

The effect of work environment on work-life balance among nurses at Riyadh Hospitals in Saudi Arabia: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

In the high-stress healthcare systems where the nurses work in, such as countries like Saudi Arabia, work-life balance (WLB) is a critical factor that dictates the level of well-being, job satisfaction, and retention of nurses. Hospitals in Riyadh impose significant sources of work environment stress to nurses such as staff shortages, shift burden, and insufficient managerial support which has the potential of disrupting both the professional and personal life of a nurse. The systematic review investigates the question: How do work environment factors influence the work-life balance of nurses in Riyadh hospitals? The aim is to systematically construct a qualitative body of evidence on the effects of organizational dynamics on the WLB of nurses and inform evidence-based workforce policy and management practices. A systematic search strategy with the help of databases like PubMed, CINAHL, Scopus and Web of Science was carried out to find qualitative studies published in (2014-2024). The studies incorporated were undertaken in Saudi hospital conditions and evaluated nurse work environment variables in correlation to WLB. Methodological quality was measured using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) critical appraisal tools and a thematic synthesis applied to identify major findings. A total of five qualitative studies of high quality were present, and most of them included nurses employed in the tertiary care and the public hospitals of Saudi Arabia. Thematic analysis identified five main themes; workload (lack of staff) prevalence, shift scheduling flexibility, leadership and management support, organizational culture appreciation, and turnover intentions associated with affective stress. The findings stress that an encouraging and well-designed working environment is prerequisite to increase WLB among nurses. The findings have real-world implications to healthcare administrators and policymakers in Saudi Arabia because strategies on staffing, scheduling, and leadership development must have strategic interventions in addressing the sustained motivated workforce in the nursing workforce to achieve the vision 2030 of healthcare objectives.

Keywords: Quality of Nursing Work Life (QNWL), Work-Life Balance (WLB), Work Environment, Organizational culture and Support, Burnout and Retention.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Work-life balance (WLB) is the individual's ability to give personal life activities, responsibilities and work commitments equal importance (Pradhan et al., 2016). In the healthcare environment, the realization of WLB is particularly difficult owing to the capricious and intense nature of clinical conditions. As the foundation of healthcare delivery, nurses' work-life balance has been seen to contribute to increased stress levels, burnout, absenteeism, and high turnover, hence reducing the quality of patient care (Poulose & Sudarsan, 2017).

Globally, the nursing profession is marked by demanding shifts, high patient workloads, emotionally draining work, and insufficient recuperation time, all of which pose a serious threat to the sustainable balance of professional

and personal activities. In Saudi Arabia, it is aggravated by a multicultural nursing staff, hierarchy within training hospitals, and ongoing shifts in healthcare policy with the aim of enhancing service delivery in alignment with Vision 2030. All these constitute compelling elements to make investigation of nurses' work environment and experience pertaining to WLB highly relevant in the Saudi context, and even more so in urban areas like Riyadh where hospitals are very busy and often understaffed (Al Mutair et al., 2022).

Since work-life balance is a constant source of stress, it is necessary to investigate how nurses manage their time between work and life in the hopes of resolving the issue and reducing the tension brought on by the imbalance. Since work patterns and the nature of work itself are changing in this more technologically advanced period, work is getting more demanding (Thilagavathy and

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Geetha, 2020). The aggressive and demanding nature of work with the goal of reaching the top demands full commitment and active participation from the employees, which compromises their work-life balance (Turanligil and Farooq, 2019).

According to Lee et al. (2015), nurses are by far the most important group of healthcare professionals, and the stability of their team has a big impact on the standard of care they deliver. The degree to which nurses can achieve their personal needs through their experiences in the healthcare system and the degree to which they can accomplish significant organizational goals are the two main factors that determine the quality of nurses' work lives. Because it impacts the efficiency of providing the best treatment possible, the quality of nurses' work-life balance is a critical issue for healthcare organizations. The provision of high-quality healthcare services also depends on nurses' work-life balance, which also helps to reduce nurse turnover, boost motivation and retention, and boost productivity for both nurses and organizations.

In this particular review, work environment refers to the physical space where nurses operate, the organizational culture, and the psychosocial factors at play. Important elements include the degree of available staffing, workload, length of shifts, administrative and managerial relations, teamwork, and policies, among many others. All of these have a direct influence on not only job performance but also job satisfaction and well-being. Various studies have documented the association between positive work environments and improved quality of nursing work life (QNWL), which has a close link with increased work-life balance.

