

The Stressors on Community Health Nurses in the Running of Child Welfare Clinics in Tamale Metropolitan Assembly

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Abstract

This study examined the types of stressors that Community Health Nurses at Tamale Teaching Hospital encounter in their work. The sample consisted of 95 Nurses drawn from six health facilities in Tamale. The instrument used in this research was a self-designed inventory. ANOVA and Independent Sample T Tests analyses were used to analyze the data. The responses of the Nurses revealed that gender did not have an influence on the workload. The Staff Nurses perceive more administrative stressors than the other ranks. Those with 1-2 years had more environmental workload than the rest. It was also found that the Muslims had more administrative stress than the other religions. The Tamale Hospital had more logistics than the other facilities. The recommendations centered mainly on screening most Nurses with Stress Inventories and organizing stress management workshops for them. It was also recommended that this study be replicated in the other two regional hospitals in Upper East and Upper West in the country.

Keywords: Logistic stressors, TTH, Community health Nurses, Health facilities in Tamale.

Introduction

Hans Seyle first introduced the term into the Allied Health Science in 1926. As a medical student, he noted that individuals suffering from a wide range of physical ailments all seemed to have a common constellation of symptoms. These include loss of appetite, muscle weakness, high blood pressure and loss of ambition (Seyle 1974). Wondering why these symptoms seemed to appear commonly, regardless of the nature of the somatic disorder, led Seyle to label this condition as 'the syndrome of just being sick'. Most people think of stress as the demands of life, however, technically these demands are called 'stressors'. The term refers to the actual wear and tear on our bodies. It is, therefore referred to the reaction of our bodies, souls, and minds to the various social, physical and emotional pressures on modern life.

Community Health workers in Ghana face a lot of challenges in work and as such find it difficult to achieve their goals (Nullis-Kapp 2005). The number of health care providers in a country positively affects the coverage of immunization, as well as skilled birth attendance (Anand & Bärnighausen 2004; WHO 2006), leading to an inverse correlation between health worker density and infant mortality, maternal mortality and various disease-specific outcomes (Khann *et al.* 2003).

Ghana like any developing country has high rates of morbidity and mortality with differences between rural and urban settings. The maternal mortality ratio of Ghana is estimated at 451/100 000 live births (GSS *et al.* 2009b). There are also marked variations across the 10 regions of Ghana with low coverage in Northern and Upper West regions, recording 27% and 47%, respectively, compared with 84% in Greater Accra region which is largely urban (GDHS 2008, see GSS *et al.* 2009a).

Furthermore, the distribution of health care workers in Ghana is skewed towards urban and wealthy areas and it is difficult to attract highly qualified nurses to deprived or remote areas of Ghana like Tamale which still poses a challenge (Wilson *et al.* (2009, Deville *et al.* 2010,).

Tamale like any derived region, health policy-makers and managers are searching for ways to improve the recruitment and retention of staff in remote and deprived areas. Several sources report the lack of a holistic approach to health worker retention at country level (WHO 2006), despite the recognition of

complex interactions between incentives such as pay, job satisfaction, career prospects and quality of life; many such interactions may be country-specific (Buchan 2002; Lehmann *et al.* 2008).

The MOH tried Fiscal incentives for rural service. One of them was a salary top-up scheme called the Deprived Area Incentive Allowance (DAIA) was launched for health workers in deprived areas in 2004, and nurse salaries in Ghana and it did not go well.

The present study is conducted to find out the challenges the Community Health Nurses go through and how on potential incentives to promote recruitment and retention in rural service.

Significance of the study

The Ministry of Health in Ghana can make use of the findings or the results of this study to find out the challenges that Community health nurses encounter in their work. The study will serve as baseline information for policy makers to device policies to reduce infant mortality of under-fives. The study is also directed towards the knowledge base of the health prompters so as to create a better understanding of the issues of logistics, staffing and motivation. This will enable Stakeholders to gain more insight into the phenomenon which will enable them to respond positively and effectively towards demands of the Ministry of health to alleviate their challenges. The results of this study will also be useful to the practitioners in the child welfare clinics especially the Nurses on managerial positions on how to manage these challenges of the staff to reduce stress related disorders. The findings of this study could also be used by the researchers as a baseline study for future studies in the area.

