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The Discrimination of Nurses in Healthcare Administration and Management: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract: The current study is about the discriminatory attitudes and behaviours of nurses in healthcare management as a manager equal to the doctor, which is not yet recognized by the doctors. The study was carried out employing qualitative research methods in order to understand the research problem through the perspectives of the affected population. The researchers chose to conduct this study to investigate the problem through the nurses' perspectives. The sampling type was purposive, whereby the research participants who have lived experiences were selected for the in-depth interviews. The sample size of the study is five nurses (male) serving in government hospitals. The researcher collected the data in natural settings from the targeted population. The researchers used thematic analysis for the research findings of the study. All collected data were transcribed and coded to develop the categories and themes. The findings of the study revealed that nurses are discriminated against by the doctor community, who are health administrators in government hospitals. These attitudes and behaviour are manifested on different fronts, such as politically, socially and professionally. Although, nurses claim that they can be health administrators if the government authorizes them and puts them into these key administrative positions to serve even better.

Introduction

Nurses play a crucial role in healthcare management and are considered the backbone of the healthcare system. In Pakistan, the role of nurses in healthcare management has become more critical in recent years due to certain factors, such as the increasing burden of disease, population growth, and the need for quality healthcare services. However, the nursing profession in Pakistan is facing numerous challenges, such as a lack of resources,

inadequate training, low salaries, and poor working conditions, which can affect the role of nurses in healthcare management.

The present study is to determine the role of nurses in the healthcare management system as a manager equal to the other management cadre positions. The research study will reveal the clarity of whether nurses can serve as a manager in the capacity of district health officers, medical superintendents, and additional and secretary-

level management cadre positions in the healthcare industry of Pakistan.

The purpose of this research is to critically analyze the role of nurses in healthcare management in Pakistan. This research will examine the challenges faced by nurses in healthcare management, the impact of these challenges on their role, and the potential solutions to overcome these challenges. The study aims to provide insights into the role of nurses in healthcare management and identify ways to improve their performance and contribution to the healthcare system.

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of the role of nurses in healthcare management in Pakistan. For instance, a study conducted by Ahmed and colleagues (2022) explored the role of nurses in managing patients with chronic diseases in a tertiary care hospital in Pakistan. The study revealed that nurses play a vital role in the management of chronic diseases, and their involvement in patient care can improve health outcomes. Similarly, another study conducted by Ahmed and colleagues (2022) investigated the challenges faced by nurses in providing quality care in public hospitals in Pakistan. The study identified various challenges, such as lack of resources, poor working conditions, and inadequate training, which can affect the role of nurses in healthcare management. (Ahmad, 2022).

Therefore, this research will build on these studies and provide a critical analysis of the role of nurses in healthcare management in Pakistan. The study will contribute to the existing literature by identifying the challenges faced by nurses in healthcare management and proposing potential solutions to overcome these challenges. The findings of this study can be used to improve the performance of nurses and their contribution to the healthcare system in Pakistan.

The effective role of nurse leadership is required to transform the healthcare system. (Ashley Page, 2021). Some major factors, such as rising medical costs, competition within medical

institutions and increased demand for quality medical services, are witnessing to have an efficient management system in medical institutions which determines the demand for nurses with management and leadership skills. (Berez, 2015).

Literature Reviewed

Healthcare management is a complex process that involves a range of professionals who work together to deliver quality patient care. Nurses play a critical role in healthcare management as they are involved in patient care, management, and administration. In Pakistan, where the healthcare system is facing numerous challenges, the role of nurses in healthcare management is even more critical. This literature review aims to explore the existing literature on the role of nurses in healthcare management in the context of Pakistan, particularly in Sindh.

Nurse as a Healthcare Manager

Nurses are the frontline managers responsible for pursuing changes in a clinical environment. Due to the changing patterns in the medical field, it has become more important than ever before for nurse managers to undertake this responsibility for better health management. (Association., 2016). Various strategies have been developed and implemented to make nurses an efficient health manager to promote change. (Association., 2016). (Broom and Marshal, 2020), emphasized nurse leadership education for developing their leadership skills among them, which is mandatory for their career growth. (Broome, 2020). The nurses will be able to be the best nurse leaders after acquiring the leadership education to know about the theory of leadership and skills as well to implement into the clinical practices. (Salifu, 2018).