Problem Statement

Nurses working across Riyadh hospital are often faced with challenges achieving work-life balance due to a number of environmental stressors. Despite increased awareness of the problem, there is still insufficient systematic evidence that clearly summarizes how work environment challenges specifically affect work-life balance in Saudi hospital nurses. Without a solid understanding of these dynamics, efforts to combat burnout, maximize nurse retention, and improve patient care may still be fragmented and ineffective (Alharbi et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Review

This review aims to critically appraise and synthesize evidence of qualitative research undertaken in Saudi Arabian hospital environments and specifically in Riyadh with a focus on understanding the relationship between different aspects of the work environment, including workforce, shift workload, organizational leadership and corporate culture influence the capacity of nurses in order to achieve and sustain work-life balance. This review can be used to inform policy, management practices and future research in an attempt to promote nurses' well-being and maximize sustainability of healthcare workforce by

identifying common themes and effective strategies identified in the local setting.

Justification of the Review

There is growing global interest in the improvement of WLB among healthcare workers, recognizing its role in improved retention and quality of care. In Saudi Arabia, while individual studies have examined aspects of nurse well-being and job satisfaction, no systematic synthesis of evidence was found that aimed specifically at examining the influence of work environment factors on WLB, particularly in Riyadh hospitals. Riyadh, being the capital and one of the most populous cities, has several public and private tertiary hospitals where nurses routinely face complex challenges due to patient overload, understaffing, and hierarchal workplace cultures.

Nursing turnover remains an issue in Saudi healthcare, typically driven by job dissatisfaction and WLB that is suboptimal. A high number of nurses employed in hospitals across Saudi are of various nationalities, and these can be subject to additional cultural and systemic stressors. Studies have also found burnout and stress-related disorders to be prevalent in nurses employed at Riyadh hospitals, with implications for systemic change in the work environment.

With the high stakes of nursing performance and health care provision, determining how work environment determinants contribute to or lessen WLB issues is critical. A systematic review will summarize existing research and provide evidence-based practice guidelines for policymakers, hospital managers, and nurse leadership to implement targeted interventions.

OBJECTIVES

Broad Objective

To investigate the effect of work environment on work-life balance among nurses at Riyadh Hospitals in Saudi Arabia

Specific Objectives

1. To assess the main environmental stressors affecting nurses' work-life balance at Riyadh Hospitals in Saudi Arabia
2. To assess how shift scheduling, workload, and staffing levels affect work-life balance among nurses at Riyadh Hospitals in Saudi Arabia
3. To investigate how organizational culture and leadership support affect nurses' work-life balance at Riyadh Hospitals in Saudi Arabia.
4. To recommend strategies to improve nurses' work-life balance at Riyadh Hospitals in Saudi Arabia.

Research Questions

1. What work environment factors influence work-life balance among nurses at Riyadh Hospitals in Saudi Arabia?

2. How do staffing levels, workload, and shift patterns affect work-life balance among nurses at Riyadh Hospitals in Saudi Arabia?
3. How does organizational culture and leadership support affect nurses' work-life balance at Riyadh Hospitals in Saudi Arabia?
4. What strategies can improve work-life balance among nurses at Riyadh Hospitals in Saudi Arabia?

Significance of the study

In light of the Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia that focuses on healthcare transformation and workforce sustainability, it is necessary to understand how the work environment variables influence the work-life balance among nurses. The nurses are the backbone healthcare delivery to patients and directly affect the retention, productivity and quality of care. This review collates the qualitative evidence of studies involving Saudi hospitals and can be used to determine the systemic issues in workplaces and responsive strategies that could be used to guide national workforce policy, hospital administrative practices, and nurse-related interventions. The insights gained thereby provide robust approaches to the formulation of conducive leadership effectiveness, positive staffing, and the creation of better and healthier work culture, all of which would eventually emerge as national health-focused nursing workforce that would become more robust and contented at large.

METHODS

Introduction

Systematic reviews play an essential role in identifying research gaps and setting future research agendas through close examination of existing studies on a given educational issue, theme, or topic (Chigbu et al., 2023). The efficiency and quality of academic work are affected by how much the systematic review is done. The process involves meticulous and systematic appraisal of the existing body of knowledge relative to the research query. In order to ensure completeness and relevance, systematic reviews involve thorough searches across several databases and sources that help keep the research current. Originating in the field of medicine, the systematic review is the gold standard for a systematic, reproducible, and transparent synthesis of research evidence (Snyder, 2019). It requires clearly specified research questions and is

widely regarded as the most reliable method for collecting and collating all the relevant data.

