

A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY TO ASSESS THE CHALLENGES FACED BY NURSES MANAGERS AT A TERTIARY HOSPITAL IN INDIA.

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Abstract

Background: Nurse manager role is considered the most complex in health care due to the numerous responsibilities. Lack of management and leadership training has been identified as a major challenge in nursing administration. Previous studies have reported the emergence of multiple complex challenges during disasters.

Aim of Study: This study was conducted to evaluate the challenges faced by Nurse Managers while performing their duties.

Materials and methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted between July 1, 2023 and October 30, 2023, at a tertiary hospital in New Delhi. One hundred nurse managers were enrolled in the study. Participants were asked about 34 potential challenges using a structured questionnaire. They were also asked about challenges other than the questionnaire that they had faced at the end.

Result: All challenges were categorized into three categories: major, moderate, and minor. Nine major challenges were identified, such as Inadequate availability of medicine and surgical items in the ward (87%), Insufficient nursing staff (82%), Work with untrained nursing orderly and sanitation workers(79%), Implementation of the policies made without their input (76%), Work with poorly trained subordinate(75%), Patient workload(73%), disobedience of the subordinate(73%), Current indenting process from the store(73%), and no formal management training before taking charge as a Nurse Manager(72%)

Conclusion: Inadequate availability of store supplies, staff shortages, untrained nursing orderlies, and sanitation workers, implementation of policies made without nursing input, poorly trained nursing subordinates, patient workload, and lack of formal training as Nurse Managers were the major issues faced by the majority of respondents.

1. Introduction

Nursing services are considered integral to the healthcare system for the promotion of health and prevention of illness. A Nurse manager is an individual who acts as a liaison between nursing staff and top management(*What Are A Nurse manager's Responsibilities?*, n. d.). Nurse managers perform various responsibilities. The duties

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and responsibilities of a nurse manager include supervision of nursing staff, patient care, problem-solving, decision-making, collaboration with other departments to ensure that patients receive the best possible care, communication with superiors, training new nurses, managing human and financial resources, and maintaining a safe environment for patients and staff. Leadership, organization, communication, collaboration, and emotional intelligence are considered qualities of nurse managers (aaronanderson, 2021). However, they may encounter several problems as part of their role.

Nurses in managerial positions often face many difficult challenges. A healthy working environment is crucial for nurses to deliver high-quality care to patients. However, nurses may experience workplace violence. It is challenging for nurse managers to address this type of workplace conflict without targeted training and sufficient support (lorioswald, 2023). Efficient nurse managers with a positive attitude can help prevent burnout among nursing professionals. Nurse Managers play an important role in hiring and training staff. It is also vital to select adequately trained staff to provide high standards of care to patients.

Nurse managers can improve patient experiences by fostering a healthy and respectful environment. However, sometimes, nurse managers are not involved in planning and decision-making in hospital administration. Challenges faced by nurse managers, such as lack of resources, poor quality improvement initiatives, personnel, issues lack of uniform standards, and poor technical support, may affect patient health care outcomes. Nurse managers are responsible for creating an empowered working environment by overcoming challenges and barriers.

1.2. Background of the Study

Highly competent nurse managers are required to create a positive environment where staff members are free to work and communicate effectively with patients and other health care providers. Sometimes nurse managers may struggle with many challenges due to organizational changes and high demands on the healthcare system. (*Nurse Leaders' Strategies to Foster Nurse Resilience* - Wei - 2019 - *Journal of Nursing Management* - Wiley Online Library, n.d.) Organizational conflict may arise due to differences in the values, attitudes, and personalities of individuals working in the organization. A competent and experienced nurse manager can effectively resolve such problems in an organization.

According to Curtis et al. (2011), "Leadership involves a blend of thoughts, reflections, and images, as well as having power, influence followership, amongst others (*Developing Leadership in Nursing: Exploring Core Factors* / *British Journal of Nursing*, n.d.)". Nursing leaders are expected to have adequate education, administrative competence, clinical expertise, and an understanding of leadership principles. According to Schein (2004), effective nursing management and leadership are the driving forces behind the success or failure of every health care organization.

