

In The Spotlight: Understanding Healthcare Privatization's Effects On Nursing Workforce And Care Quality – A Systematic Review In Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Background: This systematic review delves into the repercussions of healthcare privatization on the nursing workforce and care quality in Saudi Arabia (KSA). The backdrop is set against the backdrop of significant healthcare system changes in KSA, notably the shift towards privatization. With a particular focus on nursing, the study recognizes the crucial role nurses play in maintaining high standards of care and ensuring patient safety. **Objective:** The study aims to assess the impact of healthcare privatization on the standard of care in Saudi Arabia, with a specific focus on nursing practices and the broader healthcare environment. Key objectives include evaluating employment patterns, job satisfaction, and professional autonomy of the nursing workforce, as well as scrutinizing the impact of privatization on quality of care standards, patient outcomes, and satisfaction levels.

Method: Adhering to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) standards, the study conducts a thorough search of databases, including Google Scholar, Research Gate, and PsycINFO, covering the years 2019-2023. The systematic review criteria include specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the selection of pertinent research studies. The quality of the literature is assessed using the Joanna Briggs Institute Critical Appraisal Checklist.

Findings: The synthesized findings from the selected studies highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of healthcare reform and privatization in KSA. Key themes emerge, including the impact on nursing management and workforce dynamics, assessment of healthcare systems, the role of executive nurse leaders, and the significance of education and training in preparing nurses for the evolving healthcare landscape.

Conclusion: The collective body of research contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with healthcare reform and privatization in KSA. It underscores the need for a coordinated and holistic approach to address systemic issues, ensuring equitable, accessible, and high-quality healthcare services for all segments of the population.

Keywords: Healthcare privatization, nursing workforce, quality of care, Saudi Arabia, systematic review, PRISMA, executive nurse leadership, healthcare reform, patient outcomes, healthcare infrastructure.

Introduction

Background

Saudi Arabia's healthcare system has seen major changes in the last few years, most notably the privatization of healthcare services. There has been much discussion about the ramifications of this shift toward privatization for a number of stakeholders, most notably the nursing staff and the standard of care delivered. Nurses are the backbone of any healthcare system and are essential to providing high-quality treatment and guaranteeing patient safety. Thus, it is crucial to comprehend how privatization affects the

standard of nursing and treatment (Rahman & Al-Borie, 2021; Asmri et al., 2020).

Saudi Arabia is focusing on privatization as a strategy to improve efficiency and meet growing healthcare demands. However, this approach also presents challenges, especially in the nursing sector. The nursing workforce, predominantly expatriates, relies heavily on foreign talent to fill staffing gaps (Rahman & Alsharqi, 2019). Privatization could lead to increased competition for skilled nurses, potentially increasing wages and exacerbating shortages in the public sector. This could result in experienced nurses being displaced from public institutions to higher-paying private facilities, further straining the public healthcare system. Therefore, healthcare institutions are considering the potential benefits and challenges of privatization in the healthcare sector (Armstrong & Bourgeault, 2020; Hooda, 2020; Zelnick & Abramovitz, 2020).

Additionally, new care delivery models like telemedicine and outpatient clinics may be introduced via privatization, which could change the duties and functions of nurses. In an effort to maximize productivity and profitability, healthcare companies may require nurses to adjust to new workflows, technologies, and performance measures (Hunter & Murray, 2019). Furthermore, changes in job security, perquisites, and working hours may result from the move toward privatization, which could have an effect on nurse staff morale and retention (Hui & Bruera, 2020).

Concerns over the standard of patient care are also raised by the privatization of healthcare, in addition to the effects on the labor market. The role of nurses is crucial in guaranteeing the safety and efficacious results of patients; nonetheless, alterations in the healthcare domain may present obstacles to upholding elevated standards of care (Zaccagnini & Pechacek, 2019; Butler et al., 2019). For example, inconsistent care delivery and coordination may jeopardize patient safety and continuity of treatment due to the fragmentation of services between public and private sectors.

