Time Wasters Facing Head Nurses at Ain Shams University Hospitals

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Abstract

Background: Head nurses are commonly facing time wasters. Time waster is any activity that has that has fewer benefits and usually prevents the head nurse from accomplishing the job or achieving the goal. **Aim:** Assess time wasters facing head nurses in the work place. **Design:** A descriptive design was used in this study. **Subjects:** The subjects of the study included 115 head nurses working in Ain Shams University hospitals. The subjects of the study were convenient sample. **Setting:** The study was conducted at five hospitals affiliated to Ain-Shams University Hospitals where the head nurses worked. **Tool of data collection:** Time waster's questionnaire. **Results:** more than three fifth of head nurses facing all types of time wasters. The highest mean score was communication time wasters 20.63±4.28 while the lowest mean score was planning time wasters14.38±2.9. **Conclusion:** the result revealed that the most common time waster facing head nurses was communication 66.1%, while planning time waster was the least time waster facing head nurses 60.0%. **Recommendations:** Providing training programs for head nurses regarding strategies to eliminate time wasters and enhance delegation process.

Keywords: Head nurse, Time wasters

Introduction

Deciding on how a head nurse spends the time is very important to make oneself productive and more organized. Inability to have strategic plans, not having plans for the day, failing to prioritize, misplacing the items and searching for misplaced items, use of excessive telephone calls, internet, emails, surfing, and being disorganized will contribute to wastage of the time **(Nayak, 2019).** Time is wasted when it spent on anything that did not have to be done. The concept of time wasters is a dynamic that changes with climate conditions, crises, places and people, an activity that takes unnecessary or uses inappropriate time, or an activity that does not give a return commensurate with the time spent on it. Time wasting factors are those factors that prevent the implementation of high-value critical work. **(Algarrai and Elsheikh, 2015).**

A time waster is any activity that has fewer benefits and usually prevents a person from accomplishing the job or achieving the goal **(Cherry and Jacob, 2019)**. In the realm of health care, head nurses are commonly facing time wasters. Many head nurses waste time on little priority items, frequently without realizing it. This occurs when head nurses are kept away from doing valued and important things and this might cause frustration to them. On the other hand, some wasted time can be constructive because it helps head nurses to relax or reduce their tension **(Awad, 2016).**

Time wasters also were divided into, Internal and external time wasters. Internal time waster is personal or self-inflicted one which is generated by the head nurse, they are more difficult to identify as well as to manage, such as procrastination, poor planning, failure to establish goals and objectives. Besides, inability to delegate, inability to make a decision, inability to say "No", management by crisis, indecisiveness, open-door policy, poor listening and memory techniques, lack of self-discipline, to jump from task to task without finishing any of them and poor reading skills are another internal time wasters **(Marquis and Huston, 2017).**

However, the external time wasters are those generated outside the individual. These wasters are reflected in telephone interruptions, socializing, meetings, poor communications, lack of feedback, and unorganized office visitors. The other external time wasters that a head nurse may conquer are paperwork overload and a poor filing system. Head nurses are generally overwhelmed with paper clutter including organizational memos, staffing requests, quality assurance reports, incident reports, and patient evaluations. Because paperwork is often redundant or unnecessary, the head nurse needs to become an expert at handling it. Whenever possible, incoming correspondence should be handled the day it arrives, it should either be thrown away or filed according to the date to be completed. Try to address each piece of correspondence only once **(Lucia, and Nikola, 2018).**

Good managers are those people who can control time-wasting activities that disrupt designed time management system, they must know how to cope up with varying interruptions and how to manage and solve other peoples' problems. This can be dealt with by being kind and assertive whenever necessary. Minimize interruptions as possible to concentrate on the task at hand. However; to enable managers to control time waste they must undertake the following: a head nurse must be capable of coping up with interruption of any nature and after having worked hard, one must rest to refresh so that he/she can be ready to work effectively again. Head nurses should plan and effectively manage their time and should consider the following for effective and efficient use of time **(Michael, 2016).**

