

# Factors behind Expatriates Nurses Job Dissatisfaction in Hail's Public Hospitals, Saudi Arabia

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## Abstract

Job satisfaction is considered one of the most important parameters in measuring the performance of the employees. In this study, the researcher has discussed different factors that lead to dissatisfaction among expat nurses working in the Saudi healthcare sector, and has used positivism philosophy. Different survey instruments were used to collect primary data for this study: and the JSS (quantitative component). Firstly, nurses were provided with a self-administrated JSS. The JSS was developed to analyse nine job satisfaction scales, each containing four subscales. The reliability coefficient for descriptive statistics was computed at 0.84, above the threshold mark of 0.70. T-tests were used in this research. During the study, it was observed that out of the 100 married participants, 43 were at the position of Charge nurse and only one of them was working as a director in the organisation. The researcher conducted t-tests to identify the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction among the expats at Hail's public hospitals in Saudi Arabia. Herein it was observed that very few chances of getting a promotion were of the main causes of job dissatisfaction among the expat nurses. Here the p-value was 0.00, lower than the threshold requirement of 0.05. In conclusion, the chances of getting a promotion were very less due to the fact that they were not native to the country. Also, nurses were not happy with the benefits that they receive in the organisation. That is, expats do not get too many benefits in the host nations.

**Keywords:** Nursing, Expatriates nurses, Job satisfaction, Public hospitals, Saudi Arabia.

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## INTRODUCTION

Expatriate nurses or foreign-based nurses form the largest portion of nurses who currently work and live in Saudi Arabia. Saudi national nurse's form approximately 29.1% of the total nurse's population in the area while expatriate nurses form the remaining numbers (Mansour Saleh & Roger, 2014). The number of Saudi based nurses is low in both public and private hospitals with the private sponsored institutions recording even low numbers. The local nurses make up 4.1% of the total nurses in the private healthcare settings while the remaining proportion is strictly left to the expatriate nurses (Mansour Saleh & Roger, 2014). Therefore, private nursing in Saudi Arabia is generally driven by expatriate nurses. More nurses move to Saudi Arabia because of the many different benefits provided by the Saudi Arabian healthcare system compared to

those present in their countries of origin. Saudi Arabia attracts higher remuneration to its nurses compared to other regions of the world, and as a result, more nurses across the world are tempted to join the system. For example, expatriate nurses in Saudi Arabia are paid approximately 800 pesos a day which translates to approximately \$18 dollars, a rate which is significantly high compared to what other nurses across the world are paid (Aldossary *et al.*, 2008). The number of expatriate nurses in Saudi Arabia continues to increase on an annual basis due to some of the benefits associated with the system. The table below indicates the number of Saudi and non-Saudi nurses across Saudi Arabia from 2005 to 2011 courtesy of the Ministry of Health. Table 1 indicates a surge in the number of both Saudi and Non-Saudi nationals although the number of foreign nurses is also higher.

**Table 1: Number of Saudi and foreign nurses in Saudi Arabia since 2005, Courtesy of Ministry of Health (2011)**

| Nationality                | 2005   | 2006   | 2007   | 2008   | 2009   | 2010   | 2011   |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Saudi                      | 9,669  | 10,417 | 13,542 | 14,737 | 20,977 | 26,307 | 27,040 |
| Non-Saudi                  | 20,910 | 21,495 | 24,110 | 26,195 | 23,742 | 33,291 | 33,631 |
| Total                      | 30,579 | 31,912 | 37,652 | 40,932 | 44,719 | 59,598 | 60,671 |
| Percentage of Saudi nurses | 31.1   | 32.6   | 35.9   | 36     | 46.9   | 44.1   | 44.6   |

Saudi Arabia traditionally has been known as a nation which has not provided adequate support to the expatriates. Studies and reports have revealed that expatriate nurses living and working in Saudi Arabia are not happy and satisfied with their jobs (McHugh, Kutney and Cimiotti, 2011). Due to this reason, they are not able to perform to the best of their skills and abilities. Job satisfaction is considered one of the most important parameters in measuring the performance of the employees. The more satisfied they are with their jobs, the better would be their performance.

