

Assessment of Work Related Stress and Coping Strategies Among Nurses in Selected Tertiary Hospitals in Lagos State

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Abstract:

Work-related stress is the physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, needs or professional practice of the nurse. The study therefore investigated work-related stress and coping strategies among Nurses in selected Tertiary Hospitals in Lagos State. This study specifically identified the work-related stressors among nurses; examined the effect of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses; and determined coping strategies required to manage work-related stress on professional practice among nurses. A descriptive survey research design was chosen to carry out the research. The population included all professional nurses working at the two selected tertiary hospitals in Lagos State (NOHIL and FMC). Sample size of 185 nurses was selected from National Orthopaedic Hospital, Igbobi Lagos and also 132 nurses from Federal Medical Centre, Ebute-meta Lagos respectively using a convenient sampling technique. A questionnaire was designed to collect data on the factors influencing work-related stress on professional practice among nurses. Face and content validity of instruments were determined by research experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained using Cronbach alpha reliability test and reliability coefficient was calculated to be 0.727. Three research questions were answered through descriptive. The results showed that highest work-related stressor

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nurses are mostly exposed to was nature of nursing work stressor (\bar{x} = 3.22). The level of impact of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses was high representing 55.6%. The level of perceived coping strategies required to manage work-related stress on professional practice among nurses was high. It was recommended among others that hospital management should organise regular in-service training on the management of work-related stress for nurse clinicians, to continually update their knowledge and necessary coping strategies required to manage stress.

Keywords: Coping Strategies, Nurses, Work Related Stress,

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Introduction

Nursing is globally acknowledged to be a challenging and stressful profession (Adeolu, et al, 2016). It is a job that needs expenditure of energy on many levels. Physically, the vocation can be challenging with high levels of muscular-skeletal stress, leading to many aches and pains. Mentally, nurses are expected to be alert, calculating drug dosages, responding to significant questions from patients and relatives. Emotionally, the impact is felt more when they empathize and assist people, and from the stress of working in an environment where there is pain and sadness. The nurses' work environment is mostly characterized by resource constraints, inadequate staff support and organizational modification, which add to the energy utilized (Dall'Ora, et al., 2015).

Worldwide, previous studies revealed level of stress among general nurses ranged from moderate to high (Halpin, et al, 2017). Work stress has become a phenomenon that nurses/caregivers face around the world. The reasons implicated are the increasing spate of globalization, the unstable and demanding nature of healthcare provision, amongst other factors (Hanson, et al, 2017). The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (2017) defined work stress as the physical and emotional responses that arises when the obligations of the vocation do not match the abilities, resources or needs of the worker. The consequence of work pressure on nurses could be more harmful both to them and their patients if the stress impacts their compliance to professional practice and safety. This is particularly due to several reasons which include the nature of the profession dealing with human lives.

In Nigeria, most health care providers especially at the secondary and primary levels of care have been exposed to harsh and unconducive condition which leads to increase work-related stress among health care workers. The nurse-patients ratio per shift in Nigeria is 1:13 compared to 1:4 recommended by World Health Organization and Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria respectively. This ratio contributed to stress nurse's encounter and the decline in the quality and efficiency of professional practice among nurses. Nursing staff are exceptionally stressed by both qualitative and quantitative job overload, including shift work, physically demanding postural change, bathing assistance, lack of supervisor and co-worker support, and long working hours among others. These have been a strong contributory factor to accidents or near misses in the healthcare settings which affects service delivery. Stress in the workplace is linked with a number of health problems in employees. Work-related stress has been connected with increased occupational accidents, low job satisfaction, reduced productivity (Loo, et al, 2015). It is often believed that whenever hospital worker is stressed up, there is bound to be mismanagement of equipment which may lead to its damage, injury, or accident to the staff or patient.

A research in Nigeria revealed Nigerian nurses experience significantly higher stress levels than the global norms commonly reported in the literature (Ogundipe, et al., 2015). Another study by Nwozichi and Ojewole (2015) added that stress levels were more in densely populated areas where workload alone accounted for about two-third of work stress. Although, stress levels among nurses is also dependent on department and specialty (Naholi, et al, 2015), individuals in general are exposed to several forms of stress aside from their work environment like death of loved ones, financial burdens, relationship problems, and



challenges that bring tension from their home lives (Akangbe & Tetteh, 2015). These other sources of stress in addition to work stress increase their stress level and impacts negatively on their performance at work (Adeolu et al., 2016).