Moreover, pressure to put financial goals ahead of patient-centered treatment may arise from the privatized healthcare system's drive of profit maximization. This could show up as overuse of services, pointless medical procedures, and insufficient staffing all of which put the standard and security of patient care at

risk (Ramamonjarivelo et al., 2020).. In addition, as nurses balance conflicting demands from employers, patients, and regulatory agencies, the commercialization of healthcare may present conflicts of interest and moral conundrums (Morais Nunes et al., 2019; Filc, Rasooly & Davidovitch, 2020).

Policymakers, healthcare executives, and nursing experts must work together to address the effects of privatization on nursing workforce and care quality in light of these obstacles. This necessitates taking proactive steps to guarantee proper workforce planning, recruitment, and retention tactics that put nurses' welfare and professional growth first. It is also necessary to strengthen initiatives to support a culture of patient safety, moral behavior, and evidence-based treatment across the public and private healthcare sectors (Duggan et al., 2023; Gunn et al., 2019; Maleki Mardani & Vaismoradi, 2021). Healthcare privatization presents both opportunities and challenges for nursing and care quality. While it can drive innovation and efficiency, it also poses risks to workforce stability and patient safety (By addressing these challenges through strategic collaboration, Saudi Arabia can navigate the complexities of healthcare privatization while ensuring high-quality care for its population (Noory et al.,2020; Lopez, Weerasinghe & Killackey,2022).

Objective

This study aims to assess the impact of healthcare privatization on the standard of care delivered in Saudi Arabia through an examination of patient outcomes, safety protocols, healthcare service accessibility, and patient satisfaction levels. This entails investigating how privatization affects nursing practices and the larger healthcare system to ascertain whether it improves or degrades the standard of care provided to patients.

Research Question

1. How does healthcare privatization in Saudi Arabia affect the employment patterns, job satisfaction, and professional autonomy of the nursing workforce?
2. What impact does healthcare privatization have on the quality of care standards, patient outcomes, and satisfaction levels in Saudi Arabia, particularly concerning

nursing practices and the broader healthcare environment?

Aim of the Study

The Aim of current systematic review is to evaluate the impact of privatization of healthcare system for nursing workforce and quality of care in KSA.

Methods

The standards of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) were adhered to by this systematic review.

Identifying Studies through Search Methods

In 2023, a search was made of databases and publications including Google Scholar, Research Gate and PsycINFO for the years 2019 to 2023 in order to address the methods for the evaluating the impact of privatization of healthcare system for nursing workforce and quality of care in KSA.

Table 1 Syntax Search and Search Data Base

No Database	Syntax Title	Year	No of Researches
1 Google Scholar	Syntax 1: "Privatization of Healthcare", "Nursing Workforce" and "Quality of Healthcare"	2019-2023	272
	Syntax 2: Privatization of Healthcare System: Implication for Nursing Workforce and Quality of Care in KSA.		28
2 Research Gate	Syntax 1: "Privatization of Healthcare", "Nursing Workforce" and "Quality of Healthcare"	2019-2023	219
	Syntax 2: Privatization of Healthcare System: Implication for Nursing Workforce and Quality of Care in KSA		42
3 PsycINFO	Syntax1: "Privatization of Healthcare", "Nursing Workforce" and "Quality of Healthcare"	2019-2023	129
	Syntax 2: Privatization of Healthcare System: Implication for Nursing Workforce and Quality of Care in KSA		53

Statistics from the Data Base

The study utilized Google Scholar, Research Gate and PsycINFO databases to identify relevant research publications from 2019-

2023. The most significant articles were found in Google Scholar 300 and Research Gate 261 whereas PsycINFO had 162 demonstrating thoroughness in the scientific search. The total researches were searched as 723 .Systematic Review Criteria for the evaluating the impact of privatization of healthcare system for nursing workforce and quality of care in KSA.

