

INCREASING DIVERSITY IN NURSING TO REDUCE HEALTH DISPARITIES AND ACHIEVE HEALTH EQUITY

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(Received, 08th November 2023, Revised 29th December 2023, Published 17th February 2024)

Abstract: *In modern healthcare systems, achieving health equity remains paramount, yet persistent health disparities among diverse populations present significant challenges. The study's main objective is to find the increasing diversity in nursing to reduce health disparities and achieve health equity. This mixed-methods study was conducted in Bahawal Victoria Hospital Bahawalpur from January 2023 till December 2023. The study enrolled a diverse cohort of 550 participants, including registered nurses (RNs), nursing students, nurse educators, and healthcare administrators. Participants were recruited from various healthcare settings, including hospitals, community health centers, and academic institutions. The study included 300 registered nurses (RNs) aged 22 to 65, comprising 75% females and 25% males, demonstrating diverse ethnic representation. Additionally, 150 nursing students aged between 20 and 30 years participated, with 85% females and 15% males, reflecting a diverse demographic composition. Furthermore, 50 nurse educators aged 30 to 55 years were involved, with 60% females and 40% males showcasing diversity. Most participants, comprising 70%, acknowledged that nursing diversity positively impacts patient care and outcomes. However, only 45% felt that their workplace adequately supports diversity initiatives. Regarding healthcare disparities, 60% identified access to care, 50% recognized quality of care, and 45% acknowledged health outcomes disparities as prevalent issues. It is concluded that diversity in nursing holds significant promise for reducing health disparities and advancing health equity. The study's findings underscore the importance of organizational support for diversity initiatives to address systemic barriers in healthcare delivery.*

Keywords: Health Equity, Nursing Diversity, Health Disparities, Mixed-Methods Study, Registered Nurses (RNs)

Introduction

In modern healthcare systems, achieving health equity remains paramount, yet persistent health disparities among diverse populations present significant challenges. Recognizing the critical role of nursing in promoting health equity, efforts to increase diversity within the nursing workforce have gained prominence. This introduction explores the importance of fostering diversity in nursing as a strategic approach to mitigate health disparities and advance health equity (Purnell et al., 2016). By developing a nursing workforce that mirrors the rich embroidery of society, healthcare associations can more likely locate the extraordinary necessities of underserved networks, further developing admittance to quality consideration and encouraging comprehensive healthcare conditions (Phillips and Malone, 2014). The job of the scholarly community in advancing diversity inside the nursing workforce is multi-layered and essential. Laying out diversity and incorporation drives requires clear definitions, enunciated results, and a comprehensive climate for encouraging diversity. This involves working with troublesome discussions, tending to outlooks, and giving preparation assets to develop a broad culture (Wakefield et al., 2021). As well as encouraging diversity, the scholarly community should outfit students with the information and abilities to address well-being differences and disparities inside weak populaces. The educational program should integrate central tools for understanding and resolving these issues alongside administration advancement and well-being strategy education (Lathrop, 2020). Pipeline programs

pointed toward supporting underrepresented minority faculty and students ought to be coordinated into scholarly foundations. These projects should address boundaries to affirmation, registration, and graduation, offering educational, monetary, and mentorship support mediations (Nardi et al., 2020). Moreover, assets, for example, mentoring, language help, culture guides, faculty consultants, and daily reassurance, are fundamental for the progress of underrepresented students. Groundwork for positions of authority and cooperation in student associations should likewise be empowered, alongside help with making proficient improvement plans (Morrison et al., 2021).

To improve diversity inside the nursing workforce, it is vital to execute a complete and quantifiable, well-defined course of action pointed toward enrolling and holding racial/ethnic minority people in nursing programs. For example, one Midwestern nursing school fostered a Diversity Pyramid with a well-thought-out course of action to address the basics of encouraging a different student nursing populace (Patel et al., 2020). This plan utilizes a three-pronged methodology, stressing hierarchical responsibility, monetary help for students, and designated assets custom-fitted to the necessities of a different student body, all with obviously characterized and quantifiable goals. At its center, the association's obligation to diversity is incorporated into its more extensive, well-thought-out course of action, with measurable diversity objectives set at the most elevated levels of initiative and flowing down to

faculty and staff individuals. Every person inside the association is considered responsible for adding to or accomplishing diversity objectives as a component of their yearly exhibition assessments (Chin, 2020). Confirmation rules, strategies, and methods align with the college's devotion to cultivating a different student body. Monetary help components are set up to help people confront economic difficulties, offering awards, grants, and other financial assets to ease obstructions to education (Todic et al., 2022). Thus, the study's main objective is to find the increasing diversity in nursing to reduce health disparities and achieve health equity.

Methodology

This mixed-methods study was conducted in Bahawal Victoria Hospital Bahawalpur from January 2023 till December 2023. The study enrolled a diverse cohort of 550 participants, including registered nurses (RNs), nursing students, nurse educators, and healthcare administrators. Participants were recruited from various healthcare settings, including hospitals, community health centers, and academic institutions.

Quantitative data were collected through surveys distributed among the participants. The surveys assessed demographic characteristics, including age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational background, and years of nursing experience. Additionally, participants were queried about their

perceptions of diversity in nursing, experiences with healthcare disparities, and attitudes toward achieving health equity. Qualitative data were gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with a subset of participants. These qualitative sessions' explored participants' lived experiences, perspectives, and narratives related to diversity in nursing, health disparities, and strategies for advancing health equity.

