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Nursing workforce challenges in Saudi Arabia and the role of transformational leadership

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Purpose: To identify challenges in the nursing workforce development in Saudi Arabia; and identify the role of transformational leadership within the nursing context in improving the performance of healthcare organizations.

Method: Literature published between 2000 and 2012 was reviewed from 5 electronic databases, including the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Pro Quest Central, Expanded Academic ASAP, Wiley Interscience (Wiley), MEDLINE (OVID), and SAGE. In consultation with a health librarian, databases were accessed using key words: Saudi Arabia, nursing, nursing leadership, and transformational leadership.

Findings: In Saudi Arabia, inadequate numbers of national nurses has prompted an increase in recruitment of inexperienced expatriate nurses. However, Saudi Arabia ends up losing the nurses once they gain experience, as they prefer move to more developed countries. Many expatriate nurses have been found to lack competencies in the English language and familiarity with the Arabic language; hence language and communication are significant issues that should be addressed to enhance the interaction with the nurses and the local population. Insufficient experience among new expatriate nurses generates additional workload for experienced nurses, and this presents a great challenge to the improvement of nursing practice. The current nursing shortage in Saudi Arabia requires nurse leaders to re-examine their approaches to leadership. Nursing leadership in Saudi Arabia has been found to be more effective with a transformational approach.

Conclusion: To effectively manage the challenges associated with the nursing shortage, quality of patient care, language competencies, communication difficulties, and necessary experiences of nurses, the Saudi healthcare system needs successful, motivated, and visionary leaders. Appropriate leadership approaches should be targeted towards the improvement of nursing workforce. Specifically, leadership styles that seek to improve nurse's satisfaction, motivation and performance are needed.

Clinical relevance: The findings provide enhanced awareness and understanding of challenges facing nursing workforce in Saudi Arabia. Findings may assist with the development of leadership strategies to facilitate and overcome nursing workforce challenges and improve patient outcomes.

Biography

Nourah Alsadaan is PhD Candidate from the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. She obtained Master of Nursing (Clinical Leadership) at the University of Western Sydney, Australia and Bachelor of Science in Nursing at King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia.

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