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LACK OF NURSES IN THE NHS ENGLAND

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ABSTRACT:

This report contains a review of the problem about why nurses are leaving the NHS in the three first years after finishing university.

How external, internal, and personal causes are creating an impact on those professionals, who are quitting their job for different reasons, causing those professionals to be forced to move to other countries, or in many cases change their work into a different type of role or even into a totally different industry.

This study also explains the percentage of the data offered by the NHS, and those offered by other independent studies. Making a comparison on the high number of resignations of nurses, especially in our NHS hospitals.

Also, how the NHS is managing this difficult problem, and a review of alternative solutions that could be taken to improve our current chaotic situation which affects both, professionals and patients in the UK.

INTRODUCTION:

It is estimated that between 50-60% of nurses and midwives leave their NHS jobs in the UK within their first three years.

Precarious working conditions and inequality among minority ethnic groups are causing stress and absenteeism among a large number of these professionals.

To all this, it should be added that the situation for these professionals has worsened in the last two years, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it should be noted that these data were already handled between 2013-2014, where the average job abandonment was almost 50% within the first three years of joining the jobs.

In order to improve this situation, the UK government has made important efforts to alleviate the negative trend. According to a testimony from an NHS spokesperson, who assured that recently 13,000 nurses had joined the NHS, thanks to a fund of 28 million pounds, to support international recruitment. (Campbell, D. 2020).

PROBLEM DEFINITION:

The survey carried out by RCN to more than 9,000 nurses, ensures that 57% of the nurses in the UK are thinking of quitting their job. Being more than 60% of them nurses from NHS hospitals. Among the main reasons, they all say that they were feeling undervalued and overworked under high pressure roles.

Approximately, six out ten respondents consider their band or low salary level for the work that they carry out as the main reason for thinking about leaving their current role.

This survey, which was carried out in October 2021, explains that 74% of nurse practitioners reported that they work more hours than those established in their shift, and most of the time they do not get paid for their overtime worked.

Many of them said that they are forced to work 12-hours shifts, completely under pressure and extremely busy to be able to offer a quality level of care to patients.

When they were asked about their state of health, 77% said they have worked sick on more than one occasion, of which 67% assured that their discomfort was due to stress, and 38% confirmed having mental health problems, due to the pressure at work.

On the other hand, there would be the patients and their families, who according to the nurses must wait in long queues for hours to be seen, since most hospitals cannot cope with the high demand due to the lack of personnel. (Kirby, J. 2021).

(PESTLE Analysis shown in appendix).

DISCUSSION:

The last 15 years there have been several changes in the structure of the NHS, remodelling attempts by different governments and the entry of Brexit have been factors that have reduced the quality of the free medical care system in the UK.

The main development of this institution is that in addition to offer medical care, it is forced to contribute financially to the nation. (Faulkner, R & Wyatt, D. 2021).

These types of economic measures are creating a direct impact on health and care's professionals, specifically in this case causing a lack of nurse practitioners throughout the country's health sector.

Given this situation, professionals who decide to leave the NHS are emigrating to other countries, such as Germany or Switzerland, or even returning to their countries of origin, where working conditions are better. (Ellis, R. 2019).

Also, part of them is changing labour sector, many nurses are leaving NHS hospitals to work in aesthetic clinics, where they work Monday to Friday, and they are able to get higher salaries.

On the other hand, patients are directly affected by the shortage of professionals in NHS hospitals, long queues in emergency services are some of the problems, that thousands of people are suffering every day. In some cases, ending in fatal outcomes.

In an article from Birmingham mail, Brinkworth, A. (2021) talks about a tragedy that occurred at the Midland Hospital, where an ambulance remained for five hours waiting to admit a seriously ill patient, who died shortly after entering the hospital due to cardiac arrest. Although unfortunately there are many more similar cases.

Many of the nurses' complaints mention the poor service they specifically offer to patients, due to the lack of professionals in hospital shifts. Also, nurses claim to be suffering aggression on some occasions by patients and their families, due to the desperation that they suffer waiting in the long queues and the poor service offered. (Kirk, I. 2022).

ANALYSIS:

Undoubtedly, the main cause of the lack of nurses in the NHS is due to low salaries, added to the excessive number of hours that these professionals are forced to work and that in many cases, they are not receiving remuneration for the extra hours worked.

All of this is causing professionals sick leave due to stress and anxiety, or in the worst case, resignation from their jobs.

Meanwhile, NHS leaders are working hard to cut costs to save 330 million of pounds that government is demanding. Considering the increase in the cost of electricity and fuel, they will hardly be able to carry it out by increasing the wages of the workers. (Deaking, M. 2022).

According to the care act 2014: Duty of Candour.

In the sections:

- Professionals must fully explain to the patients the short- and long-term effect of what has happened.
- Offer an appropriate remedy or support to put matters right.

Due to the pressure that nurses are subjected to, unfortunately they recognize that they cannot offer such support to patients in most cases, something that is included in the UK legislation and should be carried out.

About the law called "working time directive" in which no employment contract can force anybody to work more than 48 hours per week, it would not be applicable to nurses, since they belong to emergency services, which is exempt from such law.

However, when their mental or physical health is in risk, the employer must provide a safe environment for the workplace, in those cases they could legally file a complaint, to access better working conditions.

They also have the right to enjoy their corresponding break times, having access to food and drink, and provide them with equipped showers and bathrooms. (Kinman, G. Teoh, K & Harriss, A. 2020).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is contradictory that in a country like the United Kingdom, where meticulous specific protocols are followed in nursing practice, such as the double check technique, which requires the verification, registration a signature of the administration of intravenous medication and opiates by two nurses qualified to avoid errors.

