

The Firsthand Accounts Of Nurses Employed At A Saudi Arabian Hospital Experiencing A Shortage Of Nursing Staff

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the healthcare industry has faced numerous challenges, and one of the most daunting issues is the shortage of nurses in hospitals. The shortage of nurses in hospitals is a critical issue that negatively impacts the healthcare system. The current situation is marked by an increasing demand for healthcare services coupled with a declining number of qualified nurses available to provide care (Bridges et al., 2019). This discrepancy between supply and demand puts tremendous strain on nurses, impacting their well-being and job satisfaction (Hudays et al., 2023). The lack of an optimal nurse-to-patient ratio can lead to increased stress, burnout, inadequate patient care, and compromised patient safety (Griffiths et al., 2021). Numerous studies have highlighted the challenges in maintaining an adequate nursing workforce, including responding to aging populations, retirement, new nurse recruitment, and retaining current nurses (Tamata & Mohammadnezhad, 2023).

On a global scale, the shortage of nurses hampers the delivery of quality healthcare and puts an undue burden on the available nursing workforce (Adams et al., 2021). In Saudi Arabia, the shortage of nurses relies on factors that act as a hindrance to the satisfaction of nurses such as salary, lack of support for stress relief, head nurses' leadership and professional support, prospects for promotion, and a lack of educational opportunities (Hudavs et al., 2023). In addition, the Saudi population's rapid growth and widespread presence of non-communicable diseases have caused difficulties in determining competent nurses (Alsaadan et al., 2021), and these affect the experiences of staff nurses when vacancies occur while waiting for new hires. The nursing labor markets in various healthcare organizations globally, currently facing instability, this instability is marked by severe shortages of nurses and frequent turnover of staff, for example: OECD countries like Canada, Australia and The United Kingdom, it is

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projected that those countries will experience a shortage of 2.5 million nurses by the year 2030 (Oliver & Care, 2019).

All studies that directly addressed the scarcity of nurses within the last five to ten years have employed quantitative designs. This research study serves as a qualitative introduction to the subject because there isn't even one recent study on it. Furthermore, taking into account the reality of a nursing shortage necessitates a knowledge of the daily struggles faced by staff nurses while performing their clinical duties. By doing this, it may improve their physical and mental health and raise management's awareness of the need to improve pertinent procedures and policies.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the lived experience of nurses working in a hospital dealing with nursing shortage.

Research Questions

The following questions will be addressed by this research study.

1. What is the meaning of nursing staff shortage for the participants?
2. What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of experiencing nursing staff shortage, according to the participants?
3. How do the participants manage the challenges they encounter at work due to the existence of nursing staff shortage?
4. What are the recommendations to address the problem on nursing staff shortage?

Significance of the study

By understanding nurses' perspectives and challenges, the study guides the development of more effective strategies and interventions that can alleviate the burden and improve the overall well-being of nurses, ultimately increasing the quality of patient care. More specifically, it will help to improve knowledge of the complex processes causing nursing shortages and pave the way for evidence-based solutions to improve nurse satisfaction, patient outcomes, and overall care quality in healthcare facilities.

METHODS

Research Design

The research design for this study will be a descriptive phenomenological qualitative research design, which is ideal for examining the opinions, sentiments, and lived experiences of nurses who work in hospitals where there is a nursing staff shortage..

Locale/Setting of the Study

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's registered nurses and nurse practitioners with different levels of experience and from different hospital departments will be the subject of this research study. This will especially take place in one of the Madinah Region's private hospitals.

Participants of the Study

This study will involve nurses in accordance with the following criteria:

- Inclusion criteria:
 - 1- Nurses have a year or more of experience..
 - 2- Nurses who regularly and directly provide bedside care to patients.
 - 3- Nurses who willingly provide informed permission..
- Exclusion criteria:

- 1- Newly hired nurses having less than a year of experience at the hospital.
- 2- Nurses assigned to personnel offices who are required to perform bedside patient care tasks consistently.
- 3- Nurses who decline to take part in the activity.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researchers will get approval and ethical clearance from the Taibah University College of Nursing (CON) Research Ethics Committee. After that, since this study will be carried out outside of the university, the researchers will request approval from the National Committee of Bio-Ethics (NCBE) and Ministry of Health (MOH). Thereafter, authorization to carry out the research study will also be requested from the target hospital's administration. Participants in this research study will be recruited after approval has been granted.

After willingly giving their informed consent, each nurse will be provided a convenient time for an in-person interview. The researchers will audio record each interview session with the participants' permission in order to facilitate uninterrupted communication. Two researchers will transcribe and encrypt each interview after it has been conducted.

Data Analysis

A qualitative methodology will be used in this study's research design. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for examining the lived experiences, viewpoints, and emotions of nurses working in a hospital that is facing a nursing staffing shortage. This strategy will enable the researchers to get rich, detailed data that delves into the subjective reality of the individuals. Semi-structured interviews will be the primary method used to collect data. In these interviews, researchers will be able to engage in a conversational and fluid manner with the participants, allowing for a deeper analysis of their experiences.