Job dissatisfaction is an important aspect of the operations of business organisations. It needs to be considered in the process of managing human resources efficiently and effectively. By satisfying the employees, the company can provide better products and services for the customers, thereby fulfilling their varied needs and demands. In recent years, it has been observed that job dissatisfaction among employees across industries has increased significantly (Alshmemri, 2014). The role of job satisfaction among expatriates is of great importance. They are the individuals who have left their home nations in order to find better job opportunities and subsequently improve their living standards as well. Similarly, the role of job satisfaction is imperative in cases of expat nurses. It is a well-known fact that the health and social care industry is one of the most demanding job profiles. Employees tend to spend a considerable number of hours at the workplace. In this regard, Saudi Arabia is one of the destinations in the United Arab Emirates regions that see a significant number of expatriates in the nursing field (Elamin, 2011). This puts a lot of pressure on the authorities to ensure that these individuals get a proper working environment. This way they will be able to perform better and be satisfied with their job. There are several factors and forces that influence the motivation and dedication of the expat nurses working in Saudi Arabia. To ensure that these individuals perform better and are satisfied with their job and working conditions.

Nurse dissatisfaction is linked to a number of factors within clinical settings including extensive workloads (Zhou *et al.*, 2015), lack of training and development opportunities (Kanai-Pak, Aiken, Sloane, & Poghosyan, 2008), stringent policies on hiring nurses, extensive workloads (Cho *et al.*, 2009), poor remuneration (Kanai-Pak *et al.*, 2008), poor health benefits compared to other practitioners and poor

leadership and management skills among hospital administrative members (Lu, Barriball, Zhang, & While, 2012). As a consequence of the poor working conditions, most nurses leave their workplaces in search of better working conditions. At the same time, the number of students joining nursing school has decreased over the years increasing nursing shortages and at the same time signalling gap in the provision of essential nursing services in the coming years (Delobelle *et al.*, 2011).

Nursing Job dissatisfaction factors affecting healthcare system differ based on the level of development of the healthcare system. The United States, a developed country has the highest rates in the world currently standing at 41% followed by Scotland at 38% (McHugh, Kutney-Lee, Cimiotti, Sloane, & Aiken, 2011). Such values are significantly high despite the two-healthcare system being recognized as some of the best in delivery of some services. Nurses from other countries with less opportunities may choose to look for greener pastures in such countries. When employees move from their country of origin to other countries and are either temporarily or permanently employed, they become expatriate employees. One country which has witnessed an influx of nurses from other countries is Saudi Arabia. The number of expatriates in Saudi Arabia had grown too high to the point that the Royal Monarchy decreed the need to introduce a policy of "Saudinisation" to decrease the number of foreign workers in the state as well as reduce the number of Saudi who are unemployed (Alboliteeh, Magarey, & Wiechula, 2017). Nonetheless, there is a substantial nursing population of expatriates working in Saudi Arabia.

Nurse satisfaction may refer to the work attitudes, likes and dislike nurses have towards their job. Nurse satisfaction is a global issue as it is one of the factors associated with the low shortage of nurses across all continents. Developed countries are facing a huge nursing gap as the number of enrolled nurses within their clinical settings continue to dwindle while an increase is being noted in the turnover rates (Currie & Hill, 2012).

Various factors affect nurse satisfaction across the globe. Extensive workloads due to the shortage of nurses across the world result in nurses working for more hours to meet the health needs of the populace

(Beswick, Hill, & Anderson, 2010). In some cases, the nursing schedules are quite rigid providing only for a few resting hours before nurses resume their duties. As a result, nurses lack adequate time to spend with their family members since they spend more time in clinical settings (Hoi, Ismail, Ong, & Kang, 2010). Consequently, there are increased incidences of strained family relationships due to the extensive workloads.

