Introduction

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancer are leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide (World Health Organization, 2021). In Saudi Arabia, the prevalence of NCDs has been increasing rapidly, largely due to the adoption of unhealthy lifestyle behaviors such as physical

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inactivity, poor dietary habits, and tobacco use (Alharbi et al., 2019; Al-Hazzaa, 2018). Promoting healthy lifestyles is crucial for preventing and managing NCDs, and healthcare professionals, particularly nurses and midwives, play a vital role in this endeavor (Aldossary et al., 2019; Alotaibi et al., 2017).

Nursing technicians and midwives in Saudi Arabia work in various healthcare settings, including hospitals, primary care centers, and community health clinics (Almalki et al., 2017). They are well-positioned to promote healthy lifestyle behaviors among patients due to their frequent interactions with individuals and families across the lifespan (Aqeel et al., 2019). However, little is known about the specific experiences, strategies, and challenges faced by nursing technicians and midwives in Saudi Arabia when it comes to promoting healthy living.

This qualitative study aimed to explore the experiences of nursing technicians and midwives in Saudi Arabia in promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors among patients. Understanding their perspectives can provide valuable insights into the current state of lifestyle promotion practices, identify areas for improvement, and inform the development of strategies to enhance the effectiveness of nursing-led lifestyle interventions in the Saudi context.

2. Literature Review

1. The Burden of Noncommunicable Diseases in Saudi Arabia

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are a growing public health concern in Saudi Arabia. Studies have shown high prevalence rates of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and other NCDs among the Saudi population (Alotaibi et al., 2017; Moradi-Lakeh et al., 2017). For instance, the prevalence of obesity among adults in Saudi Arabia is estimated to be around 35% (Al-Hazzaa, 2018). Additionally, the prevalence of type 2 diabetes is approximately 19% (Alharbi et al., 2019). These NCDs are largely attributed to the adoption of unhealthy lifestyle behaviors, such as physical inactivity, unhealthy diets, and tobacco use (Al-Hazzaa, 2018; Moradi-Lakeh et al., 2017).

The rising burden of NCDs in Saudi Arabia has significant implications for the healthcare system and the overall well-being of the population (Almalki et al., 2017). NCDs are associated with increased healthcare costs, reduced quality of life, and premature mortality (World Health Organization, 2021). Therefore, promoting healthy lifestyles and preventing NCDs is a critical public health priority in Saudi Arabia (Aldossary et al., 2019).

2. The Role of Nurses and Midwives in Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

Nurses and midwives are essential members of the healthcare workforce and play a crucial role in promoting healthy lifestyles among patients (Aldossary et al., 2019; Alotaibi et al., 2017). They have frequent contact with patients across various healthcare settings, providing opportunities for health education, behavior change counseling, and support (Aqeel et al., 2019).

Studies have shown that nursing interventions can be effective in promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors and preventing NCDs (Alyami et al., 2019; Murad & Huynh,

2018). For example, nurse-led educational programs have been found to improve patients' knowledge, self-efficacy, and adherence to healthy lifestyle practices (Alyami et al., 2019). Additionally, motivational interviewing and goal-setting strategies used by nurses have been shown to facilitate behavior change and improve health outcomes (Murad & Huynh, 2018).

However, nurses and midwives may face various challenges in promoting healthy lifestyles, such as time constraints, lack of resources, and cultural barriers (Almalki et al., 2017; Aqeel et al., 2019). Understanding these challenges and identifying strategies to overcome them is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of nursing-led lifestyle interventions.

3. Lifestyle Promotion Practices in Saudi Arabia

Several studies have investigated the lifestyle promotion practices of healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia. A cross-sectional study by Aldossary et al. (2019) found that nurses in Saudi Arabia had positive attitudes towards health promotion but reported limited engagement in lifestyle promotion activities. The study identified barriers such as lack of time, inadequate training, and lack of resources as factors hindering nurses' involvement in health promotion.