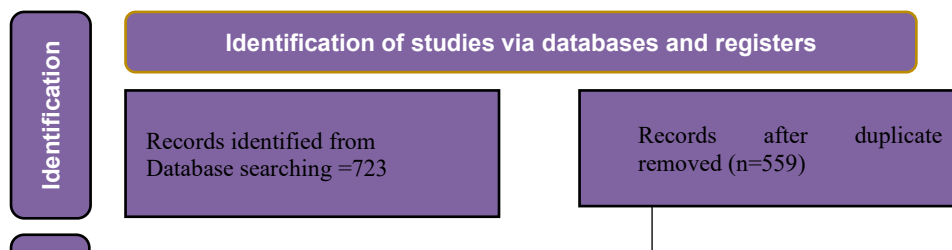
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

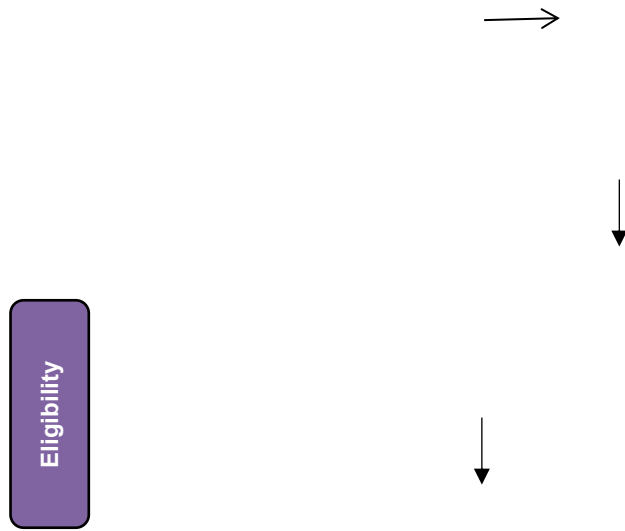
Research were included if they satisfied the following requirements: Three types of research projects are being considered: (1) an empirical full-text format study in English; (2) case-control, cross-sectional, future, and retroactive cohort research projects; and (3) an analysis for evaluating the impact of privatization of healthcare system for nursing workforce and quality of care in KSA. (4) The research findings were released between 2019 and 2023.

Gathering and Analysing Data

Using PRISMA criteria, the researcher carried out an independent assessment, concentrating on titles and abstracts to find pertinent articles. Next, a full-text screening was carried out, which included the addition of exclusion criteria to the study selection flow diagram and the removal of irrelevant publications.

Figure 1 PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for new systematic reviews which included searches of databases and databases





Result

Quality Assessment

Using tools such as the Joanna Briggs Institute Critical Appraisal Checklist, the studies were evaluated for methodological rigor and quality, taking into account factors including sample size, data collection strategies, research design, and possible biases. The results were interpreted notwithstanding the exclusion of some studies.

Table 3 Assessment of the literature quality matrix

Sr #	Author	Selection of Studies	Literature Coverage	Method Description	Findings Description	Quality Rating
1	Noory, B. et al. (2020)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
2	Falatah, R. et al. (2021)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
3	Alkhamis, A. et al. (2021)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
4	Sajjad & Qureshi (2020)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
5	Hejazi, M. M. et al. (2022)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
6	Rahman & Qattan (2021)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
7	Alsubhi, (2022)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
8	Alrowes, (2023)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	High
9	Alharthyb & Hoslerb (2021)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
10	Caswell & Kenkre (2021)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
11	Tobaiqy et al. (2023)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	High
12	Alhame et al. (2023)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medium
13	Oraibi et al. (2022)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	High

The systematic review of studies provided clear descriptions, methods, selection processes, literature coverage, and clear conclusions, resulting in a "High or Medium" rating for their quality.