*Poor remuneration* is another critical factor related to dissatisfaction. Nursing remains one of the professional practices with high qualifications across the globe. The practice also deals with specific aspects related to human life. Taking into consideration the extensive workloads and other vital roles nurses must play in any organizational setting, nurses should be adequately paid. However, nursing remuneration remains quite poor across most clinical settings (Huffenberger, 2012). In addition, nurses are not provided with any new incentives or promotional opportunities for development within their setting, and as a result, most nurses feel stuck in their current organizational setting (An, Cha, Moon, Ruggiero, & Jang, 2016). In addition, there are few training and development opportunities that could be provided to the nurses to improve their skillset and as a result, get better incomes. Most nurses have been restricted in their current organizational settings and as a result, receive poor remuneration throughout their careers. Some nurses have opted out of such a system by looking for other opportunities outside the current scope.

*Leadership styles* applied within organizational settings have a bearing on the nurse satisfaction rates. Transformational leadership style primarily defined by aspects of open communication and meeting intrinsic needs of nurses is preferred by most nurses across clinical settings (Nelson, 2013). Autocratic leaders who authoritarian policies within organizational settings without necessarily consulting other parties result in high turnover rates (Murrells, Robinson, & Griffiths, 2008). Nurses prefer working in an environment that incorporates their views during decision making.

*Organizational visions and policies* also play a critical role in job satisfaction. Nurses prefer working in organizational settings which have strict policies on healthcare management. Some clinical settings lack a quality of care vision to address common problems like nurse to patient ratio, implementation of new technologies provision of insurance plans for medical staff and implementation of promotional health activities (Cortese *et al.*, 2010). Such poor working conditions result in higher turnover rates as nurses look for better working conditions. Studies in Saudi Arabia have identified job satisfaction factors among expatriates. (Yasin, Al-Hamad, Bélanger, Boucher, and AbuRubeiha (2017) identified several factors associated with satisfaction including working conditions, hospital policies, job security, and interpersonal relationships.

Dagamseh MS (2016) identified work-family balance, lack of extrinsic needs as well as interaction with other co-workers as some of the critical aspects associated with satisfaction while Al- Ahmadi (2014) classified all factors related to satisfaction into based organizational factors and personal factors. Other studies indicated that job satisfaction among non- Saudi nurses was related to pay and working condition (Aljohani & Alomari, 2018), workload and promotion (Alasmari & Douglas, 2012), emotional exhaustion due to extensive workloads (Al-Turki *et al.*, 2010), and infringe benefits and lack of opportunities (Al-Dossary, Vail, & Macfarlane, 2012) The table below summarizes nurse satisfaction among non-Saudi nationals.

Various studies and reports have shown that job dissatisfaction level among the expat nurses is rampant, indicating that the nurses are neither happy with their jobs and nor with their working conditions. Through this study, the researcher has identified and thoroughly analysed the reasons for job dissatisfaction among expatriate nurses in Saudi Arabia. In this study, the researcher has discussed the various factors that lead to dissatisfaction among expat nurses from their jobs (Bahnassy *et al.*, 2014). By conducting this study, the researcher has evaluated different job trends prevalent among expat nurses in Saudi Arabia. Through such information, the researcher has been able to get a more thorough and effective understanding of the current job market in the country. The health care system followed in Saudi Arabia is considered one of the most effective ones around the world. It has been observed that a large number of people are migrating to Arab countries in hopes to find better jobs and living opportunities (Wanders, 2017). In this study, the researcher has discussed different factors that lead to dissatisfaction among expat nurses working in the Saudi healthcare sector.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Questions

- What is the level of job satisfaction among expatriate nurses in the Hali public hospital?
- What are the factors that dissatisfy expatriate nurses from their jobs in Hali public hospital?
- How can job satisfaction level of the expatriate nurses be improved?

### Study aim

- To identify factors relating to expat nurse job dissatisfaction in Hail's public hospitals in Saudi Arabia.

### Study objectives

- To assess the level and reasons for job dissatisfaction among expatriate nurses working in Saudi Arabia.
- To evaluate the job satisfaction level among expatriate nurses working in Hail public hospital in Saudi Arabia.

- To determine the factors that dissatisfy expatriate nurses from their jobs in Hail public hospitals.
- To suggest ways to improve the job satisfaction level of expat nurses.

