Factors Influencing Migration of Nurses from India- A Brief Review

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Abstract: *Background: International nurse migration from India has surged due to global demand, driven by better pay and conditions abroad. India's nursing shortages worsen due to disparities in domestic employment. Despite being the second-largest nurse supplier, India has only 17.3 nurses per 10,000 people, notably lower, especially in rural areas. Method: This brief review synthesizes insights from five studies in India, aiming to understand nurse migration factors. Using Google Scholar, PubMed, Wiley, CINAHL, and MEDLINE, studies exclusively focusing on nurses in India were selected, totaling 1,051 nurses. Result: Results show low salaries, limited career advancement, and poor working conditions drive migration, with nurses in the private sector more likely to migrate. Conclusion: Policy interventions are crucial to retain nursing talent and sustain healthcare services in India.*

Keywords: Migration, Nurses, Influencing Factors

1. Introduction

The migration of nurses from India is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by a variety of factors spanning economic, social, political, and professional domains. India, being one of the largest exporters of nurses globally, witnesses a significant outflow of nursing professionals seeking opportunities abroad [1]. This migration trend has profound implications for both the source country, in terms of healthcare delivery, and destination countries, in addressing their healthcare workforce needs [2]. Understanding the factors driving this migration is crucial for policymakers, healthcare administrators, and stakeholders to devise effective strategies to manage workforce shortages and ensure equitable healthcare access [3]

This review synthesizes findings from five critical studies in India, offering a comprehensive understanding of factors driving nurse migration. Economic disparities, remuneration prospects, professional development, working conditions, and career advancement opportunities motivate migration. Push factors like job dissatisfaction, inadequate infrastructure, and limited specialization also contribute. Socio-cultural factors such as familial obligations and professional identity perceptions play pivotal roles. By analyzing diverse perspectives, this paper aims to inform evidence-based policies, addressing workforce challenges while safeguarding healthcare professionals interests and the broader ecosystem.

2. Background

International nurse migration has increased recently in response to the growing global demand for nurses. India is among the major nurse-sending countries, addressing shortages in destination countries while facing its own nursing shortages. The migration from India is driven by disparities between the private and public sectors in terms of remuneration, working conditions, and workplace environment. The COVID-19 pandemic has further escalated the demand for nurses globally [4]. Without improvements in working conditions and the creation of decent work opportunities in India, the country will continue to be a significant source of nurses, exacerbating its own shortages.

India has a well-trained, English-speaking nursing workforce. The migration of nurses from India has profound implications for both source and destination countries. India is the second-largest supplier of nurses after the Philippines, with about 88,000 nurses in OECD countries and approximately 640,000 working abroad, including in Gulf countries [5]. However, India also suffers from a severe nursing shortage, with only 17.3 nurses per 10,000 population compared to the global average of 36.9 and 107.7 in high-income countries. Rural areas are particularly affected, with 73 out of 640 districts lacking registered nurses entirely [6].

Economic factors are primary drivers of nurse migration. Better remuneration and improved living standards in countries like the US, UK, Canada, and Australia attract many Indian nurses [7]. Professional development opportunities and better working conditions also play crucial roles, as Indian nurses often face limited career advancement, inadequate training, and poor infrastructure domestically [8]. Socio-cultural factors, such as familial obligations and professional identity, further influence migration decisions.

Additional factors include age, marital status, and higher education. Younger, single nurses are more mobile and inclined to seek better opportunities abroad. Higher education abroad offers career advancement and specializations, enhancing job prospects and salaries in destination countries.

This brief review aims to explore and analyze the various factors influencing the migration of nurses from India. By synthesizing findings from key studies, this paper seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of nurse migration and to inform evidence-based policies that address workforce challenges while safeguarding the interests of healthcare professionals and the broader healthcare ecosystem.

3. Methods

The brief review methodology involved a comprehensive search of Google Scholar, PubMed, Wiley, CINAHL, and MEDLINE, applying strict inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Included studies focused solely on nurses and were conducted in India. Exclusion criteria eliminated studies unrelated to nurses or healthcare worker migration, those conducted outside India, and other brief reviews. Two independent reviewers meticulously assessed titles, abstracts, and full texts for study selection.

Data from selected studies were carefully extracted, focusing on study details, methodologies, sample sizes, and key findings regarding factors influencing the migration of nurses from India. The selected studies underwent rigorous evaluation for methodological quality and risk of bias. The findings were tabulated as follows:

S. No	Authors	Type of study	Study population	Study Tool	Methodology	Factors influencing to migration of nurses
1	Philip, H.et al.,2018[9]	Descriptive study	103 staff nurses	1 Baseline proforma 2 Checklist: It includes items related to salary, employment opportunities, professional development prospects, etc.	descriptive approach	Less salary, Better employment opportunities in abroad, Opportunity for professional skill enhancement, Additional payment for extra hours.
2	Thomas, P.etal.,(2006)[10]	cross-sectional study	448 nurses	Questionnaire & interviews	Survey approach	Economic Factors: Low pay and limited financial opportunities Working Conditions and Social Attitude: Negative societal perceptions towards nurses. Sectoral Differences: Nurses in private sector more likely to migrate. Promotional Avenues: Concerns among government sector nurses about promotional opportunities. Impact of reservations for Scheduled Castes and Tribes on career advancement.
3.	Oda,etal.,(2018)[11]	Survey method	345 nurses	survey questionnaire. (base line data, factors contributing migration)	Survey approach	Low Salary and Poor Working Conditions, Internship Systems Contribute to wage suppression by restricting nurses' mobility. Internship Conditions: Include low pay and extensions, further motivating nurses to pursue overseas migration.
4	Hawkes, M ,. etal (2009)[12]	cross-sectional study	99nurses	Questionnaire& interview	Both qualitative and quantitative methods.	Dissatisfaction with working conditions and prevalent social attitudes toward nurses, Better income prospects overseas, Historical and cultural factors, including linguistic and religious background
5	Johnson, S. E., etal (2014)[13]	Qualitative interview study	56 nurses	Interview method	Qualitative study	career objectives such as gaining knowledge, skills, and economic rewards, Social Mobility, Status Improvement, Family Influence, Social and Economic Factors