Using time log is a good way to identify areas of wasting time in your life and enabling to reduce these through log every task doing at a week in detail and then reviewed to identify how you use your time. One can decrease or eliminate time spent in many activities such as organizing your workspace does not need to be overwhelming. Provide yourself with a desk with enough clear space to do your work, the best lighting you can afford, and a comfortable chair. Also, element telephone call time wasters through: focused on the reason for the call;

don't answer phone! Leave specific message; have a secretary screen calls to immediate and delayed response; stand up while you talk on the phone; keep the conversation brief; determine times of the day for receiving calls and identify the others when you are available **(El Shaer, 2015).**

Significance of the study

The researcher noticed that the head nurses working in Ain Shams University hospitals spent their times in socializing with other nurses, receiving visitors,   and receiving telephone calls, so they didn't complete their tasks at the working time. So identifying, and eliminating time wasters are the most useful skills that the head nurses need to learn to help them to excel in their jobs and keep up good balance. As well as, enable them to overcome wasting time and raised awareness of the importance of effective time management to improve performance and increase productivity.

Aim of the Study:

The aim of the study is to assess the time wasters facing the head nurses in the work place.

Research question:

What is the most common time waster facing the head nurses in the work place?

Subjects and Methods:
A- Research design:
A descriptive research design was conducted to achieve the aim of this study.

B- Setting:

The study was conducted at five hospitals affiliated to Ain-Shams University Hospitals where the head nurses worked. These hospitals namely, Ain-Shams University hospital, El-Demerdash hospital, Obstetric and Gynecological hospital, Pediatrics hospital, and Academic Heart Institute Hospital.

C- Subject:

The subjects of the study included 115 head nurses working in Ain Shams University hospitals who represent all head nurses on job.They were continent sample.

D-Tool of data collection:

The data for this study was collected through time wasters' questionnaire. This tool was developed by**Awad (2016)** and modified by the researcher based on review of related literatures**Mohamed, (2019).**

This tool consists of two parts:

● **Part I:** It aimed at collecting data regarding personal characteristics of the participants including: age, marital status, qualifications, hospital name, and years of experience in the current position.

● **Part II:** It aimed at identifying time wasters facing head nurses in their work place. It consisted of 53 items divided into seven time wasters' dimensions as the following: time wasters regarding planning (7 items), time wasters in organizing (7 items), time wasters in staffing (8 items), time wasters in directing (8 items), time wasters in controlling (7 items), time wasters in communication (9items), and time wasters in decision making (7 items).

Scoring system:

The response for questionnaire was measured by 3 point likert scale as follows: 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes 3 =Always.If the total score was 60% or more it means presence of time wasters and if less than 60% it means that they have absence of time wasters **(Khalil, 2017 and Soliman, 2009).**

Tools validity and reliability

The preliminary form of the data collection tools were presented to jury group for face and content validation. The jury group consisted of eleven experts in nursing Administration departments from different faculties of nursing (Ain Shams University, Cairo University and Mansoura University). The process involved their general or overall opinion about the tools of data collection. The tool was assessed for its clarity, comprehensiveness, simplicity, understanding and applicability. According to the jury group opinions modifications as rephrasing and adding/omission were performed by the researcher. The tool was examined through assessing its internal consistency by Cronbach's alpha and it was (0.856).

● **Pilot Study:**

A pilot study was carried out after developing and modifying the tools and before starting data collection. Twelve head nurses who representing 10% of the main study sample were participated in the pilot study, they were selected randomly 6 from each group before embarking on the data collection.The pilot served to assess the clarity of language, applicability, practicability as well as the feasibility of the tools. It also helped to estimate the time needed to complete the data collection forms. No changes were done in the tools. The pilot sample was included in the main study sample.

Field Work:

The actual field work started at the beginning of August 2020 after securing all the official permissions. It was completed by the end of October 2020. Head nurses who gave their approval to participate in the study were handed the questionnaire form during working time. Data were collected in the presence of the researcher to clarify any queries and prevent any knowledge contamination. The tools were checked by the researcher to ensure its' completeness. Each head nurse took time to fill in each questionnaire ranged from 30-45 minutes. Data were collected 2 days/ week in the morning shifts from 11: 00 am to 1:00 pm.

