

Time Wasters Facing Nurses During Work in Hospital Departments

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Abstract

Introduction: The authorities of healthcare and treatment worldwide are seeking to use available resources in a way that prevents any waste of money or time, as time is, of course, convertible to money.

Objective: The objective of the study is to assess the time wasters facing nurses in the work department.

Method: A cross-sectional study was conducted involving surgical and medical ward nurses from hospitals in the West Bank. A structured questionnaire was administered to 200 nurses.

Results: The participants' sociodemographic characteristics indicated that nurses were almost equal in terms of gender (females: 51%). Seventy-four percent were young, with ages ranging from 25 to 34 years and work experience ranging from 6 to 10 years. Most of the participants (71.6%) held a bachelor's degree. More time was wasted by nurses during work, with an overall mean of 3.4 (medium). The activity thought to waste the most time in hospital care was moving around between patients' rooms, the nursing station, and the restroom, which may delay required tasks. Other time-wasting activities included using phones and social media, waiting for physicians to provide medication orders, post-round information, discharge orders, and other necessary details, communicating with patient relatives, and searching for supplies or equipment and returning them.

Conclusion: The hospital working environment is complex, and opportunities for improving the efficiency of nurses' workloads should be analyzed case by case in each hospital and workgroup. Modifications to reduce the time wasted waiting in wards, straightforward creative solutions to minimize the time spent searching for necessary equipment, the use of Hospital Information System technology for communication and documentation, and better ward design to decrease time wasted moving between the ward and the restroom could all be beneficial for increasing productivity and providing safer, more acceptable care.

Keywords

nurses, time waster, time management, healthcare productivity, hospital

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Introduction

A time waster is any activity that offers minimal advantages and typically hinders an individual from completing tasks or reaching their objectives, according to Cherry and Jacob (2019). The term “time waster” refers to an activity that consumes unnecessary time or does not provide a reasonable return on investment given the circumstances (such as climate, crises, location, or population). Time-wasting factors hinder the completion of vital tasks, as stated by Algarrai and Elsheikh (2014). Nurses encounter continual problems as they try to perform an increasing number of complex tasks and handle demanding work conditions under the constraints of limited time (Miranda et al., 2020). According to Saintsing et al. (2011), nurses reported that time constraints limited their

ability to complete comprehensive patient assessments, and approximately 80% of entry-level nurses admitted to making mistakes due to time constraints. In the nursing profession, it is critical to manage time properly and prevent time-wasting activities (Takruri et al., 2024).

Time-wasting activities among nurses can be attributed to a lack of effective time management skills. This includes

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failing to set short- and long-term goals, failing to organize tasks, indulging in activities that waste time, and lacking knowledge and expertise in establishing priorities (Qteat & Sayej, 2014; Trentepoh et al., 2022). Time wasters are activities that consume the productive time of health professionals at work. God has apportioned time equally to all humans, but how each individual spends their time varies (Qtait, 2024). There are some pursuits in life that provide little reward for the amount of time spent. Although most people blame others for poor time management and attribute it to external circumstances, they are also responsible for time loss. A study on the reasons behind nurses' time wasting discovered that the positional characteristics of a specific ward influenced the nurses' movements between wards, as well as the frequency with which the nurses entered the patients' rooms or the nurses' station (Bagheri Lankarani et al., 2019).

Hospitals play a crucial role in providing healthcare. According to the Ministry of Health report (2022), hospital charges accounted for 10.5% of total health expenditures for healthcare and treatment in 2023. In light of national budget constraints, healthcare and treatment authorities around the world are looking for ways to make the best use of existing resources. Therefore, recognizing the causes of such waste and proposing methods to prevent it is extremely important. Indeed, due to hospitals' significant contribution to healthcare and treatment expenses, as well as their relevance in the healthcare system, scientists have focused their attention on investigating the types and quantities of hospital waste (both treatment-related and nontreatment-related).

Hospital waste comes in many forms and is caused by a variety of factors, including not only financial expenditures but also wasted time and energy. Nursing contributes to hospital waste due to the large number of patients. Knežević et al. (2019) studied the impact of time management skills on job satisfaction among nurses. The study showed a substantial correlation between nurses' job satisfaction levels and their inability to effectively manage their time. In a related study, Ozkan & Timbil (2018) observed that nurses with poor time management skills made more medication errors and missed nursing care activities more frequently than those with strong time management abilities. The time management training included in nursing education improves the quality of care (Qtait, 2024). According to Qtait and Alarab (2018), nurses who struggled with time management reported feeling more stressed at work. Poor time management skills can have a negative impact on nurses' ability to provide quality patient care.

