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NURSES' SHORTAGE AND CHALLENGES DURING INTERNSHIP: AN EMERGING ISSUE

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ABSTRACT

Nurses' contribution to the health care system is remarkable and as health care professionals they are doing more than their capacity within the limited resources as well as lack of facilitation. Their demand has been increased in the last decade due to the gross increase in the population of the world. The advancement in science and technology, high morbidity and mortality along shortage of nurses are affecting the internship process among nursing graduates. Certain challenges such as shortage of nurses, lack of rewards and job satisfaction, high turnover, and compromised competencies can be seen among nursing graduates. However, they still use some coping strategies to overcome these issues. Furthermore, proper internship programs and policies related to these problems may be helpful at the individual or organizational level depending upon the nature of the problem. In addition, a well-organized leadership may play a positive role in this regard.

Keywords: Nurses; Challenges; Internship.

INTRODUCTION

Nurses are the most important members of the health care team consisting of half of the human resources around the world with a vital role in providing competency-based care to patients.¹ A study from Iran concludes that human resources are the most common important aspect of the health system and nurses are considered as the backbone in this chain because of increased demand in the excellence of care as per international standards.² One of the reports from America in 2010 explored that the demand for nurses is more than the supply and approximately fifty million people will require health care in the current country.³ Despite the highly demanded profession according to the World Health Organization (WHO) the human resources in the nursing profession are lacking below the standards which are approximately 09 million by the year 2035, while in Pakistan approximately 60,000 nurses are needed in the current health care system.⁴ In an advanced country like America the shortage of registered nurses will be 340,000 by the year 2020.⁵ In addition, a study from Pakistan in 2018 found that the shortage of nurses is high in the country and the factors affecting job satisfaction among nurses are excessive work, poor support from healthcare professionals, way of training, surrounding and most commonly the salary package.⁶ Furthermore, nurses are the most important person in the health care system with a vital

role in providing quality of care to the patient, but their number is decreasing due to an increase in demands.⁷

Intern nurses are individuals who recently gets graduated from university and enrolled in the one-year internship program for clinical practice.⁸ The main purpose of the internship program is to learn practical skills which relate to the leadership style of the supervisor in terms of communication and direction.⁹ A successful internship program can fill the gap between the classroom and clinical practice leading to a "win-win" situation.¹⁰ A study from Australia conducted in the year 2017 explains that the health care system around the world is extending into a complex one, which leads to problems among nursing graduates in different forms such as clinical, social, and emotional.¹¹ In addition, during the 12 months transition period of nursing graduates during their internship they are exposed to challenges such as increased workload, compromised level of knowledge, poor communication, high expectations, role change from student to staff, environment, lack of support, and bullying leading to decrease in quality of care as well as frustration among them.¹² Furthermore, the performance of nursing graduates affects their career, family, and even society.¹³ The purpose of this narrative review was to identify the shortage along with challenges among nursing graduates during their internship.

METHODOLOGY

This narrative review focuses on the shortage of nurses and challenges among nursing graduates both nationally and internationally. Each subheading shows information about the current topic in detail.

Electronic databases such as Google Scholar, Google, and PubMed have been searched from October to December 2020. The key phrases are nurses' shortage, nursing graduates, challenges, and internship. The Boolean operators were nurses' shortage OR nursing graduates OR challenges OR internship; nurses' shortage AND nursing graduates AND challenges AND internship. Details of databases being searched are given in figure 1.

The papers included were (1) nurses' shortage (2) challenges among nursing graduates during internship (3) research articles (4) review articles (5) reports (6) in the

English language (7) published after 2000. The exclusion can be noted as (1) studies other than nurses (2) Websites, Newspapers, Magazines, YouTube.

