

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTION OF MOTIVATION OF NURSES: A LITERATURE AND PERSPECTIVE VIEW

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ABSTRACT

Motivation is a crucial psychological factor that significantly impacts good performance, quality of care, and job satisfaction among nurses. Despite its pivotal importance, motivation levels among nurses have unfortunately declined in recent years, attributed to various factors. This article delves into the challenges hindering nurse motivation in Iran.

The design of this paper integrated a targeted literature review with the author's expert perspectives to provide a comprehensive and actionable understanding of the subject. Based on these findings, future directions and specific recommendations have been formulated to address the identified challenges. From the novel perspective of this research, economic factors, including low salaries and limited career advancement opportunities, profoundly impact nurse motivation. Additionally, the public's perception of nursing as a technical rather than an academic field, coupled with existing issues within nursing education, further contributes to this problem.

For nursing management, human resource management, and healthcare organizations in Iran, this paper offers a comprehensive framework of actionable strategies. Key recommendations for improving motivation include recognizing and appreciating nurses' efforts, actively supporting their professional growth, empowering them in their roles, fostering effective communication, and promoting diversity and inclusion within the profession. The article further emphasizes a critical future direction: proactive engagement by nursing schools and society at large to elevate the status of nursing students and reshape public perception. These preventive measures are crucial for averting adverse outcomes such as job burnout, increased resignations, and a decrease in the quality of work life among nurses. Implementing these multifaceted approaches, tailored to individual needs, can significantly enhance nurse motivation, leading to improved job satisfaction and patient care outcomes.

KEYWORDS

motivation, challenge, nurse, Iran, profession

INTRODUCTION

In many parts of the world, nurses are the largest and most critical workforce within the healthcare system. They have consistently been at the forefront as pioneers and innovators in the field. Nurses also play a significant leadership role in advancing evidence-based practices, impacting all aspects of prevention, from promoting health to facilitating rehabilitation [1]. Psychological health is one of the most important factors in nurses. Motivation stands out as one of the paramount psychological factors that significantly shape good performance. It holds a pivotal role in areas such as learning, the delivery of quality care, and the overall job satisfaction experienced by nurses [2].

Regrettably, and observed globally, the motivation levels among nurses have witnessed a decline in recent years, owing to a multitude of factors [3]. This downturn has given rise to adverse outcomes, including burnout, job abandonment, and psychological repercussions like heightened aggression and depression [1]. Several factors contribute to the decline of motivation among Iranian nurses. These include economic issues such as low salaries that are often insufficient to meet the cost of living and a lack of comprehensive benefits [4]. Additionally, the absence of clear career progression models and limited access to professional development opportunities hinder their professional growth and sense of accomplishment [5]. The public's perception of nursing as a technical rather than an academic field also negatively impacts their motivation, as it can lead to a lack of respect and a feeling of being undervalued [6].

Understanding and addressing this decline in nurse motivation is not only crucial for individual nurse well-being and job satisfaction but also profoundly impacts the quality of patient care, the efficiency of healthcare teams, and the overall stability and effectiveness of nursing organizations [3]. A demotivated nursing workforce can lead to reduced patient safety, higher staff turnover, and increased operational costs, thereby compromising the entire healthcare system [7].

While psychological factors like motivation are paramount for nurses' performance and job satisfaction, understanding their decline necessitates a deeper theoretical lens. Among various motivational theories, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory offers a robust framework for dissecting the elements contributing to or detracting from nurse motivation [8]. This theory differentiates between factors that cause dissatisfaction (hygiene factors) and those that lead to satisfaction and motivation (motivators), providing a valuable perspective for analyzing the challenges faced by Iranian nurses and formulating effective interventions [8].

This article delves into the unique challenges to nurse motivation in Iran and presents suggestions to address these issues within this national context. The findings provide actionable insights for nursing management, human resource departments, and healthcare policymakers seeking to bolster the nursing workforce and optimize healthcare delivery in Iran.