Administrative Design:

An official letter was issued from the Faculty of Nursing, Ain-Shams University, to obtain the permission from each hospital

director of the five hospitals of Ain- Shams University to collect the data for the study. Then, the researcher met with each of these directors to explain to them the purpose of the study and to obtain their help and cooperation.

Ethical Considerations:

The research approval was obtained from the ethical committee of faculty of nursing before initiating the study work. The researcher clarified the objectives and aim of the study to the head nurses included in the study. The researcher assured maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of subjects' data. Head nurses were informed that they are allowed to

Results

Table (1) shows that, 33.9 % of head nurses had age more than 50 years old. Moreover, 75.7% of head nurses were married. Also, this table shows that 58.3% of head nurses had nursing diploma while, 35.7 % had bachelor degree. Lastly, less than half (47%) of head nurses had more than 20 years' experience in current position.

Table (2) describes time wasters' domains among head nurses, three fifth of head nurses had present time wasters in planning, meanwhile nearly two third of them had time wasters in communication.

withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reasons and without penalties.

Statistical Design:

Data entry and statistical analysis were done using SPSS 24.0 statistical software package. Data were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages for qualitative variables, and means and standard deviations for quantitative variables. Chi-square test was used for finding relation between quantitative variables. Statistical significance was considered at p-value < 0.05 and highly statistically significant at p-value<0.01.

Table (3) shows that, the head nurses had the highest mean score in communication time waster domain (20.63±4.28) while the lowest mean score was for planning time waster domain (14.38±2.90).

Figure (1) reveals that 63.5% of head nurses had present time wasters while 36.5% of them had not present time wasters.

Table (3) reveals that there were statistically significant relations between total head nurses' presence of time wasters and their demographic characteristics in terms of age, marital status, and qualifications with (P<0.05). There was highly statistically significant relation between total head nurses' presence of time wasters and experience in current position with (P<0.01).

Table (1): Demographic characteristics of study subjects (n= 115)

Demographic characteristics	Head nurses	
Age (years)	N	%
<30	6	5.2
30- 40	27	23.5
40- 50	43	37.4
>50	39	33.9
Range	27-59	
Mean±SD	45.76±8.43	
Marital status		
Single	10	8.7
Married	87	75.7
Divorced	6	5.2
Widow	12	10.4
Qualifications		
Nursing diploma	67	58.2
Diploma with specialty	7	6.1
Bachelor degree	41	35.7
Experience in current position (years)		
<10	29	25.2
10- 20	32	27.8
>20	54	47.0
Range	10-40	
Mean±SD	19.57±10.22	

Table (2): Presence of time wasters as reported by head nurses (n=115)

Time wasters' domains	Present		Not present	
	N	%	N	%
Planning	69	60.0	46	40.0
Organizing	72	62.6	43	37.4
Staffing	74	64.3	41	35.7
Directing	75	65.2	40	34.8
Controlling	70	60.9	45	39.1
Communication	76	66.1	39	33.9
Decision making	73	63.5	42	36.5

Table (3): Time wasters' domains mean scores amonghead nurses

Time wasters' domains	Head nurses Mean±SD
Planning	14.38±2.90
Organizing	17.85±2.77
Staffing	19.32±3.29
Directing	19.18±3.28
Controlling	16.22±3.37
Communication	20.63±4.28
Decision making	17.33±3.68

Figure (1): Total presence of time wasters as reported by head nurses (n=115)
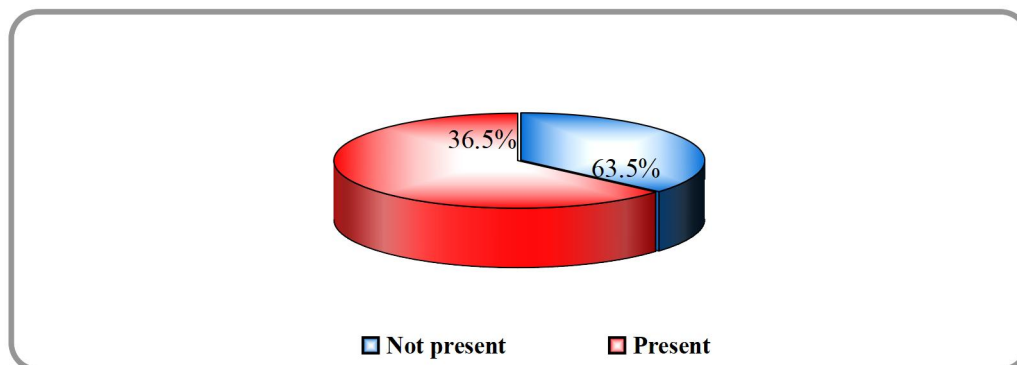

