

Growing Evidences of Challenging Environment in Nursing Profession: A Qualitative Study of Patterns, Causes and Outcomes

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Abstract: The raising violence against overall medical professional has increased over few last decades. The nursing personnels bear the primary responsibility of caregiving for in patient departments and cater to their medical needs. This profession demands rigorous training and supervision to provide the best support. The aim was to understand the patterns, causes and outcomes of challenges against the nursing personnels. The data of 20 online news articles and blogs was collected on 04.09.2024 through google search. The coding and themes were analysed manually. The frequency and percentage analysis were done with the help of a software. The result findings revealed a total of 4 themes and 9 sub-themes, focusing on current patterns, causes and outcomes of rising challenges among nursing personnels. Based on present findings, it can be concluded that the struggles or challenges of nursing personnels is increasing rapidly along with high work demand and absence of balanced work life.

Keywords: Nursing, Qualitative Study, Rising challenges, Violence.

Introduction:

During the pandemic, nurses worldwide have expressed a deep sense of vulnerability. The main cause of this emotion is the fear of being infected while providing medical care (Akkuş, Y., Karacan, Y. & Güney, R., 2022). In addition, many nurses have pre-existing medical illnesses, which makes them more concerned about the threats to their own health at work. The general recognition of a lack of readiness before the epidemic exacerbates these worries. There were chaotic and stressful working circumstances at many healthcare institutions since they had effective plans to handle such a disaster. Furthermore, there have been concerning problems with personal protective equipment (PPE); some nurses have stated that they have either been provided insufficient PPE or have been forced to limit their supply, which has increased their exposure risk. All of these elements work together to make this unprecedented period of time difficult and sometimes terrifying for healthcare practitioners (Grinspun, D., Perry, L. & Abu-Qamar, 2022).

These difficulties include a variety of management, professional, and environmental elements that seriously compromise the standard of patient care. According to nursing practitioners, these difficulties result in more stress at work, which eventually affects both their performance and patients' health. Studies have repeatedly shown that this situation is influenced by a number of distinct stresses. For example, excessive workloads frequently cause nurses to feel overburdened and unable to give the kind of care they want to. Furthermore, the issue may worsen if doctors are not present since nurses may be forced to handle patient care responsibilities outside of their area of expertise, which would increase their stress levels. Furthermore, the existence of unsupportive supervisors may foster an atmosphere in which nurses feel underappreciated and unaided in their work. Chronic understaffing causes the current employees to take on

more duties, which raises stress levels, therefore a lack of human resource is also a concern.

Last but not least, unfavorable interpersonal relationships, whether with coworkers or patients, can create a toxic workplace, which in turn can contribute to nurses' job discontent and mental exhaustion. When taken as a whole, these elements have detrimental effects on patient safety and care quality in addition to the nurses' well-being (Fallahnezhad, T., Aghaie, B. & Norouzadeh, R., 2023). Due to the social and cultural stigmatization of this female-dominated profession, nurses are facing significant recruiting and retention problems, which is impacting their decisions to stay in or enter the field.

Working on the front lines of a pandemic requires nurses to have a high sense of moral bravery and resilience. Three ethical concerns that come up during pandemics were discussed by Morley et al.: (a) nurse, patient, and family safety; (b) resource allocation; and (c) the evolving aspects of nurses' interactions with patients and families. These circumstances have a significant and detrimental effect on nursing students' and nurses' professional identities in general (SHUN & Shiow-Ching, 2021).

Methods:

Data was gathered from 20 blogs and online news stories on September 4, 2024, using a Google search. While frequency and percentage analyses were carried out using specialist software, topic identification and coding were done by hand. Nine sub-themes and four main topics emerged from the data, highlighting the origins, trends, and consequences of the growing difficulties that nursing staff are currently facing. These results suggest that increased job expectations and a lack of work-life balance are contributing to the growing challenges faced by nursing professionals.

RESULTS

Themes	Codes	Description	Cases	% Cases
Effect of High Workload	Patient Care	The negative consequences of high work-load	5	31.3%
	Migration	Leaving the native country for better opportunities and balanced work-life	6	37.5%
Training and Education	Quality of training	The need for improving education system	4	25.0%
	Weak Regulation	The challenges faced by nursing staff due to regulatory norms	3	18.8%
	Organizational Challenges	The various challenges due to organizational policies	1	6.3%
Role Mis-interpretation	Social Stigma	The social stigma associated with the nursing job profile	1	6.3%
	Lack of job role differentiation	Similar job roles for different degrees within nursing profession	2	12.5%
Future Direction	Alternatives to Improve Situation	possible solutions to improvise the overall work-life situation	7	43.8%
Mental Health Challenges	Burnout, Anxiety, Fear	Effect on psychological well being	5	31.3%