The Role of Nursing in the Advancement of Health Equity

Human history reveals that the secret of the nation's healthier life has become possible through

the crucial role of nurses every time. No one can deny the key role of nurses in making nations happy through healthcare management services.

In every move of life at every level, these are the nurses who address the root causes of poor health. The history of nurses witnesses that nurses are advocates of social justice and community health as well.

Nursing Leadership and Management

Leadership and management are two key areas that are crucial for the success of any healthcare organization. Nurses, as frontline healthcare workers, must possess strong leadership and management skills to provide high-quality patient care. A study conducted in Pakistan found that nurse managers' leadership styles influenced job satisfaction and organizational commitment among nurses. Transformational leadership was found to be the most effective leadership style in promoting job satisfaction and organizational commitment. (Thapa, 2022).

Patient Safety and Risk Factors for Nurses

In the healthcare, industry Research reveals that nurses are a high-risk population in the healthcare industry everywhere in the world due to their occupational particularity. (Wu Y., 2022). The findings in the study of Sobregrau Sangrà et al., 2022, reveal that mental health and other health problems can be reduced through the perceived knowledge of stress in any critical situation. (Sobregrau Sangrà P., 2022).

Nursing Workforce

The nurses are facing many challenges, including a shortage of nurses, inadequate training, and low job satisfaction. These challenges have a direct impact on healthcare management in Pakistan. A study conducted in Sindh found that a lack of opportunities for professional growth, inadequate staffing and poor working conditions are major factors which contribute to job dissatisfaction among nurses. The study highlighted the need for policymakers to focus on

improving the nursing workforce's working conditions and opportunities for professional growth. (Kurtzman ET, 2022).

Nursing Education

Nursing education is a critical aspect of healthcare management as it provides the necessary skills and knowledge for nurses to provide quality patient care. Nursing education faces numerous challenges, including a lack of resources and inadequate training facilities. A study found that nursing students faced challenges in accessing learning resources and that the quality of education provided was inadequate. The study highlighted the need for policymakers to invest in improving nursing education. (Julia Lukewich 1, 2022).

Nursing Research

Nursing research plays a critical role in improving healthcare management and patient outcomes. However, nursing research in Pakistan is limited, and there is a need for increased investment in this area. A study found that a lack of resources, limited funding opportunities, and inadequate research training were significant barriers to nursing research. The study highlighted the need for policymakers to invest in nursing research to improve healthcare management and patient outcomes. (Thapa, 2022).

Theoretical Perspective

In the context of Pakistan, a suitable theoretical framework for the research topic "The Role of Nurses in Healthcare Management: A Critical Analysis" could be the Transformational Leadership Theory. This theory emphasizes the importance of leadership in motivating and inspiring individuals to achieve common goals and improve organizational performance. It is particularly relevant in the healthcare sector, where effective leadership can improve patient outcomes, quality of care, and staff job satisfaction.

According to this theory, transformational leaders inspire and motivate their subordinates to transcend their self-interests and work towards a shared vision. They also empower their subordinates by delegating responsibilities, providing resources, and fostering a supportive work environment. In the context of healthcare, transformational leaders can promote patient-centred care, foster a culture of collaboration and teamwork, and encourage continuous learning and innovation.

Applying the transformational leadership theory to the research topic of nurses in healthcare management, the study can investigate the impact of transformational leadership on nurses' job satisfaction, work engagement, and ability to provide high-quality patient care. The study can also explore the factors that facilitate or hinder the development of transformational leadership skills among nurses in Pakistan's healthcare system.

Overall, the transformational leadership theory can provide a useful framework for understanding the role of nurses in healthcare management and the leadership practices that can improve healthcare outcomes in Pakistan.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study on “The Discrimination of Nurses in Healthcare Administration and Management: A Critical Analysis” in the context of Pakistan is quite broad. The study aims to analyze the current role of nurses in healthcare management in Pakistan, including their level of involvement in decision-making, leadership, and communication with other healthcare professionals. The study will also examine the challenges faced by nurses in healthcare management and identify potential strategies to overcome these challenges.