The success or failure of an organization depends on effective and efficient leadership and management forces. Excessive administrative burdens, combined with clinical leadership, mentoring, and team communication place pressure on nurse managers, reducing their capacity to provide day-to-day leadership and develop a strategic vision for their nursing departments (Locke et al., 2011).

The nurse manager role is considered the most complex in health care due to the numerous responsibilities. Lack of management and leadership training has been identified as a major challenge in nursing administration. Previous studies have reported the emergence of multiple complex challenges during disasters. Nurse Managers need more organizational and emotional support to create a positive working environment in an organization (Gab Allah, 2021).

1.3 Need for Study

Nursing services are considered the backbone of any health care institution and are managed by nurse managers. A nurse manager is an administrator who oversees various functions of nursing services through planning, organizing, directing, and controlling (Aydogdu, 2023). At different stages of management, nurses face numerous challenges, particularly those related to balancing personal and professional life (rose, 2022). Previous studies have revealed many challenges, but few have been conducted in India. Therefore, this study is being planned to evaluate the challenges faced by nurse managers when performing their duties.

1.4 Objectives

To assess major, moderate, and minor challenges faced by nurse managers during ward management were the primary objectives, whereas to determine the association between Qualification, Designation, Total experience, Experience as a Nurse Manager, Working Area of Nurse managers, and Major challenges were secondary objectives.

A nurse manager refers to a Senior Nursing Officer and Assistant Nursing Superintendent who oversees ward management, including assigning assignments, supervising and directing nursing officers, nursing orderlies and sanitation workers, and material management. **Challenges** refer to the problems, issues, and difficulties encountered by nurse managers during ward management.

Ethical consideration: Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC-464/2023). Informed consent from the participants was obtained before the study. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were maintained throughout the study period. The information collected from the participants was used only for research.

2. Material and Methods

This quantitative cross-sectional study was conducted at a tertiary hospital in New Delhi and evaluated the challenges encountered by nurse managers in overseeing ward management. Convenience sampling was done from various centers of the institute, such as the Cardiac and Neuroscience Center, Trauma Center, Ophthalmic Sciences Center, Mother and Child Block, Main Hospital, Private Wards, Surgery Block, and OPD between July 1st, 2023, and October 30, 2023. A total of 100 participants were enrolled. The content validity of the tools was verified by five experts. There was 100% agreement among the experts. Participants included in the study who had a minimum of one year experience as a nurse manager

2.1 Data collection

Participants were recruited for the study based on the inclusion criteria. Two tools were employed: Tool-1 was used to gather demographic details, and Tool-2 consisted of a semi-structured questionnaire comprising 34 questions related to potential challenges faced by nurse managers. Following the questionnaire, participants were invited to share information about any additional challenges not covered in the survey but encountered during ward management.

3. Results

Table:1 Demographic Profile of Nurse Managers, N-100

S No	Demographic characters	Frequency/Percentage
1	AGE (1) 30-40 years (2) 41-50 years (3) 51-60 years	8 27 65
2	Gender (1) Male (2) Female	6 94
3	Designation (1) Senior Nursing Officer (HR) (2) ANS	66 34
4	Educational Qualification (1) GNM (2) BSc Nursing (3) BSc Nursing (PB) (4) MSc Nursing (5) PhD	76 10 11 3 0

5	Total nursing experience (1) 20- 25 year (2) 26-30 year (3) 31-35 year (4) 36-40 year	29 42 26 3
6	Experience As a Nurse Manager (1) 1-3 year (2) 4-6 year (3) 7-9 year (4) 10-12 year	58 22 9 11
7	Area of work (1) Ward (2) ICU (3) OT (4) OPD (5) Other	58 16 20 4 2
8	Additional Qualification No Yes	93 7

Table1 provides an overview of the demographic profiles of the nurse managers. The data indicate that the majority (65%) of nurse managers belonged to the 51-60-year age group. Additionally, a significant proportion (94%) of nurse managers was female. Designation-wise, most nurse managers (66%) held the position of Senior Nursing Officers (Higher Responsibility). The majority (76%) of the participants possessed a diploma in general nursing and midwifery (GNM). Moreover, 42% of nurse managers had accumulated between 26 and 30 years of experience in the nursing profession. In terms of managerial experience, most (58%) had 1-3 years of experience. The majority of participants (58%) were affiliated with wards. Additionally, 93% of the nurse managers did not have additional qualifications.

