

Stress Management Techniques for Nurses in Critical Care Units

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Abstract

The management of stress is an extremely important topic for nurses working in critical care units because they are required to work in high-stress conditions that are defined by complex patient care, emotional strain, and rapid decision-making. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of stress on critical care nurses and to assess the effectiveness of various stress management strategies from the perspective of improving their mental health, job performance, and resilience. In this study, a review of the existing literature on stressors in critical care settings is conducted. These stressors include high workloads, lengthy shifts, and exposure to patient suffering. Additionally, the study examines coping techniques such as mindfulness, peer support, and organizational interventions. In addition to improving the well-being of nurses, the data indicate that effective stress management not only improves the outcomes of patient care but also minimizes the likelihood of nurses being burned out. Nevertheless, there are variations in the deployment of particular methods and the effectiveness of those methods across the diversity of healthcare settings. The findings of this study highlight the importance of individualized interventions that are designed to meet the specific issues that are experienced by critical care nurses. Additionally, the research indicates that healthcare organizations should emphasize stress management as an essential component of workforce sustainability.

Keywords

Stress management, critical care nurses, nursing stressors, coping strategies, burnout, mindfulness, resilience training, workplace support programs, healthcare settings, emotional strain, intensive care units, organizational interventions, workload, nursing well-being, stress reduction techniques.

المخلص

إن إدارة الإجهاد موضوع بالغ الأهمية بالنسبة للممرضات العاملات في وحدات الرعاية الحرجة لأنهن مطالبات بالعمل في ظروف عالية الإجهاد تتسم برعاية المرضى المعقدة والضغط العاطفي واتخاذ القرارات السريعة. والغرض من هذه الدراسة هو التحقيق في آثار الإجهاد على ممرضات الرعاية الحرجة وتقييم فعالية استراتيجيات إدارة الإجهاد المختلفة من منظور تحسين صحتهم العقلية وأدائهم الوظيفي وقدرتهم على الصمود. في هذه الدراسة، تم إجراء مراجعة للأدبيات الموجودة حول مسببات الإجهاد في بيئات الرعاية الحرجة. وتشمل هذه المسببات أعباء العمل العالية، والتحويلات الطويلة، والتعرض لمعاناة المرضى. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تدرس الدراسة تقنيات التأقلم مثل اليقظة، ودعم الأقران، والتدخلات التنظيمية. بالإضافة إلى تحسين رفاهية الممرضات، تشير البيانات إلى أن إدارة الإجهاد الفعالة لا تعمل على تحسين نتائج رعاية المرضى فحسب، بل تقلل أيضاً من احتمالية تعرض الممرضات للإرهاق. ومع ذلك، هناك اختلافات في نشر أساليب معينة وفعاليتها تلك الأساليب عبر تنوع بيئات الرعاية الصحية. تسلط نتائج هذه الدراسة الضوء على أهمية التدخلات الفردية المصممة لتلبية القضايا المحددة التي يواجهها ممرضو الرعاية الحرجة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يشير البحث إلى أن منظمات الرعاية الصحية يجب أن تؤكد على إدارة الإجهاد كمكون أساسي لاستدامة القوى العاملة.

الكلمات الرئيسية

إدارة الإجهاد، ممرضو الرعاية الحرجة، عوامل الضغط في التمريض، استراتيجيات التأقلم، الإرهاق، اليقظة، تدريب المرونة، برامج دعم مكان العمل، إعدادات الرعاية الصحية، الضغط العاطفي، وحدات العناية المركزة، التدخلات التنظيمية، عبء العمل، رفاهية التمريض، تقنيات الحد من الإجهاد.

