



**PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF FEMALE NURSES IN INDIA:
A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS****Neelambika Indrajeeth¹ and Dr (Smt). Shivaleela Basavaraj²****¹Research Scholar, Department of Sociology ,
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Government Degree College Kamalapur, Dist: Kalaburagi, Karnataka.****ABSTRACT:**

Nurses plays significant role in healthcare industry and their service is noble profession with humanity. After globalization, there is growth of healthcare industry and employment opportunities for nurses especially female nurses at national and international level. Still, the female nurses are facing many of the problems such as lower pay, longer working hours, exploitation, sexual harassment, problems in family due to irregular working hours and night shifts and so on. The paper addressed the problems of female nurses in India. It is suggested to the Government to implement welfare schemes for the female nurses. Further, it is essential to control private healthcare centres and hospitals so that, they should pay higher salaries, maintaining good working conditions, flexible and fair working hours, etc for the welfare female nurses.

**KEY WORDS:** Female Nurses, Problems of Nurses, India.**INTRODUCTION:**

Nurses play an integral role in the healthcare industry, providing care to the patients and carrying out leadership roles in hospitals, health systems and other organizations. Nurses can be classified into many categories like head nurse, staff nurse, nurse in charge, nurse superintendent and so on. Although nursing profession can be very rewarding but it is equally challenging and it entails a huge level of dedication and commitment. Nurses needs to be focused on not only the patient needs but also on the management of system of care. This often creates unfortunate hassles irrespective of how hard the nurse's works towards patient care. They are coordinators and custodians of patient care. This entails lot of managerial skills where they need to possess apart from technical skills.

Nursing is a highly feminized profession. Nurses are one of the most diverse and largest workforces in the health care system. The word "nurse" originated from Latin word "Nutricious" which means someone who nourishes, fosters and protects. The role of nurses in the health care system is expanding and changing. The nurses are one of the strongest pillars of the health care delivery system in providing safe, affordable and quality services to the people. Mortality, morbidity and disability reduction, health promotion through healthy lifestyles are positive health outcomes in which nurses have a pivotal role. They play a major role in maintaining health status and also in achieving the health-

related targets of the country (D'Souza and Battur, 2020). The nursing profession is a well-recognised and respected discipline in the Western world, where nurses are considered equivalent to doctors and other health care professionals in health-care team, and thus, they have significantly contributed in ensuring quality healthcare (Sharma, et al, 2020).

Nurses are crucial in fostering collaboration among healthcare providers, including doctors, paramedical staff, and support personnel. However, they grapple with many daunting challenges in their workplace, which hamper their efficiency in delivering quality patient care and tarnish the reputation of the healthcare institution they serve. Notably, these challenges are frequently cited as the primary reasons motivating nurses to exit the profession, resulting in a need for more nursing students and exacerbating staff shortages in sectors like homecare. These challenges are intricately interlinked, and their repercussions are far-reaching (Elham Malik and Shail Shankar, 2023).

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF FEMALE NURSES:

Female nurses are more prone to job stress and mental health issues due to direct and regular exposure to death, accidents, trauma, and chronic illnesses among other problems. This is because other healthcare workers like doctors or therapists spend limited amounts of time with the patients. Comparatively, nurses are the first line of contact with the patients and their family or friends which make them constantly exposed to the emotional strains of dealing with the sick and dying (Mangwani, et al, 2020). At their families, female nurses are unable to spend time with elders, husband or children, which cause dissatisfaction of their own family members.

Nurses confront a high risk of developing occupational health hazards if not taken proper precautions and care. Nurses are confronted with a variety of biological, physical, and chemical hazards during the course of performing their duties. Deficient Manpower leads to unmanageable patient load and disparity in the Nurse: Patient ratio. Nurse: Patient ratio needs to be well maintained as it highly affects the patient care delivery system. When nurses are forced to work with high nurse-to-patient ratios, patients die, get infections, get injured, or get sent home too soon without adequate education about how to take care of their illness or injury. So, they return right back to the hospital, often sicker than before. When nurses have fewer patients, they can take better care of them (Chhugani and Merlin, 2017).

Workplace violence is widespread in healthcare settings. Huge amount of workload and responsibilities on the staff can often lead to disturbed mental peace, which ultimately leads to less efficient care. Multiple tasks can pose a problem in a healthcare unit. Workplace mental violence can be in the form of threats, verbal abuse, hostility, and harassment, which can cause psychological trauma and stress. At times, verbal assault can escalate to physical violence. In a healthcare setting, the possible sources of violence include patients, visitors, intruders and even co-workers (Chhugani and Merlin, 2017A).

