

A rapid review of time management strategies among nurse managers

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Abstract

Background. Time management practice is the act of influencing one's behavioural dimensions to complete as many tasks as possible within a specified amount of time. These behavioural dimensions include work organization and the continued application of time management techniques. Good time management, such as setting goals and priorities, as well as planning and delegating tasks, can facilitate productivity and success, contributing to work effectiveness, maintaining balance and job satisfaction. Conversely, poor time management has been associated with poor quality of work, low productivity, negative influence on the career path, and high levels of stress.

Aim. The study aims to identify the strategies used by middle nurse managers in time management.

Methods. A rapid review of biomedical databases was undertaken during the month of June 2021. The included studies were published in English and in Italian.

Results. Findings reveal that the most used and effective time management strategies for nurse managers are setting goals, and priorities and delegating tasks. Other useful strategies also found to be fundamental are discussed in detail.

Conclusion. A manager should prioritize the concept of planning, which can be counted as an efficient time management technique and educate himself on delegating. Time management has an impact not only on productivity and organizational success, but also on the balance between private and working life of managers. *Clin Ter 2023; 174 (1):75-79 doi: 10.7417/CT.2023.2500*

Key words: Nurse manager, Strategies, Time management

Introduction

The concept of time management (TM) starts with the industrial revolution and has now become the modern notion of doing things effectively and efficiently (1). It is difficult to measure the practice of time management, but this largely depends on the performance results of the workers (2).

Time management is the act of influencing one's behavioural dimensions to complete as many tasks as possible within

a specified period of time. Such behavioral dimensions include work organization and the continued application of time management techniques as a habit (3).

Good TM means doing high-quality work, not large quantity. In addition, the definition of objectives and priorities, as well as the planning and delegation of tasks, can facilitate productivity and success, contributing to the effectiveness of work, and maintaining balance and satisfaction (4). Conversely, poor time management has been associated with poor quality of work, low productivity, negative influence on the career path and high levels of stress (5).

TM practices vary within different countries of the world. For example, Palestinian nurses working in the hospitals reported to use TM with a rate of 69.5% (6); among 1200 Pakistan nurse participants 30% reported practicing TM (7); in the United Arab Emirates 49% practiced TM (8); in Egypt, time scheduling was used by only 45% of nursing middle managers (9); in Nigerian hospitals 51% of employees reported some use of TM (10).

There is a widespread lack of TM culture in many companies, including Africa and other developing countries, which can be detrimental to both the organization and its employees (11). Most people feel they have too much to do and not enough time and blame lack of time for their unmet goals, poor performance, and low productivity (6). There are several known factors that contribute to inadequate TM practices. These include personal factors (punctuality, waste of time), administrative and organizational obstacles to time management (organizational policy, lack of incentives, performance evaluation) and the performance of employees in an organization (9). Other individual variables such as education, age, marital status and gender were determined as contributing factors (12).

TM practices are crucial to implement in every organization. To our knowledge, a gap still persists in achieving desired productivity and improving the performance of middle managers. Therefore, this study aims to identify the best strategies implemented by nurse managers to better organize their time and job scheduling.

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Methods

A rapid review of the literature was performed. Rapid review methodology utilizes similar processes to a full systematic review but generates a more timely synthesis of the evidence by limiting scope (e.g. search terms and inclusion criteria) and various aspects of synthesis (e.g. data extraction and bias assessment) (13). The research question was based on the PIOM acronym: population, intervention, outcome and method. The research question is: "What are the best strategies implemented by nurse managers to organize their time?".

POPULATION	Nurse Managers
INTERVENTION	To determine the best strategies for time management
OUTCOME	To enlist the best effective time management activities
METHOD	A rapid review of the literature

Fig.1 PIOM used for building the research question.

The review was performed from June to July 2022 with no time limits, including articles written in English and Italian within MEDLINE, Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Scopus, PsycINFO, and Web of Science. The reference lists of all included reviews were searched manually for further relevant articles. Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) terms or equivalent were used, as well as keywords related to the topic.

