

**Assessing the Link between Nurses' Job Satisfaction and Healthcare Quality Outcomes at
Hospitals in Hail, KSA: A Qualitative Study**

Authors and Affiliations

Abdullah Abdulaziz Alshammari^{1,2} MSN, RN.

ORCID: 0009-0007-6587-1471

Prof. Seham Al-Yousef¹ PhD, MSN, RN.

Prof. Sami Al-Hamidi¹ PhD, MSN, RN.

Prof. Juliana Linnette D'Sa¹ PhD, MSN, RN.

Affiliations

¹ College of Nursing, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

² Hail Health Cluster, Hail, Saudi Arabia

Corresponding Author

Abdullah Abdulaziz Alshammari

ORCID: 0009-0007-6587-1471

Abstract

Background: Nurses’ job satisfaction is an important organizational and workforce issue that may shape motivation, well-being, and nurses’ perceived ability to provide high-quality patient care. Although quantitative studies have examined nurse job satisfaction and related outcomes, qualitative evidence describing nurses’ experiences of this relationship remains limited in Saudi Arabia, particularly in the Hail Region.

Aim: To explore nurses’ perceptions of job satisfaction and its perceived relationship with the quality of patient care in public hospitals in Hail, Saudi Arabia.

Methods: A qualitative descriptive design was used. Purposive sampling recruited 10 registered nurses working in three public hospitals in the Hail Region. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted in Arabic and lasted approximately 30–60 minutes. With written consent, interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English for analysis. Data were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke’s six-phase approach, with NVivo 11 used to support data organization. Trustworthiness was addressed using the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Results: Participants perceived job satisfaction and patient-care quality as closely interconnected. seven broad workplace influences were repeatedly described: leadership support and recognition; workload and staffing; workplace environment and teamwork; role clarity and administrative responsibilities; salary and benefits; and emotional well-being. Supportive leadership, recognition, effective teamwork, adequate staffing, and manageable workloads were perceived as facilitating motivation and patient care, whereas excessive workload, staffing shortages, unclear responsibilities, inadequate resources, and limited recognition were perceived as barriers.

Conclusion: Nurses in this study described job satisfaction and perceived patient-care quality as interconnected through organizational and workplace conditions. The findings highlight areas that nurses identified as important to their work experience, including leadership, staffing, recognition, role clarity, teamwork, and the work environment. Further research using larger qualitative samples and objective patient-care and workforce indicators is warranted.

Keywords: job satisfaction; nurses; patient-care quality; qualitative research; thematic analysis; Saudi Arabia; hospital nursing

1. Introduction

Nurses constitute a substantial proportion of the healthcare workforce and have a central role in delivering direct patient care. Their experiences of the work environment are therefore important to understanding workforce well-being and the delivery of care. Previous research has linked nurses' job satisfaction with work environment characteristics, workload, leadership, teamwork, and other organizational factors (Hellín Gil et al., 2022; Labrague et al., 2022; Nurmeksela et al., 2021).

Job satisfaction is multidimensional and can be shaped by interpersonal, organizational, and psychosocial conditions. Studies have reported associations between nurses' satisfaction and factors such as supportive leadership, social support, workload, professional relationships, and opportunities for development (Abadi et al., 2021; Hellín Gil et al., 2022). In Saudi Arabia, research has also identified leadership behavior, workplace conditions, and occupational stress as relevant to nurses' job satisfaction and well-being (Alzailai et al., 2021; Reshidi et al., 2023).

The relationship between job satisfaction and quality of care is particularly relevant because nurses' perceptions of staffing, workload, teamwork, and managerial support may influence how they experience their capacity to provide safe and effective care. Quantitative evidence has reported relationships among nurse work environment, job satisfaction, patient-safety outcomes, and patient satisfaction (Labrague et al., 2022; Nurmeksela et al., 2021). However, quantitative associations do not fully describe how nurses understand these relationships in their everyday practice.

In the Saudi context, available evidence has largely relied on quantitative approaches. Qualitative inquiry can complement this literature by examining nurses' own accounts of what contributes to satisfaction, what makes their work more or less manageable, and how they perceive these conditions in relation to patient care (Mofadi et al., 2024). This is especially relevant in Hail, where previous research has examined nursing leadership and job satisfaction quantitatively (Reshidi et al., 2023), while qualitative evidence describing nurses' experiences of the relationship between satisfaction and patient-care quality remains limited.