Table (4): Relation between total head nurses' presence of time wasters and their demographic characteristics (n=115)

Demographic characteristics	Total time wasters					
	Present		Not present		Chi-square	
	N	%	N	%	X^2	P-value
Age (years)						
<30	6	8.2	0	0.0		
30- 40	20	27.4	7	16.7	10.100	0.018*
>40- 50	29	39.7	14	33.3		
>50	18	24.7	21	50.0		
Marital status						
Single	8	11.0	2	4.8		
Married	58	79.5	29	69.0	13.922	0.003*
Divorced	5	6.8	1	2.4		
Widow	2	2.7	10	23.8		
Qualifications						
Nursing diploma	50	68.5	17	40.5		
Diploma with specialty	2	2.7	5	11.9	9.929	0.007*
Bachelor degree	21	28.8	20	47.6		
Experience in current position (years)						
<10	24	32.9	5	11.9		
10- 20	24	32.9	8	19.0	13.359	<0.001*
<20	25	34.2	29	69.0		

* Statistical significant P<0.05   ** High Significant at P < 0.001

Discussion

Head nurses organize their own job tasks and daily activities to meet the demands of the unit. They must coordinate multiple duties, such as meeting attendance, interacting with nurses and residents, and monitoring work schedules. Work schedules and duties are assigned to nurses, practical nurses and nurses' aides **(Zakaria, 2016).** While working, head nurses face distractions, disorganization and inefficient procedures which make the day long and burdensome. With so many responsibilities, a head nurse doesn't have time to waste. Time waster is something that prevents a person from accomplishing the job or achieving goals.

Particularly with complex tasks, once an interruption occurs, the primary task is completed with less accuracy and the time spent actually on a complex primary task decreases. High mental strain and task complexity lead to increased errors, especially when switching from one task to another. On the other hand, daily preparation and attentiveness to most important work responsibilities can make the day fruitful and productive **(Mohamed, 2015).**

The findings of the present study clarified that, the communication time waster domain was the highest mean score among head nurses. Most attributed to those head nurses were unable to communicate what they want to others, they were socially more than imposed in work and were following the open door policy and they failed to listen to what other people say which lead to lack of feedback. As a result, all this lead to a lot of interruptions in communication process in work area. Really, these noises in communication process make the message received different. Head nurses' poor listening to staff can cause misunderstanding, conflict and decrease managerial effectiveness.

Similar findings in a study conducted by **Awad, (2016)** confirmed that, nurse managers had a lot of time wasters in communication. Also, the result of the present study is supported by **El Shaer, (2015)** study on "Impact of Time Management Program on Time Wasters of Head Nurses and Their Perception toward Effective Organizational Performance" revealed that among highest time wasters in their study was for communication the head nurses were lacking effective communication with all surrounding people.

But, **Gad (2013)** study about administrative duties of baccalaureate nursing graduates unit managers not supported the present study result and revealed that unit nurse managers had good communication skills in providing subordinates with information needed in performing duties and allow for feedback. Thus, their time is not wasted in providing others with clear messages for handling different issues in work.

The result of the present study revealed that, among the second highest present time wasters was directing. From the researcher point of view the possible reason is that, the head nurses found it very difficult to cope with changes. Most probably those head nurses act under constant pressure from surrounding environment due to the increased time wasters they had. In agreement with this finding **El Shaer, (2015)** in their studies found that time wasters in directing was among the highest time wasters in comparison to other types of time wasters facing the head nurses in their work.

Regarding time wasters in directing, the result of the present study revealed that head nurses were unable to manage conflict in their units and they were wasting their time from being involved in routine details. This may be due to that those head nurses failed to delegate authority compensated with responsibility. Besides, they mostly make everything even routine tasks with themselves which produce conflict among them.

