

Managing Nursing Brain Drain from Pakistan

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Abstract

Background: *A developing country like Pakistan cannot afford nursing brain drain because it has a grave consequence of nursing shortage, which greatly affect the efficiency of the healthcare system of Pakistan. This study investigates the ways to manage nursing brain drain from Pakistan.*

Methodology: *Descriptive exploratory qualitative study design was used to investigate the ways to handle this imperative issue. For this purpose, 11 key informants of nursing profession were interviewed by using semi-structured questionnaire. The researcher interviewed the key informants of nursing profession and policy makers of health care system personally by using a semi structured questionnaire.*

Results: *The findings indicated that inadequate salary package is a greater push factor for nurse's brain drain and salaries should be increased. Service structure is another push factor behind nurses' migration. It should be revised and there should be proper service structure for graduate (BScN) and postgraduate (MScN) nurses. Likewise, public image should be improved and nursing leaders should raise voice on the behalf of nursing community to transform the public image of nursing profession in order to enhance their self-esteem. Sanctioned seats for nurses should be increased so that the majority of nurses get chance for government jobs within country while opportunities for higher education should be increased. Lastly findings of policy makers' interview also indicated that nursing*

profession needs good policy makers as migration is the fundamental right of every human being it cannot be stopped by force, salary and other incentives.

Discussion: *The findings of the study showed that provision of good salary packages, favorable working environment and job facilities, promotion on merit and financial support in the form of scholarships for higher education can stop nursing brain drain from Pakistan.*

Key words: Handling – Brain Drain, Suggestions

INTRODUCTION: -

Migration of qualified nurses (nursing brain drain) from developing countries to developed countries is a major public health issue. Brain drain is defined by Lowell and Findlay (2001) “as the mass leaving of competent, qualified people for short or long term durations cannot be compensate by the shift of payment to their country of origin ¹.

According to UNESCO “the migration rate of qualified nurses is increased alarmingly from 6.1 in 1990 to 9.2 in 2000 ².

Production rate of nurses in Pakistan is very low and have also been getting worse by the relocation to source countries. Production rate of nurses is six times less than its annual demand. The existing nurse patient ratio is 1: 40 while the recommended nurse patient ratio of Pakistan nursing council is 3:10 in the general ward. In the present scenario one nurse is responsible to provide care to 60 patients in general ward, this shows that we are facing a huge scarcity of qualified nurses. Developed countries also attract nurse educators by offering them high salary packages and greater opportunities for their development resulting in shortage of nursing faculty in nursing schools and colleges. ²

Nursing scarcity is an overwhelmed issue of our health care system. Our present nurse patient ratio is very far from the standardized nurse patient ratio suggested by the Pakistan Nursing Council and it results in low quality of nursing care. Major causes of nursing shortage are inadequate enrollment, inadequate quality nursing institutes, and high emigration rate of nurses ^{.3}

Pakistan is good at production of doctors as median number of doctors working in private sector per 1000 population is 0.27 but as other health care professionals are concerned like nurses they are short by 95.94% the median number of nurses working in private sector per 1000 population is 0.24 ⁴.

Pakistan is a developing country facing extreme nursing shortage .In Pakistan 13132 nurses are annually produced in all four provinces that mean one nurse is responsible to provide care to 3,175 people. This ratio indicate that nursing is still neglected profession in Pakistan, more over health care system desperately need nurses as never before ⁵.

In Pakistan, the burden of non-communicable and communicable diseases is very high moreover; our country is also on the risk of natural and manmade disasters because of its unique geography to handle this issue we need many more nurses .¹

Developing countries like Pakistan are not in this situation that it can bear the loss of qualified, competent, skilled nurse because this can lead to a great barrier in economic progress. He also argued that the poor country which is producing nurses within their very limited resources should not have a compromised health care system ⁶.

In Pakistan nurses image is very low because people don't have proper knowledge of his profession and it needs to make strategies to market this profession nicely to change the public image ⁷.There is huge shortage of nursing schools and colleges to provide excellent nursing teaching. Most of the nursing schools and colleges don't have basic facilities like competent teaching faculty, science lab, libraries even they are not affiliated with any hospital for the student's clinical practice ⁸.

Nurses are doing efforts to get acceptance and self-respect by the society for them and for their profession as well. As our society is basically a male dominating society so the image of this female dominating profession is low. This is important for the health sector to hire highly educated talk for the rights of nurses. Presently our country has shortage of this kind of qualified nursing faculty and that's why this is hard to start degree program at all nursing schools ⁹.

