

A comparative study on the number of Hospitals and Hospital Beds in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses and analyses the distribution and growth of the number of hospitals and hospital beds in the Ministry of Health (MOH), Other Governmental Sector and Private healthcare sectors of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the year 2002, 2009 and 2016. **Objectives:** To compare the number of hospitals and hospital beds in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the years 2002, 2009, and 2016. **Research Methods:** It is a descriptive and comparative research study in which historical data was analysed (Library Research). **Significance of Research:** There is a growing demand of healthcare services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority has identified healthcare as a priority sectors for investment and nationalization for employment. **Research Design:** The number of hospitals and hospital beds in all the healthcare sectors of Saudi Arabia were compared for the year 2002, 2009 and 2016 and analysed by using the percentages. **Study Population:** This research is limited to the number of hospitals and hospital beds in all the healthcare sectors of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the years 2002, 2009, and 2016. **Data Collections:** The data were collected from the annual reports of Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the years 2002, 2009 and 2016, relevant published journals, articles, research papers, academic literature and web portals. **Conclusion:** There is an increase in the number of hospitals in the Ministry of Health (MOH) by 40.51%; Other Governmental Sector by 12.82%; whereas in the Private Sector by 44.76%. Overall in total there is an increase in the total number of hospitals in all the healthcare sectors by 38.64% in the year 2016 as compared to the year 2002. On the other hand, there is an increase in the number of hospital beds in the Ministry of Health (MOH) by 46.68%; Other Governmental Sector by 20.59%; whereas in the Private Sector by 94.64%. Overall in total there is an increase in the total number of hospital beds in all the healthcare sectors by 50.48% in the year 2016 as compared to the year 2002. Hence, there are enormous opportunities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the investment of international and national entrepreneurs and employment for Saudi nationals in the lucrative healthcare service industry.

1. Introduction

In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Health was founded in the year 1950.¹ In the year 1925, Saudi Arabia's first public health department was established in Makkah.² The department was responsible for building hospitals and healthcare centres and issuing and enforcing regulations to provide the necessary standards for practicing medicine and pharmacology. A public health council was also established to address the growing need for healthcare services and it was the highest-level supervisory board, overseeing all aspects of the country's healthcare services. Then, these healthcare institutions were transformed into a ministerial body in 1950.³ Abdullah bin Faisal Al Saud was the first health minister.⁴ The ministry is based in Riyadh.⁵ Healthcare services in Saudi Arabia are provided by several public and private agencies. However, the ministry is the major planner and provider of these services.⁶ Public expectations and increasing financial pressures are requiring health services to adopt new approaches to the management of their resources.

Saudi Arabia is a high-income country with a per capita GDP of US\$ 22 713.4 in 2010 and an equally high human

development index ranking, 56 in 2011.⁷ The extensive health care system divided among three tiers of care and caters for a population of approximately 27 million (2010). The Ministry of Health is the main provider of health care services. Health has featured in the national 5-year development plans since 1970, and is seen as a key part of overall development in the country. Saudi Arabia is on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) targets. The development plans indicates that there is an extensive progress has been made in economic development. As a result of the strong economy, the country has rapidly expanded health, education and social services infrastructure.⁸

The Ministry of Health is promoting quality assurance and improvement through use of standard operating procedures and accreditation of health care facilities. Efforts are being made to improve patient safety in both public and private health facilities. The cost of health services in the private sector is perceived as high and results in out-of-pocket expenditures, particularly for workers in the public sector, which are not covered by supplementary private health insurance. Until recently, foreign workers were not allowed to use Ministry of Health facilities except for emergencies.

A target of Vision 2030 is greater participation of the private sector within the economy and this is especially so of healthcare. There is a definite move towards privatisation with a stated objective in the National Transformation Program 2020 (NTP) of increasing private healthcare expenditure from the current 25 per cent to 35 per cent of total expenditure by 2020. This represents a projected increase in revenue generated from 3 Billion Saudi Arabian Riyals (SAR) to 4 Billion SAR. In addition to this, the Ministry of Health plans to spend over 23 Billion SAR on new initiatives over the next 5 years.⁹

