

JOB SATISFACTION AND RETENTION OF NURSING STAFF IN SAUDI HOSPITALS.

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to investigate job satisfaction amongst nurses in Saudi Arabian hospitals. In recent years, there has been considerable growth in the healthcare system in Saudi Arabia, yet little attention has been paid to improving the performance of healthcare professionals, by improving job satisfaction and retention of nursing staff. This paper reviews the research conducted on job satisfaction, and retention of Saudi nursing staff. This is an integrative review of previous studies on job satisfaction and retention of Saudi nursing staff. The electronic databases Google Scholar, CINAHL, PubMed, and Global Health were used to identify peer-reviewed literature published between 2009 and 2018. The literature review showed that the majority of nurses were satisfied in their job. However, there was a shortage of research in retention of nurses. The evidence from this study suggests that the hospitals need to ensure high level of job satisfaction and decent wages of nurses for maximum retention of nurses.

KEYWORDS

job satisfaction, retention, nursing, hospital, Saudi Arabia.

BACKGROUND

Nursing performance affects the quality of healthcare significantly. Several factors affect nursing performance, including job satisfaction and retention. In Saudi Arabia, the relative importance of job satisfaction has been the subject of considerable debate. Al-Ahmadi (2009) [2] reported a strong positive relationship between

performance and job satisfaction. Beecroft et al. (2006) [14] found that the environment influences job satisfaction and retention in nursing. Other factors, such as, pay, supervision and promotion, have also been identified. Alharbi, Wilson, Woods and Usher (2012) [4] found that overwork leads to job dissatisfaction. Yet it is difficult to measure job satisfaction as several factors are involved in it. However, this review could locate only one study (Abullrub & ALghamdi, 2012), [1] which showed high levels of satisfaction when their leaders used a transformational leadership style.

Nursing is a key component of the health care system. But shortage of nurses is rapidly becoming a global challenge. Shortage is due to nurses leaving the hospital for several reasons and shortage in the number of trained nursing professionals compared to the market demand. Nurses may leave if they are not satisfied with the job. Here, nursing job satisfaction is linked to retention of nurses.

Continued growth in the Saudi health system will require adequate number of skilled workforce in order to deliver high quality care. However, there is increasing concern over job satisfaction among nurses. Also, the Saudi government has vision 2030 has set high targets for healthcare. According to Bassi (2016-2017) [6], increased private participation, improved efficiency and effectiveness of the healthcare sector through the use of information technology and digital transformation, increasing local and international training and development of nurses, increasing the attractiveness of nursing and medical support staff as a preferred career, improving quality of care both inside and outside hospitals, improving public health services, improving infrastructure and facilities with high safety standards and reducing waiting times are among the Vision 2030 healthcare

targets. All these targets directly or indirectly affect nursing numbers, care quality, job satisfaction and working conditions. Certainly, these targets indicate rapidly increasing demand for nurses in hospitals. Adequate supply of nurses to meet this demand has to be ensured by increasing nurse retention and training much larger number of nurses than now. Both these are possible only if nursing profession is attractive enough with good working conditions, pay and perks and positive workplace environment leading to higher job satisfaction.

Thus, the two key issues of nursing profession in Saudi Arabia, both for the present and for the future are: job satisfaction and nurse retention. Therefore, this review focused on job satisfaction and retention among nurses in Saudi Arabian hospitals. The research questions were:

- What is known about job satisfaction among nurses in Saudi Arabian hospitals?
- What is known about retention of nurses in Saudi Arabian hospitals?

METHODS

DESIGN:

This is an integrative review of current literature and was conducted in five steps: select problem, literature search, data assessment, data analysis and presentation (O'Leary, 2014) [10]. Narrative review is a well-established approach to understanding specific problems or phenomena in the healthcare system (Broome, 1993) [7]. This method approaches due to here is limited studies of nursing in government hospitals. In this research, integrative approach was chosen for the design of the research methodology and narrative approach was used for derivation of findings and interpreting them towards conclusions.

TABLE 1: SEARCH CRITERIA

INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Written in English only.	Studies focusing on physicians or patients or other health professionals.
Studies measuring job satisfaction, retention of nurses in Saudi Arabia.	Studies outside Saudi Arabia.
Publications between 2009 and 2018.	Any study outside the scope of the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia.