A systematic review is an effective and appropriate approach to this research, as it permits the extensive and detailed analysis of existing studies. With this approach, gaps in the evidence, best practices, and expert-based guidelines may be established. Systematic reviews are the pillars of evidence-based practice because they collect research evidence to inform effective decision-making (Shaheen et al., 2023). A crucial element of the review process is to judge the methodologies used, the quality of evidence, and the overall research in order to avoid any kind of bias.

Review Design

With a focus on Riyadh, this study used a systematic review design to compile the empirical research on the impact of work environment characteristics on work-life balance among nurses employed in Saudi hospitals. To maintain openness and methodological rigor, the review complied with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 declaration.

Eligibility Criteria

The PICOS framework (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome, Study Design) served as the basis for the inclusion and exclusion criteria. According to the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions (Eriksen & Frandsen, 2019), the PICO strategy is widely used in clinical evidence and healthcare to format specific review questions and direct evidence synthesis. It helps to articulate all the crucial components of the research question.

Though PICO has been utilized in the past for treatment issues, it is extremely simple to use for general topics such as occupational health and work-life balance for healthcare workers. Within this review, PICO is applied to determine research that compares the effect of variations in the workplace environment on work-life balance among nurses in Riyadh hospitals. Secondly, as Methley et al. (2014) attest, PICO is a sensitive but durable tool for creating systematic review search strategies. As such, it is even better suited than frameworks like SPIDER, especially if the outcome encompasses measurable or experiential changes like work-life balance.

Table 1: PICO Inclusion Criteria

Element	Criteria
Population	Registered nurses working in Saudi hospitals
Intervention/Exposure	Work environment characteristics (e.g., workload, shifts, staffing, management support, organizational culture)
Comparison	Not applicable (descriptive synthesis)
Outcome	Work-life balance or Quality of Nursing Work Life (QNWL)
Study Design	Quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method studies
Language	English only
Time Frame	Published between 2014 and 2024
Setting	Studies conducted in hospitals located in Saudi Arabia

Exclusion Criteria:

- Studies not conducted in Saudi Arabia
- Studies not involving nurses
- Reviews, editorials, commentaries, or theses
- Non-English publications

Search Strategy

An exhaustive and systematic search master plan will recognise the relevant studies. The credible databases

searched comprised of PubMed/MEDLINE, CINAHL (via EBSCOhost), Scopus, Medline, PsycINFO, Web of Science, Saudi Digital Library (SDL), and Google Scholar for grey literature. In addition, reference lists of eligible articles were manually screened for relevant studies

A combination of MeSH terms, Boolean operators, and keywords were also used to construct the search strategy as illustrated below.

Table 2: Search Terms/ Keywords

Search terms/ Keywords
Work environment OR workplace factors OR nursing work conditions
AND
Work-life balance OR quality of nursing work life OR job satisfaction
AND
nurses OR registered nurses
AND
Saudi Arabia OR Riyadh

Filters were applied to restrict the search to studies published between 2014 and 2024 and in English only. The same search terms were adapted to match indexing terms and filters specific to each database.

Data Collection and Synthesis

A standardized data collection form was used to collect the author(s) name and year of publication, study location and setting (hospital, city), study design and methodology, sample size and participant demographics, work environment variables examined, WLB or QNWL outcomes measured and key findings and conclusions from each included study.

Given the heterogeneity in study design, populations, and outcome measurements, a narrative thematic synthesis approach which involved identifying patterns and common themes across the studies, grouping findings into key thematic categories, such as staffing, shift work, management support, and WLB outcomes and interpreting these themes in the context of Saudi Arabia's healthcare system and the Riyadh hospital setting was adopted

Where applicable, effect sizes or summary statistics were reported to complement the qualitative synthesis.

Quality Appraisal

The methodological quality of every included study was evaluated using the Joanna Briggs Institute's (JBI) Critical Appraisal Tools. The JBI Checklist for Analytical Cross-Sectional research (for quantitative research), JBI Checklist for Qualitative Research (for qualitative studies), and JBI Checklist for Mixed-Methods Studies were the evaluation instruments chosen in accordance with the study design.