As a result, time management skills must be included as an integral part of nursing education and workplace health programs. To achieve this, nurses need practical time management skills and a variety of time management tactics for professional nursing practice and peak performance on the job (Qteat & Sayej, 2014). Effective time management entails differentiating between important and urgent tasks. Multiple studies concur that the most important jobs are typically not the most urgent. However, people have a tendency to let urgent responsibilities

control their lives. Activities can be classified as urgent, not urgent, important, or not important (Qtait, 2023).

A quasi-experimental study of 60 nurses from all hospital wards in Tehran investigated the psychological and social effects of a one-day instructional workshop on techniques to enhance time management and avoid wasting nursing time (Hamzehkola and Naderi, 2018). Many studies have shown that time-wasting actions decrease with age, education, experience, and participation in time-management courses. Most earlier research did not compensate for confounding effects in multivariate analyses (Elsayed et al., 2018). The current study aims to investigate time-wasting behaviors within nursing practice in both medical and surgical departments, while also exploring the relationships between these behaviors and various background variables.

Review of the Literature

Time-wasting behaviors among nurses are often linked to poor time management skills, including a lack of goal setting, disorganization, and difficulty prioritizing tasks. These challenges can lead to inefficiency and negatively impact patient care and job satisfaction (Abo Keshek et al., 2024). There are some pursuits in life that provide little reward for the amount of time spent. Attending time management courses significantly reduced time-wasting behaviors among nurses, demographic factors such as age, gender, and education were not linked to time-wasting, while factors such as the workplace setting, organizational type, and participation in time management training were found to influence nurses' time management skills (Zyoud, 2024).

The number of employees is growing, which makes it harder to get things done because people like to visit and talk to each other. Mpogolo (2022) added that time constraints can also occur when there are no effective ways for management and the different teams to communicate with each other.

There is a major gap in the study of time management: no one has definitively determined whether it works. For example, research on the link between managing time and job performance has yielded different conclusions (Mace & Tira 2000). In addition, researchers have only tried to combine qualitative literature so far, meaning they have not been able to conduct a quantitative general assessment (Qtait, 2024).

A meta-analysis is needed to fill this knowledge gap about how to handle time. Before answering the question of whether time management works, let us be clear about what makes it work. As seen in other reviews, almost all studies focus on two main outcomes: performance and satisfaction (Wegman et al., 2019).

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to assess the time wasters facing the nurses in the hospital.

Methods

Study Design

This cross-sectional study was conducted within wards of the surgical, and medical in the hospital government. Sample was taken by the investigator from departments of surgical and medical Hospital. It consisted of 200 nurses in department.

Research Question

What is the most common time waster facing the nurses in hospital?

Study Population

This study was applied to all nurses in the surgical department and the medical department in all hospitals in Governmental, the target population (395) nurses. A total of 200 nurses submitted the questionnaires, and the response rate of which was more than 51%.

Construction of Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire was structured based on a collection of earlier studies, a literature review, and discussions with specialists that addressed the research variables. To strengthen the reliability and validity of the structured questionnaire (Qtait, 2024), demographic data (gender, type of hospital, qualifications, years of experience, and age) were covered in two main sections of the questionnaire. There are 13 questions about timewasters in the questionnaire. Each item on the questionnaire was formatted using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The ratings for the responses were as follows: strongly agree (5 points), agree (4 points), neutral (3 points), disagree (2 points), and strongly disagree (1 point). The responses' mean scores, identified from the Likert scale (1–5), were as follows: 1.79 for “never” (very low), 1.8–2.59 for “rarely” (low), 2.6–3.39 for “sometimes” (medium), 3.4–4.19 for “very often” (high), and 4.2–5 for “always” (very high).

The other two subscales of the questionnaire were also measured on a 5-point Likert Scale (1–5), ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and their mean scores were obtained in the same way as for the other dimensions. The items of the questionnaire include: moving around between patient rooms, the nursing station, and the restroom may delay required tasks; using phones and social media for personal matters during working hours; waiting for physicians to receive medication orders, post-round information, discharge orders, and other necessary information; communication with patient relatives, visitors, and colleagues; searching for supplies or equipment to be used and then bringing them back; lack of competence and delays in getting nursing tasks done on time; procrastination on tasks that are

disliked but must be done; procrastination in decision-making; underestimating time for tasks; coordination among healthcare professionals for patient needs, care, and follow-up; manual charting and documentation; frequent disorder of the Hospital Information System (HIS); and the use of both manual systems and the HIS. The Cronbach alpha reliability score of 0.89 for the entire scale showed that the study items had a high degree of consistency.

Inclusion Criteria

Nurses working in the surgical and medical department in governmental hospitals. Professional working time of more than 6 months in department.

Exclusion Criteria

Nurse refuse to participate in the study, and new employ less than 6 months.

Ethical Consideration

Ethics approval was obtained from the University Ethics review committee (ppu.nur-48/01/24). Informed consent was obtained from each participant with an assurance of anonymity and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Following data collection, SPSS software was used to evaluate the data using both descriptive, independent sample *t*-test and ANOVA, and, test analytical statistics.