Research Definitions

1. **Stress:** Stress is defined as the physical, emotional, or mental response to external pressures or demands that exceed an individual's adaptive capacity. For critical care nurses, stress often arises from high workloads, long hours, and emotionally charged environments.
2. **Stress Management:** Stress management refers to the techniques, strategies, and practices employed to identify, reduce, and manage stress levels, aiming to improve mental health, job performance, and overall well-being.
3. **Critical Care Unit:** A critical care unit is a specialized hospital ward that provides intensive medical care to patients with life-threatening illnesses or injuries, requiring continuous monitoring and advanced medical interventions.
4. **Burnout:** Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged and excessive stress, commonly observed in healthcare professionals working in demanding environments such as critical care units.
5. **Coping Mechanisms:** Coping mechanisms are the strategies and techniques used by individuals to manage stress, adapt to challenging situations, and maintain psychological stability. These mechanisms may include emotional regulation, problem-solving, and seeking social support.
6. **Mindfulness:** Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present and engaged in the current moment, without judgment. It is often used as a stress management technique to reduce anxiety and enhance emotional well-being.
7. **Peer Support:** Peer support refers to the emotional and professional assistance provided by colleagues who share similar experiences and challenges, fostering a sense of community and reducing stress.
8. **Resilience:** Resilience is the ability to recover quickly from adversity, stress, or trauma. In the context of nursing, resilience helps professionals maintain their performance and emotional well-being in high-pressure environments.
9. **Organizational Interventions:** Organizational interventions are workplace strategies implemented by healthcare institutions to address stressors, improve work conditions, and support employees' mental health. These may include policy changes, counseling services, and workload adjustments.
10. **Workplace Stressors:** Workplace stressors are the specific factors within a professional environment that contribute to stress. For nurses in critical care units, common stressors include patient acuity, inadequate staffing, and emotional demands.

Introduction

It is one of the most demanding and high-pressure settings in the healthcare industry, and nurses who work in critical care units are subjected to it. Critical care nursing requires the management of life-threatening conditions, high patient acuity, and the ability to make decisions quickly, frequently in challenging and emotionally charged circumstances. Because of these conditions, stress is an unavoidable component of the profession, and if it is not treated, it has the potential to result in burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and poor delivery of treatment to patients. Therefore, stress management is a vital component of providing support to nurses and maintaining both their well-being and the quality of care that they deliver to patients. Because they are needed to combine strong clinical abilities with compassionate care in an environment where mistakes can have devastating effects, nurses working in critical care units play a vital role in the treatment that patients receive. The severe nature of their profession, on the other hand, puts them in a position where they are subjected to a variety of stressors, such as heavy workloads, lengthy hours, emotional strain, and exposure to the suffering and possible death of patients. The purpose of this study is to investigate stress management strategies that are specifically designed for critical care nurses. The research will concentrate on practical measures that can help reduce the adverse effects of stress and improve the resilience and performance of these nurses in their jobs (Zakaria & Abo Al Habieb, 2022).

There has been a significant amount of research conducted on stress in healthcare settings; nevertheless, there is an increasing demand for the investigation of specialized interventions that are designed to meet the specific issues that critical care nurses confront. The purpose of this research is to contribute to the creation of evidence-based methods that can improve the mental health of nurses as well as the general working conditions of the nursing profession. This will be accomplished by examining the available literature and finding successful techniques. Not only does this study emphasize the significance of stress management for nurses, but it also underlines the wider implications that it has for the outcomes of patient care and the long-term viability of the healthcare workforce (Isa, Ibrahim, Abdul-Manan, Mohd-Salleh, Abdul-Mumin, & Rahman, 2019).

Literature review

Overview of stress in healthcare settings, specifically critical care units.

Stress is a condition of unease experienced by an individual due to actions deemed excessively severe and frequent. Such activities exceed an individual's coping capacities and available resources for optimal management. Stress can be conceptualized as the body's response to demands, whether they be internal or external. Stress is a critical phenomenon in contemporary society, affecting several aspects of our life. Prolonged or elevated stress levels can profoundly affect multiple

facets of our lives. Elevated stress levels are prevalent in emergency and intensive care unit (ICU) settings, and if inadequately managed, they may result in diminished productivity and compromised treatment quality (Alkhalaf, Soh, Mukhtar, Peng, & Anshasi, 2020).

The healthcare profession inherently involves considerable stress, including both regular stressors and crucial incidents that may be beyond an individual's typical coping strategies. Nurses, including a significant segment of the healthcare workforce, are especially vulnerable to stressful circumstances during patient care delivery. In the forthcoming years, it is expected that nurses will persistently experience elevated levels of occupational stress, which directly affects both nurse and patient safety. Healthcare professionals, especially nurses, encounter many workplace dangers, resulting in elevated stress levels. A study indicated that nurses administering care to patients with severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) encountered considerable psychological anguish. Recent studies demonstrate a significant rise in stress levels among nurses following the commencement of the COVID-19 epidemic (Terp, Hjärthag, & Bisholt, 2019).