Every study was evaluated based on important criteria, including the validity of the conclusion, the appropriateness of the methodology, the data collection,

the data analysis, and the clarity of the objectives. The final synthesis did not include studies that had a low-quality rating.

Ethical Considerations

Since this is a secondary review of previously published research, ethical approval was not necessary. However, all the studies included were thoroughly checked to determine that they had obtained appropriate ethical approvals and consents of the participants. Proper citation and acknowledgment of original authors were maintained throughout the review.

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the systematic review in accordance with the selection, appraisal, and thematic analysis of studies that fit the eligibility criteria. Five studies in Saudi hospitals were included following a rigorous screening according to PRISMA 2020 guidelines. These studies examined various facets of the work environment and their influence on work-life balance among nurses. Results are reported in main thematic categories that were constructed from thematic analysis, e.g., workload and staff, shift pattern, leadership support, organizational culture, and intentions to turnover. The findings give insight into the systemic and organizational factors affecting nurses' experience and health within the Saudi healthcare environment, with emphasis on Riyadh hospitals.

Study Selection Process

Through database searches, 243 records in total were first obtained. 179 titles and abstracts were evaluated after 64 duplicates were eliminated. 26 full-text articles were evaluated for eligibility out of these. Ultimately, this evaluation comprised 5 papers that satisfied the inclusion criteria.

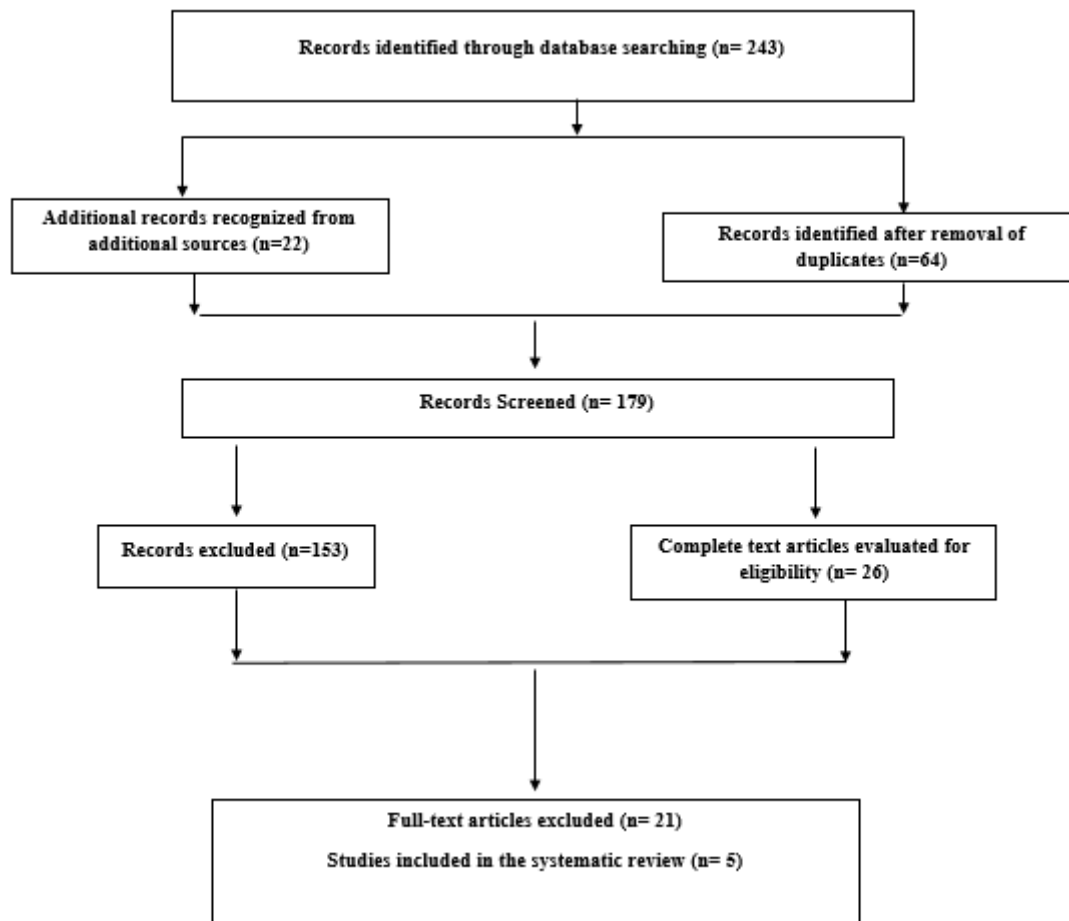


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram

A PRISMA 2020 flow diagram provides a summary of the study selection procedure.