Another study by Alotaibi et al. (2017) explored the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of primary care physicians in Saudi Arabia regarding lifestyle counseling. The results showed that while physicians had good knowledge about lifestyle modification, their practices were suboptimal, with only a small proportion of physicians providing lifestyle counseling to their patients.

These findings highlight the need for further research to explore the experiences and perspectives of nursing technicians and midwives in Saudi Arabia regarding their role in promoting healthy lifestyles. Understanding their unique challenges and identifying strategies to support their efforts can contribute to the development of effective lifestyle promotion interventions in the Saudi healthcare system.

3. Methods

1. Study Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design using semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of nursing technicians and midwives in promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors among patients in Saudi Arabia. Qualitative research is appropriate for gaining in-depth insights into participants' perspectives, beliefs, and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2. Participants and Sampling

A purposive sampling technique was used to recruit 24 participants, including 18 nursing technicians and 6 midwives, from various healthcare settings across Saudi Arabia. Purposive sampling allows for the selection of information-rich cases that can provide valuable insights related to the research question (Patton, 2015). The inclusion criteria were:

- Currently employed as a nursing technician or midwife in Saudi Arabia

- At least one year of experience in their respective roles
- Involved in direct patient care
- Willing to participate in the study

3. Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants either in-person or via telephone, based on their preference and availability. The interviews were guided by an interview protocol that included open-ended questions and probes to elicit detailed responses. The questions focused on participants' experiences in promoting healthy lifestyles, strategies used, challenges faced, and recommendations for improvement. The interviews were conducted in Arabic, the native language of the participants, and were audio-recorded with their permission. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes.

4. Data Analysis

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated into English for analysis. Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the data. The six-phase process of thematic analysis included:

1. Familiarization with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Two researchers independently coded the transcripts and compared their findings to ensure consistency and reliability. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. NVivo 12 software was used to manage and organize the data during the analysis process.

5. Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985):

- **Credibility:** Prolonged engagement with the data, peer debriefing, and member checking (sharing the findings with participants for validation) were used to enhance credibility.
- **Transferability:** Thick descriptions of the participants' characteristics and the study context were provided to enable readers to assess the transferability of the findings to other settings.
- **Dependability:** An audit trail was maintained to document the research process, including decisions made during data collection and analysis.

- **Confirmability:** Reflexivity was practiced by the researchers to acknowledge their own biases and assumptions.

4. Results

The thematic analysis of the interview data revealed four main themes and several subthemes that captured the experiences of nursing technicians and midwives in promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors among patients in Saudi Arabia.

Theme 1: The Role of Nursing Technicians and Midwives in Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

Participants recognized the importance of their role in promoting healthy lifestyles among patients. They perceived themselves as educators, advocates, and role models for healthy living.

Subtheme 1.1: Educating patients about healthy lifestyle behaviors

Nursing technicians and midwives described their role in providing patient education on various aspects of healthy living, such as proper nutrition, physical activity, stress management, and tobacco cessation. They believed that educating patients about the benefits of healthy lifestyles and the risks associated with unhealthy behaviors was crucial for promoting behavior change.

Subtheme 1.2: Advocating for patients' health and well-being

Participants saw themselves as advocates for their patients' health and well-being. They emphasized the importance of encouraging patients to prioritize their health and supporting them in making positive lifestyle changes. Nursing technicians and midwives reported collaborating with other healthcare professionals to ensure that patients received comprehensive care and resources to support their health goals.

Subtheme 1.3: Serving as role models for healthy living

Many participants recognized the influence they could have on patients by serving as role models for healthy living. They believed that demonstrating healthy behaviors in their own lives, such as maintaining a healthy diet and engaging in regular physical activity, could inspire and motivate patients to adopt similar practices.

Theme 2: Strategies Used to Encourage Healthy Behaviors

Nursing technicians and midwives described various strategies they used to encourage patients to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyle behaviors.

Subtheme 2.1: Providing individualized patient education and counseling

Participants emphasized the importance of tailoring their approach to meet the unique needs and preferences of each patient. They reported assessing patients' knowledge, beliefs, and readiness for change to provide personalized education and counseling. This individualized approach helped to address patients' specific concerns and barriers to adopting healthy behaviors.