Table:2 Major Challenges Faced by Nurse Managers (N-100)

SNo	CHALLENGES	YES Frequency/ Percentage	NO Frequency/ Percentage
1.	Do you feel that the inadequate availability of medicine and surgical items is a challenge for you in the ward?	87	13
2.	Do you feel that insufficient staff is a challenge for you in your ward?	82	18
3.	Do you feel that ward management with untrained nursing staff and sanitation workers is a challenge for you in your ward?	79	21
4.	Do you feel that the implementation of top administration policies without your input is challenging?	76	24
5.	Do you feel that a poorly trained subordinates a challenge for you in your ward?	75	25
6.	Do you feel that patient workload is a challenge in maintaining quality care in the intensive care unit (ICU)?	73	27
7.	Do you feel that subordinate disobedience poses a challenge for you in your ward?	73	27
8.	Do you feel that the current indenting process for all items from the store is challenging?	73	27
9.	Do you feel that not undergoing any formal management training before taking charge as a nurse manager is challenging for you?	72	28

Table 2 presents the significant challenges encountered by Nurse Managers. Nine challenges were categorized as major based on their higher prevalence. Each question in the table follows the format used in the questionnaire administered to the participants. These challenges are organized in descending order of percentage.

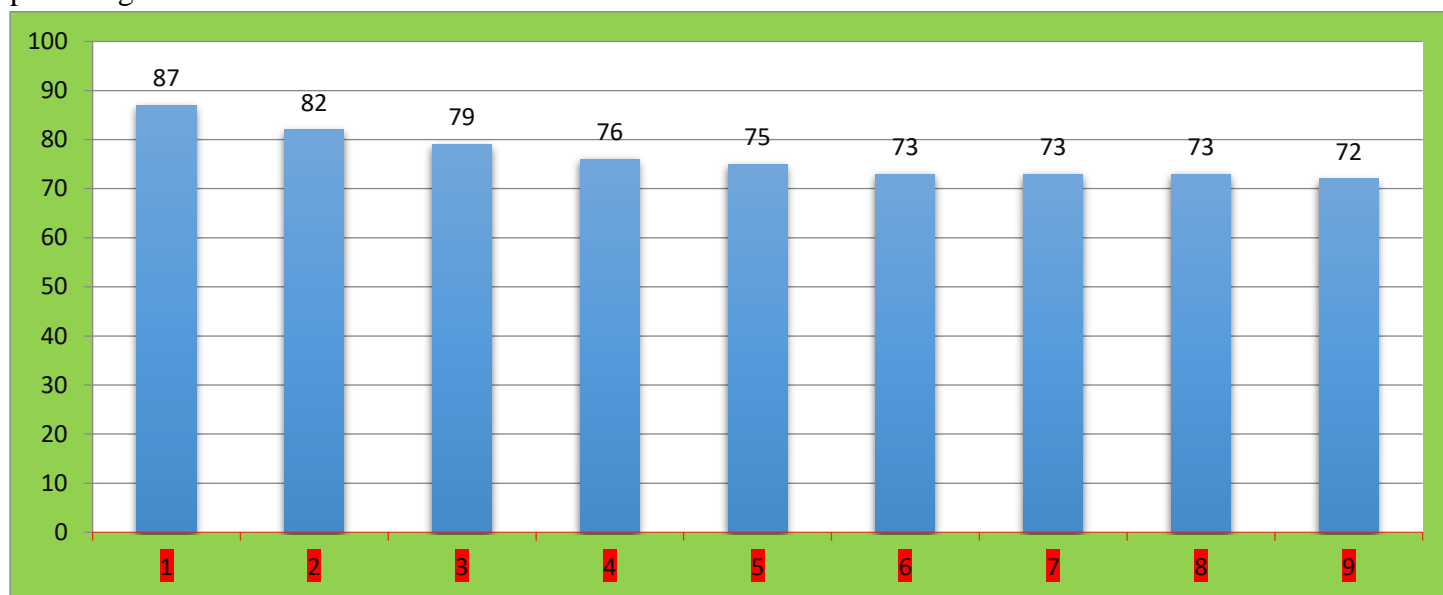


Figure 1: Major challenges faced by nurse managers.