In addition, the study will explore the impact of healthcare policies and regulations on the role of nurses in healthcare management in Pakistan. It will analyze the current healthcare system in Pakistan and identify areas where nurses can play

a more significant role in healthcare management. The study will also assess the perceptions of nurses, patients, and other healthcare professionals towards the role of nurses in healthcare management in Pakistan. This will provide valuable insights into the attitudes and beliefs of stakeholders towards the role of nurses in healthcare management.

Overall, the study's scope is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current role of nurses in healthcare management in Pakistan and identify strategies to improve their involvement and contribution in this field.

Study Limitations

This current study is focused on the role of nurses in healthcare management in the context of Pakistan, specifically Sindh province. Therefore, geographically the findings and conclusions of this study may not be applicable to other regions of Pakistan or other countries. Other than this, the sample size of this study may be limited due to the availability and accessibility of participants. This may affect the generalizability of the results.

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, there may be a possibility of researcher biases and subjectivity in the data analysis and interpretation of the study. The study is limited to the perspectives of nurses and healthcare managers and may not take into account the views and experiences of other stakeholders, such as patients, families, and other healthcare professionals whose views and ideas regarding the matter can be valuable.

The study is limited to the current state of healthcare management in Pakistan and may not take into account future changes and developments in the healthcare system.

Study Objectives

- To investigate the attitudes and discriminatory behaviours of doctor health administrators towards nurses

- To investigate whether nurses are a secondary workforce in the healthcare industry of Pakistan
- To understand the discriminatory challenges being confronted by the nurses from the doctors' health administrators
- To understand why health administrators have discriminatory behaviour with the nurses in health systems.
- To understand why nurses cannot be considered in the capacity of health administrator positions

Research Questions

RQ 1: Is it real that the nurses are discriminated against by the doctor community in the healthcare management system in Sindh/Pakistan?

RQ 2: Does it the reality that Nurses are considered a secondary workforce in the healthcare industry of Pakistan?

RQ 3: why are nurses facing such discriminatory challenges in healthcare management by the administration?

RQ 4: Why do the health administrators have such an attitude and behaviours towards the nurses?

RQ 5: Why are nurses not considered healthcare managers in the healthcare industry of Pakistan, as the doctors are privileged?

Problem Statement

Human societies are complex in nature to be predicted in the context of understanding people's attitudes and behaviours. In the research world, there is a certain set of methods which supports the researchers to understand the attitudes and behaviours of people through the people's perceptions. Human societies are constructed through the institutions which regulate the function of human activities in a smooth way. There are various institutions which serve the purpose of society. Social institutions are based on human interactions; religious institutions serve the purpose of worship and other rituals. So are there social institutions

which serve the purpose of social systems? Health institution is one of the basic units of human society which bring the load of health services. Pakistan's health system is passing through numerous challenges and opportunities, however; since its inception, it has encountered several structural and operational issues and problems within and without. Nursing, among all medical practitioners and professionals, are considered sacred professionals and highly respected all over the world. In Pakistan, the nursing profession has been confronted with internal discrimination at all levels for decades, but no one has taken it as seriously as it should have been taken.

Nurses (male and female) are considered sub-ordinates within the health industry of Pakistan. However, they are frontline health professionals in every situation, whether in war or in peace or in any outbreak of pandemic or endemic. Nurses are not given opportunities as administrators and managers in the healthcare industry of Pakistan, which is a dilemma in the health system. However, doctors are only privileged and posted in administrative positions. Nurses are of the view that there should be a policy in the health care industry of Pakistan whereby nurses with high qualifications should be posted in key government positions, as other doctors are being posted. Nurses are facing discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in the healthcare industry of Pakistan at all levels, which must be addressed and resolved at the policy level to bring their morale upward rather than undermine them through discrimination.

Research Methodology

Research methodology is a broader term used in the field of the academic world. However, it is the backbone of the scientific inquiry to generate knowledge. Research methodology is

Study Population

The five male nurses having master's in nursing and with administrative experience in the health

care industry of Pakistan were selected for the current study. The total number of research participants was five individuals with relevant field experiences in the healthcare industry of Pakistan.