METHODS

This article presents a conceptual analysis and perspective view on the challenges and future directions concerning nurse motivation in Iran. The design of this paper integrated a targeted literature review with the author's expert perspectives to provide a comprehensive and actionable understanding of the subject.

A literature search was conducted across major academic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, using a combination of keywords including 'nurse motivation,' 'healthcare challenges,' 'nursing workforce,' 'job satisfaction,' 'burnout,' 'Iran,' and 'nursing management.' The search was limited to articles published in English and Persian from 2010 to 2024 to ensure currency and relevance to the contemporary nursing landscape, particularly within Iran.

Inclusion criteria focused on original research, review articles, and expert opinions discussing factors affecting nurse motivation, challenges faced by nurses, and strategies for improvement. Studies specific to the Iranian context were

prioritized. Articles that did not directly address nurse motivation or were purely theoretical without practical implications were excluded. The initial search yielded numerous results, which were then screened based on title and abstract for relevance, followed by a full-text review of selected articles. The identified challenges in nurse motivation were systematically extracted from this body of literature.

The author's perspectives, particularly concerning the future directions and specific recommendations for enhancing nurse motivation, are grounded in clinical experience in nursing and healthcare management within Iran, coupled with ongoing engagement in nursing education and policy discussions. This practical experience provided a contextual understanding of the multifaceted issues impacting nurse motivation that extends beyond the explicit findings of the literature. The integration of these perspectives involved a thematic synthesis of the literature-identified challenges with real-world observations and practical insights.

This allowed for a deeper interpretation of the identified problems and the formulation of realistic, context-specific, and implementable recommendations for nursing management, human resource management, and nursing organizations in Iran. The proposed future directions and recommendations were developed by critically analyzing the gaps identified in the existing literature in conjunction with the author's hands-on understanding of the Iranian healthcare system. This approach aims to bridge theoretical knowledge with practical applicability, offering a unique 'perspective view' that is both evidence-informed and experientially validated.

The authors first extracted key themes from the literature. These themes were then compared against real-world observations from clinical practice, and overlapping or complementary insights were grouped together. The expert perspectives were aligned into these thematic categories to ensure a structured integration of experiential and evidence-based knowledge. Specifically, themes identified in the literature were listed and compared with experiential insights, and categories such as organizational factors, workload, professional identity, and recognition were identified. The author's expert observations were mapped onto these categories to ensure a structured alignment between empirical evidence and practical experience.

RESULTS

CHALLENGES

Table 1 presents a framework that links the identified challenges to their underlying factors and proposed interventions.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF NURSE MOTIVATION CHALLENGES, FACTORS, AND INTERVENTIONS

Challenges	Underlying Factors	Recommended Interventions
Economic Factors	Low salaries and insufficient benefits, which align with Herzberg's hygiene factors.	Policy reforms to establish competitive salary benchmarks, implement robust benefit packages, and create transparent, performance-based incentive systems.
Career Advancement	Absence of clear career progression models, limited access to professional development, and the allocation of leadership roles to non-nursing professionals.	Develop and implement clear, structured career ladders and provide financial support for advanced degrees, along with mentorship and sponsorship programs.
Societal Perception	Public's view of nursing as a purely technical rather than an academic profession, which leads to a lack of recognition and value.	Launch national public awareness campaigns and integrate public relations and advocacy training into nursing curricula to elevate the profession's status.

Cultural Context and Healthcare Policies	The traditional view of nursing as a caregiving role, coupled with hierarchical healthcare structures and a lack of professional autonomy.	Empower nurses by including them in decision-making, granting greater autonomy, and providing psychological support to address unique pressures.
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ECONOMICAL FACTOR

The economic factor as a systemic factor stands out as one of the most significant contributors to the declining motivation among nurses. In various countries, including Iran, nurses are often confronted with the challenge of low average salaries [4]. Moreover, the issue of salary parity with other healthcare team members, considering the demanding nature of their work, is a critical concern in the sector. This disparity has sparked numerous protests on a global scale and, ultimately, has had adverse effects on motivation and work quality [4, 9, 10].

