



University of Wales Trinity Saint David Birmingham

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Task 2 (Research report) on

The Influence of Workforce Shortage on the Quality of Care in UK's Healthcare Sector

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Research topic: The Influence of Workforce Shortage on the Quality of Care in UK's Healthcare Sector

1. Introduction (200 words)

The following research report highlights the prevailing issue of workforce deficit in UK's health and care sector. A number of hospitals, clinics and social care homes are facing hardships due to the inadequacy of doctors, nurses and carers which leads to the care services demands being unmet. Numerous healthcare professionals quit their jobs because of extreme stress, long hour shifts and not getting paid enough in accordance to their work. This increases more pressure on the existing employees, making the environment more stressful which significantly effects employee wellbeing, patient care and quality of service of respective organisations ([The King's Fund, 2024](#)).

In the context of the UK, this problem is particularly far-reaching given that NHS is one of the largest employers in the UK, providing services to millions of individuals. Patients have to face longer waiting times with decreased service quality when enough staff is not available ([NHS England, 2023](#)). In addition to the emotional and mental stress, families have to go through financial struggles when their loved ones are not treated well ([YouGov, 2024](#)).

The aim of this report is to analyse this problem, underline the importance of its investigation and explain various types of data and research methods that can be used. For this purpose, numerous credible and up to date sources have been studied and incorporated in the report.

2. Research topic identification

2.1 Identifying the problem/ issue (200 words)

Health and social care sector in the UK, and NHS to be specific, is currently struggling with a major challenge of staff shortages. The number of doctors, nurses and care workers is not sufficient to fulfil the growing demands of services. Recent sources tell that NHS job vacancies across England exceeded 120,000 in 2023. This implies that hospital wards, clinics and care homes does not have enough staff to deliver adequate medical care ([NHS Digital, 2023](#)).

This staff insufficiency results in existing employees feeling overworked, exhausted and anxious. This continual pressure and stress can lead to burnout, which is a state when employees are under persistent physical, mental and emotional exhaustion in their jobs. It negatively influences their work performance and even their perspective about their careers. This means that when carers are emotionally and physically struggling themselves, it gets really hard for them to efficiently care for others ([British Medical Association, 2022](#)).

The aftermath of this problem extends all over in the UK healthcare sector ([YouGov, 2024](#)):

- Patients suffer as they may not receive the needed attention and care.
- Healthcare employees are under mental and physical stress.
- Organisations e.g. hospitals, clinics and care homes have to face massive employee turnover and poor work performance.

2.2 Justification for the research (200 words)

Doing research on this problem is very crucial because staff deficiency and burnout can have a negative impact on both the patients and carers. When there are not adequate number of workers, patient waiting times increase significantly and there is a decrease in quality of service provided to them. Most importantly, the existing staff members who are burnt out are more prone to making errors and are most likely to quit their jobs which is even bigger issue ([West et al., 2020](#)).

This issue further intensifies due to increase in life expectancy and aging population which increases the demands for healthcare services. UK's health and social care sector especially NHS is facing unparalleled pressure to provide care to more individuals than ever before. According the Health and Social care Department (2022), resolving this issue of workforce insufficiency is one of the top issues UK's health sectors is facing. If it remains unresolved, the quality of care will continue to worsen over time ([Department of Health and Social Care, 2022](#)).

With the help of proper investigation, researchers can propose solutions to improve the working conditions and creating better work environment. This will not only solve this problem, but will also aid the respective policymakers to implement any changes or amendments as The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan says that effective planning alongside workforce training needs to be done for a sustainable healthcare system ([NHS England, 2023](#)).

2.3 Literature review (300 words)

The sources used for this task provide a comprehensive overview of challenges faced by UK's healthcare. One of the sources; a report from King's Fund (2024) highlights the challenges NHS has to face in terms of healthcare service quality due to workforce shortages and burnout. It not only mentions the causes and working conditions but also outlines quantitative data and provides recommendations to enhance staff support. This source was selected because of its good reputation and reliability in terms of healthcare information which will assist the research in proving why prompt actions are needed ([The King's Fund, 2024](#)).