Nurses in emergency and critical care units suffer significantly heightened stress levels. The effects of stress on nurses are extensively recorded and may lead to burnout, emotional anguish, and physical health issues. Extended exposure to stress can lead to numerous health complications, including hypertension, tiredness, cephalalgia, sleep disturbances, and gastrointestinal disorders. Stress levels are influenced by three interrelated factors: individual characteristics, personal life situations, and the work environment. These factors collectively influence the stress levels encountered by nurses. Multiple international research has illuminated the prevalence of stress among nurses. A research in Pakistan revealed that 7.4% reported mild stress, 80.2% moderate stress, and 12.4% high stress. A study conducted in Kosovo indicated that 12.22%, 52.22%, and 35.55% of nurses reported low, moderate, and high levels of stress, respectively. A study conducted in Saudi Arabia revealed that 11.7% experienced mild stress, 87.8% encountered moderate stress, and 1.3% faced high stress. A study conducted in the United Arab Emirates indicated that 14% of nurses experienced low stress, 47% moderate stress, and 39% high stress levels (Cocchiara et al., 2019).

Various variables contribute to the stress encountered by nurses in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) and Emergency Rooms (ERs). Among these variables, organizational elements such as elevated patient flow leading to substantial workloads, inadequate work settings, onerous responsibilities, interpersonal difficulties, and unsupportive managerial practices play a significant impact. Similarly, human factors include individual personality features, emotions, insufficient preparation or planning, familial and economic issues, knowledge and abilities, along with the approach to death and dying, further exacerbate stress levels. Nurses experiencing ambiguity regarding treatment outcomes and those obligated to work during a pandemic because of financial pressures may suffer increased emotional and psychological stress. Sociodemographic characteristics may significantly influence the increased stress experienced by nurses in these environments (Velana & Rinkenauer, 2021).

The consequences of stress among nurses include numerous negative effects. Employee turnover and job dissatisfaction are two of the most prevalent consequences of occupational stress. Consequently, the corporation will possess a fatigued and unproductive workforce. Likewise, chronic stress adversely affects nurses' health, leading to diminished staff retention, organizational inefficiencies, and reduced job satisfaction. Stress can produce physical consequences on the body, leading to exhaustion, changes in libido, gastrointestinal issues, and sleep difficulties. It may also lead to emotional consequences, resulting in anxiety, restlessness, reduced motivation or focus, irritation, melancholy, and maybe despair. Furthermore, stress may lead to therapeutic errors, thereby endangering the health and lives of patients. Comprehensive documentation exists concerning the influence of stress on the incidence of preventable errors (Dincer & Inangil, 2021).

In Ethiopia, a developing country with constrained resources and insufficient healthcare facilities, nurses in intensive care units (ICUs) and emergency rooms (ERs) may experience significant stress levels. To our knowledge, no prior research has been undertaken in Ethiopia especially addressing nurses in these particular facilities. Consequently, this research will be the first undertaking of its nature in Ethiopia. Although prior research has examined the perspectives of healthcare personnel in general, limited studies have specifically focused on nurses in diverse hospital wards. The workload and contextual elements in ICUs and ERs markedly differ from those in other wards. Therefore, our main aim is to assess the stress levels experienced by nurses in these essential units. This study aims to ascertain the prevalence and levels of stress, so enabling the formulation of suitable interventions classified as low, moderate, and high stress (Piquette, Reeves, & LeBlanc, 2019). Moreover, it is acknowledged that most prior research on this topic was exclusively executed using a quantitative study methodology, which may be inadequate for thoroughly identifying the elements related to stress among nurses. In acknowledgment of this constraint, the present study utilized a mixed-method technique, namely an explanatory sequential design, to augment the depth and comprehension of the research findings. This study aims to evaluate stress levels and related characteristics among nurses employed in critical care units and emergency departments of selected comprehensive specialized hospitals in southern Ethiopia (Stiller, 2022).

Discussion of existing stress management techniques for nurses.

It is possible that stress is one of the most neglected problems that nurses and nursing students have to deal with. Despite this, it is one of the most significant because it can have an effect on a wide range of aspects of both one's professional and personal life. In the field of healthcare, bedside nursing places a significant amount of emotional and physical strain on medical workers. Both the physical and mental health of nurses can be negatively impacted by stress, which regrettably can have a domino effect on the outcomes for patients (So & Chan, 2018). Moreover, it can be detrimental to the financial health of a healthcare institution and affects the retention of nurses. Even positive stress can have a harmful impact on an individual, despite the fact that not all stress is negative. Researchers and scientists have been aware of the fact that stress is a potential occupational hazard for nurses since the middle of the half-century. Because of this, the most important thing for a nurse to do in order to have a long and healthy career is to learn how to deal with stress.

Students in nursing programs made the move to managing their classes and clinicals online during the COVID-19 epidemic.