Accordingly, this study explored nurses' perceptions of job satisfaction and its perceived relationship with patient-care quality in public hospitals in Hail, Saudi Arabia.

1.1 Research Aim

This study aimed to explore nurses' perceptions of job satisfaction and its perceived relationship with

the quality of patient care in public hospitals in Hail, Saudi Arabia.

1.2 Objectives

To understand nurses’ perspectives on job satisfaction.

To identify nurses’ perceived effects of job satisfaction on patient-care quality.

To explore contextual factors influencing job satisfaction and perceived patient-care quality.

1.3 Research Questions

The study used three open-ended questions. these were: “What is the current level of job satisfaction among nurses in hospitals?”, “What factors influence job satisfaction among these nurses? ” and “How does nurses' job satisfaction correlate with the quality of healthcare provided?”

2. Methods

2.1 Design

A descriptive qualitative design was employed to explore nurses’ perspectives and experiences regarding job satisfaction and its perceived relationship with patient-care quality. The design was selected because it allows participants’ accounts to be described in a relatively direct and practice-oriented manner without imposing a formal theoretical framework on the data.

2.2 Setting

The study was conducted in three public hospitals within the Hail Health Cluster in the Hail Region, Saudi Arabia. The hospitals provide a range of healthcare services and employ registered nurses across clinical settings. Interviews were conducted in private and quiet locations within the participating hospitals to support confidentiality and participant comfort.

2.3 Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to recruit nurses with relevant clinical experience. The sample consisted of 10 registered nurses employed in patient-care roles across the three participating public hospitals. A total of 10 registered nurses participated in the study. Recruitment and interviewing continued until data saturation was achieved. Saturation was considered to have been reached when subsequent interviews no longer generated substantially new ideas, concepts, or themes relevant to the research

questions. A final sample of 10 registered nurses was therefore included in the analysis.

2.4 Eligibility Criteria

Eligible participants were registered nurses who had at least one year of clinical experience and were currently employed in patient-care roles. Nurses working in administrative roles and nurses with less than one year of experience were excluded.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Hail Health Cluster Institutional Review Board (IRB No. 2025-19) and the King Saud University Institutional Review Board (KSU-HE-25-341) before data collection commenced. Participants received information about the study purpose and procedures and provided written informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw without penalty. Participant confidentiality was protected by assigning identification numbers rather than using names in transcripts or reports. Audio recordings, transcripts, and research documents were stored securely and were accessible only to authorized members of the research team.

2.6 Data Collection

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted in Arabic in private and quiet locations within the participating hospitals. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes. The interview guide used open-ended questions concerning participants’ experiences of job satisfaction, leadership and recognition, workload and staffing, teamwork, workplace conditions, role expectations, compensation, emotional well-being, and perceived patient-care quality.

With participants’ written consent, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes were maintained to document contextual observations and reflections following interviews. The Arabic transcripts were translated into English for analysis and reporting, with attention to preserving the meaning of participants’ statements.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher, who was also responsible for data collection. The researcher had relevant nursing and research experience and had no prior professional or personal relationship with the participating nurses before the study.

2.7 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase approach. Analysis

involved familiarization with the interview transcripts, generation of initial codes, searching for candidate themes, reviewing themes against the coded data and the complete dataset, defining and naming the final themes, and producing the analytic narrative. NVivo 11 was used to organize transcripts, codes, and thematic categories.

Members of the research team independently reviewed selected portions of the data and discussed differences in coding and interpretation. Disagreements were resolved through discussion and consensus. Analysis was conducted alongside data collection, allowing issues emerging from earlier interviews to inform subsequent interviews.

2.8 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was considered using the criteria of Lincoln and Guba. Credibility was supported through prolonged engagement with the interview material, member checking where feasible, and discussion of emerging interpretations among members of the research team. Dependability was supported through documentation of methodological decisions, interview procedures, coding processes, and changes made during analysis. Confirmability was enhanced through reflexive journaling, peer discussion, and review of coding and thematic interpretations by a second researcher.

Transferability was supported through description of the study setting, participant eligibility, recruitment procedures, data collection, and analytic process. Throughout data collection and analysis, the researcher maintained reflexive awareness of potential assumptions and interpretations. Reflective notes and discussions with members of the research team were used to support reflexivity and enhance the credibility and confirmability of the findings.