Study Selection

Two independent reviewers screened retrieved studies for eligibility, then reviewed full-text articles against inclusion and exclusion criteria, with disagreements resolved through discussion or consultation with a third reviewer

Table 4 Selected Studies for SR (Systematic Review)

No	Author	Research	Year
1	Noory, B., et al.	Exploring the consequences of decentralization in Khartoum locality, Sudan	2020
2	Falatah, R., et al.	Linking nurses' job security to job satisfaction and turnover intention during reform and privatization	2021
3	Alkhamis, A., et al.	Privatization of Healthcare in Saudi Arabia: Opportunities and Challenges	2021
4	Sajjad, R., & Qureshi, M. O.	An assessment of the healthcare services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	2020
5	Hejazi, M. M., et al.	Attitudes and Perceptions of Health Leaders for the Quality Enhancement of Workforce in Saudi Arabia	2022
6	Rahman, R., & Qattan, A.	Vision 2030 and sustainable development: state capacity to revitalize the healthcare system in Saudi Arabia	2021
7	Alsubhi, E. N. M.	Health care workers knowledge about Privatization of Medical Services and Revenue Development at Saudi Arabia 2022	2022
8	Alrowes, K. M. M.	Evaluation of the impact of health policies on the provision of health	2023
9	Alharthyb, Y. Y. A., & Hoslerb, A. S.	Transformation of Saudi Arabia's Health System and Its Impact on Population Health: What Can the USA Learn?	2021
10	Caswell, A., & Kenkre, J.	Primary healthcare in Saudi Arabia: an evaluation of emergent health trends	2021
11	Tobaiqy, M., et al.	Privatization of Medical Services and Revenue Development Project: A Cross-Sectional Survey of Staff Perceptions at the University of Jeddah Medical Center	2023
12	Alhamed, A., et al.	Perspectives of Executive Nurse Leaders on Advanced Practice Nursing in Saudi Arabia: Challenges to be Overcome and Opportunities to be Seized	2023
13	Oraibi, L. A., et al.	Nursing Professional Trends and Role of Technical and Permanent Education in the Context of New Saudi Medical Era Rooted in Arab Regions	2022

Study Database

A systematic search of electronic databases identified 2021 records. After removing duplicates, 13 unique records were assessed for eligibility based on titles and abstracts.

Title and Abstract Screening

The reviewer evaluated the titles and abstracts of the identified records in the first screening. 13 studies were chosen for full-text review using this procedure. The reviewers' disagreements were settled by consensus and discussion.

Data Extraction

For assessment, a uniform data extraction form was created. Key findings, participant characteristics, research characteristics (authors, publication year), and any other pertinent information were retrieved by two reviewers separately from the selected papers. Consensus was used to settle disagreements.

Table 5 Research Matrix

Author,		Aim of Study	Methodology	Sample	Setting	Conclusion
No	Year					
1	Noory et al., 2020	Explore the consequences of decentralization in Khartoum, Sudan	Exploratory research	Not specified	Khartoum locality, Sudan	Not specified
2	Falatah et al., 2021	Examine the link between nurses' job security, job satisfaction, and turnover intention during reform and privatization	Cross-sectional survey	Not specified	Not specified	Job security among nurses is linked to job satisfaction and turnover intention during healthcare reform and privatization.
3	Alkhamis et al., 2021	Analyze the opportunities and challenges of healthcare privatization in Saudi Arabia	-	Not specified	Saudi Arabia	Opportunities and challenges of healthcare privatization in Saudi Arabia are discussed.
4	Sajjad & Qureshi, 2020	Assess the healthcare services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Analysis of old, current, and future healthcare systems	Not specified	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Not specified