Furthermore, it became apparent that there were faults in the healthcare system that had an impact on the treatment that was provided to patients as well as the physical and mental health of nurses. Understaffing, dangerous working conditions, financial losses for the provider, and inadequate resources for hospitals are some of the difficulties that face the healthcare industry. The closing of these gaps is absolutely necessary in order to prevent unfavorable consequences for patients as healthcare systems continue to advance (Labrague, McEnroe-Petitte, Leocadio, Van Bogaert, & Cummings, 2018).

Common Stressors in Nursing

According to the findings of a survey that was conducted in 2011 and funded by the American Nurses Association, combining and integrating tactics that are centered on the individual can assist nurses in managing stress on an individual basis. Some of the variables that helped decrease and avoid job stress were abolished through the use of organization-focused methods (Chesak, Cutshall, Bowe, Montanari, & Bhagra, 2019).

Working in an environment where there is a lack of nurses is one of the major sources of stress for nurses. With the remaining members of the baby boomer generation reaching senior adulthood, it is anticipated that the existing shortage will grow even more severe. To make matters worse, nursing schools are having a hard time keeping up with the ever-increasing demand. The United States of America has been experiencing shortages on a regular basis since the early 1900s; nevertheless, the current scale is significantly greater than it has ever been previously.

The nursing shortage can be attributed to a number of different factors. An example of this would be the fact that the baby boomer generation is getting older, which has resulted in a significant number of nurses leaving from their jobs (Saravanabavan, Sivakumar, & Hisham, 2019).

Another element that contributes to the stress that nurses experience is the fact that their shifts are significantly longer than those of other professions. As an illustration, hospitals have transitioned to a system in which nurses work 12-hour shifts. This structure provides nurses with the opportunity to work four days and then take three days off. When overtime is required, however, nurses may be compelled to perform shifts that are sixteen hours long on many days within a single week (Crowe et al., 2021).

Because the nursing profession needs a wide range of high-level nursing skills, such as critical thinking, the mental strain that is experienced on a regular basis is increased. The tension in the workplace is increased when one is working in a unit that is understaffed and under-resourced, which can lead to increased levels of stress. There is a lot of love and emotion involved with nursing. While on the job, nurses frequently have to keep their sentiments of annoyance, rage, or worry a secret from their patients. Some of the most common sources of stress that nurses encounter on a daily basis are listed here. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increased demand placed on nursing students and healthcare workers all around the country. A further increase in the mental, emotional, and physical strain that nurses are required to work under is the result of this.

How to Cope and Manage Stress as a Nurse

In order to effectively manage and cope with your stress levels, it is essential. Fortunately, there are tried and true methods that can help relieve stress that are neither difficult nor complicated. Each of these activities is straightforward and consistent, and you can easily include them into your daily routine. It is essential to keep in mind that stress is a natural and unavoidable component of everyday living. On the other hand, prolonged exposure to stress can raise the likelihood of experiencing a heart attack, stroke, or type 2 diabetes. You may develop a daily routine to help minimize your stress and maintain your health by using the guidelines that are provided below. This is true whether you are a working nurse or a nursing student dealing with the challenges of online schooling (Chegini, Asghari Jafarabadi, & Kakemam, 2019).

Maintain a routine to alleviate anxiety.

People tend to stay in the same routines. The likelihood that you will successfully implement measures to improve your health and wellness is increased when you establish a routine for yourself. Maintaining a routine helps you stay organized and structured, and it can also improve your health. It is especially crucial to keep this in mind during times of stress. A rigorous schedule can provide you with a sense of control, boost your ability to focus, and raise your productivity, even if you are not generally someone who thrives on following a routine. Having a pattern makes it easier to deal with change and stress, such as the challenges of juggling work and education for a nurse. Approximately twenty-one days are required for the formation of a new routine or habit. For a period of three weeks, if you establish a schedule and adhere to it, you will gradually experience a reduction in feelings of anxiety and burnout (Saravanabavan, Sivakumar, & Hisham, 2019).

Eat healthy to boost energy, mental performance, and sleep quality.