Table 3: Critical Appraisal

Reference	Objective	Research Methods	Results	Themes
Alharbi, J., Wilson, R., Woods, C., & Usher, K. (2019) <i>BMC Nursing</i> , 18(1), 21 https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-019-0347-4	To assess the quality of nursing work life (QNWL) and related factors among nurses in Saudi Arabia.	Cross-sectional study using a structured questionnaire	Moderate QNWL reported; significant relationships with job position, age, income, and work setting.	Work environment factors; job satisfaction; demographic influences on QNWL
Alshammari, F., Pasay-an, E., Villagrancia, H., & Albolite, R. M. (2022) <i>Belitung Nursing Journal</i> , 8(5), 388–395 https://doi.org/10.33546/bnj.2061	To explore the correlation between stress and QNWL among nurses in Saudi Arabia.	Descriptive correlational study	Negative correlation between stress and QNWL. High stress levels associated with low QNWL.	Stress impact; psychological well-being; nursing work life

Alzahrani, F., Gelaidan, H. M., & Al-Shehri, A. M. (2020) <i>Leadership in Health Services</i> , 33(1), 89–104 https://doi.org/10.1108/LHS-09-2018-0049	To examine the impact of transformational leadership on nurses' job satisfaction.	Quantitative cross-sectional design with a survey tool	Positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction.	Leadership style; job satisfaction; organizational support
Hakami, M. A., Altowairqi, M., & Aljuaid, M. (2023) <i>International Journal of Africa Nursing Sciences</i> , 18 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijans.2022.100531	To investigate the relationship between QWL and turnover intention among nurse managers in Makkah, Saudi Arabia.	Quantitative cross-sectional study using validated scales	Inverse relationship between QWL and turnover intention. Poor QWL predicted higher turnover intention.	QWL; retention; nurse leadership; turnover risk
Kaddourah, B., Khalidi, M., Abu-Shaheen, A., & Al-Tannir, M. (2018) <i>Journal of Nursing Management</i> , 26(5), 507–513 https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.12578	To evaluate the QNWL among hospital nurses and identify influencing factors.	Cross-sectional survey across several hospitals in Saudi Arabia	Nurses reported moderate QNWL. Factors such as workload, management support, and scheduling significantly affected QNWL.	Organizational factors; nurse satisfaction; work conditions

Thematic Analysis

In this systematic review, thematic analysis was used as a simple and straightforward method to combine descriptive and qualitative data from a few chosen papers, including interviews, surveys, and narrative data regarding nurses' work environments and work-life balance.

Thematic analysis provided a methodical manner of dealing with the heterogeneous data forms presented in the reviewed studies, facilitating a rich, organized interpretation of the lived experience of nurses in Saudi hospitals. Thematic analysis is particularly valuable in health research where complex, context-sensitive variables affect outcomes such as emotional well-being, job satisfaction, and professional sustainability (Jowsey et al., 2021).

To ensure trustworthiness, more specifically credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability, the review employed a six-phase thematic analysis procedure, i.e., keyword identification, topic development, selection of codes, establishment of transcripts, conceptual model development and final narrative production

A total of five themes, i.e., Excessive workload and staffing shortages, Impact of shift patterns and scheduling on personal life, Leadership and managerial support, Organizational culture and appreciation, Turnover intentions and emotional strain were identified through the procedure. These themes formed the foundation of

clarifying how workplace relationships affect the work-life balance of nurses in Riyadh and elsewhere in Saudi Arabia.

High Workload and Staffing Shortages

All studies identified workload as a significant factor affecting WLB. Nurses reported frequent understaffing, extended duties, and high patient ratios as routine stressors that interfered with their personal lives. In Kaddourah et al. (2018), nearly 54.7% of nurses expressed dissatisfaction with their work environment, citing insufficient staff coverage. Similar concerns were echoed in Alshammari et al. (2022), where nurses working longer than 30 hours/week had significantly poorer QNWL scores.