SEARCH STRATEGY:

In the search for relevant literature, the following parameters were considered:

- The availability of literature online, either through Google Scholar or a health research database.
- Keywords (job satisfaction, retention, nursing, hospital and Saudi Arabia); and
- Currency (the search was limited to literature published between 2009 and 2018).

Once relevant articles were sourced using this strategy, they were filtered through the set of criteria that are outlined in Table 1. The process is shown in Figure 1.

Papers were included if they measured job satisfaction and retention of nurses in Saudi Arabia. Papers were included if they focused on nurses working for the Saudi Ministry of Health. Papers were excluded if they focused on physicians or patients or other health professionals rather than specifically on nursing, if they were based on research conducted in Ministry of Health hospitals or were published before 2009.

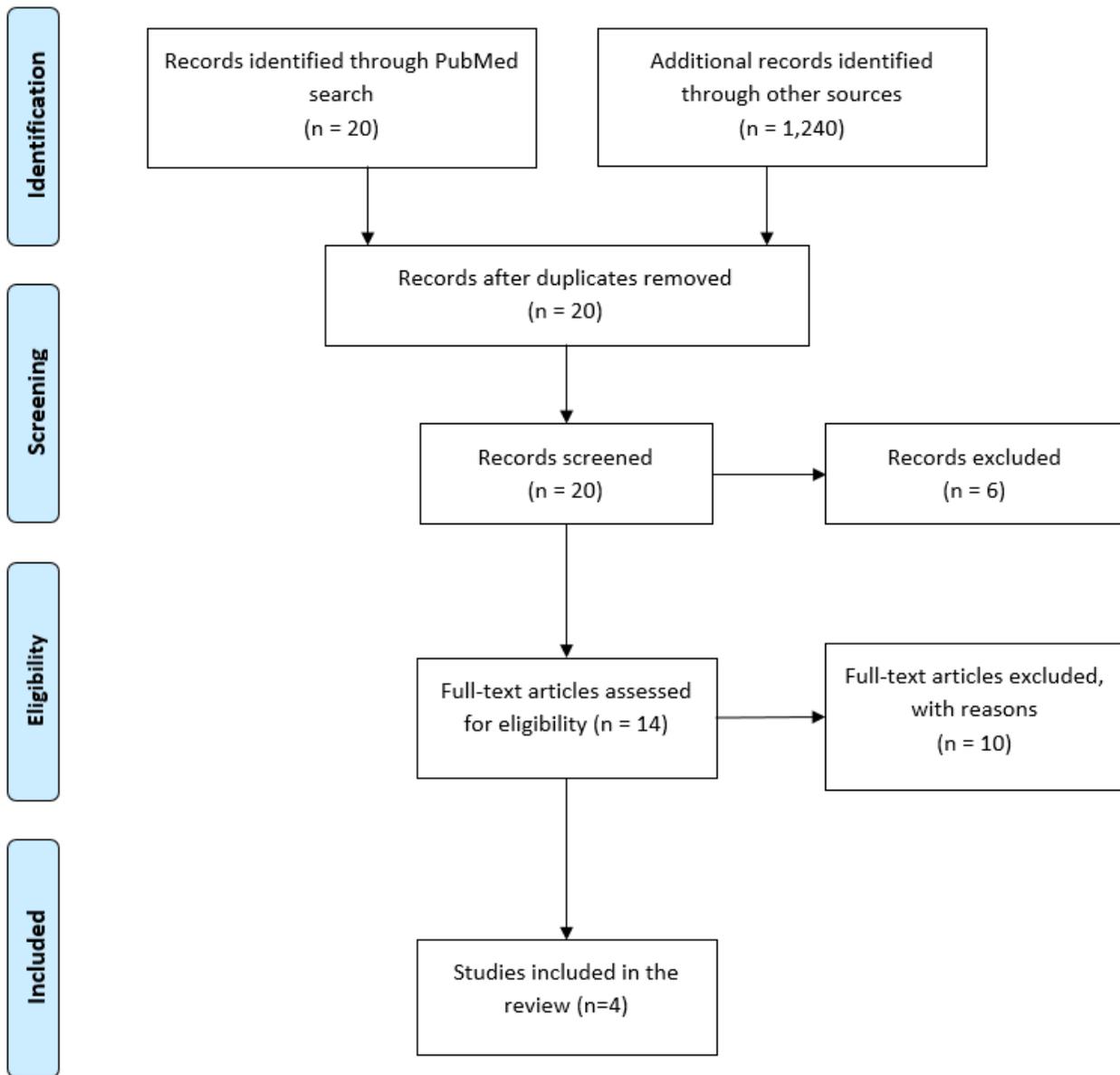
PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