### Research design

A descriptive cross-sectional approach to describe and evaluate the correlation between the variables related to job satisfaction among expat nurses in Hail's public hospitals.

### Data collection

Job satisfaction scale questionnaire included 18 questions with Likert scale starting with 1 "Disagree very much" to 6 "Agree very much". Primary data was collected through a self-administered job satisfaction questionnaire survey of the expat nurses, to analyse nine job satisfaction scales, each containing four subscales. Secondary data was collected by reviewing and analysing past books, journals, magazines, reports and articles, on the subject matter. Herein focus was on gathering the studies that have been carried out in the past (Lewis 2015).

### Sample size

Total sample size is a part of probability sampling. Expatriate nurses employed in three public hospitals in Hail, Saudi Arabia were invited to participate in this quantitative study, with the JSS being distributed by the nursing directors at the three public hospitals over one-month period.

### Data collection validity and reliability

Job satisfaction scale (JSS) questionnaire was highly valid as the nine sub-scales have moderate internal consistency between 0.60 and 0.90. The reliability coefficient was computed at 0.84 which indicate that the current study sample was reliable and can be used for future.

The STATA-14 software was used in the analysis process for the collected data. Descriptive analysis was undertaken to analyses the data, and sample t-test was used also. Thematic analysis technique was used to analyse the open-ended questions of the questionnaire.

### Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from Curtin University "Reciprocal ethics approval number "HRE2018-0554", and the lead HREC for this project had been identified as Hail Institutional Review Board. Ethical standard was considered when collecting the data, and the participants information were kept safe from any unauthorised personnel in digital format and the original data were destroyed.

## RESULTS

All the participants in this study were female nurses who had left their home nations to Hail in search for better job opportunities in the field of health and social care. The following table (Table 1) shows different categories of hierarchical position on which the selected participants worked at. Herein it can be observed that majority of the participants were aged between 20-30 years and were working at the position of staff nurse. Out of the 100 married participants, 43 were at the position of Charge nurse, and only one of them was working as a director in the organisation. Further, more than 100 were of Filipino origin, and only 91 were Indian. 2 Filipino participants worked as a supervisor in the firm while one Indian was employed as a director. 185 Staff Nurses had a bachelor's degree. Similarly, 39 Charge Nurses were also educated till graduation level only. 76 staff nurses had experience of 1-3 years, while 40 of the charge nurses had working experience of more than 50 years. 48 Charge Nurses had a contract of 1 year with the organisation.

**Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of the participated expatriate nurses**

| Variable                         | Staff Nurse | Head Nurse | Charge Nurse | Educator | Supervisor | Director |
|----------------------------------|-------------|------------|--------------|----------|------------|----------|
| <b>Age</b>                       |             |            |              |          |            |          |
| 20-30                            | 123         | 1          | 19           | 1        | 1          | 0        |
| 30-40                            | 31          | 2          | 12           | 4        | 0          | 1        |
| Over 40                          | 41          | 1          | 22           | 1        | 2          | 0        |
| <b>Marital Status</b>            |             |            |              |          |            |          |
| Single                           | 105         | 0          | 14           | 2        | 0          | 0        |
| Married                          | 100         | 4          | 43           | 5        | 4          | 1        |
| <b>Nationality</b>               |             |            |              |          |            |          |
| Filipino                         | 106         | 3          | 23           | 6        | 2          | 0        |
| Indian                           | 91          | 1          | 33           | 1        | 2          | 1        |
| <b>Religion</b>                  |             |            |              |          |            |          |
| Muslim                           | 37          | 2          | 9            | 1        | 0          | 0        |
| Others                           | 168         | 2          | 48           | 6        | 4          | 1        |
| <b>Educational Qualification</b> |             |            |              |          |            |          |
| Nursing Diploma                  | 14          | 1          | 17           | 0        | 1          | 0        |
| Bachelors                        | 185         | 3          | 39           | 6        | 3          | 1        |