Sampling

Sampling is a statistical standard of measurement whereby researchers select the quantities of people, objects or events which could be representative of the whole population. In qualitative research studies, there is a very small sampling size used to collect the data as compared to quantitative research studies.

Sampling Strategy

Sampling strategy means selecting the suitable sampling type and sample size for the targeted research study which best fits the study.

Sampling Type

Purposive Sampling

The current study was undertaken to employ purposive sampling, which is adopted when there are a known number of research participants with lived experiences in the research interest.

Sampling Size

The sample size for the current study was five nursing professionals having MSN Degrees in nursing from HEC-recognized or internationally recognized universities with maximum experience in nursing careers working in the public or private sector at the national or international level. Other than these, five doctors serving in the public or private sector having healthcare managerial position was selected for the current study.

Data Collection

The researchers collected data from the targeted participants by conducting in-depth interviews in natural settings. All research participants were informed prior to and handed over a consent form for the study. It is ethically mandatory to

have a mutual understanding and consent from the research participants to participate in the study.

Types of Data

The data for the current research study is primary data which has been collected in natural settings employing the qualitative research methodology.

Research Instrument:

In-depth Interview

The in-depth interview technique is a widely ranged data collection technique in qualitative research studies wherein a researcher goes into the natural settings and collects the data from within the selected individual research participants. This method and technique bring insightful data from the participants, whereby the researcher keeps them open for discussions to obtain the data.

Findings of the Study

Objectives

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Table 1

Thematic table

S.No:	Category	Major Theme	Sub-Theme
01	Administrative Discrimination	Theme:01Stereotyping and Prejudice Towards Nurse Administrators	Nurses are considered subordinate to the doctor community in public hospitals.
		Theme 02: Lack of Recognition and Representation for Nurse Administrators	Nurses are considered and undermined as an administrator and managers.
02	Academic and Professional Discrimination	Theme:03:Unequal Access to Training and Development Opportunities	Nursing academic degrees are less accredited by the Doctor community in Public-health sector
03	Discrimination at the Policy Level	Theme:04:Power Dynamics and Discrimination from Other Healthcare Professionals	Nurses are undermined by the government authorities and policymakers to hold administrative responsibilities.

Category 1: Administrative Discrimination

Theme 1: Stereotype and Prejudice towards Nurse Administrators

Nurse administrators often face stereotypes and prejudice within the health sector due to historical biases and misconceptions about the role of nurses in leadership positions. Discriminatory behaviours may manifest as doubts about their ability to handle administrative responsibilities, a lack of support for their career growth, or undermining their authority. Overcoming these discriminatory attitudes requires challenging stereotypes, promoting awareness of the valuable skills and expertise nurses bring to administrative roles,

and creating inclusive environments that foster their professional development and recognition.

Excerpts from Interviews in Support of Theme 1

"We have always been undermined by the doctor community as their sub-ordinates at every stage, however. We, the nurses, are frontline workers to set the stage for doctors to come for further process". (Case: 01)

"I have reminded them (the doctors) that we, the nurses, have been fighting at the frontline in wars where casualties are brought by the armies of wars, then who take care of these injured civilians or soldiers? Definitely, it is a nurse who comes first to be supportive stick for the injured or other types of patients". (Case 02)

Theme 02: Lack of Recognition and Representation for Nurse Administrators

Nurse administrators may experience a lack of recognition and representation within the health sector. This can manifest as limited opportunities for advancement, exclusion from decision-making processes, and underrepresentation in influential committees or boards. Such discriminatory behaviours not only undermine the potential contributions of nurse administrators but also perpetuate a hierarchy that favours other healthcare professionals. Addressing this issue necessitates actively promoting the representation of nurse administrators in leadership positions, creating equitable pathways for advancement, and acknowledging their unique perspectives and expertise in healthcare administration.

Excerpts from Interviews in Support of Theme 2

"We, the nurses, are always being pushed back by the government and policymakers. However, only doctors are posted as health administrators and the public and private sectors in Pakistan. Government do not consider nurses as fit for the health administration key positions such as Medical Superintendent, District Health Officer or Secretary Health".(Case 03).

