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## **Issues And Challenges Faced By Female Nurses Regarding Unavailability Of Daycare Center In Hospital**

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#### ABSTRACT

Introduction: The lack of daycare centers within hospitals is a significant issue with farreaching consequences, particularly for female nurses, who make up a significant component of the healthcare sector. Eventually, the female nurses face a variety of challenges and issue due to the unavailability of the daycare for their children. **Objectives:** The study aimed to explore the issues and challenges faced by female nurses regarding unavailability of daycare center in hospital. Methodology: A Phenomenological qualitative study was carried out in Khyber teaching hospital Peshawar. Data was collected from a total of fifteen nurses based on data saturation. Purposive sampling method was utilized to include the participants in the study. Female Nurses having child/children and working in the Khyber teaching hospital were included in the study. The study was approved from ethical review board of Khyber medical university Peshawar and data collection permission <sup>1</sup>was granted from hospital administration. All the selected participants were interviewed and data were analyzed using thematic analysis. **Results:** A total of five themes are extracted regarding issues and challenges faced by female nurses about unavailability of daycare center in hospital. These themes are Interruption in Work-Life balance, Destabilizing Mental and Physical health, need of organizational backup support, increasing job dissatisfaction and Attrition and Eroding quality of patient's care. Conclusion: In conclusion, this study underscores the critical importance of recognizing and addressing the challenges faced by female nurses in healthcare settings due to the unavailability of onsite daycare centers. Healthcare institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders must take proactive steps to support their female nursing staff. By doing so, they not only enhance the well-being of these vital healthcare professionals but

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also contribute to a more efficient and compassionate healthcare system; ultimately benefiting both the workforce and the patients they care for.

Keywords: Issues, challenges, daycare, Female nurses, Unavailability.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nursing is a profession of great significance within the healthcare sector, with nurses serving as the backbone of patient care (1). Many countries around the world have evolved advanced practice nurses in response to changing and increasingly sophisticated patient needs, inequitable access, and provider shortages (2). The nursing workforce is diverse; both in terms of gender and age, but a substantial portion of nurses are females of childbearing age (3). This demographic characteristic presents a unique set of challenges, particularly when it comes to balancing the demands of nursing and motherhood (4).

Over the years, the gender composition of the nursing profession has shifted, with more women entering the field (5). According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 90% of registered nurses in the United States are female. This trend is mirrored in many other countries as well. As a result, female nurses often find themselves in the role of both healthcare providers and caregivers within their own families (6).

The proportion of female nurses to male nurses varies substantially across the United States. In Nebraska, with the smallest ratio difference, there are 3.9 nurses for every male nurse. Iowa has the greatest gap, with 16.5 female nurses to only 1 male nurse, and North Dakota comes close behind with 15.9 female nurses to one male nurse. Overall, out of a total of 3,916,967 nurses, the ratio is 9.5 to 1, with 3,176,295 female nurses compared to 335,611 male nurses throughout all states. The gender of the remaining 405,061 nurses remains unknown. Experts predict that those ratios will narrow as more guys enter the nursing profession in each state (7). Similarly, females are more in nursing profession in Pakistan as compared to male. Approximately, 95% of the nurses working in Pakistan are female and a small proportion of the nurses are male (8,9).

One of the critical challenges that female nurses face is the unavailability of onsite daycare centers within hospitals where they work. The absence of such facilities within the healthcare environment places a considerable burden on these healthcare professionals (10). To better understand this issue, it is crucial to explore the historical context, the evolution of the nursing profession, and the challenges that have emerged due to the lack of access to daycare centers (11).

The nursing profession, with its demanding schedules and long hours, necessitates flexibility and adaptability from its practitioners. For female nurses, the challenge is compounded by their roles as mothers. The absence of onsite daycare facilities within hospitals poses a substantial obstacle to balancing these dual roles effectively (12). Nurses, like all healthcare professionals, are essential workers, especially during times of crisis such as pandemics. This makes it even more imperative to address the childcare needs of nurses, as their presence on the frontline of healthcare is paramount to the well-being of society (13).

