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Nurse Leader Perceptions of Appropriate Nurse Staffing: An Omani Perspective

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Purpose: An important responsibility of nurse leaders is to ensure that there is an adequate number of competent nursing staff to provide safe, effective, efficient, high quality, patient-centered care. Nurse leaders carry out this responsibility as they develop, provide oversight, and evaluate staffing schedules and care delivery models. The delivery of safe and high quality care and service is dependent on adequate numbers of staff, educational level of staff, mix of staff, level of training and a multitude of other variables.

Nursing leaders have the responsibility for reviewing the impact that the nurse career delivery model has on patient care outcomes. Nursing research has revealed positive associations between measures of nurse staffing and patient outcomes which have been demonstrated in hospital systems across the United States and various other countries. Specifically, United States and Canadian health care organizations have studied nurse staffing productivity metrics and the link to enhanced quality patient outcomes. This association is present despite different hospital organizational structures and different healthcare financing methodologies. Appropriate staffing is impacted by numerous variables and the determination of what is considered appropriate staffing for a specific patient care area is extremely complex.

In addition to understanding the internal variables that impact nurse staffing, today's nursing leaders must also consider external factors that influence staffing considerations. Nurse leaders from different countries face similar yet different healthcare delivery dilemmas. In the United States, nurse leaders must consider the impact of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). PPACA will provide individuals who were previously unable to effectively access healthcare services the opportunity to become insured and access needed medical care. Healthcare systems and providers are seeing patients who are presenting with higher levels of acuity and multiple chronic comorbid conditions. PPACA has started to shift the focus to prevention of illness rather than treatment alone. Understanding the effects of PPACA will be important for nurse leaders in order to inform innovative staffing models and the enhancement of patient care outcomes.

Similarly, Omani head nurses also contend with internal and external forces the impact nurse staffing. In Oman, a primary issue for nurse leaders is the diversity of the nursing workforce. Nursing leaders have to consider the multicultural nature of their workforce with more than 60 percent of nurses coming from other countries. Over the last few years, Oman has seen rapid population growth and expansion of healthcare services. The nursing workforce is not able to keep pace with the demand for care. These factors impact nurse staffing and potentially patient care outcomes. Considering all of the internal and external variables, establishing appropriate nurse staffing levels is a dynamic multifactorial activity that is a challenge for nurse leaders.

Nurse leaders in a hospital located in Oman participated in this study with a follow-up comparison study planned in the southeastern part of the United States. This study is important because it will improve the profession's understanding of what Omani nursing leaders believe constitutes safe, effective staffing. Additionally, it will increase knowledge about how and to what extent metrics inform staffing and scheduling decisions and the relationship to patient care outcomes in Oman.

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to understand how nurse leaders in Oman define appropriate nurse staffing in today's healthcare environment. Additionally, this study explored what metrics Omani nursing leaders use, as a practical matter, to plan for staffing needs as well as assess effectiveness of staffing models.

The Data Driven Model for Excellence in Staffing (DDMES) and the Principles of Nurse Staffing (2nd ed.) informed this study. It is anticipated that the DDMES framework will generate innovative care models and strategies that will lead to the effective, efficient, optimal use of knowledgeable staff and resources that will achieve optimal outcomes.

The research question was: "What factors influence decisions of Head Nurses in Oman to achieve excellence in nurse staffing?"

Methods: A qualitative descriptive study with inductive content analysis was used in this study. Data were collected through fourteen semi-structured interviews utilizing a fifteen-item interview guide. Additionally, data were collected through the use of a sixteen-item demographic questionnaire. The researchers also posed probing questions as needed during the interviews to further elicit details regarding interview items. Both the demographic questionnaire and the interview guide were created for use in this study by the research team and were based on a review of the literature, professional experiences, and in consultation with nursing researchers/leaders from the participating academic-practice partners involved in this project. Omani head nurses were recruited for this study using a purposive sampling technique. After consent was received and the demographic questionnaire was completed, participants were interviewed face-to-face by one of three researchers. Based on Omani customs, nursing leaders from the tertiary care hospital where the head nurses were employed indicated that individual interviews were preferred over focus groups and that male and female research could serve as interviewers. Head nurse participation in this study was voluntary and could have been discontinued at any time without consequences. Interviews were digitally audio recorded. These digital recordings were saved to a University-issued laptop or computer with password protection. Transcription of interviews occurred and the saved audio file was utilized to verify the accuracy of the transcribed document. The transcribed document did not include participant demographic information and was only identified with a numeric identifier. All study related materials were de-identified, kept under lock and key, and/or digitally stored with password protection.