	Highly Demanding Job	The emotionally demanding job role	3	18.8%
	Violence	The increasing violence towards nursing professionals	4	25.0%

Theme 1: Effect of High Workload

This theme covers the impact of increased work pressure among working personnels that has been a concern from last many years and it has become extremely prevalent in recent times. Apart from the family members of any patient, the nursing personnels become the immediate caregiver who bear the responsibility of multiple patients with different medical conditions. Often this responsibility turns into a never-ending burden for them because of various factors like hectic working hours, uneven nurse-patient ratio, low wages and incompetent working environment. These continuous patterns demotivated nursing personnel to migrate to other countries (37.5%) or it negatively affects the patient care (31.3%) (Maghsoud, F., Rezaei, M. & Asgarian, F.S., 2022).

Excerpts (Patient Care)

"..the shortage of nurses to be the greatest stumbling block for delivering healthcare across report mentions that Indian hospitals struggle with nurse attrition rates of 50% to 75%. No service industry with this level of attrition can function without compromising on quality and patient safety"

"Compassion fatigue is a condition where nurses experience emotional exhaustion and reduced empathy toward their patients"

Excerpts (Migration)

"While the shortage of nurses and their massive emigration to foreign countries is a cause for worry, there is a need to train them at home, especially amid the advent of health tech and other technologies."

"Those with advanced degrees seek employment in education institutions or migrate abroad where their qualifications are recognised. This has led to an acute dearth of qualified nurses in the country."

Theme 2: Training and Education

The present theme focuses on the quality of training (25%) and adequate teaching-learning environment, which is an essential part of nursing curriculum as it is directly associated with patient care. A new emerging concern in the field of patient care is the increased incompetency observed or experienced by nursing staff of many hospitals at different levels of care. This could be as an outcome of weak regulators bodies (18.8%) or because of frequent organizational challenges (6.5%) (King, O., West, E., Lee, S., 2022).

Excerpts (Quality of Training)

"The quality of training of nurses is diminished by the uneven and weak regulation."

"Multiple entry points to the nursing courses and lack of integration of the diploma and degree courses diminish the quality of training"

Excerpts (Weak Regulation)

"These challenges arise due to issue at the organizational, state and national levels. It is of utmost importance to first recognize and understand each and every possible challenges faced by nurses in order to deal with them efficiently—not just recognize and understand them but also and solution to mitigate them."

"Many stay just as long as it takes for them to gain the qualifications needed to head o abroad for better pay and a less onerous working environment, say nurses. According to WHO World Health Statistics 2020, India has 17 nurses per 10,000 people versus the global average of 38. There were 2.47 million registered nurses and midwives in India at the end of calendar 2021, as per the FY22 report of the Indian Nursing Council, the national regulatory body for nurses and nursing education."

Excerpts (Organizational Challenges)

“...was despondent and felt trapped after the altercation with the senior member of staff, who reminded her of the bond, said her colleagues. Unable to bear the harassment, ... took the extreme step and ended her life, they added”

“ she was fed up with the job, and desperately wanted to leave but was unable to because of a financial bond she had signed with the hospital authorities. The bond specified that a nurse has to pay the hospital Rs 50,000 if he/she quits before completing two years of service. Until the two years of service are successfully completed, the nurse’s educational certificates are retained by the hospital authorities”

Theme 3: Role Misinterpretation

This theme comprises two sub-themes, 'social stigma' (6.3%) associated with the profile of a nursing staff and 'lack of job role differentiation' (12.5%) which covers the multiple responsibilities a nursing staff bears other than core clinical patient care (Manik, M. J., Natalia, S., & Theresia, 2021).

Excerpts (Social Stigma)

“Though a high-skill job, nursing remains low-paid and stigmatised”

Excerpts (Lack of Job Role Differentiation)

“There is a lack of job differentiation between diploma, graduate, and postgraduate nurses regarding their pay, parity, and promotion. Consequently, higher qualifications of postgraduate nurses are underutilised, leading to low demand for postgraduate courses.”

“the government’s initiatives aimed at promoting women’s welfare and their work nature, they said. Nurses from rural areas want their work nature improved. They demand that they be relieved from non-essential tasks such as family register data management and online registrations as they are an extra burden on them”

Theme 4: Future Direction

This theme covers only a single sub-theme, 'Alternatives to Improve Situation' with highest frequency of 43.8%, which emphasizes the scope of improvement in overall areas of nursing field, including education, job role clarity, managing migration, and financial concerns (Shen, M., Feng, Z., 2024).

Excerpts (Alternative to Improve Situation)

“Incentives to pursue advanced degrees to match their qualification, clear career paths, opportunity for leadership roles, and improvements in the status of nursing as a profession will be key steps to do so. A live registry of nurses, positions, and opportunities should be a top priority to tackle the demand-supply gap in this sector.”

