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## Challenges facing new nurses working at emergency rooms of Taif hospitals: a qualitative study

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New nurses working at emergency rooms (ERs) face many challenges in the healthcare environment, which may be personal, professional or organizational. Limited studies have been conducted about these challenges in Saudi Arabia and there have been no studies in Taif hospitals. The aim of this study is to explore the challenges faced by new nurses in the ERs at Taif hospitals, in the Taif city. A qualitative, descriptive approach was adopted. All new nurses working at emergency rooms from all Taif health hospitals, Saudi Arabia were invited. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with new nurses working at ERs. All data analyses using thematic analysis. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee at Institutional Review Board (IRB), Makah with IRB Number: (H-02-K-076-0622-748). Three themes were apparent from the data; the individual challenges, the need to increase knowledge and skills and the work environment challenges. There is the need to increase knowledge and skills, as well as the ability to deal with a high-pressure work environment. However, with proper training, support, and mentorship, new nurses can overcome these challenges and thrive in their roles. It is essential for healthcare organizations to provide resources and support to help new nurses succeed in the fast-paced and demanding environment of ERs.

**Keywords:** nurses' challenges, ER, qualitative, newly qualified nurses

### INTRODUCTION

Emergency care is an important aspect of every health system, especially in traumatic medical emergencies that require quality care. In the delivery of quality care, the roles of nurses are inevitable (Afaya et al. 2021). Emergency nursing is a specialisation within professional nursing, where nurses are required to take care of patients requiring immediate assistance to prevent death or long-term stability. In the ERs, nurses face a range of challenges, such as understaffing and a lack of emergency equipment (Afaya et al. 2021). In addition, due to a lack of training, they lack the skills to deal with critical situations (Brinjee et al. 2021). Therefore, nurses face a range of personal and professional challenges, particularly in the ERs where they experience a stressful working environment, long hours, and compromised health (Al Zoubi et al. 2020). Working in ERs requires self-motivated individuals with high skills (Al-Obaid et al. 2021). Moreover, when nurses face challenges they are exposed to unfamiliar situations, leading to high turnover rates (Boland et al. 2019). Consequently, nurses' lack of experience in responding to emergency situations can compromise patient care and an organisation's reputation

(Alzahrani et al. 2017). Thus, nurses in emergency units need training for disaster preparedness and response, more so than other nurses (Hörberg et al. 2019).

In Saudi Arabia, some of the challenges faced by nurses occur due to their lack of preparedness, education and research, long working hours, and their image in the community, along with a lack of expertise in the academic and clinical fields (Al Harthi et al. 2021). All those challenges may exacerbate the lack of Saudi nurses in Saudi Arabia, and, therefore, in Saudi Arabia non-Saudi nurses account for 74% of the workforce (Lamadah and Sayed, 2014). It is important to address these challenges and to help nurses develop their speciality (Lamadah and Sayed, 2014). The study of Al-Fatih (2019) found that 56% of the nurses had moderate stress levels, which is an effect of the daily challenges faced by the nurses. Moreover, ER requires trained and well-educated nurses who can manage emergency situations and save patients' lives (Brinjee et al. 2021). Saudi Arabia's healthcare sector faces challenges and these challenges can lead to emotional stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction among nurses, particularly those new to the field. The aim of this study is to explore the challenges faced by new nurses in

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Design

A qualitative approach was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted.

### Setting

All Emergency Rooms at Taif hospitals in Taif city.

### Study Population:

The population of this study includes all new nurses working in Emergency Rooms at Taif hospitals in Taif city.

### The Sample

All new nurses working in Emergency Rooms at Taif hospitals in Taif city were invited, resulting in 12 newly hired nurses, working in the emergency rooms at Taif hospitals, participating in this study.

### Procedure of Data Collection

The interviews were conducted according to the place and time which suited each participant. The lead researcher approached nurses in the ERs of the Taif hospitals and provided them with invitation letters. The newly employed nurses were approached, and if they showed interest they were requested to return the completed invitation letters to the nursing counter. After the recruitment phase, 12 invitation letters were returned by newly employed nurses in the ER of Taif hospitals. Researchers keep recruiting participants until data saturation is achieved in participant number ten. However, the study included the remaining two participants to ensure the data saturation was reached.