The term 'brain drain' designates the international transfer of resources in the form of human capital and mainly applies to the

migration of relatively highly educated individuals from developing to developed countries ¹⁰.

Migration of nurses is resultant by the mixture of push and pull factors because in their home country they have less research facilities, limited carrier structure, lack of intellectual encouragement, threat of violence, less educational opportunity for their kids, weak health system, self-insecurity through the violence at work stations, less chances for professional development, favoritism in hiring and promotion, political unrest, poverty, unsupportive management ¹¹.

In ancient time the migration of technical competent health workers from developing countries toward developed countries was basically a submissive process it was caused by the political, social and professional conditions of the migration individuals. In recent years however request for health professionals in most of the countries in the organization for financial assistance and it's on expansion is as increased by the changes in their population .As result of this these countries need labor from the developing countries that cause damage to the health care system of developing countries ¹². The existing Infant Mortality Rate in Pakistan is 78 per 1000 live birth is so far from the Millennium development goals target of 40 per 1,000 live births, Researcher highlighted that 63% of the women have no access to skill birth attendants and this lead to high Maternal Mortality (MMR) ratio 350 to 500 per 1000 live births and this is for worst situation in the region is very embarrassing for Pakistan ¹³.

Everyone is strongly agreed that brain drain is a problem but there is little agreement on its extent reasons behind and solutions ¹⁴. One out of five nurses from Indian nursing work force are annually moving towards developed countries ¹⁵.

Significance of the study

To the best of researcher's knowledge, very little work is done on the issue of Nursing Brain Drain from Pakistan. Hopefully this study will add noteworthy developments to the current knowledge of managing nursing brain drain from Pakistan. The shortage of nurses and their migration towards developed countries is a critical issue of Pakistan that must be addressed and it should be manage effectively to retain and motivate nurses. We need to find out the root causes of brain drain and the ways to retain competent nurses within the country to overcome extreme scarcity of health care work forces.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were;

- To find out the factors which are contributing in brain drain of nurses from Pakistan.
- To give recommendations to manage this issue.

Methodology:

Study Type:

An exploratory qualitative study

Sampling Technique:

Non-probability purposive sampling technique

Sample Size:

12 (Sample was taken at saturation level)

Study tool:

In-depth interview design with a semi-structured questionnaire

Study Duration:

Six months.

Data Collection:

The researcher Moreover interviewed 11 key informants of nursing profession and one policy maker of health department in order to have deep insight a semi-structured questionnaire was also used for data collection. All the male and female nursing officials working in public or private sector of health department were included in this study. Head nurses, Staff nurses and student nurse were not included in this study.

Data Analysis:

Thematic analysis was used to analyze data.

RESULTS

The data was analyzed by sorting out the themes from the respondents' responses. Nurses ranked low salary, Outdated service structure, poor working conditions, lack of employment opportunities, poor public image etc.

Quantitative Representation of Data

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Service Structure	7	70 %
Salary package	8	80%
Public image	7	70%
Discrimination by seniors	3	30%
Security at workplace	8	80%
Provision of jobs	8	80%
Empowerment	7	70%

Policy Makers of Health Department

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Migration is fundamental	1	9%
Service structure must be revised	1	9%
Sufficient salary should be considered	1	9%
Public image should be improved	1	9%
Health system must be reformed	1	9%
Upgrade nursing schools to colleges	1	9%
Start of post Grade College	1	9%
Nurses must be part of policy making	1	9%
High ranked jobs cannot stop brain drain	1	9%

Thematic Analysis of Interviews

For the analysis of interviews, data was analyzed by sorting out themes from the responses. Data was described in main seven themes. The given themes were sorted out from the respondents' responses.

Themes and their Representative Statements

Theme	Representing Quotes
Service Structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Career structure should be revised. There is no proper service structure for the nurses for their promotion. Nurses should get government jobs according to their qualification. (Chief Nursing Superintendent).</i> 2. <i>If Government work on following aspects this issue can be handled effectively (senior nursing instructor).</i> 3. <i>There should be proper service structure for BScN and MScN to retain them with in the country (Deputy Director Academic).</i>