Subtheme 2.2: Setting achievable goals and action plans

Collaborative goal-setting was identified as a key strategy for promoting behavior change. Nursing technicians and midwives worked with patients to establish realistic and achievable health goals, breaking them down into smaller, manageable steps. They assisted patients in developing action plans and provided ongoing support and follow-up to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments.

Subtheme 2.3: Using motivational interviewing techniques

Several participants reported using motivational interviewing techniques to elicit patients' intrinsic motivation for change. They described exploring patients' values, beliefs, and reasons for wanting to make lifestyle changes. By using open-ended questions, reflective listening, and affirmations, nursing technicians and midwives aimed to help patients resolve ambivalence and strengthen their commitment to healthy living.

Theme 3: Barriers and Challenges Faced in Promoting Lifestyle Changes

Participants identified several barriers and challenges they encountered when promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors among patients.

Subtheme 3.1: Time constraints and heavy workloads

Nursing technicians and midwives reported that time constraints and heavy workloads often limited their ability to engage in extensive lifestyle promotion activities. They described the competing demands of their roles, such as providing direct patient care, completing documentation, and attending to administrative tasks, which left little time for in-depth patient education and counseling.

Subtheme 3.2: Cultural and social influences on lifestyle behaviors

Participants acknowledged the influence of cultural and social factors on patients' lifestyle behaviors. They reported that traditional dietary practices, social norms, and family dynamics sometimes posed challenges to promoting healthy living. Nursing technicians and midwives emphasized the need to be culturally sensitive and to work within the context of patients' lives to facilitate sustainable behavior change.

Subtheme 3.3: Lack of patient readiness and motivation for change

Some participants encountered challenges related to patients' readiness and motivation to make lifestyle changes. They described patients who were resistant to change, lacked self-efficacy, or had competing priorities that hindered their ability to focus on their health. Nursing technicians and midwives highlighted the importance of assessing patients' readiness for change and using strategies to enhance their motivation and confidence in adopting healthy behaviors.

Theme 4: Recommendations for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Lifestyle Promotion Interventions

Participants offered recommendations for improving the effectiveness of lifestyle promotion interventions in the Saudi healthcare system.

Subtheme 4.1: Providing additional training and resources for nursing staff

Nursing technicians and midwives expressed the need for additional training and resources to enhance their knowledge and skills in promoting healthy lifestyles. They suggested that ongoing professional development opportunities, such as workshops, seminars, and e-learning modules, could help them stay updated on evidence-based practices and improve their competencies in behavior change counseling.

Subtheme 4.2: Enhancing interprofessional collaboration and referral systems

Participants recognized the value of interprofessional collaboration in providing comprehensive lifestyle management support to patients. They recommended strengthening collaboration between nursing technicians, midwives, physicians, dietitians, and other healthcare professionals to ensure a coordinated approach to promoting healthy living. Establishing efficient referral systems and communication channels was seen as crucial for facilitating timely access to specialized services and resources.

Subtheme 4.3: Developing culturally relevant health promotion materials and programs

Nursing technicians and midwives emphasized the importance of developing health promotion materials and programs that are culturally relevant and tailored to the needs of the Saudi population. They suggested that incorporating cultural values, beliefs, and practices into lifestyle interventions could enhance their acceptability and effectiveness. Participants also recommended involving community leaders, religious figures, and family members in health promotion efforts to foster a supportive environment for behavior change.

Table 1 summarizes the main themes and subthemes that emerged from the data analysis.

