

Perceptions of EMS leaders and supervisors on the challenges faced by female paramedics in Riyadh Saudi Arabia: a qualitative study

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Background

- Emergency medical services (EMS) is an essential public health service provided by the government of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). EMS in Saudi Arabia is provided by the Saudi Red Crescent Authority (SRCA). It was established in 1934 and combined more than 5,000 male emergency medical technicians (EMT) and paramedics around the country. They do not employ female paramedics.
- Saudi society is considered a conservative culture, as such female patients reportedly prefer female paramedics to care for them due to privacy and cultural sensitivities, suggesting the Saudi EMS needs to employ female paramedics in the Saudi workforce.

Objectives

To explore the perceptions of EMS leaders, managers and academics about female paramedics and the challenges that these healthcare providers currently face in the Saudi workforce.

Methods

- A descriptive qualitative approach with seven male EMS leaders, managers and academics from five different hospitals in Riyadh region in Saudi Arabia (two university hospitals, two hospitals from Ministry of Health and one private ambulance service) with a semi-structured interview. Snowballing sampling was used to recruit participants of the study. Inclusion criteria: (1) coordinating, supervision or teaching female paramedics, (2) holding at least Bachelor of paramedicine or an equivalent, (3) read and write both English and Arabic.
- Following the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) guidelines.

Saudi female paramedics who want to practice in the Saudi EMS are currently impacted by trying to balance family planning, job responsibilities and constrained by Saudi culture and traditions



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Results

- Thematic analysis was used in this study.
- Three main themes emerged from the interviews reflecting challenges faced by Saudi female paramedics:
 - (1) Family and cultural challenges.
 - Cultural and family issues, which required maintaining a balance between career choice and demands of families
 - Family planning and pregnancy.
 - Long- hour shifts
 - (2) The value of Saudi female paramedics in the workforce.
 - Very important for Saudi female paramedics to be engaged and work in EMS field in the country
 - (3) Workforce issues.
 - Physical fitness issues
 - Issues in performing CPR
 - Develop EMS infrastructure
 - Change of stakeholders views against Saudi female paramedics.
 - Shortage of opportunities
 - Lack of practice
 - Burnout

Recommendations

Overall, the interviews revealed that Saudi females faced several challenges that could affect their job duties and capacity to work in the EMS. Saudi female paramedics who entered the discipline were impacted with some challenges with family and cultural responsibilities such as balancing between family responsibilities and work activities. With the new Saudi vision, society recognises the importance of Saudi female paramedics in the EMS workforce, despite its conservative culture. As a consequence of the interviews with EMS leaders, managers and academics, the availability of Saudi female paramedics in EMS was highly supported.

Therefore, future research that assesses the challenges that may affect Saudi female paramedics from their perspectives would be beneficial.

References

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