3. Results

Ten registered nurses from three public hospitals in the Hail Health Cluster participated in the study. The analysis identified seven themes: (1) perceived relationship between job satisfaction and patient-care quality; (2) factors influencing job satisfaction; (3) overall experiences of job satisfaction; (4) workplace environment; (5) role clarity and job description; (6) salary and benefits; and (7) nursing shortage.

3.1 Theme 1: Perceived Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Patient-Care Quality

Participants commonly described a perceived relationship between their job satisfaction and their ability to provide patient care. Emotional well-being, supervisor support, recognition, staffing, and

workload were repeatedly described as conditions that shaped motivation and perceived work performance.

"Listening with respect from my supervisor naturally boosts my patient care giving which results in better patient recovery." (Nurse 4)

"When exhaustion results from long shifts or insufficient staff levels it causes patient care to deteriorate thus increasing the risk of medical errors." (Nurse 2)

These accounts indicate that participants understood patient-care quality not as an isolated clinical outcome, but as something influenced by the organizational conditions in which nursing work was performed.

3.2 Theme 2: Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction

Participants identified hospital culture, leadership approach, communication, workload, recognition, and professional development as important influences on job satisfaction.

"My appreciation grows when the head nurse praises my work through words of encouragement. Lack of support results in a situation where others cannot see how much work we put into our job." (Nurse 6)

"Workload is a huge issue. While performing double and triple tasks as a nurse you rarely receive any acknowledgment from others." (Nurse 7)

Participants therefore emphasized both interpersonal and organizational factors. Recognition and supportive communication were described as positive experiences, whereas excessive workload and insufficient acknowledgment were described as sources of dissatisfaction.

3.3 Theme 3: Overall Experiences of Job Satisfaction

Participants described variation in their experiences of job satisfaction, ranging from average contentment to strong dissatisfaction. Teamwork, workload management, patient numbers, and relationships with colleagues were among the conditions associated with these experiences.

"Working in my previous job used to be enjoyable until recent periods brought me more tension than happiness." (Nurse 3)

Participants continued to value nursing work while describing periods of reduced or unstable satisfaction associated with work pressure and perceived limitations in hospital resources.

"Although I continue to enjoy my work as a nurse the hospital exposes me to extra difficulties. We're always understaffed." (Nurse 9)

3.4 Theme 4: Workplace Environment and Teamwork

The workplace environment was described as an important component of participants' work experiences. Participants highlighted cleanliness, safety, teamwork, equipment availability, and nurse-to-patient ratios.

"The teamwork quality manages difficult shifts so that they become workable." (Nurse 1)

Positive teamwork was perceived as helping nurses manage difficult shifts. In contrast, participants described equipment shortages, unfavorable workplace cultures, and high nurse-to-patient ratios as conditions associated in their accounts with greater difficulty in practice and increased risk of mistakes.

3.5 Theme 5: Role Clarity and Administrative Responsibilities

Participants described concerns when nursing roles were perceived as unclear or when nurses were assigned substantial administrative tasks outside their expected bedside responsibilities.

"We are nurses, not secretaries. The majority of my work shifts involve data entry tasks instead of patient bedside care responsibilities." (Nurse 5)

These accounts suggest that role clarity was important to participants' perceptions of job satisfaction and their ability to focus on patient-care responsibilities.

3.6 Theme 6: Salary and Benefits

Salary and benefits were mentioned by several participants, but compensation was not described as the only or primary determinant of overall satisfaction. Participants also emphasized respect, fairness, recognition, and work-life balance.

"Money is not everything. The only request I have from you is fairness along with regular breaks." (Nurse 8)

Thus, participants described financial compensation alongside a broader set of organizational and interpersonal conditions that shaped their experiences of work.

3.7 Theme 7: Nursing Shortage

Insufficient staffing emerged as a workplace concern and was described as contributing to difficult working conditions. Although the theme received fewer mentions than several other themes, participants connected staffing shortages with increased workload and hardship for nurses and patients.

“There are not enough of us. The situation leads patients as well as healthcare providers to experience hardship.” (Nurse 10)

The accounts indicate that staffing adequacy was perceived as relevant to both nurses’ work experiences and their perceptions of patient-care quality.