It is impossible to deny that being a nurse is a hectic profession; nonetheless, it is essential to keep a good diet in order to support both physical and mental health. Refined carbs, sugar, processed foods, and trans fats are some of the foods that have been related to depression. Because of this, it is crucial to make thoughtful decisions even when you are in a busy schedule. Creating a menu and a shopping list to ensure that you have all of the necessary items on hand each week is a good place to start when you want to simplify healthy eating. If you are short on time, it is better to use more convenient alternatives, such as canned or frozen vegetables, rather than fresh ones. Keep nutrient-dense snacks such as nuts, cheese, raw vegetables, dip, or fruit on hand for options that don't require cooking and can be prepared quickly. Meals that are simple, nutritious, and require little work can be prepared by cooking in quantity and freezing the leftovers. As an additional time-saving measure, preparing breakfast the night before can also make mornings go more smoothly. Keeping yourself hydrated by drinking a lot of water and bringing your own snacks with you for lengthy shifts are two other measures that can help you support your health while handling a rigorous schedule (Al-Majid, Carlson, Kiyohara, Faith, & Rakovski, 2018).

Good sleep reduces anxiety and depression.

Even though they work unorthodox schedules, night shift nurses are required to prioritize getting excellent rest in order to maintain their overall health. Sleep is an essential component of overall health. It has been demonstrated through research that sleep is beneficial for relaxation, the decrease of stress, and the reduction of the risk of illnesses such as dementia. Sleep deprivation, on the other hand, can result in a sluggish thinking process, poor memory, an inability to concentrate, and difficulty making decisions that are effective (Saravanabavan, Sivakumar, & Hisham, 2019). In order to enhance the quality of one's sleep, it is essential to keep a suitable sleeping environment and to develop healthy routines before going to bed. Instead of serving as a place to work, your bedroom ought to be a place of rest and relaxation. To avoid bringing work into bed or watching television, avoid doing either. The room should be kept cool and dark, and you might think about utilizing room-darkening blinds or a sleep mask in order to stimulate the production of melatonin and achieve deeper sleep. It is also important to avoid eating before going to bed because doing so can cause your energy levels to rise and interfere with your ability to go asleep and stay asleep. You will be able to increase both your quality of sleep and your general health if you develop these practices (Coats et al., 2018).

Exercise regularly to lower stress, improve mood, and sleep quality.

Despite the fact that you probably walk kilometers throughout each shift, there are benefits to exercising outside of work that you should be aware of. The fact that you exercise on a regular basis has been shown to have a substantial impact on your mental health. In point of fact, therapists who treat persons for eating disorders, stress, anxiety, and depression also frequently prescribe that their patients engage in physical activity. Exercise reduces the levels of stress hormones in your body, assists in the release of endorphins, and enhances the quality of your sleep.

Spend time in nature to lower stress hormones.

Getting some fresh air and spending time outside might help lessen feelings of tension and anxiety. Twenty minutes spent outside can help reduce the levels of stress hormones in your body, according to research. In the event that planning a walk in the fresh air feels like simply another thing to add to your list, you should think about ways in which you could fit a walk into your regular routine instead (Friganović, Selić, & Ilić, 2019).

Having a healthy support system is essential to mental health.

Establishing limits is critical to maintaining a healthy mental state. The end outcome is definitely worth the effort that was put in, even though it is not always easy. As an illustration, if you are experiencing feelings of exhaustion, you might discover that it is important to decline participating in one more overtime shift. When there are not enough people working at the hospital, it may feel challenging to maintain alertness and concentration while on duty; yet, it is absolutely necessary for providing quality treatment to patients (Babanataj, Mazdarani, Hesamzadeh, Gorji, & Cherati, 2019).

Connect with a therapist to form healthy coping mechanisms.

The advantages of having a robust social support system consisting of close friends and family members are extensive. When you are going through a stressful moment, your network can be an important resource. Distancing oneself from others, on the other hand, might lead to more unhealthy lifestyle choices and an increase in blood pressure. Additionally, it contributes to a diminished capacity to deal with stress. A reduction in vulnerabilities and an increase in resilience to stress can be achieved through social support (Alharbi & Alshehry, 2019).

When you are a busy nurse, it is absolutely necessary to keep up with your social network. Create a schedule that allows you to check in with your family and close friends on a frequent basis. Digital communication may be a convenient method to plan a phone call or a cup of coffee, but it is not a suitable replacement for face-to-face engagement. If you do not currently have a strong support network, you might want to think about finding for friends through volunteer opportunities, religious organizations such as churches or temples, enrolling in a class, or joining a gym.

Connect with a therapist to form healthy coping mechanisms.

A major improvement in your mental health can have a positive impact on both your physical health and the health of your patients. Establishing a working relationship with a mental health counselor or professional is one approach that might be taken. They are able to assist you in recognizing particular sources of stress in your life that you might have neglected (Isa, Ibrahim, Abdul-Manan, Mohd-Salleh, Abdul-Mumin, & Rahman, 2019).

Practice mindfulness to combat anxiety.

