REVIEW ARTICLE

# Managerial Approach In Addressing Nurses' Workload : Effective Strategies To Improve Service Quality In Hospitals

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## ABSTRACT

Nurses' workloads substantially influence healthcare quality by increasing the risk of burnout, reduced performance, and decreased patient satisfaction. This narrative review explores managerial strategies to optimize nurse workloads in hospital settings. A comprehensive literature search was conducted in Scopus, PubMed, and ScienceDirect for articles published between 2019 and 2024. Of 243 articles identified, 8 were included based on relevance and empirical strength, with eight prioritized as core references. Thematic analysis revealed four strategic themes: effective resource allocation, transformational leadership, flexible work policies, and Total Quality Management (TQM). These approaches interact synergistically to improve staff well-being and care delivery. However, findings also show conflicting views regarding the practical application of these strategies across different healthcare environments. Hospitals should adopt integrative, context-sensitive managerial frameworks to enhance workforce sustainability and service quality.
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**Keywords:** Flexible work policies, Healthcare quality, Nurse workload management, Transformational leadership, Total Quality Management

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## INTRODUCTION

Nurse workload is a key determinant of healthcare quality. Excessive workload driven by high patient volumes, complex clinical tasks, and administrative duties reduces efficiency and elevates stress levels among nurses (1). This problem is intensified by limited staffing and the constant demand for high-quality care. Evidence from Semarang District Hospital shows that many nurses face heavy workloads, contributing directly to stress and reduced performance (2,3). Excessive workload also heightens the risk of burnout, particularly when job demands exceed available resources and managerial support (4,5). Burnout, in turn, leads to emotional exhaustion, lower job satisfaction, and increased errors, ultimately compromising patient care and satisfaction(6).

Workload significantly affects occupational safety, with high demands and inadequate staffing increasing accident risks in nursing practice (7,8). Nurses' multiple roles require effective workload management, yet time constraints and limited managerial support often hinder performance. Poor workload management consequently reduces efficiency, increases errors, and lowers patient satisfaction. Addressing nurse workload requires a comprehensive and strategic approach involving evidence-based managerial interventions (7,9). These measures promote healthier work environments, enhance service delivery, and reduce risks of burnout and occupational hazards (10,11). Supportive leadership further sustains improvements, ensuring patient safety and enabling nurses to fulfill their complex roles effectively (6,12).

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a narrative review approach to synthesize managerial strategies addressing nurse workload across diverse contexts. Literature was searched in Scopus, PubMed, and ScienceDirect for articles published between 2020–2024, using keywords such as "nurse workload management," "nursing workload," "workload in nursing," "nursing management strategies," and "patient care quality." From an initial 243 records, systematic screening via PRISMA yielded 8 eligible articles (Fifure 1). Inclusion

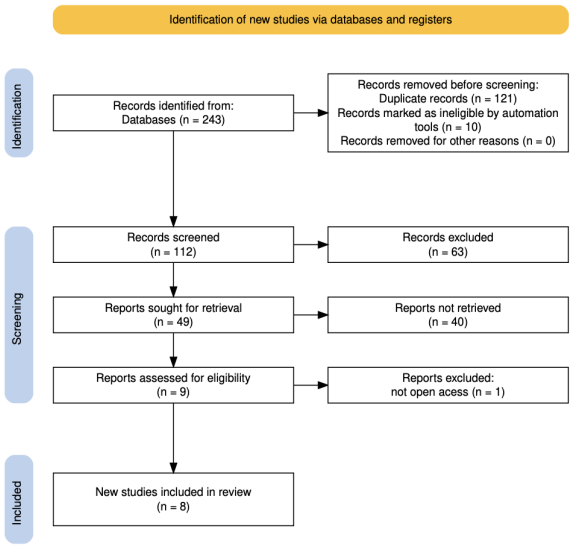


**Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram of the study selection process**

criteria were peer-reviewed studies conducted in hospital settings and presenting empirical or evidence-based strategies on workload management. Exclusion criteria comprised non-empirical papers, lack of full-text access, and studies outside hospital settings.

## RESULTS

From 243 records initially identified, 121 duplicates and 10 ineligible entries were removed, leaving 112 for screening. After title and abstract review, 63 were excluded, and 49 full texts were sought. Due to access restrictions, 40 could not be retrieved, resulting in 9 full texts assessed. One was excluded for lack of open access, leaving 8 studies included in the final review. he extraction data and key findings of these papers are detailed in Table I.

A methodological appraisal using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) revealed varying quality among the eight included studies. Maghsoud et al(10), Griffiths et al(12), and Dhaini et al(8) demonstrated high quality due to robust designs, large samples, and rigorous analyses. Ivziku et al (13) and Simonetti et al (14) showed moderate quality with certain methodological limitations. In contrast, Yuliatin (1), Pujiyanto and Hapsari (2), and Septiantoro et al (15) were rated moderate to low because of smaller sample sizes and limited instrument validation. Nonetheless, all studies contributed valuable insights into managerial influences on nursing workload and care quality, underscoring the need for more rigorous and contextually relevant research.