In the absence of intervention, work stress could negatively impact nurses' compliance to professional practices (quality healthcare delivery practices, safety precaution, and infection control). Moreover, poor professional practices could cause serious threat to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal of achieving health for all by 2030. Thus, in view of these problems, the study investigated work-related stress and coping strategies among Nurses in selected Tertiary Hospitals in Lagos State. This study specifically:

1. identified the work-related stressors among nurses;
2. examined the effect of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses; and
3. determined coping strategies required to manage work-related stress on professional practice among nurses.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for this study:

1. What are the work-related stressors among nurses?
2. What are the effects of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses?
3. What are the perceived coping strategies required to manage work-related stress on professional practice among nurses?

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted to examine how work-related stress affects professional practice among nurses in selected tertiary institutions in Lagos State. This study was carried out in two teaching hospitals in Lagos State which include National Orthopaedic Hospital, Igbobi (NOHIL) and Federal Medical Centre, Ebute-meta Lagos (FMC). The study population included all professional nurses working at selected tertiary hospitals in Lagos State irrespective of rank, gender, specialization and years of service. There were 360 and 200 nurses in NOHIL and FMC respectively. The sample size selected was 349 nurses while a convenient sampling technique was used because of the bi-duty shift being practiced in the nursing services in those hospitals. However, data collection was spread across the two shifts of nursing duty to accommodate all nurses that were on duty during the study period.

Data were collected using a set of structured questionnaires designed to measure the study constructs. The instrument for data collection was a self-developed structured questionnaire based on the study objectives. The questionnaire items were divided into three sections namely sections A, B and C. The questionnaire was validated using face and content validity. The reliability estimate was obtained by using Cronbach alpha reliability test to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability index of 0.727 was obtained to ensure internal consistency of the instrument. Data were analysed using SPSS version 22 after the exhaustive verification for reliability, tallying, sorting, and coding. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and percentage distributions in tables and charts were used for answering the research questions.



Results**Research Question 1:** What are the work-related stressors among nurses?**Table 1: Work-related stressors among nurses during professional practice**

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	Remark
	NATURE OF NURSING		
1.	Shift work	2.69	High
2.	Caring for dead and dying	2.97	High
3.	Difficult patients and relatives	2.80	High
4.	Monotonous and repetitive work	2.81	High
5.	Working under time pressure	2.90	High
6.	Heavy workload	2.52	High
	Average Mean	2.78	
	WORK ENVIRONMENT ISSUES		
7	Poor lighting at work	1.74	Low
8.	Poor ventilation at work	1.69	Low
9.	Insufficient resources to work	1.94	Low
10.	Unhygienic and unsafe environment	1.87	Low
11.	Noisy work environment	1.86	Low
	Average Mean	1.82	
	RELATIONSHIP ISSUES		
12.	Lack of support from superior	2.88	High
13.	Lack of support from colleagues	2.82	High
14.	Unwillingness of superior to listen to problems	2.11	Moderate
15	Lack of appreciation for work done	2.04	Moderate
	Average Mean	2.46	
	ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES		
16	Limited in service educational opportunities	1.81	Low
17	Rigid rules and regulation	2.84	High
18.	Nursing shortage	2.61	High
19.	Poor communication network	1.80	Low
20	Lack of involvement in change management	2.15	Low
	Average Mean	2.24	
	ROLE ISSUES		
21	Conflicting roles with other professionals	1.83	Low
22	Unclear responsibilities	1.55	Low
23	Unclear expectations	1.56	Low
24	Other professionals taking decision concerning your work	1.54	Low
25	Harassment at work	2.57	High
26	Lack of control over your work	1.63	Low
	Average Mean	1.78	



Table 1 described work-related stressors nurses are mostly exposed to during professional practice. The mean cut-off mark of 2.00 was derived by finding the average of the scoring system. Mean score of items greater than mean cut-off of 2.00 were accepted while those less than 2.00 were rejected. The respondents indicated that the average mean mark of nature of nursing work stressor (2.78), work environment issues (1.82), relationship issues (2.46), organizational issues (2.24), and role issues (1.78). Figure i further revealed the common work-related stressors nurses are mostly exposed to during professional practice.