Open-ended questions were used, such as "Why did you choose to work in the emergency department?", "What are the positive points to work in emergency department?", "What are the negatives points to work in emergency department?" and "What are the challenges faced by new nurses in the emergency departments?" The interviews were conducted in Arabic. The length of the interviews was from 45 to 55 minutes, based on the situation. All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The data collection and analysis processes were carried out concurrently. Following each interview, the research team transcribed and translated the recordings from Arabic to English. Thematic analysis was used (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

### Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee at Institutional Review Board (IRB), Makkah with IRB Number: (H-02-K-076-0622-748). The study participants were provided with an information sheet that included the participants' rights, responsibilities, the

interview process, and the potential advantages and disadvantages of taking part in the study. Prior to the start of the interview, each participant signs the consent form. Moreover, participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any point and were assured that their responses would be kept confidential. All data collected were stored in a protected file on a university computer and were only accessible to the research team.

## RESULTS

This study enrolled 12 nurses' – three female nurses and nine male nurses. Their ages ranged between 23 and 26 years old. Participants' working experience in ER ranged from two months to one year, as shown in Table 1. Two main themes appeared from the data. The first theme related to individual challenges. The second theme was the need of the participant to increase their knowledge and skills. The third theme related to the work environment challenges.

### Theme 1: The individual challenges

Working in the ERs, which are characterised by pressure and the large number of patients, as well as those accompanying patients, is not an easy work environment. Moreover, the ERs form an open environment with unexpected, risky circumstances, dealing with a variety and significant number of patients. Therefore, the feelings and psychological state of the new nursing staff who work in the ER vary between positive and negative. However, the majority of new nurses feel that working in ER offers positive challenge, passion and excitement, appropriate to their personality, as quoted below:

"In fact, the passion started with me from the first time I went to the hospital to the ER, and from that time I saw how nurses work in the emergency, and then suddenly a passion began with me. I am a dynamic person with this thing and working in the ER suits my personality and my reactions are quick. This thing I found here in the emergency is not like anywhere else. The response here in the emergency is the least that should be – within about 30 minutes; you have finished dealing with the patient. I see that the emergency, it is my place, I consider it like home, not just a place to work, which means I found that it is the right place that suits my personality." (Participant4)

"There are new cases in the ER. I know that working in the ER has work pressure, but I learn faster here in the ER. I mean, people ask me why I joined ER. I tell them that I joined the ER because this is my dream. I like to work in challenges. I love the pressure of working in the ER." (Participant 4)

However, some new nurses have negative challenges when they work in ER, including nervousness, tension, stress, forgetfulness, exhaustion, and fatigue, as quoted below:

Table 1: Participants' characteristics

Participants	Age	Age	Work experience in ER	Educational Degree
1	F	24	8 Months	Bachelor's Degree
2	M	23	2 Months	Bachelor's Degree
3	M	25	1 Year	Bachelor's Degree
4	F	23	1 Year	Bachelor's Degree
5	M	25	1 Year	Bachelor's Degree
6	M	23	2 Months	Bachelor's Degree
7	M	24	2 Months	Bachelor's Degree
8	M	25	3 Months	Bachelor's Degree
9	M	26	8 Months	Bachelor's Degree
10	M	24	3 Months	Bachelor's Degree
11	F	23	2 Months	Bachelor's Degree
12	M	25	3 Months	Bachelor's Degree

"There is tension and great work pressure and more fatigue in ER in terms of work, although time goes by quickly, but I feel exhausted, as in the ER any patient complaining of any specific health problem will visit the ER, which leads to overcrowding in the ER and thus greater work pressure." (Participant 10)

"The staff in the ER get angry and tense at work from the patients, for example some of them say why do I have to wait an hour for one of the nurses to follow up on my case, this is negligence, and they ask about the manager to file a complaint with him. These things can stress me a little and increase my tension and nervousness." (Participant 7)

### Theme 2: The need to increase knowledge and skills.

Training and skill development are vital for workers in the ER, where the nursing staff sometimes need guidance and counseling. A lack of familiarity with all emergency cases is a clear challenge faced by the new nurse in the ER. Therefore, many new nurses in the ER seek training to improve their knowledge and skills in nursing. However, some participants mentioned that if they did not know a specific case, they would refer it to the more experienced nurses and ask them about the proper procedure, as quoted below:

"We have a clinical instructor who guides us through the learning process step-by-step so that we never get bored and constantly offers us support. The supervisors are also continually nearby and present, and they provide us with valuable quality talks every morning. However, we need additional classes, lectures, and workshops, and I demand that they give new nurses special attention." (Participant 8)

"When I see the waiting room crowded and I am almost alone, and in cases where I have no experience because I am new here, I feel pressure and tension. And if you had a situation that you had no experience in, how would you act? Ask those with experience; it's impossible to do something I don't know." (Participant 7)

"I tell you, the situation is like someone who wants to learn to swim, they throw him into the sea, and you will definitely learn to swim. It means that you are new, so it

takes two months of orientation, after that you enter the rotation system, after that you move to the critical area and then become responsible for critical cases, and all of this does not come to improvement, training and effective practice in dealing with different cases of ER patients. So, I think we need more special courses related to cases in ER." (Participant 9)

### Theme 3: The work environment challenges.

Most of the participants mentioned that work pressures are the most important challenges they face. All of them attributed this to the increased number of patients in ER together with the shortage of nursing staff, as a nurse's preoccupation with a particular case may cause delay in another case, and those in that situation get angry at the nurse, which causes stress and increases work pressure, as quoted below:

"The work pressure is clear. When you are responsible for six beds in the ER, this is a lot and causes great pressure on the nurse. There is a terrible shortfall in the ER, and those nurses who leave the department are more than those who come to it." (Participant 4)

"The work pressure is one of the most difficulties I face, because I handle more than four patients at one time, with a lack of staff for 30 patients. There are only nine nurses, and this constitutes a burden and a great challenge for me as a new nurse in the ER. Sometimes there are verbal altercations between patients and nurses because we have a shortage of staff, and sometimes there is a delay in it, so the patient screams, 'You have no concern for the patient, you have no care.' Sometimes his health condition does not require him to be even in an emergency. This definitely causes me stress at work and makes me nervous as a result." (Participant 8)

In addition, there are challenges related to the work environment, such as the inability of the new nurse to get along with the work team and the lack of management support, such as understanding the team issues, as quoted below:

"There are some problems between the staff here and the leader does nothing. I mean, I don't like to settle problems with anyone, but here some staff members are

groups with each other, and I don't want to be biased towards one group against another group. This is disturbing and uncomfortable in the work environment, especially with the presence of some sensitivity among staff members, especially by nurses of non-Saudi nationalities, as there are many foreigners who say that Saudis do not perform their work as required." (Participant 2)

"Also, I faced the difficulties of not keeping up with the emergency environment and not getting along with the staff, due to lack of experience and fear sometimes also, because of the lack of training in the ER during the internship period, so I was under psychological pressure and great physical exhaustion." (Participant 3)

"I feel that the work environment here is a bit toxic, I mean, frankly, I always say it, even to my colleagues at work. I say that the environment is really difficult here, an environment that does not allow you to learn a lot or develop you. If you do not have the desire, you will not improve at all, and no one will help you even if you have the desire. You learn that not all people here help you; sometimes the administration is against you, and this is a big challenge that I suffer from as a new nurse in the ER." (Participant 4)

"I also see that the administration's support is very limited, and it is not complete, based on what they see upstairs or in their offices." (Participant 9)

Moreover, many new nurses in ER suffer from the interventions of patients' companions and family members. These interventions affect new nurses' performance and that may lead them to make mistakes in their work environment, as quoted below:

"The family and the patients' companions cause problems for me, despite my attempts to deal with all the cases for which I am responsible. From being late in dealing with their patient, they put pressure on me, and mistakes may happen. I try not to let these problems affect me, I mean, I try to remove their negative energy from them. I try to calm them down and make them sit and wait for us. In this way, we solve the problems, but I don't let them affect my work because I am a human being. If I was affected by my work, I would hate the situation." (Participant 3)

"The large number of cases that I follow at one time leads to the fact that I receive bad treatment from the patients' companions at certain times because of the delay that may occur when busy with other cases. I mean, the patient should not be late, and if you are late and get busy with another case, the patient and their companions get angry, scream and cause tension." (Participant 11)

