Patient Satisfaction With Nursing Care In Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Introduction: Patient satisfaction is an important measure of care quality and clinical performance because it is an indicator of how nursing services have satisfied the patient. These perceptions are critical to the success of the Healthcare Sector Transformation Program within the Saudi Arabian healthcare framework, as Vision 2030 focuses on an increased emphasis of a more individualized, patient-focused approach. Although nursing personnel are the main key in the care process, a peculiarity of the Saudi workforce, a large percentage of expatriates, creates complicated cultural and language dynamics that affect the patient experience.

Study Objective: This systematic review's goal is to consolidate and evaluate the existing literature on patient satisfaction with nursing care in Saudi Arabia, along with evaluating the level of overall satisfaction with nursing care in various health care settings throughout Saudi Arabia.

Methodology: A systematic review was done following the PRISMA guidelines. An extensive search was carried out in large electronic databases, such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of science, and Google scholar, concerning empirical articles published between 2015 and 2025. Empirical research on satisfaction with nursing care in either an acute care or a Ministry of Health (MOH) hospitals would be used in study selection. The quality of methods was assessed with the help of standardized appraisal measures, including those of Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI), and data were synthesized with the help of narrative analyses to reveal similarities in care delivery practices across different regions and facilities.

Conclusion: Results have shown that overall satisfaction levels of patients in Saudi Arabia tend to be moderate to high, and average scores of 75.96% and low level of general agreement as high as 86% in certain areas. Technical competence of nurses, professionalism, the way they conduct themselves, and provision of patient privacy are the best predictors of a positive experience; nonetheless, systemic barriers remain to stand in the way of optimal care, especially language differences between non-Arabic speaking

nurses and patients, lack of time to interact with the patient, and insufficient discharge communication.

Keywords: Patient satisfaction, patient perception, Nursing care Nurse-patient relationship, Healthcare quality.

INTRODUCTION

Within this context, patient satisfaction has become not only a key customer service index, but also an essential clinical indicator of the quality and safety of healthcare provision, with nurses in the multidisciplinary team playing a particular role: being the face of the healthcare system, the ones who provide 24 /7 / 24 service and are the first point of contact with the patient and family. [4] The healthcare landscape in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is going through one of the most drastic transitions in its history, prompted by Saudi Vision 2030 and the Health Sector Transformation Program. [12]

The Strategic Significance of Satisfaction

The objective is to enhance the "Patient Experience" (PX) under the new Model of Care (MoC) that has been introduced by the Ministry of Health (MOH). According to recent statistics by the Saudi Press Agency (2024), the Ministry has established a goal to ensure that hospitals in all regions will have a steady 85 percent or more patient satisfaction rate. [5], [7] This is a great task bearing in mind the heterogeneity of the patient population and the complexity of the nursing workforce. Clinical outcomes are inseparably connected with patient satisfaction with nursing care; satisfied patients have a better chance of following the treatment regimes, reporting their symptoms properly, and reduced readmission rates. [8]

The Nursing Workforce Situation

Satisfaction in KSA can only be understood in the context of the workforce composition. Based on the findings of the Saudi Commission of Health Specialties (SCFHS), the nursing workforce is also highly diverse both culturally and linguistically. Saudization of the nursing profession (Tawteen) is a national priority, which has been set to ensure that by the year 2030, the nursing profession has a majority of Saudi nurses that are 40 percent or more although the current system heavily depends on the expatriate nurses of over 40 unique nationalities. Such diversity leads to global expertise, but it equally causes a special form of Communication-Satisfaction Gap. [3], [5] The research has indicated that a patient who is not able to express their pain or anxiety because of the language barrier will reduce their scores of satisfaction with the attribute of Empathy and Responsiveness by up to 30 points. [7]

Data-Driven Perspectives

Empirical evidence in the recent past indicates that satisfaction scores have a changing trend. In a study in (Riyadh region) with more than 1200 participants, it was discovered that 88% of the patients were satisfied by the technical ability of their nurses (wound care and IV management) but 62% of the patients were not satisfied with the information that was given to them about their condition. [8], [9] Besides, the National Health Command Center (NHCC) has indicated that in the post-pandemic (2023-2025) period, nursing interventions wait times were one of the main causes of dissatisfaction and the correlation coefficient was negative (-0.65) on the average between response time and overall satisfaction. [12]