Nurses are required to record in writing all the care provided to the patients, every two hours in the case of changes in posture to avoid ulcers. Or even the mandatory trainings, specific courses that nurses must renew every five years, such as venepuncture or catheters. (Garcia, N. Garcia, P. 2020).

And on the other hand, the professionalism of nurses in not being valued, and their salaries and time off are being devalued.

For this reason, it would be essential to apply a labour reform to the contracts of such professionals, in which they would be included within the groups where it is not allowed to work more than 48 hours per week.

Meet the ratios required by the world health organization, where a minimum of 9.8 nurses per thousand inhabitants is required instead of the 7.8 per thousand of the ratios in the NHS, in order to guarantee the necessary care for patients, and relief from the excessive workload of professionals. (Garcia, N. Garcia, P. 2020). (Graphic showed in appendix).

Facilitate visas for NHS nurses as it was done last year in other industry during the “logistic / transport” crisis. This will avoid the exodus a such professionals and it will facilitate new hiring, since almost a quarter of the nurses come from foreign countries.

And most important of all, increase the economic budget of the NHS, and thereby approve a salary regulation in which part of the budget is destined to increase the salary of the workers.

It should also be noted the need for access to the well-being and mental health of these workers, who have been suffering an enormous mental burden, especially in the last years of the Covid-19 pandemic. So, the worker’s union should guarantee psychological support.

(PMI analysis showed in appendix).

CONCLUSION:

Within the many promises of the government, in which it assures that it will improve the quality of the NHS. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

“Nurses are the absolute backbone of our NHS, without whom we would have been lost throughout the pandemic and who will be vital in helping the NHS tackle the COVID backlogs. This government will continue to do everything we can to recruit and retain even more nurses and to support our NHS”. (Department of health & social care. 2022).

The current PM Boris Johnson assured that he will make sure this government increase the number of nurses by 50,000 between 2024 and 2025.

But leaving aside all the statistical data that contradicts the testimony of the workers, with what the government assures.

The reality is that the NHS is going through a severe crisis, due to the exodus of staff, the extra expense caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the high price inflation, which all together is undoubtedly having a physical and economic impact on worker's sector.

It is not just a matter of increasing the number of contracts, the real solution is to increase such number of workers, preventing many others resigning. It would be necessary to improve the working and economic conditions of nurses overall to avoid this negative trend of professional leaving the NHS.

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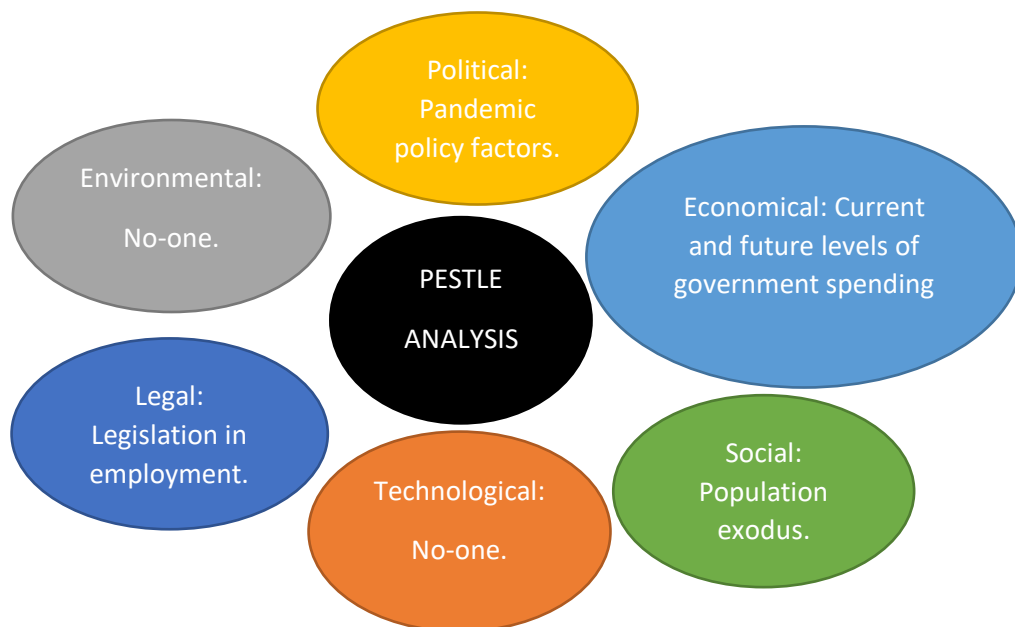
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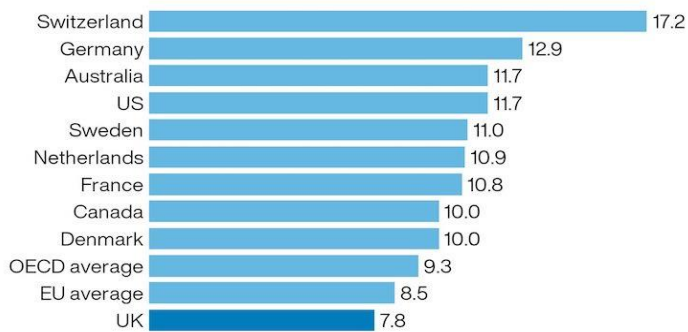
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APENDIX:



Practising nurses per 1,000 population in 2017



PA graphic. Source: British Medical Journal

NATIONAL HEALTH SECTOR IN THE UK:

