

Investigating the Effects of Occupational Stress on Nurses Working in Referral Hospitals in Botswana to Reduce Health Risk

Tabby Maphangela

Ph.D. Public Health, School of Public Health, Texila American University, Botswana

Abstract

The incidence of work stress among nurses is a persistent issue. This qualitative study was carried out to examine the problems that nurses experience in providing basic health care at Botswana referral hospitals. The study was presented as a qualitative research approach. Three referral hospitals: Princess Marina Hospital, Nyangabwe Referral Hospital, and Sabrana Psychiatric Hospital were chosen for this study. Ten management officers from the three referral hospitals with the necessary and appropriate experience were purposefully sampled in order to generate the required data via questionnaires and interviews. An inductive thematic data analysis was then used, the researchers attentively examined the data to uncover common themes and patterns that appear frequently. The intended study objectives were obtained by focusing on the preceding sampled data from management officers in referral hospitals: to identify challenges faced by nurses in the delivery of basic health care services and to recommend strategies that can be used to address challenges faced by nurses in the delivery of basic health care services. The overall findings of this study emphasized three themes that developed from the interviews: the obstacles faced by nurses in the delivery of essential health care services, which are: a lack of manpower, a lack of staff and accommodation, low wages, and a terrible working environment. The researchers finished by providing a conceptual model that may be employed as an intervention technique in the workplace to help with occupational stress.

Keywords: *Occupational Stress, Stressors, Stress, Nurses.*

Introduction

Occupational stress can be defined as a harmful physical response that occurs when the job requirement does not match the capabilities, resources or need of the worker, leading to poor health or even injury [1]. Due to their line of work, nurses are subject to high levels of stress brought on by disagreements with superiors, co-workers, and frequently patients and their families, dealing with patient mortality and extended duty hours, and finally, conflicts with their own families [2].

Stress has become one of the important factors influencing individual efficacy and satisfaction in modern organizational settings [3] Stress is a state which affects our mind and body

[4]. Social stressors are environmental or social circumstances that have the potential to cause stress.[5] Factors such as motivation to work, feeling of commitment, organization's culture and identification with the organization are important in developing a perception towards stress.

An employee experiences occupational stress when elements associated to their employment interact with them, altering their psychological and physical state to the point that they are compelled to deviate from their usual behavior [6]. According to the WHO, "the physiological and emotional responses that occur when workers perceive an imbalance between worker effort and associated reward" constitute occupational stress [7]. Work-related stress

Received: 19.08.2022

Accepted: 10.09.2022

Published on: 29.12.2022

Corresponding Author: tmaphangela@gmail.com

impairs a nurse's capacity to address the issue and the patient's condition. Nurses are taught to think about the patient's quality of life and care, but very rarely about their own [8]. Nurses often disregard their personal health issues, which lowers the standard of care. The nurses develop the ability to accept health issues brought on by the physical and psychological demands of their line of work [9].

While it is crucial for nurses to take care of themselves, it is equally crucial for the caliber of care they offer to their patients.[10], most nurses experience diseases linked to stress.

Therefore, the objectives of this study were to identify the challenges faced by nurses in the delivery of basic health care services and to recommend strategies that can be used to address challenges faced by nurses in the delivery of basic health care services.

Methodology

The study was based on a qualitative approach and was performed using open ended questionnaire with the participants. This method was chosen because the author was interested in investigating subjective experiences of occupational stress in referral hospitals in Botswana. The choice of method is supported by who described that qualitative method is suitable for studying people's experiences, behaviours, and feelings therefore this method was chosen for this study. The reason why a semi-structured interview was chosen instead of, for example, a structured interview was to get a deeper insight into the phenomenon. The study's credibility refers to the extent to which research is trustworthy in the data collection and analysis. To prove this, each step in the method was described, and examples of how the analysis was performed were illustrated in the method section. Before starting the interviews, all the informants received information regarding the purpose of the study, the approach, and how confidentiality would be managed and that they could discontinue their participation at any time if they wished. This information was given both

in writing and orally. The study included both women and men. The registered nurses who participated had a good age distribution and different lengths of work experience within the health care. This could also be seen as a strength in the study. Regarding the dependability of the study, the focus has been on the participants' experiences of occupational stress.

Results

This chapter focuses on the results of the research data and reveals the findings, with the aim of supporting the fact that the research problem of occupational challenges for referral hospital nurses was realistic and balanced. Specific emphasis was placed on a selected referral hospital in Botswana to achieve realistic and balanced results for the research outcomes this chapter is all about findings of the study. The data was analysed through thematic analysis to explore common themes, topics ideas and patterns that came up repeatedly. The following themes were selected to represent the objectives:

1. To identify challenges faced by nurses in the delivery of basic health care services.
2. To recommend strategies that can be applied to address challenges faced by nurses in the delivery of basic health care services.

Objective 1: Challenges Faced by Nurses in the Delivery of Basic Health Care Services

Shortage of Manpower

The participants experienced too few staff in relation to the number of work duties and patients, which contributed to stress at work. They described the fact that they were understaffed, and it appeared that they were worried about not being able to do their work satisfactorily. Understaffing made them feel inadequate because they had more to do than they could handle. They described how the understaffing put tremendous pressure on them, leading to a more significant amount of stress.

"We are very understaffed" (Interviewee n.1).

“There is no manpower, which makes nurses to work overtime” (Interviewee n.2).

“We are understaffed, and more work needs to be done hence stress levels are high” (Interviewee n.3).

Shortage of Staff and Accommodation

Numerous witnesses claimed that while there were shortages everywhere, they were particularly acute in some specialized fields, including critical care, midwifery, aged care, and mental health. Witnesses identified the current situation as a “crisis” that is adversely affecting the standard of care given to patients and will continue to do so.

“I feel like if nurses had accommodation, it would be much easier as they wouldn’t have to travel long distances to work” (Respondent n.1).

“The government does not want to hire enough staff even though there are qualified nurses who are unemployed. Also just like any other essential service providers like police officers and soldiers as nurses need their own accommodation” (Respondent n. 2).

Other Related Challenges

Consequently, hospital environments generate a lot of stress, which not only affects health and job satisfaction of nurses, but also the welfare and health of patient [10] Working in a small space, frequently interacting with the dying and the dead, uncertainty about treatment plans, an excessive workload, and a lack of staff support are the main causes of workplace stress for nurses, which can result in physical and mental health issues [2]. Additionally, the stress of the job put in danger family life, as well as sexual and very personal lives. Respondents highlighted some of the following:

“Poor availability of medicines in referral hospitals make the public to lose trust in our services as they view as incompetent” (Respondent n.5).

“Not conducive environment, Ambient features in office environments imply that certain factors of the physical environment have

an impact, including lighting, temperature, the presence of windows, free air movement, etc, suggest that these elements of the physical environment influence employee’s attitudes, satisfaction, Performance and productivity” (Respondent n.5).

“I believe that Official are crucial to bringing on new hires and integrating them into an organization. But regrettably, training sometimes ends quickly after orientation. Healthcare is a fast-paced industry that requires continual comprehensive training programs due to the industry’s expanding demands and constantly shifting insurance criteria. (Respondent n. 6).

“Without enough equipment supply, the risk to healthcare workers around the world is real. Industry and governments must act quickly to boost supply, ease export restrictions, and put measures in place to stop speculation and hoarding” (Respondent n. 8).

Objective 2: Strategies that can be Applied to Address Challenges Faced by Nurses in the Delivery of Basic Health Care Services

The purpose of strategies was to provide opportunities that would benefit both the employees and the employers at organizations. Strategies can be developed to suit the operational requirements of the organization, as well as the workers’ requirements. The difficulties faced by nurses must be lessened. It was crucial to concentrate on several possibilities to effectively solve these issues. The respondents highlighted the following strategies:

“To ensure that nurses are not only dependent on the government, but the government should also permit them to run their own businesses.” (Respondent n. 1 & 4).

“Resources should be made available as soon as possible to avoid making a bad impression on the public,” (Respondent n. 2 & 5).

“An effective strategy for advancing nurses and a healthy work environment go hand in

hand. Both help nurses provide the best possible patient care.” (Respondent n. 3).

“It is important that nurses receive promotions on time because some have worked for a long period without receiving any promotion which demoralizes such nurse” (Respondents 4, 6, 9 & 10).

“New staff members should be hired so that work gets distributed evenly” (Respondents 8 & 9).

“Nursing and midwifery education so that nurses advanced their level of education” (Respondent n. 2).

Discussion

There is solid evidence in the literature that stress affects nurses everywhere. Apart from workplace stress nurses also suffer from stress due to work-home competing time demands and expectations from the business and the home, or interface [12] Stress happens when a situation cannot be handled effectively. Although a certain amount of stress is necessary to survive and enjoy life, persistent stress that exceeds a person’s capacity to handle it poses a major threat to the person’s bodily and psychological wellbeing [13]. Numerous studies and meta-analyses have shown a connection between occupational stress and several illnesses, including addiction, accidents, hypertension, dyslipidaemia, diabetes, major and minor depression, and other disorders [14]. Due to the nature of their work, nurses are constantly under a lot of stress. Stress in nurses can come from both the job and the family. Due to their professional empathy towards those in need of help, nurses are exposed to stress factors on a daily basis [15].

These causes included understaffed departments and overwork, poor pay, a lack of appreciation for good work, conflict with higher authority, fear of making mistakes, and a lack of job security [16].

Prior research in Tamilnadu, India also reflected similar observation.[9] Using the “Garrett ranking,” it was determined that

understaffing and overwork, low pay, a lack of recognition for good work, conflicts with higher-ups, a fear of making mistakes, and a lack of job security were the main causes of job stress among women nurses working in referral hospitals [17].

Because one of its negative effects is decreased job satisfaction, which has been demonstrated to be an indirect cause of absenteeism among nursing staff, work stress might be seen as a valuable criterion of organizational effectiveness for hospitals [18]. Among the twenty-four workplace challenges identified through an open ended- questionnaire, most of the nurses felt ‘understaffed department and overwork’, ‘poor salary’, ‘no appreciation for good work’, ‘lack of promotion’, ‘lack of accommodation’, and ‘lack of resources, as major factors for causing job related stress [19].

The field of patient care requires personnel that is highly motivated. Since nursing is one of the most important aspects of any hospital service, excessive job stress and a lack of job satisfaction combined with family stress ultimately results in subpar patient care services [20]. Every organization should measure the level of stress and analyses it to determine whether it requires action. The process is known as a “stress audit.” For improved patient satisfaction and care quality, hospital administration should address those challenges [14].

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that work stress is a problem for nurses. The enormous amount of work that nurses must complete has led some of them to say that they are unable to sleep. As a result, nurses put in a lot of time in many departments. Additionally, nurses reported feeling agitated or irritated at work; this could be a result of job stress. Occupational stress is also influenced by a lack of resources and unfavourable working conditions.

Additionally, a sizable number of nurses may experience stress and difficulty focusing on their

profession. Nurses' occupational stress is a result of workplace conditions. To deal with the occupational stress that nurses experience, it is necessary to develop techniques that are enduring. The working environment for nurses should be changed to ensure that they are that is conducive and ensures that their needs are taken care of.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all participants of this study for their great cooperation.

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