Table 3: Moderate challenges faced by nurse managers (N-100)

SNo	CHALLENGES	YES Frequency/Percentage	NO Frequency/Percentage
1.	Do you feel that availing the leave by subordinates unexpectedly is a challenge for you in your ward?	69	31
2.	Do you feel that the policies related to nursing services provided by non-nursing personnel are challenging for you?	68	32
3.	Do you feel that working in a poorly designed clinical setting is a challenge for you in the ward?	67	33
4.	Do you feel that frequent staff turnover is a challenge for you in your ward?	62	38
5.	Do you feel that maintaining both online and offline records together are a challenge for you in your ward?	63	37
6.	Do you feel that inadequate recognition and respect from medical colleagues is a challenge for you in the ward?	57	43
7.	Do you feel that sometimes following faculty orders is a challenge for you in your ward?	54	46

Table 3 depicts the moderate challenges encountered by Nurse Managers. These challenges are categorized based on their moderate prevalence. In total, seven challenges were grouped under the moderate category.

Table 4: Minor Challenges Faced by Nurse Managers N-100

SNo	CHALLENGES	YES Frequency/ Percentage	NO Frequency/ Percentage
1	Do you feel that sometimes being a channel of communication between subordinates and seniors is a challenge for you in your ward?	48	52
2	Do you feel that the process of issuing items to patients from the ward (for 24-hour use) is challenging in the ward?	47	53
3	Do you have ever experienced mental harassment in the workplace?	45	55
4	Do you feel that online recording and reporting is a challenge for you in the ward?	41	59
5	Do you feel that frequent extra assignments apart from your assigned role are a challenge for you in your ward?	39	61
6	Do you leave easily whenever you need to?	59	41*
7	Do you feel that maintaining coordination and collaboration with other departments is a challenge for you in your ward?	38	62
8	Are you able to communicate your concerns easily with top <i>nursing staff members</i> when needed?	71	29*
9	Do you feel that offline recording and reporting is a challenge for you in the ward?	24	76

* - Challenges

Table No. 4 presents the minor challenges, with reported occurrences ranging from a minimum of 24% to a maximum of 48%. Minor challenges are those not reported by most participants. These challenges include being a channel of communication between subordinates and senior (48%), Process of issuing items to patients from ward stores (47%), Mental harassment at the workplace (45%), Online recording and reporting (41%), Extra assignment apart from the defined role (39%), Not getting leave easily (41%), Maintaining coordination and collaboration with other departments (38%), Unreachability to nursing administration (29%) and Offline recording and reporting (24%).

Table 5: Association between Qualification, Designation, Total Experience as Nurse Manager, Clinical Area of Nurse managers, and Major Challenges N-100

S No	Challenges	Qualification		Designation		Total experience		Nurse manager experience		Clinical Area	
		X ²	P	X ²	P	X ²	P	X ²	P	X ²	P
1	Do you feel that the inadequate availability of medicine and surgical items is a challenge for you in the ward?	.822	.844	2.623	.105	5.764	.124	4.709	.194	5.576	.233
2	Do you feel that insufficient staff is a challenge for you in your ward?	6.070	.108	.234	.629	2.115	.549	4.639	.200	1.925	.750