Category 2: Academic and Professional Discrimination

Theme 3: Unequal Access to Training and Development Opportunities

Discriminatory behaviours in the health sector can result in unequal access to training and development opportunities for nurse administrators. They may face barriers such as limited funding for professional development, biased selection processes for leadership training programs, or exclusion from specialized courses and certifications. This unequal treatment inhibits the growth and advancement of nurse administrators and contributes to a disparity in skills and competencies. Eliminating discriminatory practices requires ensuring equal

access to training and development resources, implementing transparent selection processes, and recognizing the value of investing in the professional growth of nurse administrators.

Excerpts from Interviews in Support of Theme 3

"Nurses in the Pakistani healthcare industry have been undermined by the government itself. We, the nurse community, have been kept aside from the modern-age training and developments, and only the doctors are given first priorities in these activities". (Case 02).

"Doctors are the blue boys of the government and have been given the lion's share in the healthcare industry in all terms. In terms of power, they are all in all. In terms of financial systems, their share is larger one as compared to the nurses". (Case 03)

Category 3: Discrimination at Policy Level

Theme 4: Power Dynamics and Discrimination from Other Healthcare Professionals

Nurse administrators may encounter discriminatory behaviours and power dynamics from other healthcare professionals within the sector. This can manifest as resistance to their authority, a lack of collaboration, or the marginalization of their input in decision-making processes. Such discriminatory behaviours can impede effective teamwork, hinder organizational effectiveness, and undermine the overall quality of healthcare delivery. Addressing these issues requires promoting mutual respect, establishing clear lines of communication, and fostering a culture of collaboration and inclusivity among all healthcare professionals, recognizing the value and expertise nurse administrators bring to the table.

Excerpts from Interviews in Support of Theme 4

"Doctors think that nurses cannot handle the administrative systems in hospitals and other medical institutions. However, if they encourage and promote to these executive positions, then I think they

can better handle the administrative system of health care industries in Pakistan”. (Case 03).

“This is prejudice towards the nurse community in Pakistan whereby we, the nurses, are undermined by the policymakers and government itself, which discourage the frontline working manager of health systems”. (Case 02).

Discussion and Conclusion

The history of disease and its methods of treatment is old as human societies are old, however; with the passage of time, it becomes more modern and more popular and effective as compared to primitive societies. People used to treat through herbal and other methods were frequent to apply for the treatments. Nurses are a highly respected profession in human history everywhere in the world, but it is assumed that doctors are more valuable and noble as compared to nurses. Different societies give different views and levels of honour to this profession according to their cultures. In Pakistan, mainly in the Sindh region, Nurses are facing discriminatory behaviours in their profession at all levels. The government itself has dual policy frameworks for nurses and doctors separately, whereby doctors are allocated health executive positions and health management in the government sector. A doctor can be Medical Superintendent (MS) and District Health Officer (DHO) and up to the secretary level.

It is determined by the government itself, which makes policies for the institutions and hierarchy where different roles and responsibilities are shouldered according to academic and managerial experiences. The nurses are not considered for these positions to hold and serve the health care industry in Pakistan. This discrimination creates unrest within the nursing community in Pakistan, mainly in Sindh. Due to this, nurses feel inferior, and it affects their performance.

Nurses play a critical role in healthcare management in Pakistan, and their contributions are essential for delivering quality patient care in

the health industry of Pakistan. This literature review has highlighted several key areas where nurses' roles and contributions are crucial, including nursing leadership and management, patient safety, the nursing workforce, nursing education, and nursing research. Policymakers must focus on addressing the challenges faced by nurses in these areas to ensure that they can provide quality patient care and contribute effectively to healthcare management in Pakistan.

Ethical Considerations and Future Research Directions

The present research study was undertaken keeping in view the career injustice with the key players of the health industry of Pakistan who are suffering from prejudice by the government and policymakers in health systems. The data has been solely collected only from the nurse who holds a huge nursing experience and has high-level academic qualifications in the relevant disciplines. The data will not be exploited and misused by the researchers for their personal gains. Rather it is solely intellectual property which is secured from any harm to the government or research participants.

This is not to be claimed by the researchers that this study is all in all and fulfils all the sides of the research study. Rather this could be a step ahead for future researchers to undertake more studies on this topic from other methodological and philosophical sides.

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