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The Impact of Workload and Emotional Stress on Nursing Care Quality in Baghdad Hospitals: A Cross-Sectional Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the impact of nursing workload and emotional stress on the quality of nursing care delivered in hospitals located in Baghdad Governorate.

Methods and Materials: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted between November 2023 and May 2024 in three major hospitals: Al-Naaman Teaching Hospital, Al-Kindi Hospital, and Ibn Al-Nafis Hospital. A purposive sample of 245 nurses and 224 patients was recruited for the study. Data were collected using a two-part, validated questionnaire that addressed nurse workload, emotional factors, and perceived care quality. A panel of 18 experts confirmed the validity; reliability was supported by a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.84, obtained using the split-half method. Descriptive and inferential statistics (SPSS v26) were used for analysis.

Findings: The results showed that 54.5% of nurses experienced a moderate workload, and 26.2% experienced a high workload. Regarding emotional stress, 97.1% of nurses reported a moderate emotional impact, and 2.9% reported a significant impact. Additionally, 72.6% of nurses believed that nursing shortages had a moderate impact on the quality of care, while 15.9% reported a high impact. A significant relationship was found between workload, emotional stress, and nursing care quality ($p = 0.019$), confirming that workforce strain has a negative impact on patient outcomes.

Conclusion: Workload and emotional stress, exacerbated by nursing shortages, significantly reduce the quality of patient care. Addressing staffing issues and improving nurses' working conditions is essential to enhancing healthcare delivery and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Nursing, Workload, Emotional stress, Quality of care, Job satisfaction.

Introduction

Nurses are an essential component of healthcare departments and undoubtedly represent the primary unit of the healthcare profession. According to global health data, there are around 29 million nurses globally, with an estimated additional requirement of one million nurses by the year 2020. The shortage of nurses adversely impacts the nation's healthcare system and considerably affects patient treatment, leading to a general fall in public health across the country (Fainguersch, 2020).

The primary factors contributing to the nursing shortage are the workload and the workplace environment. Employee retention declines when individuals are compelled to operate in adverse and hazardous environments characterized by safety issues such as bullying and harassment. Nurses globally perceive that their capacity to manage job demands and workload is surpassed. (Ghafoor et al., 2021).

A multitude of issues contributes to the acute shortage of nurses, including insufficient government financing, low socioeconomic level, and a scarcity of scholarships for nursing students. The acute deficiency of nurses adversely impacts patient care and the overall quality of healthcare in any country. The shortage of nurses significantly adversely affects patient care within the national healthcare system, hence diminishing the overall health of the population. The shortage of nurses in hospitals adversely affects their health by augmenting their burden, perhaps resulting in anxiety, exhaustion, physical ailments, and mental health disorders. (Chaban Ahmad & Saadi Mohammed, 2025) Conversely, in nations with a lesser scarcity of nurses, the quality of nursing care is significantly enhanced due to reduced stress and job dissatisfaction among nurses (Tamata et al., 2021).

To address the shortfalls, numerous registered nurses find their schedules occupied with a high volume of patients and extended hours. Consequently, nurses may have diminished job satisfaction, increased stress, and potentially exit the profession entirely (Yousefzadeh & Ebrahimi, 2020). Insufficient nursing staff results in increased pressure and strain on current practitioners, potentially prompting them to pursue a more flexible and manageable career trajectory (Drennan & Ross, 2019).

The persistent threat of mental or physical abuse inside the healthcare environment exacerbates the nursing shortage by intensifying an already high-stress profession. Physical and emotional abuse significantly impacts healthcare professionals' physical and mental well-being, subsequently affecting their job satisfaction and productivity (Ayub et al., 2025). The patient demographics in emergency departments and psychiatric facilities elevate the danger for nurses. Globally, there exists a significant risk of violence against healthcare professionals, with 8% to 38% encountering violence at some stage in their employment. (Abdollahzadeh et al., 2017).

Methods and Materials

The present study used a descriptive approach at Al-Naaman Teaching Hospital. This study commenced on 14 November 2023 and concluded on 20 May 2024, utilizing a nonprobability purposive sample of 245 nurses and 224 patients from Al-Kindi Hospital, Ibn Al-Nafis Hospital. Data were collected using a questionnaire that included two sections: one for nurses and the other for patients.

Following the acquisition of requisite approvals, the Al-Rusafa Health Directorate has granted official clearance to proceed with the study. Subsequently, authorization was granted to Al-Naaman Teaching Hospital, Al-Kindi Hospital, Ibn Al-Nafis Hospital. to ensure the consensus and collaboration of management and staff. The researcher secured consent from all nurses and patients, as the names of the sample were not recorded. The researcher elucidates the study and its objectives for all nurses and patients. Consequently, comprehensive knowledge of their mission was acquired. The researcher informed all participants that the questionnaire answers would be employed solely for research reasons. Additionally, it was communicated that all participants are independent individuals possessing the freedom to decline participation.

