

Exploring Senior Nurses' Readiness for Career Development and Role Adaptation in Surgical and Orthopedic Wards: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Background: Nursing career growth is a crucial goal for organizations worldwide. In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Health has prioritized this within its Vision 2030 and National Transformation Program. The rapid expansion of private and government hospitals, as well as primary health centers, has led to an increased demand for highly qualified nursing staff, highlighting the importance of nursing roles and the readiness of staff to fulfill these roles. This, in turn, contributes to strengthening the nursing profession within society.

Aim: To explore senior nurses' approaches and roles in career development, and to assess their readiness in specific roles (leadership, education, communication) within the General Surgical, Orthopedics, and Spine Surgery ward during their first three years at Habib Medical Group Al-Khobar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Method: This qualitative study utilized a purposive sample of 14 senior nurses. Data were collected through in-depth individual interviews, considering participants' characteristics such as age, level of experience, and ethnicity. The study focused on exploring participants' career progress in four key roles: leadership, quality collaboration, communication, and mentorship. Eight questions were designed in order to find a comprehensive answer for the research question after the interview.

Participants were asked about their career goals, experience working within or leading teams, ability to learn quickly, capacity to work under pressure, familiarity with resources and technology, and their adherence to patient safety and international standards.

Results: The study included 14 female senior nurses, aged 27 to 37 years, from various backgrounds (Asian, Indian, African, and Arab). The results revealed that eight out of fourteen participants had developed leadership skills, as evidenced by their ability to organize, ensure smooth workflow, delegate tasks, make decisions, solve problems, and demonstrate flexibility. Consequently, the majority were assigned to Team Leader roles.

Communication skills emerged as the most developed skill among the interviewees, with ten out of fourteen nurses excelling in interactions with colleagues, head nurses, nursing supervisors, multidisciplinary teams, and patients and their families.

The role of quality nurse was highlighted by enhancing departmental safety practices, ensuring evidence-based procedures, preparing reports in collaboration with the Quality and Infection Control Department, and preparing for committee visits. Two nurses from each department (General Surgical and Orthopedic Ward) were responsible for these tasks.

Approximately six nurses (three in each department) were appointed as educators and mentors for newly hired staff, guiding them on organizational policies and safe practices through the preceptorship program. Regardless of their nursing backgrounds, the interviewees demonstrated significant development in personal technological skills, including the use of medical resources, tools, and devices relying on artificial intelligence.

Conclusion: This study suggests that investing in building a flexible nursing workforce capable of responding to changing conditions and needs, both locally and globally, is essential. Providing nurses with a strong educational foundation enables them to focus on their roles effectively, contributing to a positive, healthy, and attractive work environment characterized by professionalism and excellence.