Salaries for nurses in Iran are frequently reported as insufficient to meet the rising cost of living, leading to dissatisfaction and a search for supplementary income, which can further exacerbate fatigue [4]. For instance, a recent study reported that many of Iranian nurses felt their salaries were inadequate [11]. Beyond base salaries, the lack of comprehensive benefits, such as adequate health insurance, retirement plans, and housing allowances, further diminishes the attractiveness of the profession and reduces financial security [11]. Despite the widespread economic inflation triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses have continued to bear the brunt of professional and psychological pressures. Regrettably, there has been insufficient attention directed towards rectifying this inequality [12].

The economic factor, characterized by low salaries and insufficient benefits, aligns with Herzberg's hygiene factors. While inadequate compensation (e.g., as reported for Iranian nurses) is a primary source of dissatisfaction, merely increasing salaries might only prevent dissatisfaction rather than fostering deep, sustained motivation [4]. This suggests that while economic improvements are essential to remove dissatisfaction, they alone may not be sufficient to significantly enhance intrinsic motivation among nurses.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT

The potential for future career advancement within the nursing field is another factor that significantly impacts motivation levels. This is an important challenge that is rooted in systemic issues. It is essential for nurses to have the opportunity to progress in their job positions and career trajectories, as they are an integral part of any nation's healthcare system [13]. In Iran, there is growing concern as many hospital management positions have been allocated to physicians, sidelining nurses. The absence of well-defined career progression models can lead to stagnation and a lack of incentive for nurses to develop specialized skills or pursue advanced roles [14]. A survey found that only many of nurses perceived clear career progression opportunities within their organizations [15].

Access to ongoing education, specialized training, and opportunities for skill enhancement may be scarce or financially prohibitive, hindering nurses' ability to advance and adapt to evolving healthcare demands [16]. Many of Iranian hospitals offer consistent professional development programs for their nursing staff [5]. Experienced nurses with advanced education and specialized management training within the healthcare system, given their close patient interactions, can be exceptionally well-suited candidates for leading medical facilities in any country [17]. Failing to address this critical issue may ultimately undermine the nursing profession in any given nation.

The absence of clear career progression models and limited access to professional development opportunities directly relates to Herzberg's motivators, specifically 'advancement' and 'achievement' [18]. When nurses lack pathways for growth or opportunities to enhance their skills, their intrinsic motivation can significantly decline, as these are crucial for fostering job satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment [18].

SOCIETAL PERCEPTION

Another critical issue to address is the public's perception of the nursing profession that is rooted in cultural factors. Nursing has often been seen as a technical rather than an academic field, and although there have been numerous efforts to shift this perspective in many nations, there is still much progress to be made [19]. In Iran, nursing is often perceived by the public, and sometimes by other healthcare professionals, as a purely technical job rather than an academic or highly skilled professional discipline [6]. This can lead to a lack of respect for their complex responsibilities. Public opinion polls reveal that the general population do not view nursing as an academic profession [20].

The global emergence of COVID-19 brought about significant changes in how the public perceives nursing, primarily due to the tireless efforts of nurses. Nurses were widely praised for their altruism, and in Iran, the concept of health defenders gained prominence [21]. However, to maintain nursing's elevated status in society, it is imperative for the public to develop an academic and specialized understanding of the nursing profession [22]. This perspective will further solidify nursing as an independent and scientific field, enhancing the recognition of nurses within the community.

Based on Herzberg's Theory, when the profession lacks societal esteem, nurses may feel undervalued, which directly hinders their intrinsic motivation despite other hygiene factors being present. The emphasis on 'health defenders' during COVID-19 temporarily boosted this recognition, underscoring its importance as a motivator [21].