|  |     |   |    |   |   |   |
|--|-----|---|----|---|---|---|
| Master of Nursing Doctorate in Nursing | 5   | 0 | 1  | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| <b>Experience (in years)</b>           |     |   |    |   |   |   |
| 6 months or less                       | 48  | 0 | 1  | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1-3 years                              | 76  | 0 | 1  | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3-5 years                              | 46  | 0 | 15 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| More than 5 years                      | 35  | 4 | 40 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| <b>Workplace</b>                       |     |   |    |   |   |   |
| Maternal Hospital                      | 77  | 1 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hali General Hospital                  | 75  | 1 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| King Khaled Hospital                   | 53  | 2 | 30 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| <b>Contract</b>                        |     |   |    |   |   |   |
| Locum                                  | 1   | 0 | 1  | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 year                                 | 187 | 4 | 48 | 6 | 4 | 0 |
| 2 years                                | 8   | 0 | 2  | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| years Other                            | 1   | 0 | 1  | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The following table (Table 2) provides information about job satisfaction level among the research participants. Herein it can be observed that the majority of the participants are satisfied with their job. Table 2 presents the number of observations and the mean value determined through the software. The answers for each of the 'points' ranged between 1 and 6. (1 = Disagree very much; 2 = Disagree moderately; 3 = Disagree slightly; 4 = Agree slightly; 5 = Agree moderately; 6 = Agree very much). Any value of the mean above 4 meant that the employees are happy and satisfied with their workplace. The level of job satisfaction for these individuals was higher. These

categories were selected by the researcher to measure the job satisfaction levels, as they are considered as some of the key factors that affect the performance of the employees as well as their dedication towards the company. On the basis of the table, it can be said that the participants were happy and content with their pay package with the mean computed at 4.07. The selected expatriate nurses were also very satisfied in terms of the benefits that they get while working with the healthcare organisation. However, the table also reveals that the participants believe that the chances of promotion are very less. The mean here was calculated at 3.76, much less than the required mean of 4.

**Table 2: Distribution of the participants expatriate nurses according to the mean of job satisfaction level**

| Points                       | Observations | Mean | Min | Max |
|------------------------------|--------------|------|-----|-----|
| Fair Amount                  | 280          | 4.07 | 1   | 6   |
| Satisfaction due to benefits | 274          | 4.27 | 1   | 6   |
| Recognition                  | 281          | 3.78 | 1   | 6   |
| Chances of promotion         | 280          | 3.76 | 1   | 6   |
| Relations with co-workers    | 275          | 4.77 | 1   | 6   |

From Table 3 it can be observed that a large number of participants agreed with the statement that they are satisfied due to the benefits that they receive. Such benefits include the likes of bonuses, holidays, perks, etc. This motivates them to perform even better and contribute heavily towards the attainment of the organisational goals as well as on providing better

services to the care users. Very few of the participants showed disagreement that they get a fair amount. This means that the majority of them believe they are paid according to their skills and the work they do. Due to this reason, they feel motivated and thus remain loyal towards the workplace.

**Table 3: Distribution of the participants expatriate nurses according to the job satisfaction level**

| Points                       | Disagree very much | Disagree moderately | Disagree slightly | Agree slightly | Agree moderately | Agree very much |
|------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Fair Amount                  | 35                 | 30                  | 26                | 34             | 99               | 56              |
| Satisfaction due to benefits | 18                 | 25                  | 38                | 50             | 70               | 73              |
| Recognition                  | 30                 | 29                  | 48                | 68             | 77               | 29              |
| Chances of promotion         | 26                 | 28                  | 60                | 68             | 67               | 31              |
| Relations with co- workers   | 5                  | 12                  | 16                | 59             | 97               | 86              |

Table 4 shows the results of t-test that was used to identify the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction among the expatriate nurses at Hali public hospital. The researcher decided to use t-test in

the current study because they are simpler to interpret and require less amount of data than any other form of statistical tests and analysis. Herein, p-value greater than 0.05 was considered significant (Riedl, Davis and

Hevner, 2014). This means any of the factors that scored less than the threshold mark were the ones that

caused dissatisfaction among the participants in relation to their job.