Historically, nursing has been one of the few professions accessible to women. Nursing schools and organizations have been instrumental in empowering women and providing them with career opportunities (14). However, the historical portrayal of nurses as selfless caregivers may have perpetuated the belief that nurses should effortlessly juggle their professional and familial responsibilities. As more women entered the workforce and the nursing profession evolved, it became apparent that nurses faced unique challenges (15).

Balancing work and family life is an issue of great significance in modern society. However, within the healthcare sector, where long shifts, unpredictable schedules, and critical patient care responsibilities are common, the challenges become more pronounced. Nurses, in particular, experience considerable difficulties in reconciling their roles as healthcare providers and caregivers for their own families (16–18).

Instead of only focusing on work, nurses need balance in work life which will give an opportunity to fulfill other commitments in life too. The Registered Nurses are confronting different unexplored issues and challenges in Pakistan, such as violence incidences issues and ethical challenges at their workplace which are impacting the quality of life (19,20). Female nurses having children often experience of taking their children into the wards or left them in home for eight to twelve hours without breastfeeding them (21). In Netherland, most of the children spends 11 hours per day, for five days per week so that their parents hold their jobs (22). Care can be provided to children through different means like within and outside the usual homes (23).

Childcare is a pressing concern for working parents, particularly for those in professions that require shift work, such as healthcare. Among healthcare professionals, female nurses constitute a significant portion of the workforce, and many of them are mothers. The intersection of nursing and motherhood poses unique challenges that demand attention (24). The poor quality of life is associated strongly with early retirement, burnout and reduced performance in workplace. Quality of life is not only associated with the work but with the work environment too (25).

The presence of daycare in institute is associated positively participation in work and labor (26). Searching the best ways to made available the daycare may help to decrease gender inequalities within an organization (27). In the United States, different federal supported funds were issued during the emergencies like COVID-19 for creative strategies to make sure the availability of daycare in emergencies (28).

The unavailability of onsite daycare facilities within hospitals can lead to significant stress and well-being issues for female nurses. The need to secure appropriate childcare, especially for those working non-standard shifts, can be both emotionally and financially taxing. This can affect job satisfaction, performance, and even the decision to remain in the profession (29,30). Daycare is one of the critical environment where children can gain positive habits and the educators inside the daycare can play a crucial role in affecting the development and health of children (31).

The challenges faced by female nurses due to the lack of daycare centers can have broader implications for the healthcare workforce. High attrition rates, burnout, and absenteeism among nurses, especially those who are also mothers, can undermine the healthcare system's stability and quality of care provided to patients (32,33). Onsite daycare centers can be a potential solution to address the challenges female nurses encounter. These facilities offer a convenient and supportive environment, enabling nurses to fulfill their professional responsibilities while knowing their children are well-cared for nearby (34).

Having pediatric nurses as caregivers may help to address primary healthcare needs of children so may increase the scope of practice (22). If the knowledge is added in the nursing course syllabus, may help the nurse managers to increase job satisfaction and retention of the top notch nurses and to reduce the attrition rate as these topics are studied in nursing sciences (35). Finally, there is scarcity of studies so it may open a new window for further researches in future. Understanding the issues faced by female nurses due to the unavailability of daycare centers is

crucial for healthcare institutions, policymakers, and society at large. By addressing these issues, we can better support the dedicated professionals who provide essential healthcare services. Additionally, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on work-family balance, gender equality, and healthcare workforce sustainability.