Nursing students, as the future pillars of this profession, should be a focal point of attention in every country [22]. Unfortunately, in certain countries, such as Iran, this issue has not received the necessary emphasis. The establishment of guidelines and regulations is crucial in any discipline, and this holds particular importance in patient-centered fields [23]. However, the consistency in implementing and monitoring these guidelines among nursing students and other medical groups, like physicians, has been lacking [24]. This inconsistency is particularly conspicuous among nursing students. It has become evident that inadequate management of nursing students has allowed misconceptions to flourish, which could potentially shape their future perspectives and, ultimately, diminish their motivation [24].

CULTURAL CONTEXT AND HEALTHCARE POLICIES

Beyond general economic and professional challenges, nurse motivation in Iran is also significantly shaped by specific cultural factors and national healthcare policies. These elements create a unique motivational landscape that must be understood for effective interventions [25]. In Iranian society, nursing has historically been viewed through a particular cultural lens, often linked to traditional caregiving roles [25]. This can sometimes influence public perception and, consequently, the professional identity and status of nurses. Societal expectations can affect how nurses are treated by patients, families, and even other healthcare professionals, influencing their sense of value [26].

Government policies and the structure of the national healthcare system can profoundly affect nurse motivation. This includes policies related to nurse-to-patient ratios, workload distribution, resource allocation, and professional autonomy (1). Additionally, policies regarding nursing scope of practice or decision-making authority can either empower nurses or limit their professional growth and job satisfaction [27]. The predominantly Islamic cultural context in Iran also brings specific ethical considerations and patient care expectations that nurses must navigate [28]. While often a source of professional pride and dedication, these can also introduce unique pressures or moral dilemmas that affect a nurse's well-being and motivation if not adequately supported by the healthcare system [28].

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

Addressing the multifaceted challenges to nurse motivation requires a comprehensive and strategic approach. The following future directions and recommendations are designed to foster a more supportive and empowering environment for nurses in Iran, thereby enhancing their motivation, job satisfaction, and ultimately, the quality of patient care.

Implementing targeted initiatives is essential for meaningful improvements in nurse motivation. Policy reforms aimed at establishing competitive salary benchmarks and robust benefit packages primarily address Herzberg's hygiene factors.

While crucial for alleviating dissatisfaction, achieving sustained motivation requires simultaneous focus on motivators [26]. Healthcare organizations should conduct regular reviews to ensure compensation remains competitive and aligns with rising costs of living [15]. This necessitates a review and adjustment of existing pay scales, overtime compensation, and hazard pay for challenging work environments. Furthermore, implementing standardized, robust benefit packages, including comprehensive health insurance, attractive retirement plans, and housing assistance, is crucial, recognizing these as fundamental components of financial security and motivation [29]. Systemic changes should also include establishing transparent, performance-based incentive systems at the institutional level, providing tangible rewards for exceptional patient care, continuous learning, and leadership contributions [15].

Educational campaigns and professional image enhancement are equally vital. National public awareness campaigns, developed in collaboration with media and educational institutions, are needed to elevate the public's perception of nursing from a purely technical role to a highly skilled, academic, and indispensable profession [30]. These campaigns should strategically highlight nurses' critical thinking, leadership, and diverse contributions to healthcare. Integrating public relations and advocacy training into nursing curricula will further empower future nurses to articulate the value of their profession [24]. Moreover, educational reforms must involve reviewing and updating nursing curricula to ensure it adequately prepares graduates for clinical realities and fosters a strong sense of professional identity and pride [31].

Systemic changes for career advancement are another pillar of future directions. Healthcare organizations must develop and implement clear, structured career ladders that outline specific pathways for professional growth, specialization, and leadership roles, encompassing clinical specialization, education, research, and administration [14]. Establishing robust mentorship and sponsorship programs, pairing experienced nurses with junior colleagues, will facilitate skill development, knowledge transfer, and career navigation [16]. Policy reforms should also allocate dedicated budgets for consistent professional development, ensuring nurses have access to advanced training, workshops, and higher education opportunities without significant personal financial burden [5, 32]. The success of career advancement programs and professional development opportunities can be measured by tracking nurse participation rates and the number of individuals successfully moving into specialized or leadership roles [16].