Shift Patterns and Scheduling

Rotating shifts, night duties, and unpredictable scheduling were associated with poor WLB in several studies. In Alharbi et al. (2019), full-time nurses with rotating shifts had significantly lower QNWL scores. Nurses on fixed schedules, in contrast, reported better work-life harmony. The strain of night shifts and lack of rest days was particularly noted among expatriate nurses in Riyadh and Makkah.

Management and Leadership Support

Transformational leadership styles, supportive supervision, and clear communication were positively associated with improved QNWL. In Alzahrani et al. (2020), nurses who

reported strong leadership support also expressed higher satisfaction and WLB. Similarly, Hakami et al. (2023) found that organizational support and nurse manager autonomy positively influenced QWL and reduced turnover risk.

Organizational Culture and Environment

Organizational culture including policies, teamwork, professional respect, and recognition was identified as a foundational factor in enhancing WLB. In Hakami et al. (2023), a collaborative and respectful workplace led to reduced burnout and improved QNWL. A lack of

recognition, on the other hand, undermined morale and increased job dissatisfaction.

Turnover Intentions and Emotional Exhaustion

High levels of emotional fatigue, coupled with poor WLB, directly correlated with turnover intentions in two studies. Kaddourah et al. (2018) revealed that 94% of nurses expressed an intention to leave their current position, a figure attributed to work-life imbalance, poor staffing, and low salaries. The emotional toll was particularly high among expatriate nurses managing both professional stress and personal adaptation.

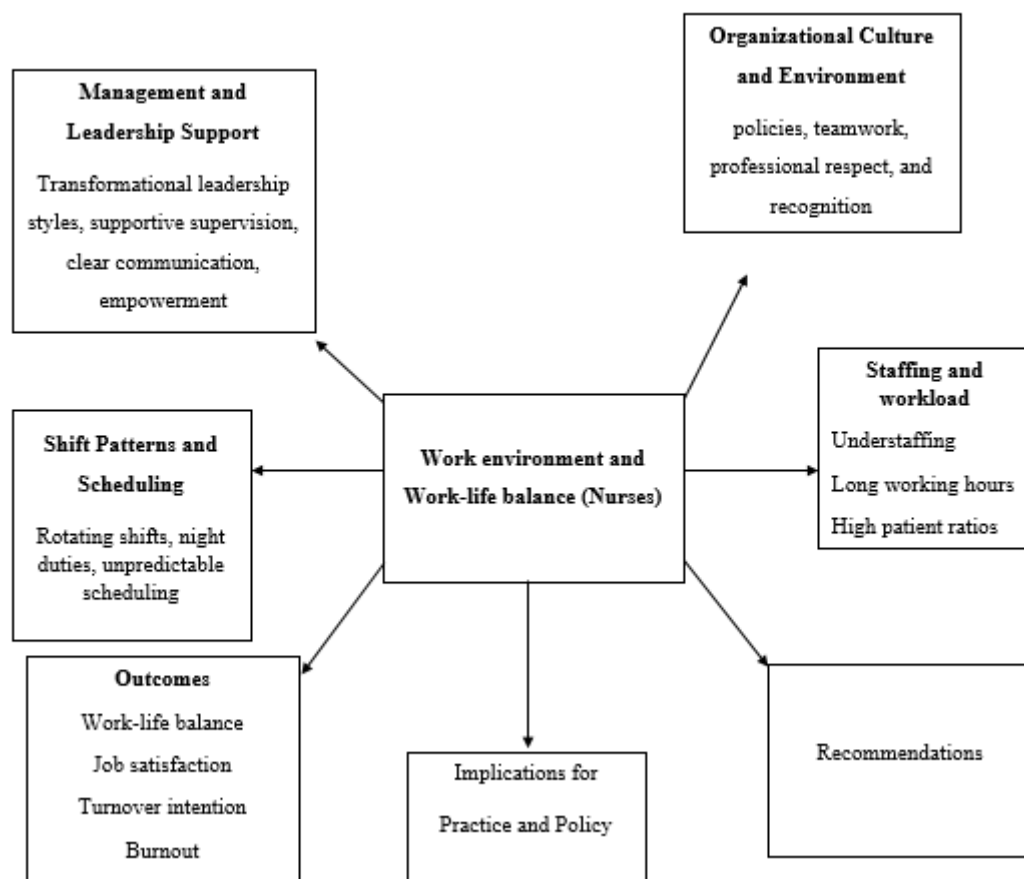


Figure 2: Mind Map

Summary

The thematic analysis highlights the need for nurse-led, supportive workplace interventions to facilitate employees' well-being, job satisfaction, and staff retention. Most of these studies note that:

- Workload and staffing are the most cited negative influences on WLB.
- Rotating shifts and long working hours disrupt personal life and recovery time.
- Supportive leadership and team cohesion can significantly improve QNWL.