In total, the four previous studies involved 2362 participants. In these studies, the sample sizes were (74 to 1,834), age (21-59), male and female. Most of the reviewed studies indicated a job satisfaction, only one study indicated retention. The four studies which explored the relationship between leadership, environment, and job stratification. The studies were conducted in Riyadh, in Aseer, Hail, and in Makah, regions in Saudi Arabia.

QUALITY APPRAISAL:

To assess the quality of appraisal by dividing into three sections high quality was more than 75%, medium quality 50%, low quality 25%. Overall, these four papers on got a high quality 75%.

FIGURE 1: SEARCH RESULTS



RESULTS

As shown in Fig 1, out of an initially identified 1260 works, after various steps of filtering, only four were found to be eligible to be included in this review as per the inclusion-exclusion criteria. Out of this four, only one study addressed retention (Abualrub & Alghamdi, 2012).[4]

Table 2 provides an overview of these studies. The studies had sample sizes ranging from 74 to 923 nurses in Saudi hospitals. One was conducted in Riyadh, one in three regions of Saudi Arabia (Jeddah, Makah and Taif), one in Hail, and one in Aseer. The main objective of all studies was

similar, that is, to explore job satisfaction among nurses in Saudi Arabia.

Alharbi, Wilson, Woods and Usher (2016) [4] examined the impact of burnout and job satisfaction on Saudi nurses. Two studies focused on the link between leadership style and job satisfaction (Alshahrani & Baig, 2016; Abualrub & Alghamdi, 2012). [5, 1] Al-Ahmadi (2009) [2] investigated the factors that affected nurses' performance and job satisfaction. All studies attempted to explain the relationship between job satisfaction and retention of nurses in Saudi hospitals.

TABLE 2: OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

REFERENCE	AIM	LOCATION	SAMPLE	METHODS	FINDINGS
Alharbi, Wilson, Woods & Usher (2016)	To examine the prevalence of burnout and job satisfaction among Saudi national critical care nurses.	Hail	150 Saudi nurses	Survey	Participants reported feelings of ambivalence and dissatisfaction with their jobs but were satisfied with the nature of their work.
Al-Ahmadi (2009)	Identify the factors influencing performance of hospital nurses.	Riyadh	923 nurses	Statistical analysis	Job performance was positively correlated with organisational commitment, job satisfaction and personal and professional variables.
Alshahrani and Baig (2016)	To assess the effect of transformational and transactional leadership styles of head nurses on the job satisfaction of staff nurses.	Aseer	74 nurses	Cross-sectional survey	All nurse leaders demonstrated a combination of transactional (TA) and transformational (TF) styles of leadership. The nurses were moderately satisfied with their work.
Abualrub & Alghamdi (2012)	To examine the impact of leadership styles of nurse managers on Saudi nurses' job satisfaction and intention to stay at work.	Jeddah, Makah and Taif	308 nurses	Descriptive correlational design	Satisfied with their jobs and intended to stay at work.

JOB SATISFACTION:

Job satisfaction is necessary to improve the quality of care in the Saudi healthcare system. The studies used different measures of job satisfaction such as leadership, environment, and the impact of burnout. Three studies reported that Saudi nurses were satisfied. Two of these measured job satisfactions using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) and one used the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire.

However, one study (Alharbi et al., 2016) [16] observed that the level of job satisfaction was lower in the majority of nurses in three hospitals in Hail. Job satisfaction was measured using the JSS and levels of burnout were measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory [MBI]. This

study found that 88% of participants experienced high levels of depersonalisation and uncertainty about their prospects for promotion.