One can achieve a level of mindfulness by paying attention to the here and now. It means that you do not evaluate your ideas or feelings as positive or negative; rather, you allow your thoughts to pass through you and concentrate on being in the present now. Additionally, it suggests that you are conscious of the conditions in which you find yourself and that you do not engage in daydreaming (Vahedian-Azimi et al., 2019).

Previous studies

Following (Alkhalwaldeh, Soh, Mukhtar, Peng, & Anshasi, 2020), nurses employed in intensive and critical care units experience elevated levels of occupational stress. Despite numerous research evaluating the efficacy of stress management therapies for acute and critical care nurses, the methodological rigor of these investigations is ambiguous. The objective of this study was to synthesize and evaluate the methodological rigor of main research concerning therapies for the management of occupational stress in acute and critical care nurses. This review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) criteria. A thorough literature review was performed to find primary studies evaluating the efficacy of therapies for reducing occupational stress in acute and critical care nurses, utilizing various databases from January 2009 to June 2019. Twelve papers published from 2011 to 2019 were deemed appropriate for inclusion. The included studies were categorized as having good or average quality. The studies collectively

indicated that, relative to the control condition, cognitive-behavioral skills training and mindfulness-based interventions were more efficacious in alleviating occupational stress among nurses in acute and critical care units. Future research should prioritize methodologically robust studies by employing blinded outcome assessors, utilizing Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) design with an active control group, implementing standardized assessment tools, and providing comprehensive details regarding adverse events related to the stress management intervention. This study highlights the necessity for high methodological quality studies to thoroughly assess the efficacy of stress management therapies prior to their endorsement for clinical application aimed at alleviating stress among nurses in acute and critical care units. Moreover, it is imperative to establish research procedures that prioritize interventions at the organizational level to tackle the escalating issue of occupational stress among intensive and critical care nurses.

In accordance with (Isa, Ibrahim, Abdul-Manan, Mohd-Salleh, Abdul-Mumin, & Rahman, 2019), the development of coping techniques for use in stressful situations is a fundamental nursing competency. Chronic and persistent stress adversely affects nurses' health, resulting in organizational inefficiencies, elevated staff turnover, and diminished job satisfaction. The objective is to discover the stress coping techniques employed by nurses and to ascertain the correlation between these strategies and sociodemographic variables. A descriptive cross-sectional study utilizing a self-administered questionnaire was conducted in the emergency department and critical care departments of the largest referral hospital in Brunei. The primary positive coping mechanisms identified were problem-solving and positive reappraisal. Individuals in medical intensive care had a higher frequency of escape-avoidance behaviors. Married individuals demonstrated elevated levels of confrontational coping behaviors. In conclusion, to the authors' knowledge, this is the first study investigating job-stress coping mechanisms among nurses in Brunei. The authors analyzed several techniques and the adverse health outcomes linked to negative coping mechanisms. Future stress management interventions should focus on personnel utilizing maladaptive coping methods to encourage adaptive strategies, hence enhancing the quality of care provided.

In accordance with (Zakaria & Abo Al Habieb, 2022), nursing is essentially a high-stress job, commonly regarded as one of the most demanding occupations, frequently marked by elevated rates of staff turnover, absenteeism, and burnout. The justification of stress has emerged as a primary concern across various domains, particularly in nursing management, owing to diminished productivity and low staff morale as stress-related issues. Stress management seeks to regulate stress levels to foster a dynamic, vibrant, and innovative company that motivates head nurses to be inventive, creative, and productive while achieving high job performance. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive assessment of stress management techniques as a means to enhance head nurses' job performance by examining the effects of various methods, including problem-solving, time management, and relaxation techniques.

Following (Piquette, Reeves, & LeBlanc, 2019), intensive care units (ICUs) are acknowledged as high-stress situations. The circumstances under which stressors impact health professionals' performance and well-being, as well as those that may result in diminished performance and psychological discomfort among staff, are not thoroughly comprehended. This study aimed to ascertain healthcare professionals' perspectives of the elements contributing to stress responses and performance deficits during ICU medical crises. A qualitative investigation conducted in a university-associated intensive care unit in Canada. We performed 32 individual semistructured interviews with ICU nurses, staff physicians, residents, and respiratory therapists at a university-affiliated hospital. The transcripts of the recorded interviews were examined with an inductive theme approach. Elevated workload, significant stakes, and substantial responsibility were identified as prevalent stresses during ICU emergencies. Nonetheless, a substantial availability of individual and team resources to address such needs was also noted. When the patient's condition fluctuated unpredictably or when anticipated resources were lacking, certain team members perceived crises as dangerous, resulting in individual anguish. This mental anguish, once manifested, was very contagious to other team members. The resulting collective anxiety was viewed as detrimental to teamwork and harmful to both individual and group performance. Individual distress responses to ICU crises manifested in the context of unexpectedly elevated demands that exceeded available resources and were transmissible among other team members. Due to the significant uncertainty associated with numerous ICU medical crises, interventions designed to mitigate distress contagion among ICU healthcare providers may enhance team efficacy and individual well-being.