The following data were collected for each selected article: title, authors, publication year, study design and TM strategies. The information from relevant articles was organized in a data extraction table (Annex 1).

Results

A total of 677 articles returned from electronic databases were screened for inclusion. After adequate evaluation 11 studies were included: 4 editorials, 1 review of the literature, 1 qualitative study, and 5 descriptive studies.

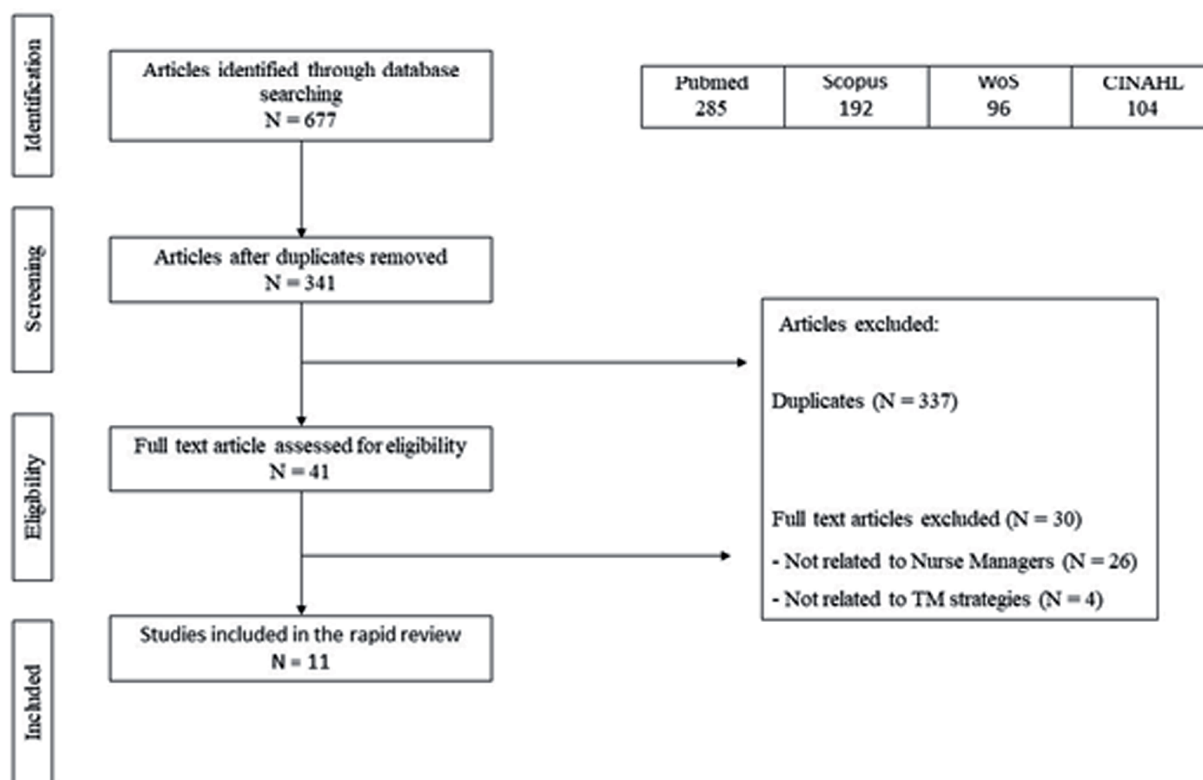


Fig.2. Flowchart of inclusion/exclusion of peer-reviewed articles

Annex 1. Summary of findings table.