Implementing recommendations such as recognition, professional growth, and empowerment requires proactive strategies to address potential barriers. For appreciation, strategies include implementing formal and informal programs like regular verbal appreciation, awards for excellence, and public acknowledgment from peers, supervisors, patients, and the broader community [5]. Potential barriers like time constraints and heavy workload for nursing managers can be overcome by integrating valuation practices into daily routines, empowering charge nurses and team leaders for immediate informal recognition, and developing easy-to-use digital platforms for peer-to-peer recognition, ensuring that it is meaningful and tailored to individual preferences [23].

Regarding professional growth and development, equitable access to internal and external training, conferences, and higher education should be provided, supporting nurses in obtaining certifications and advanced degrees [4]. Budget limitations and staffing shortages are common barriers; these can be mitigated by exploring blended learning approaches, advocating for external funding, implementing staggered training schedules, and investing in cross-training [4]. Empowerment strategies involve including nurses in decision-making processes for patient care, unit operations, and policy development, fostering a culture where their voices are heard. Hierarchical structures and resistance to change are barriers that can be overcome through leadership training on shared governance, establishing nurse advisory councils, and piloting empowerment initiatives [26]. Granting nurses greater autonomy in practice, supported by clear protocols, is also key.

Beyond addressing specific challenges, a holistic approach integrating psychological support and positive organizational culture aligns with both hygiene factors (e.g., supportive work environment as a working condition) and motivators (e.g., fostering a culture of recognition and belonging as 'recognition' and 'the work itself'). For psychological support, readily accessible mental health and counseling services for nurses are essential, recognizing the high stress and emotional

demands of the profession [1]. This includes programs for stress management, resilience building, and coping with compassion fatigue and burnout, alongside fostering a culture that de-stigmatizes seeking psychological help [27].

Work environment improvements entail creating safe, supportive, and well-resourced settings by ensuring adequate staffing to prevent excessive workload, providing necessary equipment and technology, and promoting teamwork and mutual respect among all healthcare professionals [25]. Regular assessments of the work environment through feedback mechanisms are vital for targeted improvements. Finally, organizational culture shifts are crucial: cultivating a culture that values nursing as a cornerstone of patient care, with leadership modeling appreciation, promoting open communication, and fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose [12].

Establishing clear communication protocols, promoting transparent management, and encouraging interprofessional collaboration are key initiatives in this regard. By integrating these concrete initiatives, strategic implementation approaches, and a holistic focus, healthcare organizations in Iran can create a robust framework for significantly enhancing nurse motivation and ensuring a thriving nursing workforce for the future [27].

While Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory provides a solid framework for understanding nurse motivation, a critical analysis reveals its limitations, particularly within the unique cultural and socioeconomic landscape of Iran. The theory, developed in a Western context, may not fully capture the nuances of what constitutes a hygiene factor versus a motivator in a different cultural setting [8].

In the Iranian context, the public's perception of nursing as a technical rather than an academic field and the traditional view of nursing as a caregiving role can significantly influence professional identity and motivation [23]. These factors don't fit neatly into Herzberg's binary classification and can act as powerful demotivators, regardless of the presence of other hygiene or motivator factors [18].

This cultural lens is crucial for designing effective interventions. For example, while Herzberg suggests that increasing salaries (a hygiene factor) merely prevents dissatisfaction, the severe economic pressures faced by Iranian nurses, such as low salaries insufficient to meet the rising cost of living, make financial improvements a fundamental necessity for creating a viable and respected profession [11]. Addressing these economic challenges is a foundational step that must precede or accompany the implementation of other motivators.

Similarly, while career advancement is a motivator, the intervention's success depends on addressing systemic issues, such as the allocation of management positions to physicians, which is a major barrier to nurse progression in Iran [14]. Therefore, interventions cannot simply offer career paths; they must be strategic and systemic to remove existing obstacles rooted in the national context.