DISCUSSION

Nurses Shortage

The role of nurses is more vital than any other personnel in the health care team.¹⁴ According to literature the deficiency of nurses is a global issue and will reach 590,000 by the year 2020 as per the European Commission.¹⁵ The ratio of nurse to patient and nurse to doctor in Pakistan is 1:40 and 1:15 respectively.¹⁶ In addition, Nurses shortage affects the quality of care at clinical practice which is approximately 44.3%.¹⁷ Furthermore, multiple factors including lack of management, lack of new recruitment, and demographic aspects are responsible for the shortage and affecting the quality of care being provided to the patients.¹⁸ More-

over, lack of skilled nurses in number affects both their profession and as well as patients' care, leading to poor job satisfaction. The above facts show that nursing graduates have certain challenges on different levels during their initial careers.

Challenges During Internship Among Nursing Graduates

Nursing Graduates have certain challenges in the modern world which are mainly individual and institutional. Many factors such as rewards, schedule of duties, way of dealing, chances of opportunities, motivation, working environment, and vision of the institution affect the performance of nursing graduates.¹⁹ In addition, a study from America showed that nurses face challenges such as dealing with complex diseases, lack of clinical preceptors, being bullied by others, and anxiety due to task delegation along with advancement in care.²⁰ Furthermore, a study from Pakistan revealed that nurses

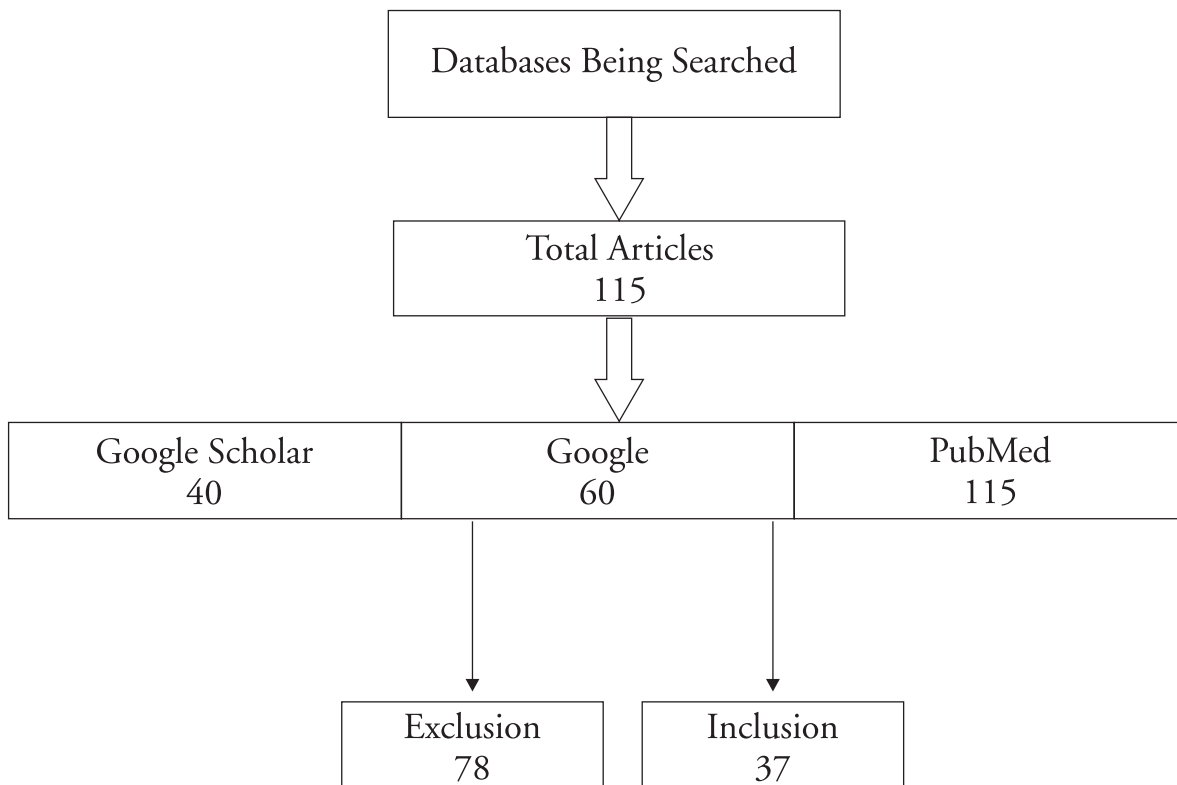


Figure 1: Search Strategy

face certain ethical challenges due to lack of co-operation by colleagues, poor nursing image, and improper facilities as well as policies for the patients, leading to tension in clinical practice.²¹ This shows that nursing graduates are under pressure due to a lack of a proper internship program which leads to poor job satisfaction.