**Table 4: Distribution of the expatriate nurses according to factors that lead to job dissatisfaction among them at Hali public hospital**

| Factors   | Observations | Mean | p-Value |
|---|--------------|------|---------|
| There is really too little chance for promotion on my job.                                | 280          | 4.25 | 0.001   |
| I am not satisfied with the benefits I receive.   | 274          | 4.27 | 0.001   |
| I sometimes feel my job is meaningless.   | 278          | 3.36 | 0.168   |
| My supervisor is unfair to me.  | 277          | 3.05 | 0.001   |
| I do not feel that the work I do is appreciated.  | 277          | 3.58 | 0.31    |
| My efforts to do a good job are seldom blocked by red tape.                               | 268          | 3.30 | 0.01    |
| I find I have to work harder at my job because of the incompetence of people I work with. | 276          | 3.53 | 0.63    |
| The goals of this organisation are not clear to me.                                       | 280          | 3.27 | 0.01    |
| I feel unappreciated by the organisation when I think about what they pay me.             | 268          | 3.81 | 0.001   |
| My supervisor shows too little interest in the feelings of subordinates.                  | 268          | 3.47 | 0.76    |
| There are few rewards for those who work here.  | 272          | 3.96 | 0.001   |
| I have too much to do at work.  | 274          | 4.55 | 0.001   |
| I often feel that I do not know what is going on with the organisation.                   | 274          | 3.70 | 0.01    |
| There are benefits we do not have which we should have.                                   | 270          | 4.45 | 0.001   |
| I have too much paperwork.  | 273          | 4.56 | 0.001   |
| I do not feel my efforts are rewarded the way they should be.                             | 269          | 4.07 | 0.001   |

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed to identify and analyse the factors leading to dissatisfaction among the expat nurses working in Hali's public hospitals in Saudi Arabia. The current study identified several factors which impacted level of job satisfaction among participants. Work pressure was one of the major causes of job dissatisfaction among nurses. McHugh, Kutney and Cimiotti (2011) found in their study that most health care workers such as the nurses are under pressure. This pressure affects their ability to carry out their roles and responsibilities efficiently and effectively. In addition, this creates an imbalance between their personal and professional lives. However, Bahnassy *et al.*, (2014) reported that expat nurses leave their families for better living and work opportunities and this work pressure is not a major issue.

In the current study, it was observed that majority of the participants reported that they do not get the proper recognition for the work that they do in hospitals. This affects their morale and dedication level to work, and they got de-motivated and dissatisfied with their job. Similarly, Almalki, FitzGerald and Clark (2012), reported that expat nurses do not get proper recognition for their performance and efforts in the healthcare sector. This has a negative impact on their morale. For these reasons, the government and healthcare organisations need to increase their effort to motivate the expat nurses and to recognise their hard work. This will enable them to perform to the best of their abilities and contribute as much as they can towards the organisational goals and objectives (Alam and Mohammad 2010). In addition, the healthcare

organisations and the government need to develop strict measures that analyse the performance of the expat nurses (Al-Dossary, Vail and Macfarlane 2012).

In terms of the relationship with the co-workers, participants in the current study reported that this is the main factor to motivate these expat nurses to perform their tasks and duties efficiently and effectively. Elamin (2011) reported that job dissatisfaction among expatriates is directly proportional with the dynamic shared with the co-workers. Therefore, Yasin *et al.*, (2017) suggested to companies that have expatriates in their workforce, to help these individuals build and maintain healthy relations with the co-workers.

One of the main factors that lead to job dissatisfaction among the expats at Hali's public hospitals in Saudi Arabia, is that few of expat nurses getting chances of promotion, which discourage them from performing the best of their skills and abilities. In addition, the study revealed that majority of the expat nurses are not satisfied with their job because they feel that they are not properly appreciated for their efforts. They also believed that they do not get growth opportunities because they are not natives to Saudi Arabia. These findings were consistent with Riedl, Davis and Hevner (2014). In this regard Almalki, FitzGerald and Clark (2012) stated that such a form of discrimination and biases further affects the morale and job satisfaction level of the employees.

## CONCLUSION

Findings from the study concluded that chances of getting a promotion were very less because they were not native to the country. In addition, nurses were not happy with the benefits that they receive from the organisation.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author has no conflict of interest.

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