In essence, applying Herzberg's theory in Iran requires a nuanced approach that adapts its principles to the local culture and policies. Ignoring these contextual factors could lead to the misinterpretation of motivational drivers and the implementation of ineffective strategies (33). This understanding underscores the need for future research to be grounded in the specific cultural and policy pressures faced by nurses in Iran.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

Improving nurse motivation is crucial for their job satisfaction, retention, and the quality of patient care. Recognizing and appreciating nurses' efforts involves showing gratitude and acknowledging the hard work and dedication they put into their jobs. Simple verbal expressions of gratitude, such as saying "thank you" or offering words of praise, can make nurses feel valued and appreciated [34]. When supervisors and colleagues express appreciation, it boosts morale and motivation. Consider establishing an awards program where outstanding nurses are recognized and celebrated for their contributions [35]. This could include "Nurse of the Month" or "Nurse of the Year" awards. In addition to praise, providing constructive feedback is also a form of appreciation. When nurses receive feedback that helps them improve their skills, they feel valued and supported in their professional growth [35].

Professional growth is essential for keeping nurses engaged and motivated in their careers. When healthcare organizations support and facilitate the continuous development of their nursing staff, it can lead to increased job satisfaction and higher motivation levels. Offer financial support and flexible scheduling for nurses pursuing advanced degrees, certifications, or additional training in their field [36]. This could include tuition reimbursement programs, scholarships, or on-site educational opportunities. Establish a well-defined career advancement path within the organization [30]. Nurses should have a clear understanding of how they can progress in their careers, from entry-level positions to advanced roles such as nurse practitioner or nurse manager. Organize regular training sessions, workshops, and seminars to keep nurses updated on the latest healthcare practices, technologies, and guidelines [37]. These opportunities can help nurses acquire new skills and stay current in their field. Implement mentorship programs where experienced nurses can guide and mentor newer or less experienced nurses. Mentorship can provide valuable insights, support, and career advice [30]. Empowering nurses and giving them autonomy in their roles are essential strategies to improve their motivation and job satisfaction. When nurses feel empowered and have a sense of control over their work, it can lead to increased motivation and better patient care [38]. Allow nurses to have an idea in clinical decision-making processes related to patient care. Encourage them to collaborate with physicians and other healthcare professionals to make informed decisions. Define and expand the scope of practice for nurses to utilize their full range of skills and training [39]. Empower them to perform tasks and procedures within their scope, which can make their work more challenging and rewarding. Encourage nurses to identify and solve problems in their work environment. Provide opportunities for them to suggest and implement improvements in patient care processes, safety protocols, and workflow efficiency [39]. Support nurses in pursuing advanced certifications and specializations that align with their interests and career goals. This empowerment can lead to a sense of achievement and motivation. Provide regular feedback for nurses' contributions and accomplishments. Acknowledge their autonomy and decision-making abilities in patient care [38].

Effective communication involves clear and open interactions among healthcare professionals, including nurses. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring patient safety, promoting teamwork, and maintaining a positive work environment. Effective communication ensures that all members of the healthcare team, including nurses, are on the same page regarding patient care plans [38]. This reduces the risk of errors, omissions, and misunderstandings that can negatively impact patient outcomes. Nurses often work closely with physicians, therapists, pharmacists, and other healthcare professionals. Effective communication fosters teamwork and allows for seamless collaboration, leading to better patient care [40]. To implement effective communication strategies within the nursing team and healthcare organization offer communication skills training to nurses to help them improve their verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, and conflict resolution skills [41]. Conduct regular team meetings, huddles, or shift handovers where nurses can discuss patient care plans, share important updates, and address any concerns. Utilize communication tools like secure messaging systems or mobile apps to facilitate quick and secure communication among healthcare team members [38].