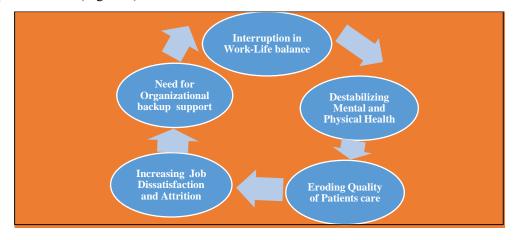
## METHODOLOGY

This was a Phenomenological qualitative (Descriptive) study. Data were collected from the nurses in Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH) Peshawar. Data saturation achieved on collection data from fifteen participants. Participant in this study was recruited using purposive sampling technique. Female Nurses having child/children and working in the Khyber teaching hospital were included in the study. In the initial stage, the researcher obtained authorization from the Institute of Nursing Sciences within Khyber Medical University. Consent for data collection was granted by both the ASRB (Academic and Scientific Review Board) and the ethical review board at KMU (Khyber Medical University). Prior to commencing the study, formal authorization was also secured from the leadership of the tertiary care institution, and the participants' consent was duly acquired.

Through the utilization of a semi-structured interview guide, data was collected via semistructured, in-depth interviews (IDIs). Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke thematic analysis method was utilized to analyze the data.

## RESULTS

**Thematic Analysis:** A total of five themes are extracted regarding issues and challenges faced by female nurses about unavailability of daycare center in hospital. These themes are Interruption in Work-Life balance, Destabilizing Mental and physical health, need for organizational backup support, increasing job dissatisfaction and Attrition and Eroding quality of patient's care (Figure 1).



#### Theme 1: Interruption in Work life balance:

According to the participants, lack of daycare facilities has a huge impact on nurse's work and life. The first generated theme is "Interruption in work-life balance". This theme is generated from categories such as violation of cultural norms and expectations, Struggles with shift work

and childcare, Effects on personal life and well-being and Effect on managing childcare responsibilities (Figure 2).

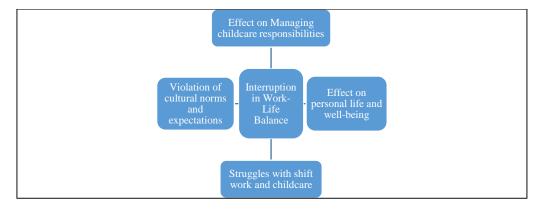


Figure 2: Extracted categories for the theme "interruption in Work-Life Balance"

#### Theme 2: Increasing Job Dissatisfaction and Attrition:

Lack of daycare availability also effects the nurses in terms of job satisfaction and retention. The second generated theme is "Increasing job dissatisfaction and Attrition". This theme is extracted from several categories such as Devolving carrier progression and opportunities, Effect on attrition and retention, Influence on job satisfaction and Profession disagreement (Figure 3).

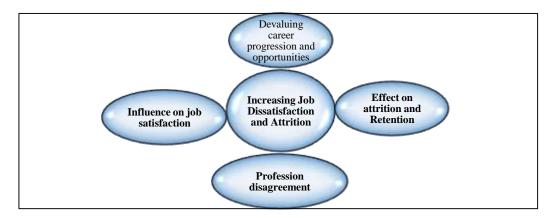


Figure 1: Extracted categories for the theme "Increasing Job Dissatisfaction and Attrition"

#### **Theme 3: Eroding Quality of Patient Care:**

The third extracted theme is "Eroding Quality of patient care". This theme is extracted from categories such as "Impact patients care, affect daily Attendance, Disturbs patients and family satisfaction and effects patients' safety (Figure 5).

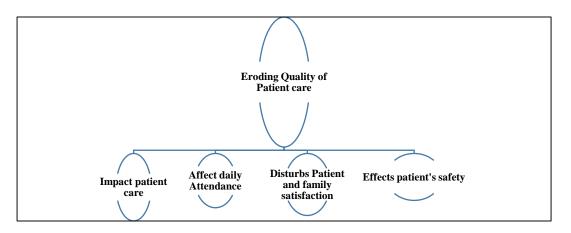


Figure 2: Extracted categories for the theme "Eroding quality of Patient care"

## Theme 4: Destabilizing Mental and Physical Health:

The fourth extracted theme is "Destabilizing Mental and physical health". This theme is extracted from categories; A root cause for stress and burnout among nurses, Disturbing parent-child relationship, Mental health challenges, Impact on physical health and Effect on coping mechanisms and support system (Figure 4).