## DISCUSSION

The ER is a fast-paced and high-stress environment, which causes new nurses to face various challenges daily. These challenges can be positive to those new nurses who are passionate about their work and like what they do, and these challenges can be negative to other new

nurses. In this study, the participants reported a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment when working in the area of their interest and this created a positive outlook toward their job. A study by Gabriel, Diefendorff and Erickson (2011) has substantially discussed that task accomplishment satisfaction can influence either positive or negative emotional reactions. Therefore, nurses who achieved their goals showed more positive attitudes and good performances (Gabriel, Diefendorff and Erickson, 2011). The participants in this study appreciated the challenge of working in the ER, where no two days are the same (Lin et al. 2019). This result is supported by a study by Motlagh (2020), which stated that some new nurses feel a natural inclination towards working in the ER. On the other hand, low satisfaction in relation to task accomplishment helps nurses to deal with other stressors by building their resilience and giving them a sense of control over their situation (Gabriel, Diefendorff and Erickson, 2011). Moreover, negative emotions in nurses can impact their ability to perform their jobs effectively and lead to burnout (Flaubert et al. 2021). It is essential to recognize these negative emotions and provide support to help them manage their emotional well-being.

Furthermore, many occupations place a high value on self-satisfaction and contentment, especially in the nursing field, since nurses are in regular and immediate proximity to patients (Bristow and Herrick, 2002; Salas-Vallina et al. 2017). This is because patients' special needs necessitate nurses to be happy with their performance, enthusiastic, and compassionate. Hence, the study suggested acknowledging and supporting these nurses to ensure that they can thrive in their roles and contribute to the overall success of the ER (Motlagh, 2020).

In this study, the new nurses in the ER faced challenges related to the lack of familiarity with all emergency cases. Thus, Javanmardnejad et al. (2021), mentioned that training opportunities are necessary to improve their knowledge and skills in nursing. On the other hand, effective training and skill development can improve their ability and provide an opportunity for new nurses to gain practical experience, build their confidence in their abilities and cope with workplace stress (Hinzmann, 2022). Additionally, guidance and counselling are essential to support new nurses in their transition to working in the ER (Cui et al. 2022). Therefore, experienced nurses and mentors should provide guidance to new nurses, helping them to navigate the complexities of the job.

This study also indicates that there are challenges related to the work environment, including division within the working team. These challenges are caused by biased attitudes of some officials towards a particular nurse, and the inability of new nurses to get along with the team. These challenges can lead to negative work experiences for new nurses, which can impact their performance because of stress and exhaustion, leading to fatigue (Borges et al. 2019). Moreover, nurses may feel pressured

under stressful work events. These feelings could be attributed to the high-pressure nature of the job and the demanding work environment (Adriaenssens, De Gucht and Maes, 2015). Participants attributed these pressures to several factors, including the increasing number of patients in the ER and the shortage of nursing staff, which means that some patients may not receive good nursing care. Therefore, a study by McKenna et al. (2019) suggested increasing the number of nursing staff in ER to ensure that patient care needs are met adequately. In the ER environment nurses need to make quick decisions, and maintain a stable mood, and this leads to increased tension among colleagues (Adriaenssens, De Gucht and Maes, 2015). Healthcare organizations should implement strategies such as workload management, task delegation, and collaboration among staff, which can help build a positive work culture and reduce conflicts (Vaismoradi et al. 2020). Collaborative working can enhance teamwork and performance. Therefore, teamwork and collaboration can counteract moral hazards (Chan, 2016).

In this study many new nurses in ER experience the difficulty of dealing with interventions from patients' companions and family members. This can impact the decision-making abilities of new nurses and increase the risk of medical errors. Therefore, healthcare organizations should develop communication and conflict resolution strategies to gain and improve staff skills (Vand, Tamadoni et al. 2020), such as assigning monitoring staff to reduce the overcrowding of patient companions, and ensuring that extra attendees to a patient's companion should not be allowed in emergency departments.

## CONCLUSION

New nurses working in ER face various challenges that can make their job difficult. These include individual challenges which can cause fluctuation between positive and negative feelings. Additionally, new nurses in ER need to increase their knowledge and skills and ability in dealing with a high-pressure work environment. However, with proper training, support, and mentorship, new nurses can overcome these challenges and thrive in their roles. It is essential for healthcare organizations to provide resources and support to help new nurses succeed in the fast-paced and demanding environment of ERs.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declared that present study was performed in absence of any conflict of interest.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization, AN, and AS. Methodology, AN, and AS. Writing—original draft preparation, AN. Writing—

review and editing, AN, and AS. Funding acquisition, AN, and AS. All authors read and approved the final version.

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