

Assignment 2

BMHP4014

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Introduction

The aim of my presentation in a previous assignment was to conduct research about the shortage of nurses in the UK, gather data, compare statistics, and find out what steps have been taken to tackle this issue. A shortage of nurses is a topic especially important for majority of the population, as the National Health Service is a main provider of healthcare, which many of us require at some stage of our lives, therefore, it is something that cannot be overlooked.

In this essay, I would like to reflect on my work done in the first assignment – the presentation. When preparing a presentation, I wanted to follow a logical structure. First, I decided to give a context to the problem by providing numbers of nurses and vacancies. Then, I wanted to focus on possible reasons for staff shortage, discuss importance of addressing the problem and discuss the steps that government has taken to address this issue.

This reflective essay is divided into several main sections I focused on in my presentation, followed by a conclusion. The applied reflection model bases on Johns' reflective model (Johns, 1995). After describing the challenge, I reflect on the experience, considering emotions and feelings about it. Then, factors that have influenced the experience should be taken into an account. Subsequently, it is important to consider that could have been done better. Lastly, I consider what lesson I had learned from it.

Statistics of the nurse staff and shortage

For introduction to my presentation, I decided to display a total number of nurses in the UK. It was important to me to rely on information that only come from verified sources, such as the government, official NHS numbers and peer-reviewed journals.

The information about numbers of nurses currently employed in public sector were easily accessible on the government and official NHS websites. I found recent data from 2020 showed that there were around 301,000 nurses working for the NHS in England (Department of Health and Social Care, 2021), compared to 22,580 nurses in Wales (Royal College of Nursing Wales, 2020).

I had also found information about vacancies in a nursing journal (Glasper, 2016). The author highlighted that there has been an increase of 50% in number of vacancies for nursing positions from 2013 to 2015. Furthermore, he mentioned that the aging British population has contributed to this issue.

Gathering quantitative data about nurse numbers and their shortage was not challenging for me due to the official numbers being disclosed to the public on official websites. However, one of the

challenges I had faced was I had to look up separately statistics for England and Wales. The situation in the nursing workforce field has been changing thorough recent years, so I had to focus on the most up-to-date information, keeping in mind that recent geopolitical events, such as Brexit and pandemic could have some effect on the nursing workforce numbers. There did not seem to be a large number of scientific journals to discuss the problem of nurse shortage that have been relevant at the time of 2022, instead, there were many news articles - (Clews, 2022), (Campbell, 2022) . When using older sources (Glasper, 2016), I learned that the nursing shortage problem has been serious even before the pandemic.

One of the things I could have done better was providing a context to raw numbers of nurses, such as nurse to population ratio in the UK and compare it with other countries. Finally, I believe I could have done more in-depth research, comparing, disseminating sources, giving a yearly comparison on how numbers changed.

Nurses leaving their jobs

I wanted to research why the shortage is happening. One of the reasons that had come to my mind was that many nurses may be leaving their jobs and I wanted to rely on credible and up-to-date sources. A reliable source turned out to be a report by Nursing and Midwifery Council that had conducted a survey in 2021 asking nurses for reasons for leaving the NHS register (Nursing & Midwifery Council, 2022). I was surprised to learn that retirement was a reason for leaving a job for 42% respondents. Workplace-related reasons were less common – workplace pressure - 18%, COVID-19 situation - 11%, staffing level - 6%.

I was happy that the NMC report met my expectations, as they claimed they had contacted around 93% of nurses and midwives who left the NHS in the last year. I was slightly surprised that the most leading reason was retirement, and “low salary” option was not included in the survey.

My personal conclusion is that even though nursing sector is heavily understaffed, it does not cause many that people to leave the NHS. However, this may change once the nurse shortage becomes more dramatic, and I believe it cannot be ignored. In my opinion, keeping the current nursing staff is even more important as hiring new nurses to cover the gaps.

I showed those survey results in my presentation, but I did not include enough level of discussion about it. I learned that I should discuss quantitative data more often and come with my own conclusions and present them to the audience after each finding.

Dangers of nurse shortage

Furthermore, I also wanted to consider dangers of nurse workforce shortage. It is known that a shortage of workers can lead to delays of services being provided and their quality. Unfortunately, this is especially dangerous when this happens in the healthcare. This fear is also felt by the nursing staff, where 85% of the respondents in the Nursing Times survey (Ford, 2021) had said that the patient safety may be affected by not having enough nursing staff.

I feel that patient safety is extremely important, and it is worrying that a vast majority of nurses are afraid that patients may not be getting sufficient care. I felt that researching about dangers of shortages made me realise how difficult situation can be if nothing is done about it.

I believe I could have focused more on reasons why the government needs to do more and how to encourage new people to join the nursing. By researching those risks, I feel that we all need to show more appreciation to hard work of nurses.

Actions to solve the problem

I decided to include actions that the government has taken to tackle the issue, if any. I found out that in 2019 the government has started a campaign to solve the nursing staff shortage. They have said to add 27,000 new nurses staff until March 2022 (Department of Health and Social Care, 2022), however, when I compared it to the annual number of nurses leaving the NHS, which a nursing news website reported to be 40,000 in 2021 (Nurses.co.uk, 2022), it made me wonder whether the situation is not actually getting worse despite the governmental actions.

Comparing those numbers made me concerned about actual situation of the NHS. With an increasing number of illnesses coming from social diseases and an aging society, soon the NHS may not be able to keep up with numbers of people requiring nursing services. I realised that hiring 50,000 new nurses within a 5-years span may not fill the gaps (Department of Health and Social Care, 2022). By this I learned and reinforced my view that it is always very important to analyse data given a certain context and other numbers to compare, while being able to critically draw conclusions.

Conclusions and recommendations

Preparing the presentation required me to perform a lot of research, compare different sources of data and critically analyse them. I created a plan of my presentation and followed it, ensuring that the audience gets sufficient background context before going into details. The data I was looking for was easily available and came from valid and certified authors, but due to lack of most recent scientific publications, my presentation had to rely on news journals for nursing field.

I was genuinely curious in the researched topic, and it made me realise even more how it is important to encourage people to join nursing. It also made me concerned about the direction things are going and the future of the NHS.

There were some factors that influenced my research, such as there have been many outdated sources that I had to discard, since the problem is developing year by year, and my research would not be as valid if I based it on older sources.

In summary, I do believe that I could have included more scientific resources in my presentation, and I could have concluded and commented on every section of the findings, but it was not as easy, since there were many points that I wanted to include. Next time, it is better to narrow down the topic, especially when it needs to be presented in within a time constraint.

I learned a lot during this process. I realized that it is better to reduce the number of statistics, numerical data in favour of discussion and evaluation.

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