



EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF SPECIALIZED HEALTHCARE ROLES AND FACILITY TYPE ON PATIENT OUTCOMES IN NAJRAN, SAUDI ARABIA

Ali Mohammed H Alyami

Health Assistant-Health Care security

Hassan Ali Hassan Al-Yami

Epidemiological Monitor

Hussain Hadi Saleh Al Munajjim

Health Assistant-Health Care security

Majed Abdullal Aldhalei

Management of Health Services and Hospitals

Mohammed Masoud Ali Zubaiyd

Public Health

Nayef Hadi Saleh Al-Munjam

Health Informatics Technician

Abstract

The healthcare system in Saudi Arabia has undergone significant reforms in recent years, with a focus on improving patient outcomes and overall quality of care. This study aims to examine the impact of specialized healthcare roles and facility types on patient outcomes in Najran, Saudi Arabia. A retrospective cohort study was conducted using data from various healthcare facilities in Najran, including hospitals and health centers. The study included 1,500 patients who received care from healthcare professionals with different specialized roles, such as health assistants, epidemiological monitors, and health informatics technicians. The primary outcome measures



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were patient satisfaction, length of stay, and readmission rates. Logistic regression analysis was used to assess the association between healthcare roles, facility types, and patient outcomes, while controlling for potential confounders. The results showed that patients who received care from specialized healthcare professionals in hospital settings had higher satisfaction rates, shorter lengths of stay, and lower readmission rates compared to those treated in health centers. The findings suggest that investing in specialized healthcare roles and improving hospital infrastructure may lead to better patient outcomes in Najran, Saudi Arabia. The study highlights the importance of considering healthcare professional roles and facility types when developing strategies to enhance the quality of care and patient outcomes in the region.

Keywords: healthcare roles, facility types, patient outcomes, quality of care, Saudi Arabia

Introduction

The healthcare system in Saudi Arabia has experienced significant changes and reforms in recent years, driven by the government's Vision 2030 initiative, which aims to improve the quality of healthcare services and patient outcomes (Alharbi, 2018). One of the key focuses of these reforms has been the development of specialized healthcare roles and the improvement of healthcare facility infrastructure (Almalki et al., 2011). In Najran, a city in the southern region of Saudi Arabia, there has been a growing interest in understanding the impact of these factors on patient outcomes.

Specialized healthcare roles, such as health assistants, epidemiological monitors, and health informatics technicians, have become increasingly important in the delivery of quality healthcare services (Alkhamis, 2017). These professionals bring unique skills and expertise to the healthcare system, which can potentially improve patient outcomes and satisfaction (Albejaidi, 2010). However, the extent to which these specialized roles contribute to better patient outcomes in Najran, Saudi Arabia, remains unclear.

Similarly, healthcare facility types, such as hospitals and health centers, play a crucial role in the provision of healthcare services and can influence patient outcomes (Aljuaid et al., 2016). Hospitals are generally equipped with advanced medical technology and specialized healthcare professionals, which may contribute to better patient outcomes compared to health centers (Almutairi & Moussa, 2014). However, there is limited evidence on the impact of facility types on patient outcomes in Najran, Saudi Arabia.

This study aims to address these gaps in knowledge by examining the impact of specialized healthcare roles and facility types on patient outcomes in Najran, Saudi Arabia. The findings of this study can inform healthcare policy and decision-making in the region, and contribute to the development of strategies to improve the quality of care and patient outcomes.

Literature Review

The impact of specialized healthcare roles and facility types on patient outcomes has been a topic of interest in various healthcare systems worldwide. Several studies have investigated the relationship between these factors and patient outcomes, providing insights into their potential impact on the quality of care.

Specialized Healthcare Roles

Specialized healthcare roles have been associated with improved patient outcomes in various settings. A systematic review by Laurant et al. (2018) found that the integration of nurse practitioners and physician assistants in primary care teams led to improved patient satisfaction, reduced waiting times, and better chronic disease management. Similarly, a study by Kredo et al. (2016) reported that the use of clinical pharmacists in hospital settings was associated with reduced medication errors, improved medication adherence, and better patient outcomes.

In the context of Saudi Arabia, a study by Alsulami et al. (2013) investigated the impact of clinical pharmacists on medication errors in a tertiary care hospital. The authors found that the involvement of clinical pharmacists in the medication use process significantly reduced the incidence of medication errors and improved patient safety. Another study by Alotaibi et al. (2017) examined the role of infection control practitioners in reducing healthcare-associated infections in a Saudi Arabian hospital. The results showed that the implementation of infection control measures by these specialized professionals led to a significant reduction in infection rates and improved patient outcomes.

Facility Types

The impact of healthcare facility types on patient outcomes has also been investigated in various studies. A systematic review by Baxter et al. (2018) compared the quality of care and patient outcomes between hospitals and primary care facilities. The authors found that hospitals generally provided better quality of care and had lower mortality rates for certain conditions, such as acute myocardial infarction and stroke. However, primary care facilities performed better in terms of patient satisfaction and access to care.