- Organizational policies that recognize nurses' efforts and ensure equity promote WLB.
- High turnover intention among nurses in Riyadh hospitals is closely linked to poor work-life balance and work stress.

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This systematic review contrasted five empirical studies conducted in Saudi hospitals, particularly Riyadh, to examine how work environment factors influence work-life balance among nurses. Five themes were revealed by

the review as most significant: workload and staffing deficits, rotating work shifts, leadership and management support, organizational culture, and turnover intentions. Collectively, the results indicate that unfavorable workplaces largely affect the work-life balance of nurses, causing emotional exhaustion, dissatisfaction at work, and intentions to leave. Conversely, hospitals with good management and favorable workplace environment are more likely to retain staff and maintain well-being.

Workload and Staffing Shortages

High workload and chronic understaffing were reported across all the reviewed studies as the main obstacles to WLB. Nurses reported most frequently being overwhelmed by patients' care, administrative work, and lacking adequate time for rest or personal activities. This aligns with international evidence that suggests overworked nurses have a higher tendency to experience burnout and stress (Chen et al., 2019).

In Saudi Arabia, where the hospitals often rely on foreign nurses, the problem can be aggravated by staffing arrangements that prioritize efficiency over employees' well-being. As shown by Kaddourah et al. (2018) and Alshammari et al. (2022), nurses with increased workloads had statistically lower QNWL and higher emotional exhaustion. The findings highlight the need for improved nurse-to-patient ratios and equitable workload distribution.

Shift Work and Scheduling Practices

Another prevalent issue that had a great impact on WLB was working shift schedules, particularly night and rotating shifts. Fixed-shift nurses registered better QNWL as per Alharbi et al. (2019), most likely due to greater predictability along with more consistent rest time. Internationally, shift work is associated with circadian disruption, sleep disorders, and health conditions such as hypertension and depression.

For Saudi nurses, these are augmented by family obligations, especially in married females or single caregivers. The findings suggest that flexibility in schedules and restricting night shifts could improve WLB and health outcomes.

Leadership and Management Support

Leadership style emerged as a determiner variable of WLB. Alzahrani et al. (2020) proved that nurses who experienced transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring, respecting, and empowering teams, experienced increased levels of job satisfaction and work-life integration. This is reinforced in broader literature where effective leadership is linked to increased team morale, reduced conflict, and enhanced nurse retention (Cummings et al., 2018). Nurses in negative cultures often report feeling devalued, isolated, and more likely to leave the profession. Developing emotionally intelligent and communicative nurse managers needs to be the top agenda for Riyadh hospital systems.

Organizational Culture and Recognition

Hakami et al. (2023) revealed that a positive organizational culture defined by mutual respect, appreciation, and policies of inclusiveness greatly boosts the morale and WLB of nurses. Nurses tend to stay where they are respected and valued and where their issues are prioritized. On the other hand, hierarchical cultures that limit nurse autonomy or reward systems that do not consider nursing input contribute to disengagement. For instance, nurses who are excluded from decision-making circles or disrespectfully treated by senior management do not achieve professional fulfillment. Therefore, building a participatory and value-based work environment is important.

Turnover Intentions and Emotional Strain

The highest worrying finding was by Kaddourah et al. (2018), where 94% of the nurses noted that they had plans to quit their current jobs. It was highly correlated with poor WLB, insufficient staffing, and no appreciation. High turnover not only has recruitment and training costs but also breaks down team continuity and undermines patient safety. One factor noted to contribute to nurses' mental illness and compassion fatigue is emotional strain, which is exacerbated by time and a lack of support. Rebalancing work-life through organizational reform is therefore not just a human capital concern but a matter of patient safety.

Generalizability of the findings

Though this review is specific to Riyadh, much of the reported challenges, including staffing shortages, pressure during shifts, and leadership constraint, are the manifestation of the larger scale problems prevalent in Saudi Arabia and possibly the Gulf region in general. Nevertheless, caution in generalizability should be exercised on a regional level due to disparities in the availability of healthcare facilities, population distribution and management systems.