As described by Raeve, et al (2023), violence against female nurses has been shown to lead to inevitable and unpredictable harm to nurses' careers, with many nurses experiencing significant and lasting psychological trauma. Female nurses report that violent incidents are increasing and that they are forced to accept violence as part of their job. The triggers of violence against nurses are complex, including such things as unmet patient/family expectations and inefficient organizational management.

Female nurses working at different hospitals are also facing many challenges such as family duties, poor human resource policies and gender inequalities that hinder their professional growth. At few workplaces, they are facing exploitation and even sexual harassment. Their working hours are irregular and are compelled to work even during night shifts. During night shift at hospitals, there are also rare incidents of rape and sexual harassment against female nurses are reported. Consequently, due to nightshift work of female nurses, there may be frequent quarrels and conflicts in their families, which may also lead to family disorganization. Shift work and work-related stress are important topics in the healthcare sector due to their possible negative impact on the workers' health and safety. This includes cardiovascular diseases, gastrointestinal complaints, sleep troubles, mental health problems,

fatigue, job dissatisfaction, accidents and injuries at work, reduced vigilance and job performance, absenteeism and turnover (Rathore, et al, 2012)

The female nurses are facing stress, tension and anxiety during emergency times like Covid19 period. During such period and frequent lockdowns, they were faced threat of Corona infection as they are treating Covid19 patients and even they are away or excluded from their families for many days during Covid 19 period due to fear of spread of corona disease to their family members. Sharma, et al (2020) have listed following barriers and challenges faced by nurses in India:

ORGANIZATIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL:

- ❖ Low pay, poor working conditions and long working hours
- ❖ Lack of defined cadre structure and career progression for nurses with different qualification and experience
- ❖ Nurses are posted in wards as per shortage not according to their area of interest or speciality training
- ❖ Minimum or no representation of nurses in policy and decision-making at institutional, state and national level
- ❖ No practice law or positions for independent nurse practitioners or clinical nurse specialists.
- ❖ No retention policies and protocols for nurses to prevent brain drain
- ❖ Unequal opportunities for continuing education and training
- ❖ Gender discrimination in enrollment and recruitment of male nurses
- ❖ Stagnant carrier with no promotional opportunities for nurses at all levels
- ❖ Rewards and appreciation are never given or considered for nurses
- ❖ Nursing manpower is utilised in basic care rather than patient treatment
- ❖ Involvement of nurses in non-nursing roles like duties at reception and excessive documentation
- ❖ Violence by patients, visitors and co-workers at workplace
- ❖ More efforts are given on nurses' grooming rather than skills
- ❖ Unavailability of basic facilities such as water, food, canteen, parking and washroom at working place
- ❖ No facilities for campus or residential accommodation
- ❖ Physician dominated health-care system, where nurses' potentials are under-recognised and underutilised
- ❖ Unchecked productions of incompetent nursing manpower due to rapid mushrooming of private nursing institutes

Individual Level:

- ❖ Poor self-concept and self-image as a nurse or about nursing profession
- ❖ Ignorant attitude of nurses towards proactive role of nurses in patient care and treatment
- ❖ Nurses are always in dilemma out their roles and responsibilities
- ❖ Majority of nurses choose nursing about of compulsion and in hope of job security at abroad or govt. hospital
- ❖ Poor knowledge, skills and competence to match with development in medicine discipline in India
- ❖ No programmes for career guidance and enhancement in nursing discipline
- ❖ Lack of dynamic or influential leaders who can be a great role model
- ❖ Lack of motivation, assertiveness, collective bargaining and lobbying among nurses

Media and Societal Level:

- ❖ People in the country do not consider nursing as a professional and respectable job
- ❖ Male dominated society considering nursing as feminine and thus menial
- ❖ Derogatory remarks and labeling of nurse as 'aayaa'
- ❖ Unawareness in society regarding diverse and advanced role of nurses

- ❖ Vicious cycle- poor social image and recognition fails to attract best talent, which leads to poor development of profession and thereby lack of recognition and status
- ❖ Media portraying nurses as sensual females in submissive, subservient roles with low intellect
- ❖ Nurses are never interviewed and given media coverage for their opinion on health policies or reforms

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

To conclude, it is highlighted that, nursing is noble profession as it is caring others with humanity. Still nurses, especially nurses are facing many of the problems and challenges in various hospitals and healthcare centres. Of course, there is growth of opportunities for nurses after globalization and growth of private hospitals. But, the problems such as lower financial rewards, longer working hours, high workload, exploitation, harassment, etc are more in private hospitals and healthcare centres. Realizing the same, it is suggested to the Government to control regulate both Government and Private Hospitals in terms of working hours, salary and other benefits, working conditions, etc of the health workers, especially female nurses. Further, it is essential for the family members to understand the work status of the female nurses and adjust with them regarding shift work, work load at hospitals and so on. It is essential on the part of people and society to respect female nurses, who are dedicated their life to care the patients with humanity.

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