Salary Package	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Salary package is major cause of Nurses migration (Chief Nursing Superintendent). Salary package of nurses should be revised to retain them (president of young nursing association). 2. Salary packages are very low, working conditions are not very ideal so this should be improved to handle brain drain (Director Academic at a Medical college).
Public Image	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nursing shortage is causing bad nursing image in society because shortage is trying to be covered by hiring non-technical, nonqualified nurses by the private sector (Chief Nursing Superintendent). 2. There is no respect for nurses by the society despite of all their hard work and tough job.
Discrimination by seniors	<p>Nepotism by the nursing leaders should be overcome. Qualified nurses are the victims of nepotism. There is leg pulling by the seniors. Non-qualified nurses are promoted and appreciated by the seniors despite of qualified and competent nurses (President Young Nurses Association at a Hospital)</p>
Security at workplace	<p>Government should create more jobs for nurses if nurses have timely permanent and good working conditions migration can be minimized (Chief Nursing Superintendent).</p>
Provision of jobs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Highly qualified nurses should be enrolled Government of all provinces and PNC should keep record of their highly qualified personnel and accommodate them properly (Chief Nursing Superintendent at a Hospital). 2. Competent and talented people should get chances for higher education on deputation. Government should upgrade nursing schools into nursing colleges because this is need of hour to promote degree nursing (Senior Nursing instructor SWCON).
Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Medical professionals make decisions on the behalf of nursing leaders. 2. The migration of nurse educators is another big issue it should be addressed (Principal at a Nursing College).

FINDINGS:

1. The 72% findings show that service structure should be revised. It also reveals that by revising service structure, educated nurses can be able to get good jobs.
2. The 63% results indicate that nurses' salary package should be improved. The findings also show that because of

- insufficient salary package nurses go to Gulf countries for good job with good salary.
3. The 63% results indicate that nurses' public image should be improved. Findings also show that Media should play an important role in improving nurses' public image.
 4. Only three respondents replied to this question, others remained silent. The 27% results show that favoritism is main cause of nursing brain drain in Pakistan. Another major cause of nursing brain drain is that uneducated nurses are being promoted.
 5. The 90% results show that good facilities should be given to the nurses. The results also show that job security and good salary can stop nurses' brain drain in Pakistan. On the other hand, findings also indicate that good working condition must be implemented.
 6. The 72% results indicate that high ranked jobs must be provided to the nurses so that nurses brain drop stopped. The findings also show that Government should offer scholarship to the nurses so that they could get higher education in their own countries.
 7. The 45% results show that nursing profession should be empowered. On the other hand, findings also reveal that nurses' leaders should be appointed so that they could resolve their issues.

DISCUSSION:-

It's usually thought that the source country may get benefit through the migration of its skilled labor in the form of remittance but in reality this remittance cannot be the alternative of competent and skilled labor. This is definitely loss nor gain².

Remittance can nevertheless be the substitute of human potentials. this massive departure is paid back to its source country in the form of unstable health care system burden of infectious and non-infectious diseases. suffering humanity, increased rate of neonatal death in Kenya ¹³.

Like Kenya and other developing countries e.g. India and Phil pine brain drain is greater threat to our health care system and it should be addressed and resolved.

To manage nursing brain drain valuable suggestions are given by the key informants of nursing profession which includes revision of service structure, improving image of nursing in public, offering attractive salary packages, up gradation of nursing schools to college level and enhancing the opportunities for retaining nurse educators at national level.

The findings of health department policy makers show that no one can stop nurses' migration. It shows that every human is free and can take his/her own decisions. On the other hand, according to policy maker, service structure must be revised in order to improve nurses' status in Pakistan. The findings indicate that per capita income in Pakistan is not comparable with developed countries.

Talking about nurses' public image, the policy maker says that by giving them designated seats nursing image is improved among society, he also expressed that high ranked job is also cannot stop this issue, Lastly, the policy makers claim that Pakistan Nursing Council lack good policy makers and all these factors cause nurses brain drain in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION:-

Based on the findings, it is concluded that in Pakistan there is a need to improve nursing profession completely. Nursing profession needs revision from nurses' appointment to good working environment and other basic facilities. If qualified nurses will be appointed then nurses brain drain will be stopped. The conclusion of the study also indicates that nurses' migration to Gulf countries should be stopped along with favoritism and leg pulling. Based on the findings, the major conclusion of the study highlights that proper service structure, attractive salary packages, promotion, appointment of qualified nurses and acceptance of this profession will bridge the gap between nurses' brain drain from Pakistan, completely.

Limitations of the Study:-

This research was conducted with 11 key informants of nursing profession that were easy to access. It is predicted that results will not be generalized on all nursing officials. The focus of this study was only the ways to manage nursing brain drain from Pakistan, not to find causes behind this issue.

Recommendations:-

- Nurses should be actively involved in decision making, and quality initiatives of health care organization.
- Further studies should be conducted on this problem to find out the root cause.
- Policies should be made to manage this issue.

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