Comparison with International Literature

Conclusions of this review are consistent with international literature. In the United States and the European Union, it has also been shown that work environment-related factors, such as supervisory relationships, shift flexibility, and staffing-to-patient ratios, contribute significantly to the WLB of nurses (Dall'Ora et al., 2020). The Saudi Arabian context is different, though, with specific challenges, including cultural expectations, language differences, and a foreign-overwhelming population. Compared to Western settings, where union approval and policy frameworks theoretically grant nurses more protection, the Saudi healthcare system is hierarchical and centralized. This makes the impact of hospital internal policy and local management even more significant in shaping nurses' experiences.

LIMITATIONS OF THE REVIEW

This review has considered in scope only English publications published in the 2014-2024 period, potentially leaving out relevant Arabic language literature and the gray literature from local institutions. The sample

size is also small (n=5) and regionally biased to non-Riyadh research potentially compromising the generalizability of the results. Moreover, the qualitative synthesis is subject-to-bias as a result of relying on interpretation of the author. Disparity in research designs, sample characteristics, and measurement tools across the studies also restrains comparability and impossibility of meta-analysis. A future study should prioritize broader sampling area across Saudi Arabian regions and mixed-method or longitudinal approaches to give deeper insight.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The effect of the workplace on work-life balance among Saudi hospital nurses, particularly in Riyadh, was evaluated in this systematic review. This research found a continuous and significant correlation between suboptimal work environments and compromised work-life balance, based on data from five studies conducted in various regions.

The key findings of five distinct but recurring themes were overload and staffing deficits, negative impact of shift work and non-standard scheduling, leadership lack of support from leadership, unsupportive organizational environment, and heightened turnover intentions. Nurses experiencing heavy workload, alternating shifts, and leadership fatigue were more likely to rate that they felt emotional exhaustion, low job satisfaction, and incongruence between their professional work life and personal life. Conversely, a supportive management, adequate staffing, and a workplace culture that encourages participation, were associated with improved WLB and quality of nursing work life. These findings should be an eye-opener to Riyadh's healthcare leaders and policymakers to create environments where professional success is possible for nurses without putting their health at stake.

The Riyadh healthcare environment, characterized by high population density, dependency on foreign nurse workforce, and hierarchical organizational structures, points up these challenges. Nurses exposed to such a demanding environment are most vulnerable to burnout and job dissatisfaction, which eventually undermines patient care quality, staff retention, and organizational effectiveness. These findings are in line with international evidence, which confirms that improving nurses' work environments is essential in both workforce and health care delivery.

Healthful and supported nurses are the backbone of achieving quality, sustainable healthcare systems. Improved work-life balance through improved work environments are not only essential for nurses' health but also for improving healthcare delivery in the rapidly evolving health system of Saudi Arabia. Riyadh's institutions and those across the Kingdom need to now invest in evidence-based reforms for respecting, protecting, and empowering their nurses.

Recommendations

The review recommends the following:

1. The Riyadh Hospitals administration to implement evidence-based staffing models that reduce nurse overload, create concrete, nurse-conducive scheduling policies to minimize night shifts and incorporate internal wellness programs that include physical as well as mental well-being.
2. The Riyadh Hospitals nursing leadership to offer regular training in transformational leadership and emotional intelligence, facilitative communication with openness and nurse participation in decision-making and incorporate an appreciation culture through awards, promotion, and feedback.
3. The Policymakers to develop national standards for WLB practice in healthcare institutions, integrate WLB measures into hospital accreditation and assessment frameworks and promote incentives for hospitals to implement facilitative WLB policies with offers of funds or recognition schemes.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- **Longitudinal and Mixed-Methods studies:** There is need for longitudinal studies to monitor work-life balance changes and the long-term effects given the staffing interventions or even leadership models.
- **Comparative Institutional Studies:** Studies comparing both the public and the private hospitals might indicate institutional and local differences impacting the WLB amongst the nurses.
- **Gender and Culture:** Additional research should be conducted to understand the link between family tasks and cultural values with WLB particularly to the Saudi environment where a significant proportion of the workforce is expatriates.
- **Patient-Perceived Impacts:** The patient-reported outcomes might give a clue on the effect of nurse stress and job satisfaction on the quality of care.
- **Measuring Intervention Success:** Empirical analyses of the results of wellness programs, flexible scheduling, and encouraging leadership on nurse retention and patient safety will be encouraged.

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