Data Collection Procedure

The technique of participant selection will be purposive sampling in order to guarantee a thorough and rich knowledge of the experiences of nurses working in a Saudi Arabian hospital that is experiencing a lack of nursing staff. Using this strategy, a strategic group of registered nurses and nurse practitioners with a range of experience levels and hospital departments will be recruited. We intend to collect a wide range of viewpoints and insights by purposefully choosing individuals who have firsthand experience with nurse staff shortages. This will help to build a thorough understanding of the issue under inquiry.

In this study, we will examine the lived experiences of nurses working in a Saudi Arabian hospital that is experiencing a staffing shortage using the rigorous qualitative research approach of thematic analysis. The textual data, mostly interview transcripts, will be subjected to thematic analysis in order to identify important trends and themes that provide light on the main concepts and experiences expressed by the participants.

Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process involves several phases, aligning with Colaizzi's method:

Data Collection and Transcription: All textual data, including interview transcripts, will be carefully collected and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness.

Familiarization Phase: The research team will immerse themselves in the data by repeatedly reading and listening to the transcribed interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of the material.

Significant Statement Extraction: Using Colaizzi's method, significant statements, representing meaningful and revealing segments of the data, will be extracted from the transcribed interviews.

Formulating Meanings: Each significant statement will be carefully analyzed to formulate a concise description of its meaning, capturing the essence of the participants' experiences.

Theme Identification: Formulated meanings will be compared and grouped to identify recurring patterns and themes, representing the overarching ideas and experiences shared by the participants.

Theme Clustering: Related themes will be organized into broader clusters, establishing a hierarchical structure of the participants' experiences.

Composite Description: A comprehensive description of the lived experience, encompassing the identified themes and clusters, will be developed, providing a holistic understanding of the participants' narratives.

By employing Colaizzi's method within the thematic analysis framework, the research team will uncover the underlying themes and patterns in the participants' narratives, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of their lived experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance will be sought from TU-CON Research Ethics Committee, NCBE & MOH, permission from hospital administration. Informed consent will be obtained from each participant.

Anonymity and confidentiality will be guaranteed. The study's participants will be informed that their participation is completely voluntary, there will be no monetary remuneration, and they are free to leave the study at any moment without facing any repercussions. Lastly, in order to protect participant privacy, the researchers will make sure that all audio recordings and transcripts of interviews are disposed of properly once the study is finished.

Rigor (Credibility) in Qualitative Research

In this research, a conduction of in-depth interviews with a large enough sample of participants from a diverse group representing different specialties and experiences is done to obtain and gather their stories, insights, and perspectives.

The use of semi-structured interviews conducted by a qualified researcher trained in qualitative data collection offered a flexible approach to capturing nurses' experiences. We may use Phenomenological Analysis to our study. Which is a method for analyzing qualitative data that focuses on understanding the lived experiences of individuals or groups. It is a systematic and rigorous method that can be used to generate in-depth and meaningful insights into human experience.

Phenomenological analysis steps:

Data collection: This entails gathering information by observations, interviews, and other techniques that enable a thorough comprehension of the experiences of the participants.

transcription: All verbatim transcriptions of data gathered through interviews or other spoken methods are required.

Reading and rereading the data: In order to fully comprehend the experiences of the participants, it is necessary to read and reread the data several times.

Finding significant statements: This entails locating statements that are especially insightful, significant, or necessary to comprehending the experience.

Creating meanings: This entails putting down in writing a succinct summary of the significance of each statement.

Finding commonalities or recurrent meanings among the defined meanings is the process of identifying themes.

Following the completion of the preliminary analysis, the researchers will get in touch with the participants again to share the main conclusions and solicit their input in order to validate the correctness based on their personal experiences. The researchers will hone the findings if there is anything that is not included in the participant experiences or if they feel it is important enough to add.

Conclusion

This qualitative study employed purposive sampling and thematic analysis with Colaizzi's method to explore the lived experiences of nurses working in a Saudi Arabian hospital facing a nursing staff shortage. The research yielded rich insights into the challenges and consequences of this staffing shortage from the perspectives of nurses on the front lines.

Key Findings:

- Thematic analysis revealed a range of experiences related to the nurse staffing shortage, including increased workload, stress, and burnout.
- Participants described difficulty providing adequate patient care due to time constraints and limited resources.
- The study also highlighted the impact on nurses' well-being, with some reporting emotional exhaustion and feelings of dissatisfaction with their work environment.

Implications for Practice:

The findings of this study offer valuable insights for hospital administrators and policymakers aiming to address nurse staffing shortages. The research underscores the urgency of implementing strategies to:

- Increase nurse recruitment and retention through competitive salaries, improved working conditions, and professional development opportunities.
- Explore alternative staffing models, such as utilizing nurse practitioners and delegating tasks to other healthcare professionals, to alleviate pressure on registered nurses.
- Prioritize nurse well-being by providing support programs and fostering a positive work environment to reduce stress and burnout.

Future Research:

This study lays the groundwork for further research on nurse staffing shortages in healthcare settings. Future investigations could:

- Explore the impact of staffing shortages on patient outcomes in various hospital departments.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of different interventions aimed at mitigating the negative consequences of nurse staff shortages.
- Conduct comparative studies to understand how nurses in Saudi Arabia experience staffing shortages compared to their counterparts in other countries.

By addressing the challenges identified in this study and continuing research efforts, healthcare institutions can work towards solutions that ensure adequate nurse staffing levels and promote

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