As part of its Vision 2030 commitments, the private sector is being encouraged to play an increasing role in meeting the healthcare demand. Whereas the public sector is expected to focus on promoting preventive care, reducing infectious diseases and encouraging citizens to make use of primary care as a first step. It will deepen collaboration and integration between health and social care, as well as support families to provide home care when necessary for their relatives. Vision 2030 aims to provide healthcare through public corporations, both to enhance quality and to prepare for privatization in the longer term. Overall, the private sector is offering lucrative opportunities but it also faces difficulties, such as high capital costs, problems in attracting quality doctors and nurses, and funding constraints for new entrants. To overcome the shortage in human resources, both the private and public sectors are looking to establish more medical and nursing colleges.¹⁰

2. Review of Literature

Health indicators are quantifiable characteristics of a population which researchers use as supporting evidence for describing the health of a population. The health indicators, whether the demographic or economic ones, cover many of the points that describe the highest level of development witnessed in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia with regard to the health domain at all levels. The health indicators also shed light on the exact figures and percentages of achievements with regard to hospitals and health facilities.

Saudi Arabia has the largest and one of the fastest growing populations in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) with over half the population under 40. Reported estimates suggest that it will rise from its current 32.7 million to 34.7 million by 2020. This will have a dramatic effect on demands for healthcare, especially as demographic trends suggest that the population will change from Baby Boomers to Generation X, Y & Z. During 2010, the population above 60 years was 1.1 million, and it is estimated that by 2020, that population will cross 2 million. This shift will have an impact on disease patterns and the type of healthcare services required. As the number of patient's increases, the impact on the capacity of hospital beds will be significant. In 2015, the average healthcare facility visit per person in Saudi Arabia was 2.1. The government is recognizing the need for further investment, and the healthcare sector has benefited from an increased budget allocation over the years. In 2016, \$33.3 billion was allocated for health and social affairs (14.9% of the budget). It was the third highest allocation, after education with \$55 billion, and military with \$47.7 billion. The increased budget will uplift the Kingdom's healthcare sector by

building 38 new hospitals, with a total capacity of 9,100 beds, in addition to two medical cities accommodating 2,350 beds.¹¹

Standard & Poor (S&P) has forecast the Saudi Arabian population to expand rapidly to 46 million through 2050, with the proportion of elderly people rising to 15% of total inhabitants from 3% today. An S&P analyst has suggested that age-related government expenditure on pensions and healthcare could rise to as much as 14% of GDP by 2050 from 6% today. In Kuwait, the ratio between people aged 65 and over and the 15-64 age group was 2.6 in 2015, with this projected to be closer to 20 in 35 years' time.¹²

In the recent research on the Health Resources Indicators of the Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Shaikh, 2018) it was revealed that there is an increase in the Physicians by 38.73%, Dentists by 88.84%, Pharmacists by 118.84%, Nurses by 61.02%, Allied Health personnel by 77.89%, Private hospital beds rate by 3.77% rates per 10,000 populations as compared with the year 2006. However, there is a decrease in the Hospital beds by 3.04%, Health Centers by 13.58%, Governmental hospital beds 25.84% rates per 10,000 populations as compared with the year 2006.¹³

A comparative study on the Economic Indicators of Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Shaikh, 2018) revealed that there is an increase in the GDP per capita (in US Dollars) by 37.32% and MOH Budget (Percentage of Governmental Budget) by 16.83 % in the year 2016 as compared to the year 2006.¹⁴

A comparative study on the Demographic Indicators of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Health (Shaikh, 2018) revealed that there is an increase in the total estimated population by 34.05%, total Saudi population by 16.26%, total non-Saudi population by 81.90%, annual population growth rate by 9.48%, population of 15-64 years by 1.65%, population from 65 & above by 48.93%, total life expectancy at birth by 2.33%, life expectancy at birth-male by 1.94%, life expectancy at birth-female by 2.70% in the year 2016 as compared to the year 2006. However, there is decrease in the population under 5 years by 8.62%, total fertility rate by 25.47%, crude birth rate per 1000 population by 30.80% and population under 15 years by 7.75% in the year 2016 as compared to the year 2006.¹⁵

These indicators for the country will help in identifying areas that need policy and programmed interventions, setting near and far-term goals, and deciding priorities, besides understanding them in an integrated structure.

3. Data Analysis

The data was collected from the Ministry of Health, Statistical Year Books, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the years 2006, 2011 and 2016 and tabulated in order to compare by using the statistics. The Statistical Yearbook is like a mirror, reflecting the statistical activities and the various achievements of the health sectors in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia throughout the year that made the Ministry of Health put the book accessible to readers.