Lack of Job Satisfaction Among Nursing Graduates

Job satisfaction is the key to success for any profession and organization. According to statistics nursing graduates are less satisfied than other professionals in terms of their working environment leading to high turnover.²² One of the studies from Pakistan found that approximately 86% of the nurses are not satisfied with their job.²³ A study from Yemen in 2019 found that nurses are more satisfied in private hospitals as compared to government system.²⁴ In addition, a study from Pakistan showed that the main reason for poor job satisfaction among nurses is sexual harassment, leading to high turnover and attendance.²⁵ Furthermore, violence among nurses during their clinical practice; physical 55.7% and mentally 82.1% leads to discontinuation of job.²⁶ Thus the lack of job satisfaction among nurses is high and causing an increased turnover.

Turnover Among Nursing Graduates

Switching jobs among nurses can be noted in recent years. As one of the studies from Brazil in 2010 showed that nursing graduates experiences reality shock while unable to apply their knowledge and skills as per standards.²⁷ Statistics showed that about 61% turnover is noted among nursing graduates during their internship process.²⁸ One of the studies from Indonesia in the year 2018 revealed that the rate of switching jobs among nurses ranges from 15-44% with the most common reasons such as individual factors, offers from other institutions, and

poor environmental status.²⁹ Certain factors such as advancement in technology, high expectations of patients, nurse's turnover and transcultural care cause stress among nursing graduates in the form of confusion, confinement, and anxiety of unknown are affecting the performance of nursing graduates.³⁰ Collectively these factors are responsible for lack of confidence among nursing graduates.

Competencies Among Nursing Graduates

According to the literature nursing graduates are not prepared to deliver the quality of care independently as compared to other members of the health care team, there is an immediate need for improvement of the transition phase from classroom to clinical practice.³¹ One of the studies from Africa conducted in 2016 revealed that nursing graduates is lacking competencies in performing skills in the clinical areas as per the demand of international standards.³² A study from Pakistan in the year 2019 found that nursing graduates feels stress due to a lack of competency in performing basic nursing skills.³³ In addition, only 23% of nursing graduates have competency in basic skills due to a marked gap in academic education, which shows that they are not prepared to perform in a complex health care system.³⁴ Furthermore, there is an intense need for a proper orientation program for nursing graduates to improve job satisfaction, reduce turnover, increase competency and decrease the chance of human errors.³⁵ Moreover, certain coping strategies may help nurses to deal with professional challenges.

Coping Strategies Among Nursing Graduates

Coping involves handling difficult situations without the occurrence of conflict. The most common coping strategies which nursing graduates is using in their clinical

challenges are creating a space for themselves and maintaining it with intelligence.³⁶ A study from Pakistan in 2018 showed that nursing is one of the emotional professions in which students use certain coping mechanisms such as self-confidence and a confident approach. Both academic and clinical instructors, nursing leadership, and administration should be involved in an internship program to make it useful while helping them in coping with the stress at clinical practice.³⁷ These coping strategies need implementation through proper policies at the institutional level.

CONCLUSION

The role of nurses in the health system is extremely important however, they encounter multiple challenges during their internship program leading to poor job satisfaction, high turnover, and decreased competency. Qualitative studies are required for an in-depth understanding of the concerned phenomena. Certain coping strategies can help up to some extent. Institutions and health authority needs to implement proper internship program which may be helpful to overcome these problems at the individual or organizational level.

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Author's Contribution

IA conceptualized the literature review and analyzed and drafted the manuscript. AS reviewed the literature and drafted the manuscript. Authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declared no conflict of interest

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None

Data Sharing Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.