4. Result and Discussion

The brief review meticulously screened 40 studies and, based on stringent inclusion criteria, distilled them down to a final selection of 5. All chosen studies were conducted in India and focused exclusively on nurses. Most of these studies were descriptive in nature and utilized surveys as the primary data collection method. The cumulative sample size across these studies comprised 1,051 nurses.

In terms of the tools used to assess the factors influencing migration, four out of the five studies employed structured questionnaires, while two utilized both interviews and questionnaires. Additionally, one study adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods. A significant number of the studies used the questionnaire method to identify the factors driving nurse migration. These findings highlight the importance of comprehensive data collection methods in understanding the multifaceted reasons behind the migration

of nurses from India, thereby providing valuable insights for policymakers to address these challenges effectively.

The synthesis of findings from various studies sheds light on the complex factors driving the migration of nurses from India. Fiscal constraints and evolving employment conditions have resulted in an uptick in contract-based nursing positions with lower wages and subpar working conditions in government health facilities. This trend was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting many nurses to opt for unemployment over short-term contracts. Graduates from private nursing schools, facing diminished prospects in terms of salaries and work environments, exhibit a higher propensity to pursue opportunities abroad. Despite government recommendations, actual wages often fail to meet minimum standards, exacerbating the shortage of nurses within the country.

Moreover, the pandemic has accelerated nurse migration, facilitated by streamlined recruitment processes in developed countries. Without substantial improvements in pay and working conditions, India is at risk of continued loss of nursing talent, perpetuating the phenomenon of brain drain. Despite these challenges, Indian nurses remain globally inclined, ready to serve across borders. The utilization of structured questionnaires and interviews has provided a comprehensive understanding of the migration drivers, supported by consistent findings across multiple studies. This systemic review offers a consolidated overview of the factors contributing to nurse migration, highlighting the urgent need for intervention to stem the outflow of nursing talent from the country.

4.1 Low Salary and Limited Financial Opportunities:

Across multiple studies, the issue of low salary and limited financial opportunities emerges as a primary driver for nurse migration from India. Nurses are attracted to better-paying opportunities abroad due to the comparatively higher salaries and improved financial stability.

4.2 Working Conditions and Social Attitudes:

Dissatisfaction with working conditions and negative societal perceptions towards nurses are consistently highlighted in Study 2, Study 3&Study 4 as contributing factors to nurse migration. Nurses seek environments where they are valued and respected professionally, which may be lacking in their home country

4.3 Sectoral Differences:

Studies 2 and 3 highlight the significant influence of sectoral differences on nurse migration. Nurses in the private sector are more likely to migrate due to better employment conditions, including higher salaries and improved working environments. This preference underscores the importance of addressing disparities between the public and private sectors to retain nursing talent within the country.

4.4 Career Advancement Concerns:

Concerns about limited promotional opportunities, particularly in the government sector, are noted (Study 2, Study 4) as motivating nurses to seek migration as a means of career advancement and professional growth.

4.5 Internship Systems and Wage Suppression:

The internship system, characterized by low pay and poor working conditions, is highlighted (Study 3) as a contributing factor to nurse migration. This system restricts nurses' mobility and incentivizes them to pursue opportunities abroad where they can receive fair compensation and better opportunities for professional development.

4.6 Better Income Prospects Overseas:

The allure of better income prospects abroad, including higher salaries and opportunities for additional payment for extra hours worked, is emphasized (Study 1, Study 5) as a driving force behind nurse migration from India.

4.7 Historical and Cultural Factors:

Historical and cultural factors, including linguistic and religious backgrounds, as well as family influence, are noted (Study 4, Study 5) as shaping migration decisions among nurses. These factors contribute to the broader context influencing nurses' choices to migrate.

Indeed, the synthesis of multiple studies reveals the primary factors driving nurse migration from India. Economic factors, particularly low salaries and limited financial opportunities, stand out as the predominant motivators prompting nurses to explore better employment prospects abroad. This finding underscores the critical role that economic considerations play in shaping migration decisions among healthcare professionals. Addressing these economic disparities and enhancing financial opportunities within the healthcare sector are essential steps towards retaining nursing talent within the country.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, our brief review highlights the main drivers of nurse migration from India. Economic factors, including low salaries and limited financial opportunities, alongside dissatisfaction with working conditions and societal attitudes towards nurses, motivate migration. Sectoral differences, concerns about career advancement, and challenges within the internship system further contribute to nurse migration. Addressing these issues through comprehensive policy interventions is crucial to retain nursing talent and ensure the sustainability of healthcare services in India.

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