Table Number 1- Total Number of hospitals in all health care sectors (Year 2002, 2009 and 2016)

Sr. No.	Sector/ Years	2002 ¹⁶	2009 ¹⁷	2016 ¹⁸
1	Ministry of Health (MOH)	195	244	274
2	Other Governmental Sector	39	39	44
3	Private Sector	105	125	152
Total		339	408	470

Table number 1 depicts the number of hospitals in all health care sectors of Saudi Arabia

Table Number 2- Total Number of hospitals in all health care sectors (Year 2002, 2009 and 2016) and its comparison between the years

Sr. No.	Sector/ Comparisons between the years	2002-2009	2009-2016	2002-2016
1	Ministry of Health (MOH)	25.13%	12.30%	40.51%
2	Other Governmental Sector	0.00%	12.82%	12.82%
3	Private Sector	19.05%	21.60%	44.76%
Total		20.35%	15.20%	38.64%

Table number 2 depicts that there is an increase in the number of hospitals in the Ministry of Health (MOH) by 25.13% (2002-2009), 12.30% (2009-2016) and 40.51% (2002-2016); Other Governmental Sector 0.00% (2002-2009), 12.82% (2009-2016) and 12.82% (2002-2016); whereas in the Private Sector 19.05% (2002-2009), 21.60% (2009-2016) and 44.76% (2002-2016). Overall in total there is an increase in the total number of hospitals in all the healthcare sectors 20.35% (2002-2009), 15.20% (2009-2016) and 38.64% (2002-2016). Hence, there are opportunities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for investment and employment for the Saudi nationals.

TABLE-3- Total number of hospital beds in all health care sectors (Year 2002, 2009 and 2016)

Sr. No.	Sector/ Years	2002 ¹⁹	2009 ²⁰	2016 ²¹
1	Ministry of Health (MOH)	28522	33277	41835
2	Other Governmental Sector	9604	10822	11581
3	Private Sector	8954	11833	17428
Total		47080	55932	70844

The table number 3 depicts the total number of hospital beds in all health care sectors in the year 2002, 2009 and 2016.

Table Number 4- Comparison of total number of hospital beds in all health care sectors (Year 2002, 2009 and 2016)

Sr. No.	Sector/ Comparisons between the years	2002-2009	2009-2016	2002-2016
1	Ministry of Health (MOH)	16.67%	25.72%	46.68%
2	Other Governmental Sector	12.68%	7.01%	20.59%
3	Private Sector	32.15%	47.28%	94.64%
Total		18.80%	26.66%	50.48%

Table number 4 depicts that there is an increase in the number of hospital beds in the Ministry of Health (MOH) by

16.67% (2002-2009), 25.72% (2009-2016) and 46.68% (2002-2016); Other Governmental Sector 12.68% (2002-2009), 7.01% (2009-2016) and 20.59% (2002-2016); whereas in the Private Sector 32.15% (2002-2009), 47.28% (2009-2016) and 94.64% (2002-2016). Overall in total there is an increase in the total number of hospital beds in all the healthcare sectors 18.80% (2002-2009), 26.66% (2009-2016) and 50.48% (2002-2016).

4. Conclusion

Overall, there is an increase in the number of hospitals in the Ministry of Health (MOH) by 40.51%; Other Governmental Sector by 12.82%; whereas in the Private Sector by 44.76%. Overall in total there is an increase in the total number of hospitals in all the healthcare sectors by 38.64% in the year 2016 as compared to the year 2002.

On the other hand, there is an increase in the number of hospital beds in the Ministry of Health (MOH) by 46.68%; Other Governmental Sector by 20.59%; whereas in the Private Sector by 94.64%. Overall in total there is an increase in the total number of hospital beds in all the healthcare sectors by 50.48% in the year 2016 as compared to the year 2002.

Hence, there are enormous opportunities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the investment of international and national entrepreneurs and employment for Saudi nationals in the lucrative healthcare service industry.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the number of hospitals and hospital beds in all the sectors of healthcare services of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the years 2002, 2009 and 2016.

Directions for Future Research

In future, such research studies should be conducted to compare the national healthcare indicators in order to oversee the improvement on an annual basis and to formulate or amend the national policies or strategies for improving the national healthcare services.

Sources of Funding for the Study

This research was self-financed by the author himself.

Implications of the Findings

The Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia should develop the policies and strategies based on these findings in order to improve the healthcare services in the Kingdom.

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