Results

Sample Characteristics

The characteristics of 200 nurses who participated from 11 hospitals are presented in Table 1. The most important causes of waste in hospitals among 13 possible causes, according to the nurses' opinions, are moving around between patient rooms, the nursing station, and the restroom may delay the required tasks; using phones and social media for personal matters during working hours; waiting for physicians to provide medication orders, post-round information, discharge orders, and other necessary information; communication with patient relatives, visitors, and colleagues; searching for supplies or equipment to be used and then bringing them back; lack of competence and delays in completing nursing tasks on time; procrastination on tasks that I don't like but must be done; procrastination in decision-making; underestimating time for tasks; coordination among healthcare professionals for patient needs, care, and follow-up; manual charting and documentation; frequent disruptions in the HIS; and the use of both manual and HIS. These are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Relation Between Time Waster and Demographic Characteristics (N = 200).

Demographic Characteristics		N (%)	M (SD)	Statistical Test	p Value
Age	25–29 years old	85(45)	3.4(0.6)	F = 1.744	.132
	30–34 years old	72(3)	3.2(0.6)		
	35–39 years old	43(15.6)	3.4(0.5)		
	40 years old and above	17(8.9)	3.5(0.6)		
Gender	Male	98(49)	3.4(0.6)	t = 0.877	.371
	Female	102(51)	3.3(0.6)		
Level of education	Diploma	88(44)	3.3(0.6)	F = 6.813	.04
	Bachelor.	112(56)	3.5(0.6)		
	Master or more	31(15.5)	3.6(0.5)		
Experience	1–5 years	80 (40)	3.4(0.6)	F = 7.003	.001*
	6–10 years	85(42.5)	3.2(0.6)		
	more than 10 years	35(17.5)	3.5(0.5)		
	No		3.4(0.6)		

The values in bold indicate that experience, and education level have a meaningful impact on time wasting.

*p value significant at the .05 level.

The differences in the time-waster mean scores and demographic characteristics were examined. These differences were examined using an independent sample *t*-test and ANOVA test. The analysis revealed that there were no significant differences in time management scores and participants' demographic characteristics (age, gender, level of education, and educational program on time management) at the pretest ($p > .05$). However, the participants' experience revealed a significant difference in time management mean scores ($p < .05$). The Scheffe post hoc test showed that those with 1–5 years and more than 10 years of experience were able to manage time-wasters statistically significantly better than those with 6–10 years of experience ($p < .05$).

Time Waster for Nurses

For time-wasters, as Table 2 shows, the time-wasters ranged from 60% to 68% according to nurse opinions. The most common time-wasters included: moving around between patient rooms, the nursing station, and the restroom; using phones and social media for personal matters during working hours; waiting for physicians to receive medication orders, post-round information, discharge orders, and other necessary information; communication with patient relatives and visitors; searching for supplies or equipment to be used and then bringing them back; lack of competence and delay in completing nursing tasks on time; procrastination on tasks that I don't like but must be done; procrastination in decision-making; underestimating time for tasks; coordination among healthcare professionals for patient needs, care, and follow-up; manual charting and documentation; frequent disorder of the HIS; and the use of both manual and HIS.

Discussion

Nurses organize their work tasks and daily activities to meet the demands of the department. They must coordinate multiple duties, such as interacting with nurses working with

Table 2. Time Waster for Nurses.

Time Wasters	Mean SD
Moving around between patient's rooms, nursing station and rest room may delay the required tasks	3.9 (0.8)
Using phones and social media for personal matters during working hours	3.6(0.7)
Waiting physicians to receive medication orders, post-round information, discharge orders and other necessary information	3.4(0.8)
Communication with patient relatives, visitors, and colleagues etc.....	3.4(0.6)
Searching for supplies or equipment to be used and then bring them back.	3.4(0.6)
Non competence and delay in getting nursing task done on time	3.4(0.7)
Procrastination on tasks that I don't like but it must be done.	3.8(0.8)
Procrastination in decision-making	3.5(0.7)
Underestimating time for tasks	3.4(0.7)
Coordination among health professional for patients need, care and follow-up	3.3(0.6)
Manual charting and documentation	3.4(0.6)
Frequent disorder of Hospital information system (HIS)	3.4(0.6)
Utilizing of use both system (manual and health information system)	3.3(0.6)

The value in bold indicate that experience, and education level have a meaningful impact on time wasting.

patients, and monitoring work needs. While working, nurses face distractions, disorganization, and inefficient procedures, which make the day long and burdensome. Time-wasters are factors that prevent a person from accomplishing their job or achieving goals. With so many responsibilities, nurses cannot afford to waste time.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the time-wasting practices that nurses encounter in hospital departments. Several conclusions were drawn from the examination of

sociodemographic traits and how they relate to time-wasters. The participants' sociodemographic profile is crucial for understanding the elements that contribute to time waste, and these traits may impact the strategies that can be employed to address time management issues.