3	Do you feel that ward management with untrained nursing staff and sanitation workers is a challenge for you in your ward?	1.704	.636	.005	.942	.441	.932	1.033	.793	16.810	.002
4	Do you feel that the implementation of top administration policies without your input is challenging?	1.141	.767	1.971	.160	2.437	.487	.972	.808	9.719	.045
5	Do you feel that a poorly trained subordinate is a challenge for you in your ward?	.517	.915	.059	.807	.206	.977	1.430	.699	8.975	.062
6	Do you feel that patient workload is a challenge in maintaining quality care in the intensive care unit (ICU)?	3.957	.266	.152	.697	.518	.915	7.535	.057	7.049	.133
7	Do you feel that subordinate disobedience poses a challenge for you in your ward?	3.356	.340	1.798	.180	.717	.869	.807	.848	6.622	.157
8	Do you feel that the current indenting process for all items from the store is challenging?	1.832	.608	1.798	.180	4.309	.230	3.809	.283	8.859	.065
9	Do you feel that not undergoing any formal management training before taking charge as a nurse manager is challenging for you?	2.064	.559	.484	.487	2.881	.410	3.358	.340	2.940	.568

Table 4 shows the association between qualifications, designation, total nursing experience, Experience as a Nurse manager, Clinical Area of Nurse Managers, and Major challenges. There was no significant association between any of the nine major challenges and the qualifications of nurse managers, as all P values were >0.05 . Similarly, there was no significant association between any of the nine major challenges and the designation of nurse managers, as all P values were >0.05 . Likewise, no significant association was found between all nine major challenges and the total nursing experience of nurse managers, as all P values were >0.05 . Additionally, there was no significant association between any of the nine major challenges and nurse managers' experience, as all P values were >0.05 . There were no statistically significant associations between the clinical area and the seven major challenges. However, two major challenges found a significant association with the clinical area: one is ward management with untrained Nursing orderly and sanitation workers, which found a statistically significant ($P = .002$) association with the clinical area. Another major challenge was the implementation of

policies made by top administration without the input of nurse managers, and this also had a statistically significant ($P = .045$) association with the clinical area.

4. Discussion

As this is a government institute, most medical and surgical items are supplied from the hospital store free of charge to all patients. However, many times, adequate supplies of medical and surgical items are not provided in wards for various reasons. **87%** of Nurse Managers responded that inadequate availability of medicine and surgical items was a challenge in managing the ward. As Nurse Managers, they are responsible for ensuring the availability of adequate medical and surgical items in their ward, and it is a challenge for them to fulfill this responsibility.

Most nurse managers (**82 %**) said they are facing staff shortage in their ward, and insufficient staff is a challenge for them to manage the ward.

Nurse Managers are provided nursing orderlies (nursing assistant) to assist them and sanitation workers to maintain the cleanliness of their wards. Nursing orderlies and sanitation workers should be trained properly for their work. However, in this study, the majority of Nurse Managers (**79 %**) found that nursing orderlies and sanitation workers are not trained adequately and it is a challenge to manage the ward with untrained nursing orderlies and sanitation workers.

This study found that administration makes policies without taking any input from nurse managers. **Of the nurse managers, 76% said that** implementing such policies is a challenge for them. This institute recruits graduate nurses after a proper selection process, but this study found that **75%** of Nurse managers are not satisfied with the level of training of newly recruited nurses, and it was a challenge for them to manage the clinical area and provide quality care to the patient with poorly trained nurses.

This hospital is a prime referral center with a high rate of patient turnover. In this study, **73%** of the nurse managers said that they were not able to provide quality care due to the patient workload. The burden of patient overload poses a challenge when providing quality care. Nurses should follow the instructions of the Nurse manager. In this study, **73%** of Nurse Managers found that their subordinates were disobedient, and managing a ward with such disobedient subordinates is challenging.

All Medical and Surgical items are provided free of charge to patients. Nurse managers must indent these items from various stores within the hospital. Most nurse managers (**73%**) responded that the current indenting process was not smooth. It is challenging to follow this indenting process.

Nurses are promoted to Nurse Managers. Nurse Managers are given formal management training neither before nor after taking charge as Nurse Managers. Managing a ward without any managerial training was a challenge for most nurse managers (**72%**).

Frequently, nursing officers take sudden unplanned leave, which may create staff shortages in the ward. Most nurse managers (**69%**) acknowledged that they were facing this type of challenge in their department.