Research objectives

The following are the objectives for the study:

1. To ascertain the workload stressors among Community Nurses at Tamale Teaching Hospital
2. To examine the work environment stressors among Community Nurses at Tamale Teaching Hospital
3. To assess the professional stressors among Community Nurses at Tamale Teaching Hospital
4. To describe the administrative role stressors among Community Nurses at Tamale Teaching Hospital
5. To examine the logistic stressors among Community Nurses at Tamale Teaching Hospital

Statement of hypotheses

Reviewing the objectives and the literature the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. There will be a significant difference in the workload with regards to the marital status of the Nurses.
2. There will be a significant difference in the workload with regards to the gender of the Nurses.
3. There will be a significant rank differences in the perceived administrative role of Nurses.
4. There will be significant differences in work environment challenges of the Nurses with regards to the duration of services
5. There is a significant difference in the administrative role with regards to the religion
6. There is a significant difference in the facilities with regards to the logistics constraints

Methodology

Research settings

The research was carried out at Tamale Teaching Hospital because it is the main referral facility for all the health facilities in the Northern Region of Ghana. There are three training centres in the region and students come there for practical. They include UDS, Tamale NMC and Tamale community Health School.

Target population & sample size

In this study, 150 Nurses constituted the population used for this study as at February 2018 (Records office TTH, 2018). A sample size of 95 Nurses was selected from the total population of 150 respondents as proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Also, time and cost were considered.

Sampling technique

The stratified sampling technique was used for the facilities. The researcher further employed the disproportional stratified sampling technique in selecting the respondents for this study. This method was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher select the sample size of each stratum which does not have to be proportionate to the population size of the stratum in the entire population (Atindabila, 2013).

Research design

The appropriate design for this study was the cross-sectional design under survey research design. This was selected because the study was interested in the views of the Nurses on the stressors affecting their work as nurses in the CWC. The researcher adopted this research design because it is more practical, economical and easy to manage (Atindanbila, 2013).

Instrument for data collection

The researcher used the self-structured questionnaire in order to get the appropriate information needed to meet the objectives of this study. The questionnaire collected close-ended questions.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts, the first part collected information concerning demographic data such as age, duration of service, religion, marital status and rank. The second section of the research instrument collected data on the stressors on workload, professional distress, administrative role, work environment and logistics. The researcher distributed a total of 95 questionnaires of which 94 were retrieved, constituting 85% of response ratio.

Ethical considerations

The researcher sought permission from the authorities from the TTH before the research was started. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents and assuring them of their confidentiality. In addition to this, the researcher discussed the intended data collection period of three weeks with them before the questionnaire administration started. The questions were read and interpreted to respondents who found it difficult to understand some of the items in the research instrument. Other ethical consideration also included obtaining permission from the Nursing Department to conduct this study.

Results

This section presents the analysis of the data using the SPSS 20.00. The statistical analysis of the data was done using inferential statistics such independent t-tests and One-Way ANOVA were used to test the stated hypotheses. The results are presented below:

1. There will be a significant difference in the workload with regards to the marital status of the Nurses

The first hypothesis was tested with the One-Way ANOVA as three marital status of Nurses were compared on one dependent variable (perceived workload). The summary of the means, standard deviations and F-tests are summarized in Table 1 below;

Table 1. Summary of One-Way ANOVA of Status difference in Perceived Workload of the Nurses

Marital Status	N	Mean	SD	Df	F	P	Effect Size
Married	41	3.32	3.32	2, 92	7.037	.001	
Single	51	4	.88				
Divorced	2	3.07	.70				

An examination of Table 1 above showed that a statistically significant difference exists between those who are married, single and divorced and their perceived work environment at the .05 level of significance,

$F(7.037) = 2,29$ $p < .05$. Comparison of the means showed that those who are single perceived more work load than the others and therefore, the hypothesis that there will be significant differences in the workload with regards to the marital status is supported.

