

## Workload and Task Distribution in Public Healthcare: A Qualitative Explorative Study From Nurse Leaders' Perceptions

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**Abstract :** Unreasonable workload and work-related stress can reduce nurse leaders' job satisfaction and productivity and can increase absence and burnout. Nurse leaders' workload in public healthcare settings is relatively unresearched. The aim of this study was to investigate nurse leaders' perceptions of workload and task distribution with relation to leading work tasks in public healthcare. A qualitative explorative design was used. The data material consisted of texts from interviews with nurse leaders in public healthcare (N=8). The method was inspired by content analysis. The COREQ checklist was used. Informed consent was sought from the participants regarding study participation and the storage and handling of data for research purposes. Six main themes were found: Increased and unreasonable workload, Length of work experience as nurse leader affects perception of workload, Number of staff and staff characteristics affect perception of workload, Versatile and flexible task distribution, Working overtime as a way of managing high workload, and Insufficient time for leadership mission. The workload for nurse leaders in a public healthcare setting was perceived to be unreasonable. Common measures for managing high workload included working overtime, delegating work tasks and organizing more staff resources in the form of additional staff. How nurse leaders perceive their workload was linked to both the number of staff and staff characteristics. These should both be considered equally important when determining staff levels and measuring nurse leaders' workload. Future research should focus on investigating workload and task distribution from nurses' perspectives.

**Keywords :** nurse leaders, workload, task distribution, public healthcare, qualitative

**Conference Title :** ICNLM 2022 : International Conference on Nursing Leadership and Management

**Conference Location :** San Francisco, United States

**Conference Dates :** November 03-04, 2022