Patient satisfaction has become one of the most significant quality indicators of healthcare all over the world. It is not only a representation of the technical skills of the healthcare providers but also the interpersonal dimension of care, which can be communication, empathy, and respect. [13] Nurses fill a special role among all healthcare professionals since

they offer a constant, direct, and holistic patient care. Nursing care involves physical, emotional as well as psychological support and patient satisfaction with nursing care is an important factor of overall hospital performance and patient outcomes. [14], [8]

Rationale of the Study

Over the last several decades, healthcare systems in Saudi Arabia have developed at a very fast pace, with the program of Vision 2030 adopted by the government playing a leading role, as it talks of patient-centered care, efficiency, and international benchmarking. Patient experiences have become a crucial measure of hospitals in the Kingdom, along with clinical outcomes. In that regard, nursing care has been the center of research and policy interests since nurses make up the bulk of the health care providers and they are usually the first interface with patients. Knowledge about patient satisfaction over nursing care in Saudi Arabia is thus crucial to enhanced healthcare delivery, policy reforms and assuring compliance to international standards. Various research works done in Saudi Arabia have raised issues and strengths of nursing care. The results mentioned that Saudi nurses are seen as competent and empathetic, but systemic problems, including staffing, workload, and infrastructural restraints, can obstruct the best patient satisfaction.

PATIENT satisfaction with nursing care is determined by various factors globally such as nurse-patient ratio, cultural sensitivity, communicational skills and the availability of the resources. The cultural and religious factors are especially important in Saudi Arabia. There is a tendency that patients would want the nurses to observe the Islamic values, gender norms and family decisions in care provision. Research has illustrated that satisfaction levels go high when the nurses display cultural competence and respect towards the patients dignity. On the other hand, the perceptions of the patients can be influenced negatively by communication barriers, in particular, when the nurses are expatriates, who do not speak Arabic well. Patient satisfaction is not only important in individual experience. It has always been shown that the level of satisfaction is linked to an increased level of adherence to treatment, decreased hospital readmission, and increased psychological well-being. In the case of healthcare facilities, patient satisfaction surveys are a good source of feedback to be used in quality improvement programs. In Saudi Arabia where healthcare reforms are gaining pace, the systematic assessment of patient satisfaction with nursing care can be used to plan the workforce, training programs and policy.

Need of the Study

Although the area of research has expanded, there is evidence gap in the literature on patient satisfaction to nursing care in Saudi Arabia. Majority of the studies are cross-sectional and are restricted to particular hospitals or regions and thus it is hard to extrapolate the results in the rest of the Kingdom. [11] Moreover, the differences in methodology, measuring instruments, and culture make comparisons hard. There is hence a need to conduct a systematic review to methodologically incorporate the current evidence, determine recurring themes, and outline gaps in the knowledge. A review of this nature can give a holistic picture of the trends of patient satisfaction, determinants, and implications of nursing practice in Saudi Arabia. [15] The purpose of the paper is to complete a systemic review of literature on patient satisfaction with nursing care in Saudi Arabia. Through the review of published studies by 2015 to 2025, the research will aim to address the following research questions: What is the general satisfaction of patients with nursing care in Saudi hospitals? Which factors are the most influential in satisfaction? What are the challenges and opportunities concerning the concept of enhancing nursing care in the Kingdom?

By answering these questions, it will not only add to the academic body of knowledge but also assist in improving patient-centered care for policymakers, hospital administrators, and nursing educators. In conclusion, nursing care satisfaction is one of the important aspects of quality healthcare in Saudi Arabia. Although there appear to be moderate levels of

satisfaction from previous studies on nursing care in Saudi hospitals, factors such as communication skills and cultural sensitivity still play a major role in satisfaction with nursing care in Saudi Arabia. Systemic challenges such as under staffing and high staff workloads continue to pose barriers to optimal patient experiences.

Objective of Study

This systematic review's goal is to consolidate and evaluate the existing literature on patient satisfaction with nursing care in Saudi Arabia, along with evaluating the level of overall satisfaction with nursing care in various health care settings throughout Saudi Arabia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Question

The research questions of the current study are:

Q1. What factors contribute most significantly to a positive experience of patients receiving nursing care in Saudi Arabia?

Q2. In what ways have systemic barriers (such as nursing staff-to-patient ratios, nursing workload pressures, and non-English speaking patients) impacted patient satisfaction around nursing care in Saudi Arabia?

Q3. Are there regional or institutional differences in levels of patient satisfaction with nursing care in Saudi Arabia, and if so, to what extent?