Author, No	Year	Aim of Study	Methodology	Sample	Setting	Conclusion
5	Hejazi et al., 2022	Explore attitudes and perceptions of health leaders for workforce quality enhancement in Saudi Arabia	-	Health leaders	Saudi Arabia	Attitudes and perceptions of health leaders regarding workforce quality enhancement in Saudi Arabia are examined. State capacity to revitalize the healthcare system in Saudi Arabia is discussed in the context of Vision 2030 and sustainable development.
6	Rahman & Qattan, 2021	Examine the state capacity to revitalize the healthcare system in Saudi Arabia	Not specified	Not specified	Saudi Arabia	Healthcare workers' knowledge about privatization of medical services and revenue development in Saudi Arabia is examined.
7	Alsubhi, 2022	Investigate healthcare workers' knowledge about privatization of medical services and revenue development in Saudi Arabia	Cross sectional	Healthcare workers	Saudi Arabia	The impact of health policies on the provision of health is evaluated.
8	Alrowes, 2023	Evaluate the impact of health policies on the provision of health	Cross sectional	Not specified	Not specified	

Author,	No	Year	Aim of Study	Methodology	Sample	Setting	Conclusion
Alharthyb & Hoslerb,	9	2021	Assess the transformation of Saudi Arabia's health system and its impact on population health	Not specified	Not specified	Saudi Arabia	The transformation of Saudi Arabia's health system and its impact on population health are evaluated, comparing it with the USA.
Caswell & Kenkre,	10	2021	Evaluate primary healthcare in Saudi Arabia	Not specified	Not specified	Saudi Arabia	Primary healthcare in Saudi Arabia is evaluated, likely focusing on emerging health trends.
Tobaiqy et al.,	11	2023	Investigate staff perceptions of privatization of medical services and revenue development at the University of Jeddah Medical Center	Cross-sectional survey	Staff at Jeddah Medical Center	University of Jeddah Medical Center	Staff perceptions of privatization of medical services and revenue development at the University of Jeddah Medical Center are examined.
Alhamed et al.,	12	2023	Explore executive nurse leaders' perspectives on advanced practice nursing in Saudi Arabia	Exploratory research	Executive nurse leaders	Saudi Arabia	Perspectives of executive nurse leaders on advanced practice nursing in Saudi Arabia

Author, No Year	Aim of Study	Methodology	Sample	Setting	Conclusion
Oraibi et al., 2022	Investigate nursing professional trends and the role of education in the new Saudi medical era	Bibliographic research	Not specified	Saudi Arabia	are explored, including challenges and opportunities. Nursing professional trends and the role of education in the new Saudi medical era are investigated.

Data Synthesis

The synthesized findings were presented through a narrative synthesis approach to evaluate the impact of privatization of healthcare system for nursing workforce and quality of care in KSA.

Finding

No	Theme	Subtheme
1	Health Policy	Healthcare Regulation Healthcare Financing Healthcare Delivery Models Healthcare Quality Improvement
2	Public Health	Disease Prevention and Control Health Promotion and Education Environmental Health
3	Healthcare Systems	Health Information Systems and Technology Healthcare Workforce and Human Resources Healthcare Infrastructure and Facilities
4	Clinical Medicine	Diagnosis and Treatment Medical Specialties Surgery and Anesthesia
5	Mental Health	Mental Health Disorders and Diagnosis

No Theme	Subtheme
	Psychological Interventions and Therapies Mental Health Policy and Advocacy

Discussion

The findings from the collective body of research highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of healthcare reform and privatization efforts in Saudi Arabia (Alkhamis et al., 2021). While privatization presents potential benefits such as improved efficiency and service quality, it also poses significant challenges that must be addressed to ensure equitable access to healthcare services for all segments of the population.

One of the key areas of concern identified in the researches is the impact of privatization on nursing management and workforce dynamics. The studies underscore the importance of addressing issues related to job security, satisfaction, and turnover intention among nurses, as they play a crucial role in delivering quality care to patients (Falatah et al., 2021).

Moreover, the assessment of healthcare systems in Saudi Arabia reveals a pressing need for comprehensive reform and investment in infrastructure, workforce development, and policy implementation (Sajjad & Qureshi, 2020). The findings suggest that while progress has been made in certain areas, significant challenges remain, particularly in ensuring access to high-quality healthcare services for underserved populations and marginalized communities.