Appreciating diversity and promoting inclusion within the nursing profession and healthcare organizations is crucial. A diverse nursing workforce reflects the diversity of the patient population. When patients see nurses who look like them or share similar backgrounds, they may feel more comfortable and confident in their care [42]. A diverse nursing team brings a range of experiences, perspectives, and ideas to patient care. This diversity can lead to innovative approaches to healthcare and better solutions to complex problems. Nurses who have experience with diverse patient populations are often more culturally competent [42]. They can better understand and address the unique healthcare needs and preferences of patients from different backgrounds. Implement inclusive hiring practices that actively seek a diverse pool of nursing candidates. Consider factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background. Provide cultural competence training for nurses to enhance their understanding of different cultures and patient populations [31]. This training can help nurses deliver culturally sensitive care. Promote diversity in leadership positions within the healthcare organization, including nursing leadership roles. Diverse leadership teams can serve as role models and advocate for inclusive practices.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This perspective view on nurse motivation in Iran, while aiming for a comprehensive analysis, is limited by its reliance on a targeted literature review and the author's subjective, expert perspectives, meaning its findings are not based on primary empirical data. This approach is valuable for conceptual analysis and hypothesis generation but may not fully capture the specific nuances of individual nurse experiences across diverse settings. Therefore, future research should prioritize a mixed-methods approach to provide a more robust understanding of the issues. This would involve combining large-scale quantitative studies (such as formal surveys to quantify the correlation between low salary and nurse turnover) with in-depth qualitative research, like focus groups or interviews, to explore the specific cultural and policy-related pressures nurses face.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies are crucial to assess the long-term effectiveness of proposed interventions, such as tracking nurse career progression and job satisfaction after a new mentorship program is implemented. In addition to these methodological considerations, researchers should be aware of potential challenges in data collection within Iran's healthcare system. These challenges may include hierarchical structures and ingrained resistance to change, which could hinder access to certain data or limit the participation of nurses in research studies, as well as cultural sensitivities that necessitate culturally competent research methods to ensure honest and open responses from participants.

Another challenge is the lack of standardized data collection systems across different healthcare organizations, making it difficult to conduct large-scale, uniform studies. To address these challenges, future research should establish strong collaborative relationships with healthcare leadership and local nursing organizations to build trust and gain support for research initiatives. Researchers should also utilize and train local researchers who are familiar with the cultural context and can navigate potential barriers, and they should employ anonymous survey methods and secure data collection platforms to protect participant privacy and encourage candid responses.

Comparative studies with other regions and empirical assessments of policy impacts are also crucial to further develop actionable strategies for enhancing nurse motivation in Iran. Specific research questions could include: 'How does a standardized career ladder system affect nurse retention rates over five years?' or 'What are the most significant cultural barriers to implementing empowerment initiatives in Iranian healthcare settings?'

CONCLUSION

This article highlights that nurse motivation directly influences the quality of patient care, job satisfaction, and overall performance. By integrating a targeted literature review with expert perspectives, we have identified a range of challenges specific to the Iranian context, including economic disparities, limited career advancement opportunities, and a depreciated public perception of the nursing profession. The strategies formulated in this paper offer a comprehensive, multi-faceted, and context-specific framework for stakeholders in nursing management, human resource departments, and healthcare organizations.

The practical implications of implementing this framework are profound. By addressing economic factors through policy reforms that establish competitive salary benchmarks and transparent, performance-based incentives, healthcare systems can directly mitigate a primary source of dissatisfaction. Furthermore, the development of clear career pathways and investment in professional growth will empower nurses, fostering a sense of purpose and achievement. The expected policy impacts of these interventions include a reduction in nurse burnout and turnover rates, an increase in job satisfaction, and, most importantly, a significant improvement in the quality and safety of patient care. Ultimately, by strategically investing in and valuing the nursing workforce, the Iranian healthcare system can cultivate a motivated and resilient professional community, ensuring long-term sustainability and excellence in healthcare delivery.

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