2. There will be a significant difference in the workload with regards to the gender of the Nurses

The second hypothesis was tested with the t-test as the gender of Nurses was compared on one dependent variable (perceived workload). The summary of the means, standard deviations and t-test are summarized in Table 2 below;

Table 2. Summary of gender differences in perceived workload among respondents

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	F	P
Males	16	3.36	.58	89	-.917	.362
Females	75	3.54	.74			

Results from Table 2 above showed that there was no a statistically significant difference exist between male and female Nurses in their perceived workload at the .05 level of significance, $t(89) = -.917$, $p > .05$. Comparison of the means showed that both male and female nurses have equal perception as to the workload and therefore, the hypothesis one that there will be significant gender differences in perceived workload among the respondents is not supported.

3. There will be a significant rank differences in the perceived administrative role of Nurses

The 3 hypothesis was tested with the One-Way ANOVA as three ranks of Nurses were compared on one dependent variable (administrative role). The summary of the means, standard deviations and F-tests are summarized in Table 3 below;

Table 3. Summary of one-way ANOVA of age difference in perceived administrative role of nurses according to ranks

Staff	N	Mean	SD	Df	F	P	Effect size
SN	44	3.89	.77	2, 92	3.084	.013	
SNO	6	3.85	.78				
NO	9	3.10	.89				
STUDENTS	27	3.29	.86				

Analysis of the means showed that there were statistically significant differences exist among the Nurses in the three 4 ranks on their perceived administrative role at the .05 level of significance, $F(2,92) = .3.084$, $p = .013$. Therefore, the hypothesis 3 that there will be significant staff differences in the perceived administrative role of the Nurses is supported

4. There will be significant differences in work environment challenges of the Nurses with regards to the duration of services

This hypothesis was tested with the F-test as three groups of respondents (< 1year, 1-2yrs, 2 yrs.+) are being compared on one dependent variable (perceived work environment). The summary of the results is presented in Table 4 below;

Table 4. Summary of duration differences in perceived wok environment among respondents

			AWE				
DURATION	N	Mean	SD	Df	F	P	Effect Size
< 1yr	15	3.40	.89	2,29	3.69	.029	
1-2yrs	16	4.1	1.21				

2yrs+	64	3.4	.94				
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An examination of Table 4 above showed that a statistically significant difference exists between those less than 1 year and those from 1-2yrs in their perceived work environment at the .05 level of significance, $F(3.69) = 2.29$ $p < .05$. Comparison of the means showed that those who worked in the hospital from 1-2years perceived more work environment than the other durations and therefore, the third hypothesis that there will be significant differences in the duration of work with regards to the perceived work environment is supported.

5. There is a significant difference in the administrative role with regards to the religion

This hypothesis was tested with the F-test as three groups of religious believers (Moslems, Christians and Traditional believers) are being compared on one dependent variable (AAR). The summary of the results is presented in Table 5 below;

Table 5. Summary of religious differences in perceived AAR among respondents

			AAR				
Religion	N	Mean	SD	df	F	P	Effect size
Moslem	36	3.94	.83	2,92	7.064	.001	
Christians	56	3.50	1.1				
Traditional Believers	3	2.01	.36				

The results of Table 5 above showed that a statistically significant difference exists between the various religious beliefs in their perceived administrative roles at the .05 level of significance, $F(7.064) = 2.29$ $p < .05$. Post hoc analysis showed that Moslems were ranked first followed by the Christians and traditional believers were last and therefore, the third hypothesis that there will be significant differences in the administrative role with regards to the perceived religion is supported.

6. There is a significant difference in the facilities with regards to the logistics constraints

This hypothesis was tested with the F-test as five facilities are being compared on one dependent variable (ALG). The summary of the results is presented in Table 6 below;

Table 6. Summary of facility differences in perceived ALG among respondents

	N	Mean	ALG SD	Df	F	P	Effect Size
RCH	20	3.20	.51	6, 87	2.627	.022	
Vitting	11	3.48	.95				
TTH	44	3.94	.92				
Nyonghini	8	3.71	.68				
Belpala	8	3.26	.94				

The results of Table 6 above showed that a statistically significant difference exists between the various facilities in their perceived logistic constraints at the .05 level of significance, $F(2.627) = 6.87$ $p < .05$. Post hoc analysis showed that TTH was ranked first followed by the Nyonghini and the rest were last and therefore, the third hypothesis that there will be significant differences in the administrative role with regards to the perceived religion is supported.