4. Discussion

This qualitative study explored nurses’ perceptions of job satisfaction and its perceived relationship with patient-care quality in public hospitals in Hail, Saudi Arabia. Participants described job satisfaction and patient-care quality as interconnected through workplace and organizational conditions. Rather than identifying a single determinant, the interviews highlighted leadership, recognition, workload, staffing, teamwork, role clarity, workplace resources, compensation, and emotional well-being as interacting aspects of nurses’ experiences.

The central finding was that participants perceived supportive working conditions as enabling them to maintain motivation and provide patient care, whereas excessive workload, staffing limitations, inadequate resources, and insufficient recognition were perceived as barriers (Alshammari, et al., 2023). This interpretation is consistent with quantitative evidence showing relationships among work environment, interprofessional collaboration, job satisfaction, and patient-safety outcomes (Labrague et al., 2022). It is also consistent with research demonstrating an association between workload and nurses’ job satisfaction, particularly in relation to organizational and professional-recognition factors (Hellín Gil et al., 2022).

Leadership and recognition were prominent in participants’ accounts. This finding is particularly relevant to the Hail context because Reshidi et al. (2023) reported an association between nursing leaders’ behavior and nurses’ job satisfaction in Hail. The present qualitative findings add contextual detail by illustrating how participants described respectful supervision, encouragement, and recognition as experiences that could strengthen motivation and perceived capacity for patient care.

Workload and staffing were also recurring concerns. Participants described long shifts, multiple tasks,

and insufficient staffing as conditions that reduced their ability to work comfortably and, in their perception, could compromise patient care. This is compatible with previous evidence linking workload with job satisfaction and with Saudi literature describing burnout and job-satisfaction concerns among critical-care nurses (Alzailai et al., 2021; Hellín Gil et al., 2022). Importantly, the present study reports participants' perceptions and should not be interpreted as evidence that staffing shortages directly caused patient harm.

Teamwork and the workplace environment were additional components of the participants' experiences. Participants described teamwork as helping them manage difficult shifts, while unfavorable workplace conditions and inadequate equipment were perceived as making care more difficult. This complements previous research indicating that interprofessional collaboration can be an important pathway linking the work environment with job satisfaction and patient-safety outcomes (Labrague et al., 2022).

Role clarity was another important theme. Participants described frustration when administrative or data-entry duties were perceived to displace bedside nursing responsibilities. This finding extends the discussion beyond traditional measures of job satisfaction by emphasizing how the organization of nursing work may shape nurses' sense of professional role and their perceived opportunity to focus on direct patient care.

Salary and benefits were mentioned but were not consistently described as the dominant determinant of satisfaction. Participants emphasized fairness, respect, breaks, and recognition alongside compensation. This broader interpretation is consistent with evidence that quality of nursing work life and job satisfaction are related to multiple dimensions of the work experience rather than salary alone (Salahat & Al-Hamdan, 2022).

Overall, the findings suggest that nurses understand job satisfaction within a broader organizational system. Leadership, staffing, workload, teamwork, role expectations, recognition, and workplace resources were not described as isolated issues; rather, participants experienced them as connected aspects of everyday nursing practice. This provides a useful contextual perspective for nursing managers in Hail while avoiding a causal interpretation that cannot be established by this qualitative design.

5. Strengths and Limitations

A strength of the study is its qualitative focus on nurses' own descriptions of job satisfaction and

perceived patient-care quality in public hospitals in Hail, an area in which the available literature includes quantitative research but comparatively limited qualitative evidence. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed participants to describe workplace experiences in their own words, and the study incorporated several strategies intended to support trustworthiness.

The study also has important limitation such patient-care quality was explored through nurses' perceptions rather than objective patient outcomes, safety indicators, or patient-reported measures. Accordingly, the findings describe perceived relationships rather than causal effects.

6. Implications for Nursing Practice and Research

The findings identify several areas that participants considered important to their working lives. Nursing managers may consider how leadership communication, recognition, workload distribution, staffing adequacy, teamwork, role clarity, and access to resources are experienced by frontline nurses. These findings should be treated as areas for organizational attention rather than as evidence of causal effects.

Future research could combine qualitative accounts with objective indicators of patient safety and quality, workforce measures, and longitudinal designs. Larger qualitative studies across different hospitals and regions could also examine whether the themes identified in Hail are shared across other Saudi healthcare settings. Future studies should report participant characteristics and a transparent rationale for sample adequacy, including the approach used to determine when sufficient information had been obtained.