Most participants (78.5%) were in the 25–34 age range, with the largest percentage (42.5%) in the 25–29 age group. Due to their relative inexperience, this group, which comprises a younger workforce, may find it difficult to set priorities and efficiently manage their time. Time-wasters were more common in this group, which may be explained by the fact that time management is often a skill that develops over time, especially for younger nurses. Younger nurses may still require greater time management support to increase their productivity and decrease time-wasting activities, even though there were no statistically significant differences across age groups ($p = .132$) (Knežević et al., 2019; Qtait, 2024).

With 51% of nurses being female and 49% male, the study's gender distribution was almost equal. Time management issues in nursing are not always influenced by gender, as seen by the lack of significant variations between gender and time-wasting activities ($p = .371$). This result is consistent with earlier research by Takruri et al. (2024), which proposed that experience, work environment, and personal coping mechanisms are more important factors in time management challenges than gender (Saintsing et al., 2021; Qtait, 2024).

Nurses with a bachelor's degree made up the largest group in terms of educational attainment (68.2%), followed by those with a master's degree or above (15.5%). A significant correlation between educational attainment and time-wasting habits was found by statistical analysis ($p = .04$); individuals with a master's degree wasted less time ($M = 3.6$) than those with a diploma ($M = 3.3$) or a bachelor's degree ($M = 3.5$). This conclusion is consistent with research suggesting that higher educational levels contribute to better time management and decision-making skills, as more experienced and highly educated nurses may possess advanced organizational abilities (Knežević et al., 2019; Qtait, 2024).

Significant results were also found when the study examined the connection between work experience and time-wasting activities. The highest degree of time waste was reported by nurses with 6–10 years of experience ($M = 3.2$), whereas those with 1–5 years of experience ($M = 3.4$) and those with more than 10 years of experience ($M = 3.5$) showed comparatively less time waste. These results suggest that moderately experienced nurses may face more time management issues, possibly due to taking on more challenging tasks and responsibilities before fully mastering the necessary time management techniques. This underscores the need for mid-career nurses to receive specialized training to improve time management and reduce inefficiencies (Li et al., 2023; Qtait, 2024; Saleh & El Shazly, 2020).

Table 2 shows several distinct trends in the time-wasting activities found in this study. Following “using phones and social media for personal matters” and “waiting for physicians to receive medication orders,” “moving around between

patient rooms, nursing stations, and restrooms” was identified as a major time-wasting activity (Li et al., 2023). These results align with the challenges nurses face in hospital environments, where they frequently encounter disruptions, ineffective communication, and delays in the delivery of information or supplies. These delays are consistent with findings from related research by Bagheri Lankarani et al. (2019) and Filomeno et al. (2024), which highlighted that ineffective communication and coordination can significantly increase time waste in healthcare settings.

Furthermore, procrastination was a substantial contributor to time waste, as evidenced by the high mean scores for both task-related procrastination and decision-making procrastination. These behaviors indicate more general challenges faced by nurses in busy hospital environments, such as stress from workloads and inadequate frameworks for making decisions (Qtait & Sayej, 2014). Additionally, the use of both manual and digital systems for documentation, along with the frequent malfunctions of the HIS, was identified as factors contributing to inefficiency. According to these results, integrating technology with efficient procedures may help reduce time wasting and enhance productivity overall.

Strength and Limitation

The study's strengths include a large sample size, a structured questionnaire for consistent data collection, and valuable insights into time-wasting activities. It offers practical implications for improving time management and provides a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing nurses' work efficiency.

The limitation of the nature of self-report data may have an impact on the findings since some individuals may intentionally or unintentionally try to demonstrate their desires and not real experiences.

Implication for Practice

The study's implication in nursing practice, the study highlights several implications for nursing practice, including improving time management training, optimizing hospital layouts to reduce unnecessary movement, enhancing communication systems through HISs, reducing reliance on manual documentation, and addressing social media use. Additionally, mid-career nurses require more support, and specific protocols should be established to handle common time-wasters, improving overall productivity and patient care. The Recommendation, Improve use of time by providing nurses, staff correct behavior skills through training program. Standardize organizational records with time-saving models and tools, such as time tracking, scheduling, and planning, to assist staff manage their time effectively. Interventional study for time management skills to improve time management.

Conclusion

The study used a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. As a result, the findings cannot definitively identify cause-and-effect relationships between time-wasting activities and nurses' sociodemographic characteristics.

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Data Availability Statement

Data for this study would be available upon reasonable request from the principal investigator.


Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Supplemental Material

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