“Nurses can write letters to editors or op-eds for local newspapers and online platforms to raise public awareness about important healthcare issues. By explaining complex health policies in relatable terms, Nurses can engage the broader community and inspire others to take action ”

“One of the primary ways of supporting nurses and midwives in the health sector is to reduce their work-related stress by improving working conditions. This includes implementing appropriate salaries, flexible schedules, adequate nurse staffing, and creating jobs that allow career growth as well as retention of aging nurses to continue so that they can remain in the workforce longer. Unless these changes are put in place, the burnout of nurses and its negative impact on patient care will only continue despite the best efforts put forth by nurses and midwives.”

Theme 5: (Mental Health Challenges)

The overburden, violence, poor work life balance, undistributed job role often leads to mental health challenges among nursing personnels, which is discussed in the sub themes respectively, 'Burnout, Anxiety & Fear'(31.3%), 'Highly Demanding Job'(18.8%) and Violence (25%) (Nagel, C., & Nilsson, K., 2022).

Excerpts (Burnout, Anxiety & Fear)

“Indian nurses faced a lot of mental health issues, including fear, burnout, anxiety, fatigue, stress, depression and insomnia.”

“Often face heavy workloads due to staff shortages, high patient acuity, and administrative tasks. This can result in fatigue, stress, and decreased job satisfaction.”

Excerpts (Highly Demanding Job)

"Although nursing profession can be rewarding but it is equally challenging and it entails a huge level of dedication and commitment. Nurses need to be focused on not only the patient needs but also on management of the system of care. This often creates unfortunate hassles irrespective of how hard the nurses' work towards patient care. This entails a lot of managerial skills. Reduced workforce and lack of quality care leads to overburdened workforce which further leads to higher morbidity and mortality"

"Nursing is emotionally demanding, requiring nurses to witness suffering, death, and human vulnerability daily. This emotional burden can lead to compassion fatigue, moral distress, and mental health issues."

"How nurses manage their mental health and wellbeing while sharing compassion with their patients evolving role. According to the Indian Nursing Council, there are approximately 27 lakh registered nurses in the country. However, despite their crucial role, nurses in India often face challenges related to workload, inadequate staffing, and limited resources."

Excerpts (Violence)

Nursing personnels have been victims of physical, sexual violence, harsh or negative comments, and critical remarks from patients, their caregivers or acquaintances.

"frequently encounter verbal and physical abuse from patients, families, or even colleagues, posing a significant threat to their safety and well-being."

"Incidents of violence, harassment and bullying towards nurses in India regularly hit the headlines, but commentators hope that new draft government guidelines designed to improve working conditions in the healthcare sector could help tackle the problem."

Discussion

The nursing personnel is considered one of the noblest professions but from past many decades patient care in hospitals has become a burdensome task for nursing personnels due to multiple factors. The aim was to understand the patterns, causes and outcomes of challenges against the nursing personnels. On April 9, 2024, information from 20 blogs and online news stories was gathered using a Google search. The coding and themes were manually. With the use of software, the frequency and percentage analysis were completed. With an emphasis on the present trends, causes, and consequences of growing issues among nursing workers, the results showed a total of four themes and nine sub-themes. According to current research, nursing staff members are facing more difficulties than ever before, in addition to heavy workloads and a lack of a proper work-life balance.

The result findings suggested that most of the articles and blogs showed that highest percentages of Future Directions (Alternatives to Improve Situation with a total of 7 cases). Another highest sub-theme was, Effect of High Workload (Migration with a total of 6 cases, Patient Care with a total of 5 cases) along with Mental Health Challenges (Burnout, Anxiety and Fear with a total of 5 cases) and Violence (with a total of 4 cases). Training and Education (Quality of training with a total of 4 cases) was considered a theme suggesting scope of improvement in system to help nursing personnels to enhance their skill-set of dealing with patients while providing care. Weak Regulation, Organizational Challenges, Social Stigma (Subu, M.A., Wati, D.F. & Netrida, N. et.al, 2021), Lack of job role differentiation, Highly Demanding Job are some other sub-themes identified during analyses with a lesser frequency comparatively (Avalos, J., Roy, D., & Asan, O. 2021). These findings suggests that nursing personnels face a lot challenges and occupational hazards which can be worked out and there is need for upgrading the overall workplace environment. This is not only required for nursing personnels but also has a direct effect on quality of patient care.

Conclusion: The above findings based on the recent online news articles and blogs are reflecting the necessity to bring a change in the existing system which is not catering to the mental health needs and professional development of nursing personnels.

Future Implications: The findings of this study give a clarity about the present challenges and the possible changes

which can enhance the quality of education and job role of nursing personnels.

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