**Table I. Result article analisis**

| Article Title | Authors & Year | Method | Sample | Descriptive Statistics | Key Findings | Quality Appraisal Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Workload and quality of nursing care: the mediating role.* | Maghsoud F, et al. (2022)(10) | Quantitative, SEM | 385 hospital nurses | Mean EE: 23.7 ± 1.14 | Workload indirectly affects care quality via exhaustion, satisfaction, and rationing. | Strong |
| *Nursing workload, nurse staffing methodologies and tools: A systematic scoping review* | Griffiths P, et al. (2020)(12) | Scoping review | 101 international studies | Not reported | Multiple tools used for workload measurement across various contexts. | Strong |
| *Trends and variability of implicit rationing of care...* | Dhaini SR, et al. (2020)(8) | Longitudinal, mixed methods | 156 acute care nurses | IRNC: 2.5 ± 1.09 | Workload is associated with care rationing and job dissatisfaction. | Strong |
| *Defining nursing workload predictors: A pilot study* | Ivziku D, et al. (2021)(13) | Exploratory quantitative | 98 Italian nurses | Workload: 3.6 ± 0.91 | Shift type, patient volume, and unit characteristics shape workload perceptions. | Moderate to Strong |
| *Environment, workload, and nurse burnout. in Chile* | Simonetti M, et al. (2021)(14) | Descriptive quantitative | 284 public hospital nurses | Burnout: 45.2 ± 0.88 | Poor environment and workload increase burnout, affecting service quality. | Moderate |
| *The correlation between nurses' workload and the implementation of health education in preventing the risk of fall in the.* | Yuliatin E. (2020)(1) | Correlational quantitative | 32 ER nurses | Workload score: 67.4 | High workload linked to increased patient falls due to lack of education. | Low to Moderate |
| *Correlation between nurse workload and fatigue levels* | Pujiyanto TI, Hapsari S. (2021)(2) | Cross-sectional quantitative | 57 inpatient nurses | Workload: 76.7 ± 1.23 | High workload significantly increases fatigue. | Moderate |
| *Relationship between nurse workload and fall prevention compliance* | Septiantoro R, et al. (2024) (15) | Analytical quantitative | 70 nurses in Hospital X | Median workload: 72 | High workload reduces compliance with fall prevention protocols. | Moderate |

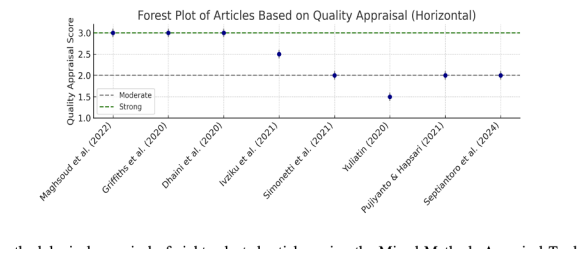


**Figure 2: Forest Plot Quality Appraisal Result**

## DISCUSSION

### Effective Resource Allocation

Human resource management is central to balancing nurse workload and care quality, as excessive demands negatively affect both staff well-being and patient safety (16). Tools such as the WHO's Workload Indicators of Staffing Need (WISN) support evidence-based workforce planning, but their implementation often faces organizational and contextual barriers, including unit type, shift length, and patient acuity (13,17). Adequate staffing reduces fatigue, prevents burnout, and promotes adherence to safety protocols, yet in Indonesia, resource limitations and insufficient institutional support continue to hinder optimal workforce allocation (12).

### Transformational Leadership Approach

Transformational leadership reduces stress, enhances well-being, and supports flexible policies by inspiring, empowering, and fostering a shared vision among nurses(15,18). Although transformational leadership is optimal for long-term development, transactional leadership may be more effective in emergencies, and a balanced application of both styles often yields the best outcomes(19,20). Ultimately, leadership shapes organizational culture by promoting work–life balance, empowerment, and professional growth, thereby improving service quality and supporting sustainable healthcare innovation (21,22).

### Development of Flexible Work Policies

The growing demands of modern healthcare and workforce expectations necessitate flexible work policies to balance nurses' professional and personal responsibilities. Rigid schedules and high workloads contribute to stress, burnout, and reduced care quality(23). Flexible scheduling, including adjustable shifts, mental health days, and part-time options, has been shown to improve job satisfaction, reduce fatigue, and enhance retention, though it requires accurate workload data and collaborative planning to ensure service continuity(24). Complementary wellness initiatives, such as stress management programs, counseling access, and rest spaces, also lower burnout and promote healthier work environments, provided they are supported by leadership and integrated into organizational culture (25,26) However, barriers such as managerial resistance and logistical challenges highlight the need for not only technical planning but also a cultural shift toward innovation and collaborative governance (27).

### Implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM)

Total Quality Management (TQM) improves healthcare quality through continuous improvement, staff engagement, and performance evaluation. In nursing workload management, TQM reduces inefficiencies and fosters collaborative problem-solving(28,29). Its core lies in involving staff across all levels to refine processes, thereby enhancing efficiency, minimizing errors, and improving patient satisfaction(21,30) TQM also identifies bottlenecks and applies data-driven interventions, such as workflow optimization and reducing redundant tasks(20). TQM is most effective when aligned with workforce planning, transformational leadership, and flexible scheduling, operating within a culture of openness, evidence-based practice, and continuous feedback(30,31). Success depends on transparent communication and strong leadership that promotes accountability and innovation (17). Barriers include cultural resistance, limited training, and resource constraints, which can be addressed through education, inclusive decision-making, and supportive management (30,32).

## CONCLUSION

Nurses' workload is a complex challenge requiring an integrative managerial approach. Four key strategies optimal resource allocation, transformational leadership, flexible work policies, and Total Quality Management (TQM) are essential to enhance care quality and nurse well-being. Successful implementation depends on leadership commitment, staff involvement, and institutional support. Addressing nurse shortages and workload through tools like WISN, empowering leadership, supportive policies, and continuous quality improvement can improve hospital efficiency and sustain a resilient nursing workforce.

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