Discussion of the results

The research is aimed at finding out the types of stressors Nurses at Tamale Teaching Hospitals encounter in their workplace. The discussion is based on these objectives for the study:

1. The perceived workload stressors among community nurses at tamale

The first objective of the study is aimed at finding out the perceived workload stressors among the Nurses. The hypothesis formulated was that there will be a significant difference in the workload with regards to the marital status of the Nurses. The results indicated that the singles had an effect on the workload of the Nurses. The reasons might be due to the fact they have no support system as compared to the married ones.

2. The work environment stressors among community nurses

The second objective of the study is aimed at finding out the work environment stressors among Community Nurses. The hypothesis formulated was that there will be a significant difference in the workload with regards to the gender of the Nurses. The results did not show any difference in stress levels. This is supported by the studies of Abouserie (1996), Richard & Krieschok (1989) and Winefield & Jarret (2001) that there is no difference between male and female Nurses with regards to stress level.

3. The administrative role stressors among community nurses at tamale teaching hospital

The forth objective of the study is aimed at finding out the administrative role stressors among Community Nurses at Tamale Teaching Hospital. The hypothesis was that there will be a significant rank differences in the perceived administrative role of Nurses. The results indicated that the staff Nurse had more administrative role than the other Nurses. This implies that the junior nurses do more administrative work than the other ones.

4. The logistic stressors among community nurses at tamale teaching hospital

The next objective was to find out the logistic constraints in Tamale Hospital. The hypothesis was finding out is a significant difference in the facilities with regards to the logistics constraints. The results indicated that the TTH Nurses perceived logistics than the other facilities of Nurses. This finding was not surprising because the HTH was located in town and staff had to board cars to the outstations. However, the other Nurses need not to take cars to their workplaces that were close to them. Another source of stress for Nurses in recent years is the expectation that they should attract external funding through research grants or research consultations. Traditionally, Nurses were not expected to generate external income and hence may not have the entrepreneurial skills that are required to do so. A study by Winfield and Jarett (2001) showed that in the humanities where this skill is lacking as compared to the other areas, the psychological stress level is higher than in the other disciplines.

5. The duration of service by nurses

The next objective was aimed at finding out the effect of environmental challenges on Nurses with regards to their duration of service. The hypothesis was that there will be significant differences in work environment challenges of the Nurses with regards to the duration of services. The findings were that those who served for 1-2 years had more stress as compared to the other ones. The explanation might be that they combine administrative work with the usual nursing activities. This supports the earlier researchers by Lazarus, 1982) that repeated and continuous irritants can be stressful.

6. The administrative role with regards to the religion

The next objective was aimed at finding out the effect of administrative role on Nurses with regards to their religious beliefs. The hypothesis was that there will be significant differences in administrative role with regards to the religious beliefs of the Nurses. The findings were that the Muslims had more stress as compared to the other ones. The Muslim practice of attending to worship 5 times a day and combined with the nursing stressed them up.

Implications, recommendations and conclusions

This study has a lot of implications for the TTH, MOH and Further Research. The first observation is that the Nurses in Hospital irrespective of gender are under moderate stress. It comes with a whole lot of problems. These include ill physical and psychological health of the Nurse. Stress also has impact on the patients because the quality of Nursing in stressed Nurses is compromised (Duncan (1981), Faber & Miller (1981). The Hospital authorities should try to screen all Nurses and give the necessary intervention.

Based on the high stress level Nurses encounter and its attendant effects on the Nurse's health, the following recommendations are made. Firstly, the Government should address the stressors outlined in study and the Nurses should be motivated to continue with nursing in the Hospital like provision of good salaries, subsidized accommodation and other amenities. In carrying out the research, it was realized that the research should be extended to other Hospitals in the North

Conclusion

This is survey research which is aimed at finding out the stressors Nurses of TTH perceive in their work. This study was conducted at TTH. Nine five Nurses were selected on stratified sampling from the five faculties in the region. A self-designed questionnaire was used to collect the data. The data was analyzed by the use of SPSS software on the objectives. Based on the findings above, recommendations were made to the TTH authorities, MOH policy makers and areas also worth studying have also been recommended for future research.

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