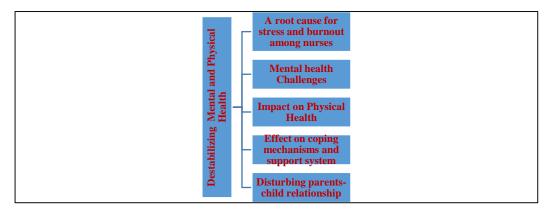


Figure 3: Extracted categories for the theme "Destabilizes Mental and Physical Health"

## Theme 5: Need of Organizational Backup Support:

The fifth extracted theme is "Need of Organizational backup support". This theme is extracted from categories such as "Provision of Daycare facilities, Design hospital policies on childcare facilities, Need employer support for working parents and availability of flexible working arrangements" (Figure 6).

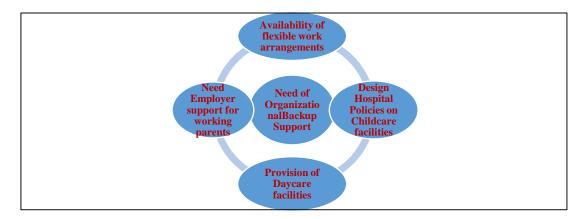


Figure 4: Extracted categories for the theme "Need of organizational backup support"

#### **DISCUSSION:**

The findings of this study highlighted the complex nature of the challenges faced by female nurses in healthcare settings due to the unavailability of onsite daycare centers. These challenges are fundamentally rooted in the juggling act female nurses perform, attempting to balance their professional and family responsibilities. It is evident that the absence of convenient and supportive daycare facilities in hospitals significantly exacerbates these challenges.

#### Interruption in work-life balance

In this study, the 1<sup>st</sup> theme is "Interruption in Work-Life balance". The unavailability of daycare centers in hospitals exerts a profound influence on the work-life balance of female nurses. The unavailability of the daycare also effects the mother management of the childcare, personal life and work. The absence of on-site child daycare facilities in healthcare settings poses significant challenges for nurses, impacting both their professional and personal lives (56). Supporting the findings of the current study, a study reported in US that unavailability of the child daycare facilities effects the nurses job and personal life (10).

Work-life balance is a vital component of overall well-being and job satisfaction, particularly for healthcare professionals who often work demanding and irregular hours. Achieving an equitable work-life balance has been linked to lower stress levels, increased job satisfaction, and improved physical and mental health, as supported by studies in Australia and Malaysia conducted in 2019 (57,58).

Similarly, culture norms and expectations, struggles with shift work and childcare affect the work and personal life and well-being of the nurses. Supporting the current findings, a study reported that in Sweden in 2020 (59). Another studies also reported in Iran and Philippines that childcare, house responsibilities affect the wellbeing and work performance of the nurses (60,61).

#### Increasing job dissatisfaction and attrition

In this study, the nurses reported that unavailability of the daycare facilities affects job satisfaction and Retention. The nurses' wastes carrier progression and opportunities due to unavailability of daycare facilities. Also, attrition and retention, lack of job satisfaction and profession disagreement are linked with unavailability of daycare facilities for the nurses'

children. These findings were supported by studies like in US and South Korea which reported that lack of facilities for the nurses leads to turnover among the nurses (62,63).

Similar to the current findings, one of the most compelling findings is the impact of these challenges on job performance. The study reveals a direct correlation between the unavailability of daycare centers and increased absenteeism and nurse turnover rates. This highlights the systemic repercussions of this issue, not only for female nurses but also for healthcare institutions, patients, and the broader healthcare workforce, similarly revealed in Istanbul, Turkey in 2021 (17).