The result of the current study revealed that more than three fifth of head nurses facing time wasters in organizing. The researcher found that the head nurses left work area disorganized and reach difficulty to reach things they need for their work, they didn't know the difference between authority and responsibility, and they haven't the ability to say "No" when given additional tasks. The fact is that those head nurses were overloaded with many tasks and responsibilities even they can't take enough time off for themselves.

This finding is in the same line with **Awad, (2016)** who revealed in their study that disorganization is one of the most causes for slowing down the work and wasting time. They mentioned that, nurse managers need to learn different strategies and tools that will help them to make organization normal part of their life because they were suffering from disorganization reflected in a form of disorganized office and taking too many responsibilities at once. Also, **El Sabahy (2015)** revealed that the majority of head nurses in their study cannot say no. If the individuals were unable to say no in their professional and/or

personal lives, several consequences come to the surface including time management problems and incomplete work.

Mohamed, (2015) in their study revealed that they have external time wasters related to blurred authority and responsibility. Also, **Doria (2013)** mentioned that a perfect way to organize work is to empower employee through giving them ownership and responsibility in their workplace. Clarity of authority and identifying responsibility makes everyone feel safe. Staff that feels things is transparent, supported and safe always feel comfort. A happy employee translates into comfort work environment, which increases productivity level and decreases stress levels. Blurred lines are bad for work.

Finally, time wasters in planning were the last and least present time waster among head nurses. Head nurses wasted their time because they were unable to set priorities in their plan to be implemented for achieving the tasks because they were lacking the skill of prioritization of tasks. Adding to this, they were dealing with any problem as if it was a crisis this might be due to the head nurses' inability to put time in their daily plan for unexpected events. So, those head nurses need to adjust their plan to avoid or smoothen a coming crisis, rather than to deal with the crisis when it comes unexpectedly.

Finding of present study is supported by **Awad, (2016)** who revealed that head nurses were lacking putting plan to their work and they manage by crisis. They also clarified their result as managers, who spend more time on urgent and important activities many times, act in stress. They remain busy in managing the crisis. Such managers unconsciously create crises and then try to manage it. The nurse managers who practice systematic planning, working preventively and devote much of their time on important but not urgent matters, become effective manager.

Regarding total head nurses' presence of time wasters, the present study findings showed that more than two third of the head nurses had present time wasters. This could be due to the absence of activities and training programs that help head nurses in identifying the time wasters and how to eliminate/ dealing with them.

The results were in agreement with **Mohamed, (2015)** and **El Sabahy, (2015)** whom claimed that almost half of the head nurses in their study have time wasters. They recommended that staff development programs must be provided to head nurses with emphasis on time management and practical strategies for saving time and overcome time wasters.

The present study results revealed that, there was statistically significant relation agreement between total head nurses' presence of time wasters and their demographic characteristics that include age, marital status, and qualifications (P>0.05). In addition, there was highly statistically significant relation between total head nurses' agrement regarding facing time wasters and years of experience in current position (P<0.01). This result may be due to the head nurses with more experiences had abilities to assess and determine the time wasters and able to take an effective decision and activities to eliminate it.These findings are in agreement with **Marquis & Huston, (2017)** anda study conducted by **Saleh& El Shazly, (2020)** whom reported thatincrease the experience of the head nurses help them to use time estimation to organize their work effectively within time constrains, anddeal with time wasters.

Conclusion

The results revealed that about two third of head nurses had present time wasters while only one third of them had not time wasters. Also, the result showed that the most common time waster facing head nurses was communication (20.63±4.28) while planning time waster was the least time waster facing head nurses (14.38±2.90).

Recommendations

The result of this study projected the following recommendations:

1.Providing training programs for head nurses about time wasters and methods for eliminating them.

2.Organizational records should be standardized with clear models for saving time, and provide effective time management tools such as; record the time, schedule, daily and weekly time planning to help staff to manage their time in a good way.

3.Assessing time wasters facing head nurses at different health care sectors.

4.Time management as a managerial skill must be included in the undergraduate and post graduate nursing curricula to eliminate any time wasters in the future career.

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