TITLE, AUTHORS, YEAR	SAMPLE AND STUDY DESIGN	AIM	STRATEGIES
"How did it get so late so soon?": Tips and tricks for managing time. Stone T. (2015)	Nurse Managers Editorial	To identify some strategies for effective time management.	Set up reminders; Use lists; Put the most important work early in the day and in the week; Small tasks first; Write a list of priorities for the next day; Clean up your desk; Set an end time for each task.
Time management strategies in nursing practice. Waterworth S. (2003)	68 Nurses (Managers, Leaders and Specialized) Qualitative	To explore how nurses organize and manage their time.	Routinization Concealment Catch up Extending temporal boundaries
Time Management Challenges among Jordanian Nurse Managers. Manal Zeinhom Ahmed (2012)	171 Nurse Managers Descriptive, cross-sectional	To find out problematic areas among nurse managers across various managerial levels (first, middle, and top-level managers) and explore any relationship between the sample's demographics and their abilities to manage time effectively.	Prioritization Delegation Scheduling tasks Minimizing interruptions
Prioritization of factors affecting time management among Health Managers. Bahadori A, et al. (2015)	240 Senior, middle and first-line Managers Descriptive, cross-sectional	To investigate and analyze the relationship between factors affecting time management.	Planning Delegation Communication management Meeting management
Improving productivity through more effective time management. Arnold E, et al. (2004)	Nurse Managers Rapid review	To discuss the importance of time management.	Respecting employees' time Discovering time wasters Establishing daily goals Prioritizing Making a daily to-do-list Establishing effective and efficient work routines Delegating
Evaluation of time management behaviours and its related factors in the senior nurse managers. Ziapour A, et al. (2015)	188 Nurse Managers Descriptive-analytical	To investigate time management behaviours along with its related factors among senior nurse managers.	Setting objectives Prioritization Maintaining order and organization
Relationship between time management skills and time wasters among nurse managers at Menoufia University Hospital. ELsayed SS, et al. (2018)	84 Nurse Managers Descriptive	To explore the relationship between time management skills and time-wasters among nurse managers.	Goal setting Prioritization Scheduling Delegation Managing interruptions
Time management strategies for research productivity. Chase JAD, et al. (2013)	Nurse Managers Editorial	To improve time management skills.	Set realistic and attainable goals Optimize realistic planning Prioritize Effective scheduling Involve a team Reward yourself for achievement Manage potential distraction Analyze progress periodically
Interactive strategies: time management, prioritisation and delegation. Bergman C, et al. (2013)	Nurse managers Editorial	To show the most important time management skills for nursing managers.	Prioritization Delegation
Time management for the nurse leader. Hackworth T. (2008)	Nurse Managers Editorial	To provide nurse leaders a matrix for time management that can assist them with prioritizing activities that are urgent, non-urgent, important, and not important.	Ignore the phone Prioritize Delegate Set goals
Assessment of Time Management Attitudes Among Health Managers Sarp N, et al. (2005)	143 Health Managers Experimental study	To describe the main factors that consume time, effective hours of work, time management opportunities, and attitudes and behaviors of health professionals and managers on time management concept, through assessment by the Time Management Inquiry Form (TMIQ-F).	Prepare a "things to do" list Order duties with respect to priority and significance Evaluate daily and weekly schedules Spare time for unexpected events Delegate Keep the workplace tidy

Table 1. Summary of the main strategies and their definitions.

Strategies	Definitions
Setting priorities/goals	Managing time effectively requires a distinction between what is important and what is urgent. Several studies agree that the most important tasks usually aren't the most urgent ones. However, we tend to let urgent tasks dominate our lives. Activities can be categorized into four quadrants: urgent, not urgent, important, and not important.
Using a planning tool	Personal planning tools include planners, calendars, phone apps, wall charts, index cards, pocket diaries, and notebooks. The key is to find one planning tool that works for you and use that tool consistently.
Meeting management	It is the process of managing the stages and components of the entire meeting process. The actions that make meetings successful before, during, and after the meeting are equally important. Neglecting any piece of the meeting management process can lead to poor results and additional meetings.
To delegate	Delegating means assigning responsibility for a task to someone else, freeing up your time for tasks that require your expertise.
To schedule	It is the process of arranging, controlling and optimizing work and workloads in a production process or manufacturing process. Scheduling is used to allocate plant and machinery resources, plan human resources, plan production processes and purchase materials.
Splitting large projects into pieces	To break down the large milestones and deadlines into smaller side tasks and objectives.