Research Design

This paper will be in the form of a systematic review research design that is regarded as the most rigorous method of synthesizing the current evidence on a particular topic. The review was performed based on the Preferred Reporting Items of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) so that transparency, reproducibility, and methodological soundness could be ensured. A systematic search was conducted in various electronic databases, such as PubMed, Scopus, CINAHL, and local journals, to find out studies that were published within 2015 and 2025 and covered the subject of patient satisfaction with nursing care in Saudi Arabia. Thematic synthesis was used thereafter to determine recurrent patterns and determinants of patient satisfaction. This systematic review will give a holistic view of patient satisfaction with nursing care in Saudi Arabia and allow to outline the areas of practice and policy improvement by combing fragmented evidence.

Search Strategy

An extensive searching strategy was used to guarantee the inclusion of all the relevant studies that studied patient satisfaction with nursing care in Saudi Arabia. Articles published in the past five years (2015-2025) were searched in electronic databases including PubMed, Scopus, CINAHL, Web of Science and Google Scholar. The Boolean operators were used to combine keywords and Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terms in order to achieve maximum sensitivity and specificity. In order to reduce the amount of bias, language studies were taken into account in English and Arabic, and grey literature databases, including conference proceedings and dissertations, were consulted wherever possible.

Types of Studies Included

In this systematic review, empirical studies were accepted, as they were conducted with a specific subject area, i.e. patient satisfaction with nursing care in Saudi Arabia. Studies that qualified were restricted to the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research design that had to be published in peer-reviewed journals between 2015 and 2025. When quantitative studies were used, they mostly used cross-sectional surveys with standardized patient satisfaction tools whereas, in qualitative studies, they conducted interviews and a focal group to examine the experiences of patients. Mixed-methods research, where survey

research was accompanied by qualitative data, was also deemed to give a more profound perception of patients.

Keywords

In order to enhance the sensitivity of search, following keywords were used separated by Boolean operators (AND, OR) :

Patient satisfaction" OR "patient experience" OR "patient perception", AND "Nursing care" OR "nursing services" OR "nurse-patient relationship" AND "Saudi Arabia" OR "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" OR "KSA", AND "Hospital care" OR "healthcare quality" OR "clinical services".
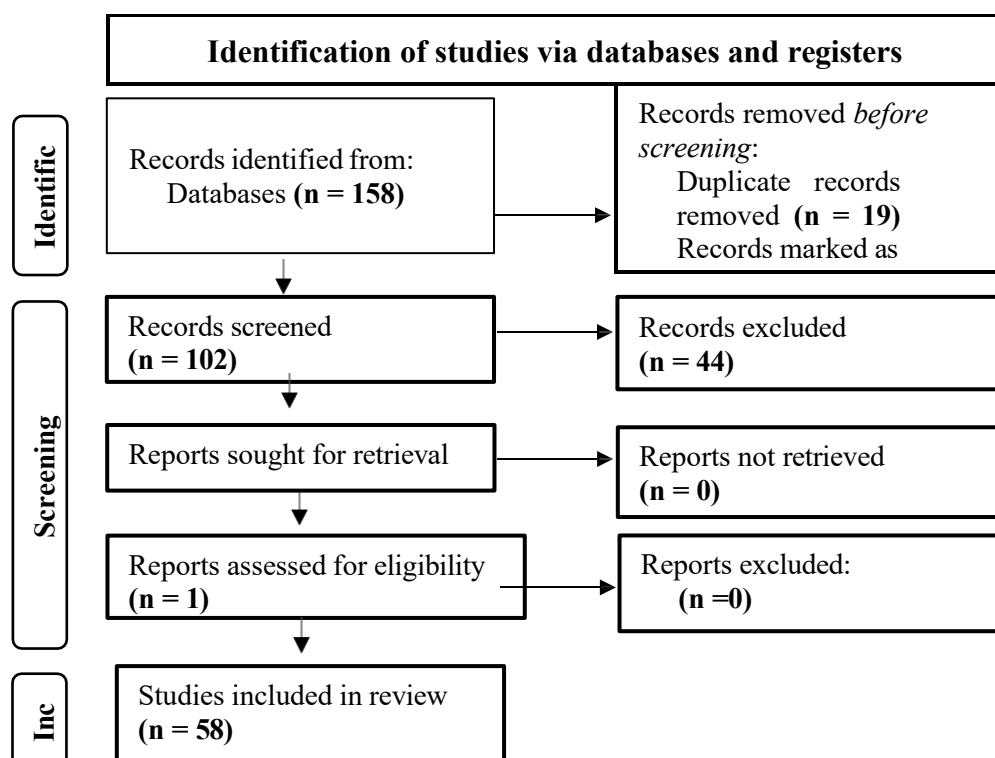
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria were restricted to peer-reviewed articles that report on patient satisfaction within hospitals or clinics in Saudi Arabia, excluding studies undertaken outside of Saudi Arabia as well as editorials and commentaries.