Similar to the current findings, studies reported like in Ohio, United States, that lack of facilities for the nurses lead to lack of job satisfaction among the nurses (64). Quality child care can contribute to higher job satisfaction among mother nurses. Knowing that their children are safe and well-cared for while they are at work can alleviate stress and allow them to focus on their nursing duties (65). Eventually, access to good childcare can contribute to job retention. Mother nurses are more likely to stay in their positions when they have reliable childcare solutions, reducing turnover rates and ensuring continuity of patient care (66). Similarly, the availability and quality of childcare significantly influence the job performance, job satisfaction, career advancement, well-being, job retention, and overall life quality of mother nurses. Adequate child care support can empower mother nurses to excel in their roles, maintain job satisfaction, and pursue career opportunities while preserving their well-being. Healthcare institutions and policymakers play a crucial role in ensuring that mother nurses have access to reliable childcare options, which benefits both the healthcare workforce and the patients they serve.

## Destabilizing mental and physical health

In this study, the nurses reported that the unavailability of the daycare centers for the children of nurses affect them mentally and physically. Supporting these findings, studies from Chicago, United States reported that nurses, particularly those with young children, experience heightened stress and anxiety due to the constant struggle to secure reliable childcare arrangements. The absence of convenient on-site daycare adds complexity to their lives, affecting their emotional and mental well-being (67).

Similarly, another study from New York, USA also supported the current findings and reported that nurses often work long shifts, which can be physically and mentally draining. When they have to arrange for childcare before and after their shifts, it adds extra hours to their already demanding day. This can lead to exhaustion and burnout (68). One another study from Indonesia conducted in 2022, also supported the current findings and reported that childcare for the working mothers is one of the challenges which not only affect them physically but also have a psychological impact (69).

In addition, prolonged stress and anxiety among the nurses can lead to physical health issues, such as sleep disturbances, weight gain, and even more severe conditions like hypertension or heart problems. Mother nurses need to be in good health to effectively care for their patients, and this issue can hinder their ability to do so (70,71). In conclusion, the unavailability of onsite daycare is a pressing issue with profound implications for the mental health and overall wellbeing of mother nurses. Addressing this issue not only supports the mental health of nurses but also contributes to better patient care, gender equality, and the overall health of the healthcare workforce. Healthcare institutions and policymakers should prioritize finding solutions to this problem to ensure a more balanced and equitable healthcare environment.

## Eroding quality of patients care

The current study also reported that lack of daycare facilities affects the quality of patient's care. The nurses remain absenteeism from their duties and also patients and patient's satisfaction is one of the concerns. Supporting the current findings, a study conducted in Montana, United States reported that when nurses, especially those who are parents, are unable to find suitable childcare solutions, they may need to take time off work. This can lead to a shortage of nursing staff, which affects patient care as there are fewer caregivers available to attend to patients' needs (72,73).

Similarly, studies the perception of the current study participants and reported that unavailability of onsite daycare facilities can lead to a higher rate of absenteeism among nurses. They may need to take time off to care for their children when their regular childcare arrangements fall through as supported by Malaysian studies conducted in 2019 and 2020 (74,75). In conclusion, the unavailability of onsite daycare facilities has far-reaching effects on both patient care and nurses' absenteeism. Healthcare institutions need to recognize the importance of supporting nurse-parents and implement policies and practices that address these challenges to ensure high-quality patient care and a satisfied, stable nursing workforce.

#### CONCLUSION

This study has shed light on the profound issues and challenges experienced by female nurses due to the absence of onsite daycare facilities in healthcare settings. It has explored the impact of these challenges on their work-life balance, its effect on nurses in terms of mental and physical health, job performance, retention and satisfaction and the effect on patient's quality care. The findings from this study highlight the pressing need for healthcare institutions to address the childcare-related challenges faced by female nurses. The absence of daycare facilities in hospitals can significantly disrupt the work-life balance of female nurses, leading to increased stress, fatigue, and reduced job satisfaction. The struggles associated with balancing work and family responsibilities can contribute to absenteeism and nurse turnover, ultimately affecting patient care continuity and increasing staffing costs. However, it is heartening to note that there are actionable steps that can be taken to mitigate these challenges. The establishment of onsite daycare centers within hospitals is a viable solution that can greatly enhance the work-life balance of female nurses.

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