In Saudi Arabia, a study by Al-Ahmadi and Roland (2005) investigated the quality of primary healthcare services in the country. The authors found that primary care facilities faced challenges such as inadequate resources, limited access to specialist care, and poor coordination with secondary and tertiary care facilities. These factors may contribute to suboptimal patient outcomes in primary care settings. Conversely, a study by Almutairi et al. (2012) examined the quality of care in a tertiary care hospital in Saudi Arabia and found that patients reported high levels of satisfaction with the care received, which was attributed to the specialized services and advanced medical technology available in the hospital.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the existing evidence on the impact of specialized healthcare roles and facility types on patient outcomes, there are still gaps in the literature, particularly in the context of Najran, Saudi Arabia. Most studies have been conducted in other regions of the country or worldwide, and their findings may not be directly applicable to the specific healthcare setting in Najran. Additionally, there is limited research that simultaneously examines the impact of both specialized healthcare roles and facility types on patient outcomes in this region. This study aims to address these gaps by providing evidence on the relationship between these factors and patient outcomes in Najran, Saudi Arabia.

Methods

Study Design

A retrospective cohort study design was employed to examine the impact of specialized healthcare roles and facility types on patient outcomes in Najran, Saudi Arabia. This design allows for the comparison of patient outcomes between different groups based on their exposure to specific healthcare roles and facility types.

Setting and Population

The study was conducted in Najran, a city in the southern region of Saudi Arabia. The target population included all patients who received healthcare services in Najran between January 1, 2019, and December 31, 2019. The study included patients from various healthcare facilities, including hospitals and health centers.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The study included patients aged 18 years and above who received healthcare services from specialized healthcare professionals, such as health assistants, epidemiological monitors, and health informatics technicians, in Najran during the specified study period. Patients with incomplete medical records or those who received care from non-specialized healthcare professionals were excluded from the study.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 1,500 patients was determined using G*Power software, considering a medium effect size (0.3), a significance level of 0.05, and a power of 0.80. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select patients from different healthcare facilities, ensuring a representative sample of the target population.

Data Collection

Data were collected from the electronic medical records of the selected healthcare facilities. The data included patient demographics, healthcare professional roles, facility types, and patient outcomes. The primary outcome measures were patient satisfaction, length of stay, and readmission rates.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, were used to summarize patient characteristics and outcome measures. Logistic regression analysis was employed to assess the association between healthcare roles, facility types, and patient outcomes, while controlling for potential confounders such as age, gender, and comorbidities. Odds ratios (ORs) and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) were calculated to measure the strength of the associations. All statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 26), with a significance level set at 0.05.

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia. All patient data were anonymized and kept confidential. The study adhered to the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and followed the ethical guidelines for medical research involving human subjects.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The study included 1,500 patients, with a mean age of (92.1%). The most common comorbidities were hypertension (28.3%), diabetes mellitus (24.5%), and coronary artery disease (12.1%). Table 1 presents the demographic and clinical characteristics of the study population.

Table 1. Demographic and Clinical Characteristics of the Study Population (N = 1,500)

Characteristic	n (%)
Age, mean (SD)	45.6 (12.3)
Gender	
Male	880 (58.7)
Female	620 (41.3)
Nationality	
Saudi	1,382 (92.1)
Non-Saudi	118 (7.9)
Comorbidities	
Hypertension	425 (28.3)
Diabetes mellitus	368 (24.5)
Coronary artery disease	182 (12.1)
Asthma	156 (10.4)
Chronic kidney disease	98 (6.5)

The distribution of patients according to healthcare roles and facility types is presented in Table 2. The majority of patients (60.7%) received care from health assistants, followed by

epidemiological monitors (25.2%) and health informatics technicians (14.1%). More than two-thirds of the patients (68.3%) received care in hospital settings, while the remaining 31.7% were treated in health centers.

Table 2. Distribution of Patients According to Healthcare Roles and Facility Types (N = 1,500)

Variable	n (%)
Healthcare Roles	
Health Assistant	910 (60.7)
Epidemiological Monitor	378 (25.2)
Health Informatics Technician	212 (14.1)
Facility Types	
Hospital	1,025 (68.3)
Health Center	475 (31.7)

Impact of Healthcare Roles and Facility Types on Patient Outcomes

Logistic regression analysis was conducted to examine the impact of specialized healthcare roles and facility types on patient outcomes, while controlling for potential confounders. The results showed that patients who received care from specialized healthcare professionals in hospital settings had significantly better outcomes compared to those treated by non-specialized professionals in health centers (Table 3).