Ziapour A. et al. (2015) analyzed the factors affecting time management behaviors among 188 nurse managers. The results of this study are a step taken to promote time management behaviors and consequently to enhance organizational efficiency. The principal variables analyzed are: setting objectives, prioritization and maintaining order (14).

Bergman C. et al. (2013), Chase JAD. et al. (2013), Stone T. (2015) and Hackworth T. (2008) editorials share common results analyzing a variety of approaches that minimize procrastination, interruptions and enhance discipline. They identified different important strategies, like setting realistic and attainable goals, optimizing realistic planning, prioritizing, effective scheduling, involving the team, rewarding yourself for achievement, managing potential distractions, and analyzing progress periodically (15,16).

Arnold E. et al. (2004) review discussed the importance of TM and enlisted the most important skills for improving it. The main variables analyzed are: respecting employees' time, discovering time wasters, establishing daily goals, prioritizing, making a daily to-do list, establishing effective and efficient work routines and delegating (17).

Bahadori M. et al. (2015) and investigate and analyze the relationship between factors affecting time management among senior, middle and first-line managers. Results showed that goal setting was the highest priority and most affecting variable; meetings management was the lowest priority (18,19).

ELsayed SS, et al. (2018) determined some time management skills among nurse managers, like goal setting, prioritization, scheduling, delegation, and managing interruption. In line with the results of this study, it can be concluded that most nurse managers had time wasters as a result of moderate time management skills, so they must improve their time management skills (20).

Hackworth T. et al. (2008) editorial aims at providing leading nurses with a time management matrix that can guide them in urgent/non-urgent, important/non-important tasks aimed at ignoring the telephone or dedicating time during the day to answer the calls, not feeling forced to always

answer, monitor your progress over time and evaluate the achievement of objectives (21).

Sarp et al. (2005) experimental study describe the main factors that consume time and attitudes and behaviors of healthcare professionals and managers on the concept of time management through the Tool Time Management Inquiry Form (TMIQ-F). Participants claimed that they felt much more productive in the morning hours than in the afternoon hours. The findings indicate that a manager should prioritize the concept of planning, which can be counted among the efficient time management techniques; prepare a to-do list for the day to come and sort the tasks by priority and meaning (22).

Discussion

This short review aimed at describing and grouping the best strategies implemented by nurse managers to better organize their working time.

Effective time management strategies benefit everyone in the organization. The results of this review indicate that delegating is one of the most effective strategies to manage time since our findings are supported by previous work of Kressin N. (2007) and Ongenae F. et al. (2016) (23,24).

Another strategy is prioritizing, a very functional way of implementing and maximization of TM. Similar to us, Malkoc SA et al. (2018) stated that focusing on the activities that are more urgent, helps the nurse manager organize better their schedule (25). Moreover, setting objectives/goals in the short and long term has a valuable impact on the work done. Like our findings regarding planning strategies, in the research of Claessens, B. J. C. (2007), strategies for time management falls into three broad categories: time assessment behaviors, planning behaviors, and monitoring behaviors. Setting goals is included in all of them because you first need to plan, then you need to assess and eventually, keep monitoring. Such records also help managers explain why certain activities were undertaken and describe their importance in accomplishing the job effectively (26).

Accordingly, a manager should discover time wasters in order to improve performance. This is in line with what Bellezza S. et al. (2016) concluded: finding out where one spends time enables a manager to determine whether certain activities are consuming too much time and whether each activity is constructive (27).

Limitations and areas for future research

The rapid nature of the review is associated with some methodological limitations. Limiting the scope of our search and associated terms is likely to have resulted in relevant references having been missed and increased the risk of publication and country/language biases. However, the strategical importance of the obtained results will encourage researchers to compare them with their daily practice in their organization and motivate a deeper study on the topic.

Conclusion

Nurse managers should become more aware of what they do with their time, identify and correct time-wasters and improve their skills on that. The most used TM strategies certainly are delegation, prioritization, scheduling, planning, setting goals and many other options that can help managers achieve a better balance between their organizational roles and personal lives.

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