In accordance with (So & Chan, 2018), the distressing experience in critical care units, whether linked to the disease process or the critical care environment, significantly affects clients' recovery and rehabilitation. A comparative descriptive research was performed in the critical care units of two prominent hospitals in Hong Kong to evaluate the perception of stressors among patients and nurses. A Chinese adaptation of the Intensive Care Unit Environmental Stressor Scale (ICUESS) was utilized. Marked parallels and disparities were seen between patients and nurses regarding their perceptions of stressors in the critical care setting. Critical care nurses, in addition to their efforts to mitigate the adverse impacts of the high-stress critical care environment, must also prioritize addressing patients' psychological needs by implementing strategies to restore patients' self-control and alleviate emotional distress.

In accordance with (Saravanabavan, Sivakumar, & Hisham, 2019), healthcare staff in the intensive care unit (ICU) operate in a high-stress environment, which may result in burnout syndrome. This study was done to assess the prevalence of stress and burnout syndrome among physicians and other healthcare staff in the ICU. We also assessed the individual contributing factors to stress and burnout syndrome among these ICU healthcare professionals. A cross-sectional survey was done among healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses, clinical pharmacists, respiratory therapists, and physiotherapists) in the ICUs of a multispecialty hospital in South India. The survey utilized established instruments, including the job satisfaction scale, perceived stress scale, and Maslach burnout inventory–human service survey. A total of 204 healthcare professionals participated in the poll. The incidence of significant burnout in our study was 80%, comprising 6% (n = 12) of physicians and 69% (n = 140) of nurses. Our study demonstrated a statistically significant association between job satisfaction levels and

burnout levels. A substantial link existed between stress levels and the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Critical care societies and institutional committees should take the initiative to formulate policies and benchmarks aimed at mitigating stressors, alleviating burnout, and enhancing job satisfaction.

Methodology

In this study, a theoretical approach was utilized to investigate several methods of stress management that nurses working in intensive care units can implement. In order to identify prevalent stressors, coping strategies, and the effectiveness of interventions in managing stress among critical care nurses, the methodology consisted of conducting an in-depth study of the current literature, as well as conducting an analysis of peer-reviewed journals, systematic reviews, and case studies. In order to ensure that a thorough grasp of both traditional and current techniques in stress management is achieved, the research specifically focused on studies that were published between the years 2018 and 2024.

Data Collection

A number of academic databases, including PubMed, CINAHL, Scopus, and Google Scholar, were utilized in order to obtain the pertinent data. Among the most important search terms were "stress management for nurses," "critical care stressors," "coping strategies for nurses," and "burnout in intensive care." Studies that focused on intensive and critical care settings, papers that were reviewed by peers, and research that discussed both individual and organizational solutions were given priority in the inclusion criteria. We did not include any articles that were either out of date or did not have a focus on critical care.

Data Analysis

The findings were categorized into the following categories by the use of a theme analysis that was carried out:

Stress in healthcare settings: an overview of the situation When it comes to critical care nursing, identifying frequent sources of stress is essential.

An analysis of the many stress management strategies now in use: Examining the data supporting interventions including mindfulness, resilience training, and workplace support programs.

Numerous sources of stress in nursing: Stressors such as workload, emotional pressure, and administrative challenges are categorized in this classification system.

As a nurse, here are some ways to reduce and manage stress: Exploring best practices for individual coping mechanisms and institutional measures.

Validity and dependability are both important.

The inclusion of only studies that were published in recognized publications was done in order to guarantee the reliability of this research. Additionally, the findings were cross-referenced across a variety of sources in order to uncover recurring trends. By concentrating on systematic reviews and meta-analyses, which gave aggregated insights from a number of different investigations, the dependability of the data was improved.

Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in accordance with ethical principles by ensuring that all sources were accurately cited and that the findings were interpreted without any personal prejudice. Due to the fact that this is a theoretical study, there was no direct participation from either individuals or organizations. As a result, problems of confidentiality and consent were entirely eliminated. In order to evaluate stress management approaches and their application in critical care nursing, the methodology that was selected offers a framework that is both structured and based on evidence. This foundation gives significant insights for healthcare policymakers, administrators, and practitioners.