This study was conducted at hospitals located in Baghdad Governorate, specifically in Al-Naaman Teaching Hospital, Al-Kindi Hospital, Ibn Al-Nafis Hospital. A purposive sample of 226 patients and 244 nurses. 10 patients and 10 nurses were eliminated from the study population as part of a pilot investigation. The questionnaire instrument was given to a panel of

eighteen specialists to evaluate its validity for the study purpose. In each discipline, the practitioners have over five years of expertise. The experts' analysis of the questionnaire and program determined that the items were clear and adequate for the study. In accordance with the experts' recommendations, slight modifications were implemented in several portions of the questionnaire and the program.

The reliability of the knowledge questionnaire was assessed using a split-half method, based on evaluations of ten patients and nurses at Al-Kindi Hospital. The reliability of the questionnaire indicates a Pearson correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.84$). Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to examine the study's outcomes utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.

Table 1

workload among nurse

workload domain		Frequency	Percent	t. test
workload	No pressure	47	19.3	48.091
	Moderate pressure	133	54.5	
	High pressure	64	26.2	
	Total	244	100.0	

Table 2

emotional factors among nurses

	Emotion domain	Frequency	Percent	t. test
Emotion	Moderate effect	237	97.1	96.062
	High effect	7	2.9	
	Total	244	100.0	

The researcher determines that there is a moderate workload and moderate influence of emotional elements. Due to A deficit of nurses creates strain on those employed in the wards, compounded by inadequate compensation and the suboptimal working conditions for nursing personnel.

Findings and Results

The findings of the current study, presented in Table 1 and Table 2, examined the statistics on the nursing shortage in hospitals. Nursing shortage data are categorized into two primary domains: evaluation of nurse workload and evaluation of the impact of emotional factors on nurses. Likert scale items to evaluate the nursing shortage. The findings indicate a moderate workload and moderate emotional issues among nurses at the hospital. The comprehensive evaluation indicates that most sample individuals are at a moderate level.

Table 3 examines the impact of emotional aspects and workload due to nursing shortages on the quality of nursing care, indicating a moderate to high influence of nursing shortages on care quality according to the study results.

Table 3

Effect of nursing shortage on quality of nursing care

		Frequency	Percent
Nursing care for patients	No effect	26	11.5
	Moderate effect	164	72.6
	High effect	36	15.9
	Total	226	100.0

Discussion and Conclusion

The majority of nurses experience a deficiency in nursing personnel, resulting in inadequate patient care and imposing psychological and practical stress on the nursing staff. Consequently, we discovered that the majority of nurses expressed unhappiness with my guest due to the aforementioned reasons and the absence of regular salaries.

The findings align with those of Saputera & Suhermin, (2020) study, which indicated that 58.7% of respondents classified their workload as heavy. Moreover, these findings corroborate those of Tamata et al., (2021), which verified that two-thirds of the study sample indicated that workload poses a challenge when there are severely limited nurses to handle patients throughout each shift. These results are consistent with those of Alharbi, (2018), indicating that a majority of the study sample, specifically 57.4%, experienced a moderate influence of emotional elements in the hospital setting. Similarly, these findings concur with Maghsoud et al., (2022), indicating that the majority of the study sample experienced a significant workload and that emotional elements exerted considerable influence. These findings are consistent with those of (MacPhee et al., 2017). This indicates that significant emotional factors influence nurses employed at the hospital due to their physical or psychological circumstances. The results corroborated the findings of Abusamra et al., (2022), which indicated that fifty percent of the study sample exhibited moderate emotional variables, with a mean score of 32.6, attributable to many circumstances, including a nursing shortage.

These findings concur with those of Maghsoud et al., (2022), indicating a moderate influence and correlation between nursing shortages and quality of care. At Saudia, Alharbi discovered a moderate impact of nursing shortages on the quality of care delivered to patients in hospitals. Conversely, SUHAIMI et al., (2023) concur with these findings in their qualitative study, which revealed that the nursing shortage significantly impacts patient care, presenting a formidable task for nurses to fulfill their fundamental responsibilities.

The Ministry of Health ought to intensify its initiatives to cultivate nursing personnel and provide incentive prizes for nursing staff, while also addressing monthly

salaries to encourage students to pursue nursing and select it as a specialism.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Ethical considerations in this study were that participation was entirely optional.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contribute to this study.

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