Themes	Subthemes
1. The Role of Nursing Technicians and Midwives in Promoting Healthy Lifestyles	1.1 Educating patients about healthy lifestyle behaviors
	1.2 Advocating for patients' health and well-being
	1.3 Serving as role models for healthy living
2. Strategies Used to Encourage Healthy Behaviors	2.1 Providing individualized patient education and counseling
	2.2 Setting achievable goals and action plans
	2.3 Using motivational interviewing techniques
3. Barriers and Challenges Faced in Promoting Lifestyle Changes	3.1 Time constraints and heavy workloads
	3.2 Cultural and social influences on lifestyle behaviors
	3.3 Lack of patient readiness and motivation for change
4. Recommendations for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Lifestyle Promotion Interventions	4.1 Providing additional training and resources for nursing staff
	4.2 Enhancing interprofessional collaboration and referral systems
	4.3 Developing culturally relevant health promotion materials and programs

4. Discussion

This qualitative study explored the experiences of nursing technicians and midwives in Saudi Arabia in promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors among patients. The findings highlight the important role these healthcare professionals play in facilitating behavior change and supporting patients' health and well-being. Consistent with previous research (Aldossary et al., 2019; Alotaibi et al., 2017), nursing technicians and midwives in this study recognized the significance of promoting healthy lifestyles and utilized various strategies to encourage patients to adopt and maintain healthy behaviors.

Participants emphasized the value of providing individualized patient education and counseling, setting achievable goals, and using motivational interviewing techniques to promote behavior change. These strategies are supported by evidence from the literature, which suggests that personalized interventions, goal-setting, and motivational interviewing are effective in facilitating lifestyle modifications (Alyami et al., 2019; Murad & Huynh, 2018). By tailoring their approach to meet the unique needs and preferences of each patient, nursing technicians and midwives can enhance the relevance and acceptability of lifestyle promotion interventions.

However, nursing technicians and midwives also encountered several barriers and challenges when promoting healthy lifestyles, including time constraints, heavy workloads, cultural influences, and lack of patient readiness for change. These findings are consistent with previous studies that have identified similar barriers to lifestyle promotion in healthcare settings (Almalki et al., 2017; Aqeel et al., 2019). Addressing these challenges is crucial for optimizing the effectiveness of nursing-led lifestyle interventions and improving patient outcomes.

Participants offered valuable recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of lifestyle promotion interventions in the Saudi healthcare system. They emphasized the need for additional training and resources for nursing staff to improve their knowledge and skills in behavior change counseling. This finding aligns with previous research that has highlighted the importance of providing ongoing professional development opportunities for nurses to enhance their competencies in health promotion (Aldossary et al., 2019; Alyami et al., 2019).

Moreover, participants recognized the value of interprofessional collaboration and the development of culturally relevant health promotion materials and programs. Collaboration among healthcare professionals can facilitate a coordinated approach to lifestyle management and ensure that patients receive comprehensive support (Almalki et al., 2017). Additionally, incorporating cultural values, beliefs, and practices into lifestyle interventions can enhance their acceptability and effectiveness in the Saudi context (Aqeel et al., 2019).

This study has several implications for practice and research. Healthcare organizations in Saudi Arabia should prioritize providing training and resources for nursing technicians and midwives to enhance their competencies in promoting healthy lifestyles. Interprofessional collaboration and communication should be strengthened to ensure a coordinated approach to lifestyle management. Furthermore, culturally relevant health promotion materials and programs should be developed to meet the unique needs of the Saudi population.

Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of nursing-led lifestyle interventions in the Saudi healthcare system. Quantitative studies can assess the impact of these interventions on patient outcomes, such as changes in health behaviors, clinical indicators, and quality of life. Additionally, exploring the perspectives of patients and other healthcare professionals can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the success of lifestyle promotion efforts.

This study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample size was relatively small and may not be representative of all nursing technicians and midwives in Saudi Arabia. The findings are based on self-reported experiences and may be subject to recall bias. Additionally, the study was conducted in a specific cultural context, and the transferability of the findings to other settings may be limited.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this qualitative study provides valuable insights into the experiences of nursing technicians and midwives in Saudi Arabia in promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors among patients. The findings highlight the important role these healthcare professionals play in facilitating behavior change and supporting patients' health and well-being. Addressing the barriers and challenges faced by nursing technicians and midwives, providing additional training and resources, enhancing interprofessional collaboration, and developing culturally relevant interventions can optimize the effectiveness of lifestyle promotion efforts in the Saudi healthcare system.

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