Data were collected and analyzed using SPSS 27. Quantitative data examination included descriptive statistics to represent the members' profiles and evaluate designs to study questions.

Results

The study included 300 registered nurses (RNs) aged 22 to 65, comprising 75% females and 25% males, demonstrating diverse ethnic representation. Additionally, 150 nursing students aged between 20 and 30 years participated, with 85% females and 15% males, reflecting a diverse demographic composition. Furthermore, 50 nurse educators aged 30 to 55 years were involved, with 60% females and 40% males showcasing diversity. Lastly, 50 healthcare administrators aged 35 to 60 were included, with a gender distribution of 45% females and 55% males representing diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Table 01: Demographic data of participants

Participant Group	Number of Participants	Age Range	Gender Distribution	Ethnic Diversity
Registered Nurses (RNs)	300	22-65 years	75% Female, 25% Male	Diverse
Nursing Students	150	20-30 years	85% Female, 15% Male	Diverse
Nurse Educators	50	30-55 years	60% Female, 40% Male	Diverse
Healthcare Administrators	50	35-60 years	45% Female, 55% Male	Diverse

Most participants, comprising 70%, acknowledged that nursing diversity positively impacts patient care and outcomes. However, only 45% felt that their workplace adequately supports diversity initiatives. Regarding

healthcare disparities, 60% identified access to care, 50% recognized quality of care, and 45% acknowledged health outcomes disparities as prevalent issues.

Table 02: Perception of diversity in nursing and experience with healthcare disparities

Perception	Percentage of Participants
Nursing diversity positively influences patient care and outcomes	70%
Workplace adequately supports diversity initiatives	45%
Type of Healthcare Disparities	
Access to care disparities	60%
Quality of care disparities	50%
Health outcomes disparities	45%

The survey revealed strong support among participants for initiatives to achieve health equity, with 80% expressing robust endorsement. Additionally, an overwhelming

majority of 90% believed in addressing healthcare disparities.

Table 03: Attitude toward achieving equity

Attitude	Percentage of Participants
Strong support for initiatives to achieve health equity	80%
Belief in the importance of addressing healthcare disparities	90%

Discussion

The study reveals a generally positive perception of nursing diversity among participants, with a majority

acknowledging its potential to influence patient care and outcomes positively. However, the finding that less than half of the participants feel their workplace adequately supports diversity initiatives underscores the need for

[Citation: Safdar, F., Qadir, S. (2024). Increasing diversity in nursing to reduce health disparities and achieve health equity. *Biol. Clin. Sci. Res. J.*, 2024: 707. doi: <https://doi.org/10.54112/bcsrj.v2024i1.707>]

organizational commitment to fostering inclusive environments (Dickson et al., 2020; Essien et al., 2021; Nelson et al., 2020). Participants reported encounters with healthcare disparities, particularly in access to care, quality of care, and health outcomes among minority and underserved populations, corroborating existing literature highlighting the persistence of inequalities in healthcare delivery (Effland et al., 2020). These findings emphasize the urgency of addressing systemic barriers to equitable care. The efforts to enhance nursing workforce diversity often rest on the assumption that increasing diversity will reduce health disparities among racial and ethnic minority populations (Quiñones et al., 2020). This assumption is deeply ingrained in the conceptual framework guiding these endeavors. However, despite numerous reports on strategies and outcomes related to diversification, there is a lack of documentation regarding the specific contributions of minority nurses in addressing health disparities (Nooraie et al., 2020). One indication of their impact is the growing number of minority nurse scientists actively involved in health disparities research, fueled partly by significant grant opportunities provided by institutions such as the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) (Cary Jr et al., 2020). With a longstanding commitment to advancing health equity and eliminating disparities, NINR is pivotal in supporting research funding and career development to achieve these goals (Ochs, 2023). The recruitment and retention strategy also influences partnerships with high schools, colleges, and professional organizations with diverse representation to attract and retain minority students (Brewer et al., 2020). These concerted efforts yield positive outcomes, underscoring the importance of institutional commitment in driving successful recruitment and fostering student success in nursing programs. Leadership within the nursing initiative highlights the pivotal role of organizational dedication in achieving these goals (Coronado et al., 2020; Subica and Brown, 2020).

Conclusion

It is concluded that diversity in nursing holds significant promise for reducing health disparities and advancing health equity. The study's findings underscore the importance of organizational support for diversity initiatives to address systemic barriers in healthcare delivery. By empowering nurses from diverse backgrounds and promoting inclusive environments, healthcare organizations can enhance cultural competence and improve patient outcomes.

Declarations

Data Availability statement

All data generated or analyzed during the study are included in the manuscript.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Approved by the department Concerned.

Consent for publication

Approved

Funding

Not applicable

Conflict of interest

The authors declared absence of conflict of interest.

Author Contribution

FIZA SAFDAR (Charge Nurse)

Coordination of collaborative efforts.

Conception of Study, Development of Research Methodology Design, Study Design., Review of manuscript, final approval of manuscript

Manuscript revisions, critical input.

SUGHRA QADIR (Charge Nurse)

Coordination of collaborative efforts.

Data acquisition, analysis.

Data entry and Data analysis, drafting article.

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