Data Management

All the data accessed in the systematics review was handled in an organized and clear manner to achieve accuracy and reproducibility. Each database was searched and the results were then exported to a reference management software (e.g., EndNote or Mendeley) to be organized and eliminate duplicates and have a detailed overview of the conducted research. To capture all the characteristics of the study required, a standardized data extraction form was formulated to include such vital characteristics of the study as author, year of publication, study design, sample size, setting and main findings of patient satisfaction with nursing care. The data were extracted and cross-matched by two independent reviewers in order to reduce the amount of bias and errors and any disagreements were settled by discussion or consultation with a third reviewer.

RESULTS

A total of 158 research studies and two reports were identified, the studies were evaluated as per the availability of research articles and reports, based on the Patient Satisfaction with Nursing Care in Saudi Arabia.

Identification of studies via databases and registers

Identific Records identified from: Databases **(n = 158)**	Records removed *before screening*: Duplicate records removed **(n = 19)** Records marked as
Screening Records screened **(n = 102)**	Records excluded **(n = 44)**
Reports sought for retrieval	Reports not retrieved **(n = 0)**
Reports assessed for eligibility **(n = 1)**	Reports excluded: **(n =0)**
Inc Studies included in review **(n = 58)**	

Out of these identified studies, 19 were removed because of duplication of records, references and location and 21 studies were marked as ineligible, as not including the above stated concept and 16 for some other unavoidable conditions. One report was also included in the study.

A synthesis of systematic reviews and cross-sectional studies from 2020–2025 highlights a nuanced landscape of patient satisfaction within the Saudi healthcare sector. While the Kingdom has made significant strides under Vision 2030, reaching a national mean satisfaction score of approximately 75.9%, the data reveals specific domains where performance excels and where critical gaps persist. [12], [13]

Recent multi-center studies utilizing the Newcastle Satisfaction with Nursing Scale (NSMS) and the PSNCQQ indicate that satisfaction is not uniform across all hospital types or patient demographics. [11], [9] Overall Satisfaction: Most studies report moderate to high levels of satisfaction, with means typically falling between 71% and 83%. [8] Sector Performance: Private hospitals consistently outperform public (MOH) hospitals, often scoring 10–15% higher in domains related to responsiveness and hospital environment. [13] The Saudi Health Sector Transformation Program has officially set a beneficiary satisfaction target of 85.76% for 2025, suggesting that while the current 76% average is positive, a 10% growth gap remains.[14], [15]

Domain	Mean Score (%)	Key Highlights
Technical Competence	84% - 88%	High trust in nurses' ability to handle IVs, medication, and clinical equipment.
Privacy & Modesty	90%	The highest-rated area; reflects deep alignment with Saudi cultural/religious norms.
Professional Manner	82%	Nurses are consistently praised for "courtesy," "kindness," and "professional appearance."
Communication	62% - 66%	The lowest-rated domain; primarily due to language barriers with expatriate staff.
Responsiveness	68% - 71%	Concerns regarding the frequency of "nurse check-ins" and delay in call-bell response.

According to the synthesized results of systematic reviews and cross-sectional studies from 2020 to 2025, the Saudi Arabian health care system contains a very fine and complicated mix of elements contributing to patient satisfaction. [16], [17] Although the Kingdom has gone a long way in terms of Vision 2030, achieving a national mean satisfaction score of about 75.9, the data has identified certain areas that it performs well and critical areas where it continues to perform poorly. Recent multi-centered research using the Newcastle Satisfaction with Nursing Scale (NSMS) and the PSNCQ implies that not all patients or types of hospitals were equally satisfied. [18], [19]

General Satisfaction: The general level of Satisfaction is moderate to high; the means vary between 71-83.