Another report from King's Fund by West, Bailey and Williams (2020) explores the mental health and wellbeing of midwives and nurses. It highlights the consequences of workplace stress and burnout, how it can diminish their ability to work effectively and provide good quality

care. This source is pertinent to this research as it emphasizes on the relation between emotional health of staff members and patient care quality, explaining the impact of burnout on patient safety and staff wellbeing (West et al., 2020).

Lastly, the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan by NHS England (2023) outlines plans and policies for recruiting, training and keeping more healthcare professionals. It also gives the statistics and predictions related to staff shortages up till 2036. This government source was selected because it is fact based and has impressive discussions on action plan, which shows efforts towards resolving the issue for workforce crisis. It aids the research by providing practical solutions and focuses on areas where more research is needed to be done for improvement (NHS England, 2023). Altogether, these resources illustrate a thorough depiction of the challenges faced by NHS, the causes, effects and the possible solutions. This blend of governmental and academic reports strengthens the research, making it more reliable.

2.4 Research methodology (200 words)

A research methodology is a comprehensive strategy or an approach for gathering and investigating relevant information to solve a research question or statement. It is important in order to guarantee that the results are correct, authentic and applicable to the goals of research (Renjith et al., 2021). There are mainly three kinds of research methodologies;

- Qualitative research
- Quantitative research
- Mixed-Methods research

Qualitative research focuses on people's experiences, point of views, attitude and behaviours. It usually incorporates methods like interviews, focuses different groups and various case studies to study and analyse detailed information (Im et al., 2023). In comparison to this, quantitative research revolves around numbers and data; it focuses on numerical data obtained from experiments, testing and surveys. Trends and different relationships can be identified between variables using this technique (Vázquez Navarrete, 2009). Lastly, as the name says, mixed-methods research is a combination of both methods in order to provide a better understanding of the problem statement (Rana & Chimoriya, 2025).

For this research, the most appropriate method would be the qualitative approach. A profound understanding of worker's experiences and difficulties that they face due to burnout can be made. With the help of case studies and interviews, researchers can study real-time consequences that numbers alone cannot tell (Renjith et al., 2021). It is more advantageous than the quantitative approach, as it shares experiences, suggestions and solutions which will improve staff wellbeing to great extent.

3. Data collection

3.1 Primary vs. Secondary Data (100 words)

Data collection plays an important role in research since it gives the relevant information needed to analyse the problem statement. Primary data is the empirical data gathered hands-on by the researcher from observations, surveys or interviews (Kumar, 2019). This kind of information is original and peculiar to the objectives. Whereas secondary data is derived from other sources such as books, online websites, journals and official reports (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2023). This type of information is usually utilised to support or differentiate various findings. Both types of data play the necessary role to study and solve the problem.

3.2 Data choice for this research (150 words)

Secondary data will be used to study the workforce shortages and burnout in the UK healthcare sector. Secondary data is selected as a number of reliable sources such as official reports from the government, data from NHS and The King's Fund and various other academic journals can be used to get a comprehensive overview of the problem and to look for possible solutions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2023). By the use of this data, researchers can draw trends and understand different patterns without having to invest more to get new information.

Key sources like reports from The King's Fund (The King's Fund, 2024) and The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (NHS England, 2023) provide reliable statistics and thorough understanding regarding staffing levels, and the challenges faced. Moreover, these reports provide professional opinions and suggestions which aids in understanding the causes and consequences of this problem. Henceforth, using secondary data is the best approach in solving this problem using solid evidence-based data.

4. Conclusion (150 words)

This study focused on the problem of workforce shortages and the leading burnout in the UK's health and social care sector. The outcomes indicate that factors such as high workload, long – working hours and mental strain are making a lot of healthcare professionals to quit their job. This situation creates major hurdles in effective service delivery and patient care. With the help of authentic sources e.g. NHS England and The King's Fund, this report demonstrates how the shortage of workforce influences the workers as well as the patients and entire healthcare sector.

Addressing this problem is necessary in order to improve the quality of the healthcare services in the UK. Organisations need to work on effective workforce planning, provide mental health support for the workers and create an overall better working environment. In the future, new strategies of keeping employees and the use of latest digital tools for better work environment should be focused to improve staff wellbeing.

5. References

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