Hospital administration implements many new policies or revises old ones from time to time. Sometimes inputs are solicited from all stakeholders before creating these policies, while other times they are not. **68%** of Nurse Managers indicated that the policies concerning nursing services, established by non-nursing personnel, present a challenge in their ward management.

This study was conducted at a premier institute with a vast infrastructure, encompassing numerous clinical areas, some of which are 70 years old, alongside recently inaugurated modern ones. **67%** of Nurse Managers have acknowledged that the clinical areas were not appropriately designed, and working in poorly designed areas poses a challenge for them.

Many departments maintain offline recording and reporting alongside online systems. **63%** of Nurse Managers have expressed that maintaining both online and offline records concurrently are a challenge for them in running their department.

The institute recruits many nursing officers every year, but many nursing officers also leave the institute, which leads to huge turnover of nursing staff. This turnover is considered a challenge in ward management by **62%** of Nurse Managers.

Patient care is provided by a team comprising nurses, physicians and other health care workers. Each member of the team assumes a well-defined role and responsibilities. For better outcomes, each member of the health team fulfills their duties by paying due respect to each other. However, many times, it has been seen that one member of the health team does not recognize the importance of the work of other team members. **In fact, 62%** of Nurse Managers highlighted that inadequate recognition and respect from medical colleagues is a challenge for them.

Doctors are generally in charge of each clinical area, along with nurse managers. Sometimes, these doctors give instructions to nurse managers without considering practicality or reality. Fulfilling these types of instructions sometimes becomes a hurdle in ward management. **54%** of Nurse Managers acknowledged that sometimes following faculty orders is a challenge for them in their ward.

In this study, we investigated the association between major challenges and various variables of nurse managers, such as their qualifications, designation, total nursing experience, experience as a nurse manager, and clinical area of posting. We found no statistically significant association between any of the nine major challenges and qualifications, total nursing experience, experience as a nurse manager, or designation of nurse managers. Seven of nine major challenges showed no statistically significant association with the clinical area of posting of nurse managers. However, two major challenges exhibited a significant association with the clinical area: one is *“ward management with untrained nursing orderlies and sanitation workers”*, and the other one is *“implementation of policies made by top administration without nurse managers' input”*. The reason for the significant association between the clinical area and the major problem of *“ward management with untrained nursing orderlies and sanitation workers”* may be that certain clinical areas like OPD do not require as many skilled nursing orderlies and sanitation workers, whereas in critical areas like ICUs, OTs, and wards, properly trained and skilled nursing orderlies and sanitation workers are essential. Similarly, the reason for the significant association between the clinical area and another major challenge, *“implementation of policies made by top administration without nurse managers' input,”* may be that all policies made by top administration do not have equal relevance to all clinical areas such as wards, ICU, OT, OPD, and Casualty.

5. Conclusion

However, in this study, we asked about 34 potential challenges in ward management. Respondents identified inadequate availability of medicine and surgical supplies, staff shortages, untrained nursing orderlies and sanitation workers, implementation of policies made without nursing input, poorly trained nursing subordinates, patient workload, disobedience of subordinates, lack of formal training as nurse managers and current indenting process as major challenges in ward management.

5.1 strength of the study

This study was conducted at the country's premier public sector institute, where each department functions as a separate center. For example, there are centers for Cardiac Neuroscience, Trauma, RPC for Ophthalmic Sciences, and the mother and child block. Various challenges were incorporated into this study. Respondents possessed significant nursing career experience; thus, the challenges faced by such experience-rich nurse managers are more significant

5.2 Limitations

We faced difficulty in data collection because most nurse managers refused to participate in the study. Perhaps they feared that any challenges they disclosed might be perceived as incompetence, or they were concerned that expressing their challenges could lead to actions by the institute administration. Many nurse managers posed these questions when approached, and although we clarified their doubts, many still refused to participate. Several nurse managers returned the questionnaire after numerous visits over the past month.

6. Recommendations

Our recommendation is to conduct an in-depth study of each challenge to identify the root cause of the challenge and implement solutions accordingly.

7. Sources of Funding

None

8. Conflict of interest

None

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