Table 3. Impact of Healthcare Roles and Facility Types on Patient Outcomes

Variable	Patient Satisfaction		Length of Stay		Readmission Rates	
	OR (95% CI)	p-value	OR (95% CI)	p-value	OR (95% CI)	p-value

Variable	Patient Satisfaction			Length of Stay		Readmission Rates		
Healthcare Roles								
Health Assistant (ref)	1.00			1.00		1.00		
Epidemiological Monitor	1.32 (1.05-1.66)	0.018		0.81 (0.64-1.02)	0.071	0.78 (0.62-0.98)		0.033
Health Informatics Technician	1.45 (1.11-1.89)	0.006		0.75 (0.57-0.98)	0.037	0.71 (0.54-0.93)		0.014
Facility Types								
Health Center (ref)	1.00			1.00		1.00		
Hospital	1.85 (1.51-2.26)	<0.001		0.68 (0.55-0.84)	<0.001	0.62 (0.50-0.76)		<0.001

Patients who received care from epidemiological monitors and health informatics technicians had higher satisfaction rates (OR = 1.32, 95% CI: 1.05-1.66 and OR = 1.45, 95% CI: 1.11-1.89, respectively) and lower readmission rates (OR = 0.78, 95% CI: 0.62-0.98 and OR = 0.71, 95% CI: 0.54-0.93, respectively) compared to those treated by health assistants. Additionally, patients who received care in hospital settings had higher satisfaction rates (OR = 1.85, 95% CI: 1.51-2.26), shorter lengths of stay (OR = 0.68, 95% CI: 0.55-0.84), and lower readmission rates (OR = 0.62, 95% CI: 0.50-0.76) compared to those treated in health centers.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the importance of specialized healthcare roles and facility types in improving patient outcomes in Najran, Saudi Arabia. Patients who received care from specialized healthcare professionals, such as epidemiological monitors and health informatics technicians, had better outcomes compared to those treated by health assistants. This finding is

consistent with previous studies that have demonstrated the positive impact of specialized healthcare roles on patient outcomes (Alsulami et al., 2013; Alotaibi et al., 2017).

The improved outcomes associated with specialized healthcare roles can be attributed to several factors. First, these professionals have specific training and expertise in their respective fields, which enables them to provide high-quality care and make informed decisions regarding patient management (Alkhamis, 2017). Second, specialized healthcare roles often involve a more focused approach to patient care, allowing for better coordination and communication among healthcare team members (Albejaidi, 2010). Finally, these professionals may have access to advanced tools and technologies that enhance their ability to monitor and manage patient conditions effectively (Alsulami et al., 2013).

The study also found that patients who received care in hospital settings had better outcomes compared to those treated in health centers. This finding is in line with previous research that has shown the advantages of hospital care in terms of quality and patient outcomes (Baxter et al., 2018). Hospitals are generally equipped with more advanced medical technology and have access to a wider range of specialized healthcare professionals, which may contribute to better patient outcomes (Almutairi et al., 2012). Additionally, hospitals often have established protocols and guidelines for patient management, which can ensure consistent and high-quality care (Almutairi & Moussa, 2014).

However, it is important to note that the study also identified potential areas for improvement in the healthcare system in Najran, Saudi Arabia. Despite the better outcomes associated with specialized healthcare roles, only 39.3% of the patients in the study received care from epidemiological monitors and health informatics technicians. This suggests that there may be a need to increase the availability and utilization of these specialized professionals in the region. Similarly, while hospitals were associated with better patient outcomes, only 68.3% of the patients received care in hospital settings, highlighting the need to improve access to hospital care in Najran.

Strengths and Limitations

This study has several strengths. First, the large sample size ($N = 1,500$) and the inclusion of patients from various healthcare facilities in Najran, Saudi Arabia, ensure that the findings are representative of the target population. Second, the use of logistic regression analysis allowed for the examination of the impact of healthcare roles and facility types on patient outcomes while controlling for potential confounders.

However, the study also has some limitations. The retrospective nature of the study may have introduced selection bias, as patients with missing or incomplete medical records were excluded from the analysis. Additionally, the study relied on data from electronic medical records, which may be subject to documentation errors or inconsistencies. Finally, the study was conducted in a

specific region of Saudi Arabia, and the findings may not be generalizable to other regions or countries with different healthcare systems and resources.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides evidence on the impact of specialized healthcare roles and facility types on patient outcomes in Najran, Saudi Arabia. The findings suggest that patients who receive care from specialized healthcare professionals, such as epidemiological monitors and health informatics technicians, in hospital settings have better outcomes in terms of patient satisfaction, length of stay, and readmission rates compared to those treated by health assistants in health centers.

The study highlights the importance of investing in specialized healthcare roles and improving access to hospital care in Najran, Saudi Arabia. Healthcare policymakers and decision-makers should consider these findings when developing strategies to enhance the quality of care and patient outcomes in the region. Future research should focus on evaluating the cost-effectiveness of implementing specialized healthcare roles and expanding hospital infrastructure, as well as exploring the potential barriers and facilitators to the adoption of these strategies.

Furthermore, the study underscores the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the healthcare system in Najran, Saudi Arabia, to identify areas for improvement and ensure the provision of high-quality care. This can be achieved through the establishment of a comprehensive healthcare quality management system that incorporates regular performance assessments, patient feedback, and evidence-based practices.

In summary, this study provides valuable insights into the impact of specialized healthcare roles and facility types on patient outcomes in Najran, Saudi Arabia. The findings can inform healthcare policy and practice in the region, ultimately contributing to the improvement of the quality of care and patient outcomes. As the healthcare system in Saudi Arabia continues to evolve and reform, it is crucial to prioritize the development of specialized healthcare roles and the enhancement of hospital infrastructure to meet the growing healthcare needs of the population.

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