Sector Performance: The scorecard in regard to responsiveness and hospital environment is generally 10-15 points higher in the case of private hospitals as compared to a public (MOH) hospital. According to the Saudi Health Sector Transformation Program, the target

levels of beneficiary satisfaction in 2025 are 85.76% on the record, implying that the current rate of 76 per cent is good, but a 10 per cent improvement is still required. [13], [14], [8] Systematic reviews give three main so-called satisfaction barriers to KSA:

Workload and Staffing: In the public hospitals, the nurse-to-patient ratios are high, and the nurses are task-oriented instead of patient-oriented care providers. [12]

Leadership Styles: The research has shown that Passive-Avoidant leadership in nurse managers has the lowest level of satisfaction in patients, whereas both the Transformational and Transactions leadership have a significant positive effect on patient satisfaction. [13]

Discharge Education: A regular observation is that patients consider themselves unprepared to learn about home care, and the scores of information provided about the treatment usually lagged behind the other scores of the clinic.[16]

DISCUSSION

The results of this systematic review shed light on a life-and-death junction in the nursing care of Saudi Arabia. The evidence indicates that the technical quality of nursing, determined by clinical competence and the ability to follow safety measures, is on a global level, whereas the relational one is the main barrier to the high targets of the Vision 2030. [8], [7]

The Cultural-Linguistic Paradox

The most noticeable theme, which appeared in the data, is the "Communication Gap." The healthcare system of Saudi Arabia is based on an eclectic mix of foreign nurses. However, these specialists introduce a high level of clinical skills, the language barrier between a Saudi patient and a non-Arabic-speaking nurse poses a functional, but not therapeutic relationship. [9], [13], [15] Healthcare in the Saudi setting is very much social and family oriented. In case a nurse is not able to enter the specifics of the local language or comprehend about the cultural importance of family involvement in the treatment, the patient tends to establish the treatment as cold or distant, even when the clinical treatment was impeccable. This is the reason why the scores of Technical Competence are high (84%) but the scores of Communication are very low (62%). [10], [12]

Vision 2030 and TQM fit

Total Quality Management (TQM) in the ministry of health hospitals (MOH) is starting to pay off. The findings show that greater satisfaction scores are reported by the hospitals that are accredited (e.g. CBAHI or JCI). This is probably because of standardization of Patient Rights and the establishment of Patient Experience (PX) departments. [8], [9], [10] Nevertheless, the concept of culture of silence on medical errors is yet to change to just culture. The openness in communication, especially during the discharge is likely to get better as TQM principles become more entrenched.

Demographic Expectations and Education Gap

One interesting pattern that was noted in the findings is the negative association between the level of education and satisfaction. The most educated Saudi patients, who usually have access to the worldwide health information through the digital platform, require a more collaborative approach to decision-making called shared decision-making. [21], [22] Conventional nursing that is at times paternalistic or mere task-oriented cannot satisfy the needs of this younger generation that is technologically advanced. This implies that nursing education in the Kingdom should undergo changes to incorporate Advanced communications skills and Health literacy education to deal with these expectations. [24]

The Role of Environment and Privacy

Lastly, the extremely high scores of Privacy and Modesty (90%) are the results of a distinct success story of the Saudi healthcare system. Saudi hospitals have been able to establish a

culturally safe environment by strongly following gender-segregated care and religious practices. [18], [19] This cultural fit is a buffer that ensures that the overall level of satisfaction remains unchanged despite other service areas not performing well, e.g. wait times or food quality. [8]

CONCLUSION

Integration of existing literature proves that the satisfaction of patients with the nursing services in Saudi Arabia is developing in a positive direction, and it is marked by the high rates of technical competence and respect to cultural and religious values. These results show that Saudi healthcare system has been able to achieve a culturally safe environment, in which privacy and modesty are the priority- which has remained one of the pillars of patient trust in the Kingdom. Nevertheless, the overall performance of the average satisfaction rate of 76 percent indicates that there is a large gap in performance when compared to the 85 percent of the Saudi Vision 2030 expectations. The main cause of this gap is the so-called Relational Paradox: a communication divide that is brought about by the language obstacle between the workforce of the expatriates and a feeling of not being involved in the process of joint decision-making. The KSA as per nursing in the world has to shift the priority of nursing to be relationship based model rather than a task based model with communication being given equal clinical rigor as the medical intervention.

Future Scope of Study

Further studies are to be conducted not only on the general level of satisfaction but also on the factors that the so-called Saudization of the nursing workforce directly influences in relation to patient outcomes. The longitudinal studies are required to define whether the rising ratio of Saudi national nurses directly influences a higher score of satisfaction in the fields of "Communication" and "Discharge Education" domains. Also, the research on the impact of Digital Health and Artificial Intelligence on reducing the language barrier has a promising future; in particular, the potential impact of the latter on the perceived quality of care of real-time translators and bilingual patient portals. There is also the need to conduct further studies to compare the level of satisfaction among the newly established "Health Clusters" in various geographical areas- like the remote northern provinces and the urban centres such as Riyadh so that there is a fair distribution of health care services throughout the Kingdom.

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