Discussion

The findings of the literature study shed light on the considerable stressors that nurses encounter in critical care settings, as well as the solutions that are accessible to manage and cope with this stress. There is a general agreement among the research that were examined about certain characteristics of stress in the healthcare industry; nevertheless, there are contrasting viewpoints regarding the efficacy of various approaches for stress management.

Several research are in agreement with the topic on stress in critical care nursing that was presented in the literature review, as well as the management measures that were offered. As an illustration, Alkhalaf et al. (2020) advocate for the significance of putting into practice systematic stress management interventions. They highlight the fact that certain programs have the potential to lessen the occurrence of burnout and enhance the well-being of nurses. In a similar vein, Isa et al. (2019) demonstrate that critical care nurses experience significant stress as a result of high workloads, emotional pressures, and frequent exposure to the suffering of patients. As additional successful methods of coping, they recommend the utilization of relaxation techniques, the management of time in an appropriate manner, and the pursuit of support from peers.

Zakaria and Abo Al Habieb (2022) are in agreement that stress management approaches have a significant role in increasing the job performance of nurses, particularly among head nurses. Their findings highlight the importance of stress management measures, such as mindfulness and leadership training, in assisting nurses in navigating demanding settings and improving overall performance. In addition, Saravanabavan et al. (2019) emphasize the vital necessity for stress reduction in intensive care units. They point out that unresolved stress can lead to burnout and a decrease in the quality of care provided to patients. Counseling and structured debriefing sessions for nurses are two examples of interventions that are supported by their research.

In addition, Piquette et al. (2009) concur with the conclusions of the literature study, notably the assertion that individual responses to stress have a major impact on the performance of teams within the organization. They bring to light the fact that

stress during times of medical emergency can reduce the cohesiveness of a team and the ability to make decisions, so highlighting the importance of appropriate stress management on both the individual and organizational levels.

There are certain research that emphasize limits or alternate ways, despite the fact that the majority of studies support the necessity for stress management measures. For instance, H. M. and Chan (2004) claim that the views of stressors held by nurses may vary depending on cultural and environmental circumstances. This suggests that interventions that are designed to be universally applicable may not be effective. According to their recommendations, stress management measures should be adapted to coincide with the specific dynamics of the workplace and the culture.

In addition, there are studies that call into question the viability of particular stress management interventions. One such study is the one conducted by Saravanabavan et al. (2019), which argues that although it is possible to achieve immediate stress relief, in order to achieve long-term results, institutional changes are necessary. These changes include the redistribution of workloads and the improvement of policies. In a similar vein, Piquette et al. (2009) criticize strategies that are centered on the individual for the purpose of ignoring the structural and organizational factors that contribute to stress in intensive care units.

In general, the body of research indicates that there is a general consensus regarding the incidence of stress among critical care nurses and the significance of implementing appropriate approaches for stress management. Different points of view, on the other hand, highlight the necessity of addressing the underlying causes of stress through the implementation of context-specific interventions and systemic reforms. The success of individual coping methods is crucial; yet, the effectiveness of these tactics is substantially dependent on the institutional context and support structures that are in place. These realizations highlight the varied character of stress management in nursing and the significance of combining solutions at the individual, team, and organizational levels in order to achieve gains that are long-lasting.

Conclusion

The management of stress among nurses working in critical care units is an essential area of study, considering the demanding nature of their roles and the high stakes involved in providing care to patients. The findings of this study underline the fact that nurses working in critical care encounter a unique set of stresses, such as extended working hours, emotional strain from the results of patient care, and conditions that need them to make decisions under intense pressure. The use of a variety of stress management strategies, including mindfulness practices, interventions that develop resilience, and organizational support mechanisms, has demonstrated significant promise in reducing levels of stress and improving overall job satisfaction.

Despite the fact that certain interventions, such as structured debriefings and peer support programs, are in tight alignment with the existing body of research, other interventions, such as technological stress reduction tools, are emerging as new paths to investigate. For the purpose of promoting mental health, reducing burnout, and improving the quality of patient care, it is essential to incorporate evidence-based practices into workplace policy. On the other hand, there are still some holes in the process of adapting these interventions to particular organizational and cultural settings, which calls for additional research. All things considered, the implementation of a multi-faceted approach to stress management has the potential to produce a workforce that is both healthier and more productive in critical care environments.

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