RETENTION:

Only one study (Abualrub & Alghamdi, 2012) [1] discussed retention. It found that the majority of nurses were satisfied and intended to stay if their hospitals adopted a transformational leadership style. This was measured using McCain's Intent to Stay Scale.

Overall, the results of four studies indicated that nurses were satisfied in their current jobs. One study reported that the nurses intended to stay in their current job. Surprisingly, no study explored retention directly.

DISCUSSION

Out of several factors affecting nursing performance, the relative importance of job satisfaction has been subject to considerable debate in Saudi Arabia. Out of four studies identified in this review, three dealt with job satisfaction. Al-Ahmadi (2009) [2] reported that personal and professional variables affected nurses' job satisfaction. This study showed a strong positive relationship between performance and job satisfaction and reported high levels of work satisfaction among of nurses. Zaghoul et al. (2008) [13], however, found that Saudi nurses were least satisfied with their environment and salary and perceived a lack of fairness in the performance system. The difference between the two studies is due to the variables measured as factors affecting job satisfaction.

A previous study of job satisfaction among 360 nurses in Saudi Arabia found only moderate overall satisfaction (Ahmadi, 2002). [2] These findings are similar to those reported by Vroom (1964) [13]. Other works have shown significant effect of work environment on job satisfaction of nurses (Kaddourah et al., 2013). [9] In this study, 50% of participants were satisfied and 40% were dissatisfied with their job. Surprisingly, nurses with lower levels of education were more satisfied than nurses with a university degree. This review identified only one study that examined retention of Saudi nurses, and no overall data on retention were available. This single report gives a positive verdict on satisfied nurses willing to stay on. It is not known whether any other work has reported a different finding.

Two other studies explored the impact of transformational leadership style on job satisfaction among nurses (Alshahrani & Baig, 2016; Abualrub & Alghamdi, 2012). [5,1] These studies reported that gender in leadership had a significant effect on job satisfaction, with higher levels of satisfaction reported if the leader was a male. Nurses were also more satisfied with their work if the leadership in their hospital adopted a transformational style. Other researchers found that the leader played an important role in job satisfaction of nurses. Omer (2005) [11] reported that nursing leaders focused on transformational factors rather than communication with their nurses. Alshahrani and Baig (2016) [5] noted the positive effect of management, motivation, and correction on job satisfaction.

Alharbi et al. (2012) [4] identified high levels of burnout which affected job satisfaction. 17% of participants in this

study intended to leave their job, while the majority were uncertain. Some participants expressed ambivalence in relation to supervision, pay and fringe benefits. These findings further support the suggestion that rewards, contingent rewards, pay and fringe benefits have a significant effect on the level of job satisfaction of nurses (Spector, 1985). [12]

Retention of nurses is a major problem for hospital leaders in Saudi Arabia. One study found a relationship between job satisfaction, salary, leadership style and retention (Lu, While & Barriball, 2005) [10], that is, nurses were more likely to leave their job if they had low levels of satisfaction or motivations. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies that have examined the effect of leadership style. As noted by Abualrub and Alghamdi (2012) [1], high levels of satisfaction among nurses are associated with a transformational leadership style. However, the sample size was relatively small. The studies involved different instruments, measures and samples, making comparison difficult. There was limited information about government hospitals and lack of data on retention of nurses in Saudi hospitals. In addition, the majority of participants in all research were female and the studies did not measure all aspects of job satisfaction.

LIMITATIONS

The studies involved different instruments, measures and samples, making comparison difficult. There was limited information about government hospitals and lack of data on retention of nurses in Saudi hospitals. In addition, the majority of participants in all research were female. The final number of eligible papers was only four. This is highly inadequate to make any generalisation of conclusions.

CONCLUSION

The main goal of the current study was to assess the satisfaction of nursing staff in the Saudi healthcare system. This study attempted to review synthesizes that is currently available. However, only four reports were eligible to be included in this review. Even within the few studies, wide variations of sample size and types of measurement were noted. This makes comparisons difficult. The literature review showed that the majority of nurses were satisfied in their job. However, there was a shortage of research in retention of nurses. The evidence from this study suggests that the hospitals need to ensure high level of job

satisfaction and decent wages of nurses for maximum retention of nurses.

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