The researches also shed light on the importance of effective leadership and strategic planning in driving healthcare system transformation (Rahman & Qattan, 2021). Executive nurse leaders play a vital role in shaping the future of nursing practice and healthcare delivery in Saudi Arabia. Their perspectives on advanced practice nursing and the challenges and opportunities facing the profession provide valuable insights for policymakers and healthcare administrators (Hejazi, 2022; Alkhamis et al., 2021). Furthermore, the findings underscore the critical role of education and training in preparing nurses for the evolving healthcare landscape. Continuous professional development and investment in nursing education are essential to equipping nurses

with the knowledge and skills needed to meet the demands of a rapidly changing healthcare environment (Oraibi et al., 2022).

In conclusion, the researches collectively contribute to our understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with healthcare reform and privatization in Saudi Arabia. They highlight the need for a coordinated and holistic approach to addressing systemic issues and ensuring the delivery of equitable, accessible, and high-quality healthcare services to all segments of the population (Alharthyb & Hoslerb, 2021). Effective leadership, strategic planning, investment in workforce development, and a commitment to continuous education are key to achieving these goals and building a sustainable healthcare system for the future (Alsubhi, 2022; Alrowes, 2023).

Limitation & Implications

The study's conclusions provide insightful information about the potential and difficulties of Saudi Arabia's healthcare reform and privatization. However, when evaluating the results, a number of restrictions should be taken into account. These include cross-sectional study designs, limited sample numbers, and reliance on self-reported data, and contextual factors that can restrict how broadly the results can be applied. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the study has important ramifications for future research, healthcare policy, and practice. The results can be used by policymakers and leaders in the healthcare industry to guide strategic planning and decision-making, especially with relation to workforce development, access, and quality of care. Building on the research's discoveries and addressing its shortcomings can help Saudi Arabia and other countries create healthcare systems that are more egalitarian and efficient. To better understand the intricate dynamics of healthcare reform and privatization and to pinpoint best practices for improvement, more research is required.

Recommendations

The discussion highlights the need for improved support for the nursing workforce, investment in healthcare infrastructure, evidence-based decision-making, targeted interventions, healthcare education, collaboration among agencies, providers, and community organizations, and prioritizing preventive care and

health promotion initiatives. These recommendations aim to strengthen the healthcare system, improve access to quality care, and enhance health outcomes for all. Encouraging patient participation in healthcare decisions and engaging communities in health promotion efforts are also crucial.

Contribution of this Study for Saudi Context

This comprehensive systematic review investigates the implications of healthcare privatization on the nursing workforce and quality of care in Saudi Arabia (KSA). The study explores the multifaceted challenges and opportunities introduced by the privatization of healthcare services in KSA, with a specific focus on the nursing sector. The findings emphasize the significance of addressing issues such as job security, satisfaction, and turnover intention among nurses, crucial components in delivering high-quality patient care.

The impact on healthcare systems, executive nurse leadership, and the role of education in adapting to the evolving healthcare landscape in KSA are also thoroughly examined. The study provides valuable insights for policymakers and healthcare administrators, offering recommendations to guide strategic planning and decision-making, with the ultimate goal of building a sustainable and equitable healthcare system in Saudi Arabia.

Conclusion

The articles discuss the privatization and reform of healthcare systems in Saudi Arabia, highlighting its complex process with both benefits and challenges. While privatization may improve efficiency, quality, and access to services, it may also raise concerns about equity, job security, and affordability. The success of these initiatives depends on effective governance, stakeholder engagement, and regulatory framework. Key themes include workforce support, strengthening healthcare infrastructure, promoting evidence-based decision-making, addressing healthcare disparities, investing in education and training, fostering collaboration, prioritizing prevention, and empowering patients. Further research is needed to understand the implications and identify best practices.

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