7. Conclusion

Nurses in this study perceived job satisfaction and patient-care quality as closely interconnected through organizational and workplace conditions. Leadership support and recognition, staffing and workload, teamwork, workplace resources, role clarity, compensation, and emotional well-being shaped participants' accounts of their work experiences. The findings provide contextual insight into how nurses in public hospitals in Hail understand the conditions that support or hinder their work. Because the study examined perceptions within a small purposive sample, the findings should not be interpreted as demonstrating causal effects on healthcare quality. Further research using broader samples and objective patient-care and workforce indicators is needed to examine these relationships.

8. Declarations

Ethics Approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the Hail Health Cluster Institutional Review Board (IRB No. 2025-19) and the King Saud University Institutional Review Board (KSU-HE-25-341) before commencement of data collection.

Informed Consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews. Participants were informed about the study purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality procedures, and their right to withdraw without penalty.

Data Availability

The qualitative data generated during the current study are not publicly available because they contain potentially identifiable participant information. Data may be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request and subject to applicable ethical and institutional requirements.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Funding

No specific funding was received for this study.

Author Contributions

Abdullah Abdulaziz Alshammari: Conceptualization, methodology, data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and manuscript preparation. Seham Al-Yousef: Supervision, methodological guidance, interpretation, and critical revision of the manuscript. Sami Al-Hamidi: Supervision, methodological guidance, interpretation, and critical revision of the manuscript. Juliana Linnette D’Sa: Supervision, methodological guidance, interpretation, and critical revision of the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

References

Abadi, M. B. H., Taban, E., Khanjani, N., Konjin, Z. N., Khajehnasiri, F., & Samaei, S. E. (2021). Relationships between job satisfaction and job demand, job control, social support, and depression

in Iranian nurses. Journal of Nursing Research, 29(2), e143. DOI: 10.1097/jnr.0000000000000410

Alshammari, M. H., & Alenezi, A. (2023). Nursing workforce competencies and job satisfaction: the role of technology integration, self-efficacy, social support, and prior experience. BMC nursing, 22(1), 308. DOI: 10.1186/s12912-023-01474-8

Alzailai, N., Barriball, L., & Xyrichis, A. (2021). Burnout and job satisfaction among critical care nurses in Saudi Arabia and their contributing factors: A scoping review. Nursing open, 8(5), 2331-2344. DOI: 10.1002/nop.2.843

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Hellín Gil, M. F., Ruiz Hernández, J. A., Ibáñez-López, F. J., Seva Llor, A. M., Roldán Valcárcel, M. D., Mikla, M., & López Montesinos, M. J. (2022). Relationship between job satisfaction and workload of nurses in adult inpatient units. International journal of environmental research and public health, 19(18), 11701. DOI: 10.3390/ijerph191811701

Labrague, L. J., Al Sabei, S., Al Rawajfah, O., AbuAlRub, R., & Burney, I. (2022). Interprofessional collaboration as a mediator in the relationship between nurse work environment, patient safety outcomes and job satisfaction among nurses. Journal of nursing management, 30(1), 268-278. DOI: 10.1111/jonm.13491

Mofadi, h., almarwani, t., al anazi, n. M., adawi, d., al nfeeli, f. N. A., alsuayed, r., ... & alrimali, a. (2024). A nationwide analysis of the correlation between work environment and nurses' job satisfaction in saudi arabia's government hospitals. Journal of ecohumanism учредители: transnational press london, 3(8), 14236-14247. <https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i8.6655>

Nurmeksela, A., Mikkonen, S., Kinnunen, J., & Kvist, T. (2021). Relationships between nurse managers' work activities, nurses' job satisfaction, patient satisfaction, and medication errors at the unit level: a correlational study. BMC health services research, 21, 1-13. doi: 10.1186/s12913-021-06288-5

Reshidi, N., Shanan, N., Garcia, M., Saleh, A., & Dali, T. (2023). The influence of nursing leaders' behavior on nurses' job satisfaction: A quantitative study in Hail, Saudi Arabia. Int J Advanced and Appl Sci, 10(9), 101-109. DOI:10.21833/ijaas.2023.09.012

Salahat, M. F., & Al-Hamdan, Z. M. (2022). Quality of nursing work life, job satisfaction, and intent to leave among Jordanian nurses: A descriptive study. *Heliyon*, 8(7). DOI: 10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09838