Results: Thematic analysis revealed four themes and twelve sub-themes that emerged from the data. These themes included: (1) Decision-making for nursing resource management is centralized; (2) Operationalization of scheduling and staffing is decentralized; (3) The concept of "team" was an important consideration for head nurses; and (4) Head nurses know staffing relates to quality however lack data to support. The data suggest that senior nursing leaders have responsibility for allocating resources for nursing workforce team members and play a significant role in international recruitment of nurses to supplement the Omani nurse workforce. Head nurses are responsible for making decisions about staffing and scheduling of nurses on individual units. They consider multiple variables on a near daily basis to accomplish appropriate staffing levels. Facilitators and barriers to effective teamwork emerged as a major consideration for staffing and scheduling of units. Head nurses who were interviewed desired additional data to support staffing decisions.

Conclusion: Multiple practical and research implications are suggested as a result of this study. Additional research is needed with greater numbers of nursing leaders using multiple methods. In addition, comparison studies in countries with varying healthcare systems and cultural norms are needed to expand knowledge about nurse staffing.

Title:

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Keywords:

Productivity, Scheduling and Staffing

References:

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Abstract Summary:

This presentation will reveal the results of a qualitative descriptive study involving Omani head nurses. Head nurses were asked how they determined excellence in nurse staffing. Four themes emerged from inductive content analysis.

Content Outline:

Content Outline

1. Review key literature related to nurse staffing and productivity.
2. Description of nurse staffing considerations by head nurses in Oman.
3. Presentation of four themes that emerged from the analysis of the data.

Topic Selection:

Best Practices in Clinical Settings

First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author

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Professional Experience: Dr. Hooks has been a practicing professional registered nurse for 27 years with more than 20 years of nursing leader and executive experience. Dr. Hooks has specialized in the recruitment and retention of high performing teams with positive employee engagement and resultant improvements in patient service and care outcomes. Dr. Hooks was recruited as the Chief Nursing Officer for a healthcare system in North Carolina where one of the hospitals had been decertified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Dr. Hooks was able to lead the nursing team and enhance patient service and quality. Dr. Hooks has worked on and with interprofessional teams for more than a decade and has an extensive understanding of the four interprofessional core competencies as well as the value of working to achieve positive metrics through academic-practice partnerships. Dr. Hooks is also certified as a nurse executive and family nurse practitioner.

Author Summary: Dr. Hooks is Assistant Dean for Community Partnerships at Augusta University College of Nursing. He is an Associate Professor and teaches in multiple programs. Dr. Hooks is board certified as a Nurse Executive and a Family Nurse Practitioner. Dr. Hooks is a fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives and has extensive nurse executive experience. Dr. Hooks maintains an active clinical practice and is certified as an HIV Specialist.

Second Author

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Professional Experience: Ms Emerson is working on her dissertation proposal for a Doctorate in Nursing Science. Ms. Emerson has accompanied students and conducted research in the United Arab Emirates and Oman since 2009. Ms. Emerson served as the faculty coordinator for KSU's signature annual country study program, the Year of the Arabian Peninsula and was recognized by the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center for her work toward the promotion of ties between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States of America. Ms. Emerson served as the co-principle investigator for a project entitled, "Connecting Communities: The Development of an International Collaboration on Nurse Staffing Metrics and Patient Outcomes," funded by KSU's Division of Global Affairs which resulted in research regarding nurse leader perceptions of appropriate nurse staffing.

Author Summary: Ms Emerson is a Clinical Assistant Professor at Kennesaw State University and is working on her dissertation proposal for a Doctorate in Nursing Science. For her dissertation, Ms. Emerson will be conducting a life history of an Omani nursing leader. She is also the first author of a

chapter entitled, Women of Oman: A Systematic Review of Health Issues in Caring for the Vulnerable: Perspectives in Nursing Theory, Practice, and Research.

Third Author

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Professional Experience: Dr. Laura Caramanica has held successive leadership positions throughout her career serving as a chief nursing officer in GA, NY and CT. Dr. Caramanica is a Fellow in the Academy of Nursing and a Fellow in the Academy of Health Care Executives. She holds two national certifications in nursing administration. She is a graduate of University of Connecticut, CT, (PhD); Columbia University/Teacher's College, NY (MEd); University of Bridgeport, CT (BSN) and Hartford Hospital School of Nursing, CT (RN Diploma).

Author Summary: Dr. Caramanica is currently an Associate Professor at the University of West Georgia in Carrollton, Georgia and has published and presented on leadership, evidence-based practice, shared governance and care delivery systems.