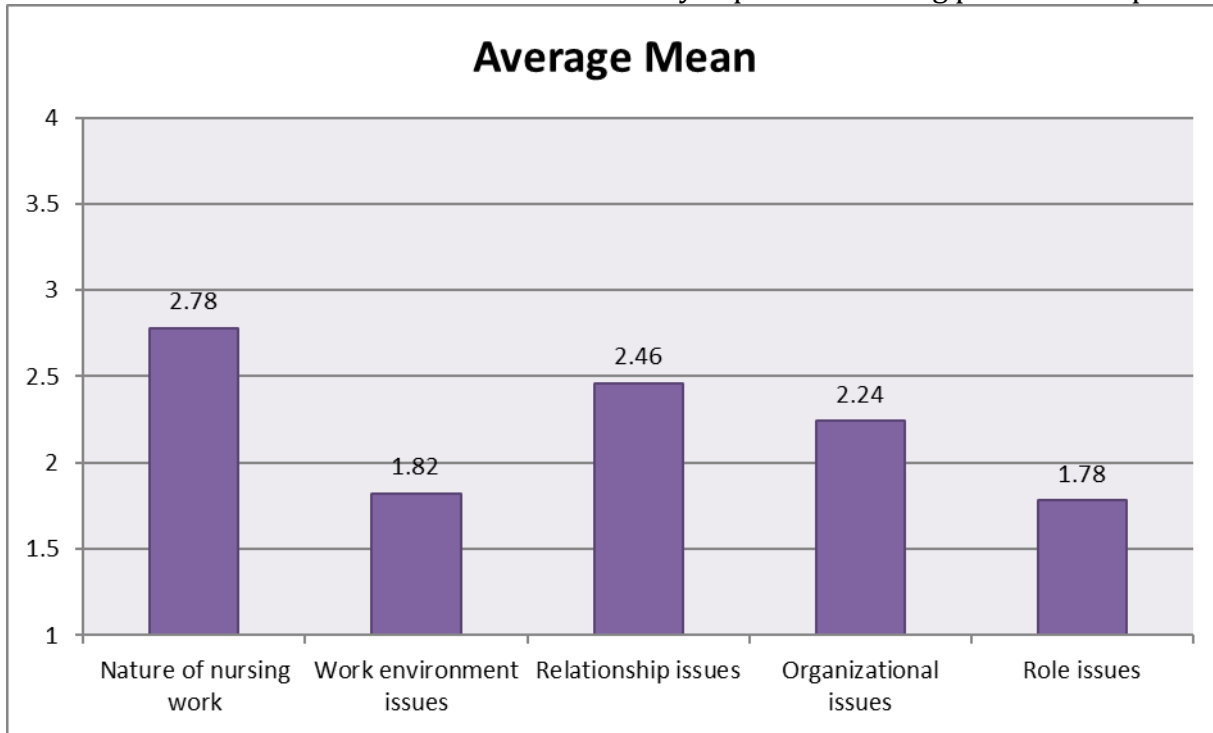


Figure i

Bar chart showing the common work-related stressors nurses are mostly exposed to during professional practice

Research Question 2: What are the effects of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses?

Table 2: Effects of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	Remark
1.	Cardiovascular problems	3.47	High
2.	Metabolic disorders	3.59	High
3.	Gastrointestinal problems	3.20	High
4.	Increased arousal	3.42	High
5.	Feelings of uneasiness	3.46	High
6.	Emotional exhaustion	3.38	High
7.	Depression	3.40	High
8.	Fatigue	3.09	High
9.	Burnout	3.14	High
10.	Medical Errors or Mistakes	2.97	Moderate



11.	Accidents	3.20	High
12.	Substance Abuse	3.45	High
13.	Anxiety	3.38	High
14.	Absenteeism	3.30	High
15.	Low staff turnover	1.79	Low
16.	Decrease in the quality of patient care	3.28	High
17.	Low level of job satisfaction	3.45	High
18.	Sleepiness	3.22	High
	Average Mean	3.23	

Mean Cut-off: 2.50

Table 3: Level of effect of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses

Level of effect of work-related stress	Frequency	Percentage
Low (1-6)	12	3.8
Moderate (7-12)	103	32.5
High (13-18)	202	63.7
Total	317	100

In table 3, respondent mean scores on effects of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses were used. Mean score and percentages were used to illustrate the responses to items (1-18) in section C of the Questionnaire. To determine the level of effect of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses (low, moderate and high), a score of 1-18 items was used. The low level of effect of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses was determined by a score of 1-6 items. The moderate level of effects of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses was determined by a score of 7-12 items while the high level of effect of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses was determined by a score of 13-18 items. The level of effect of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses was presented in table 3. The study revealed that the level of effect of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses is high.

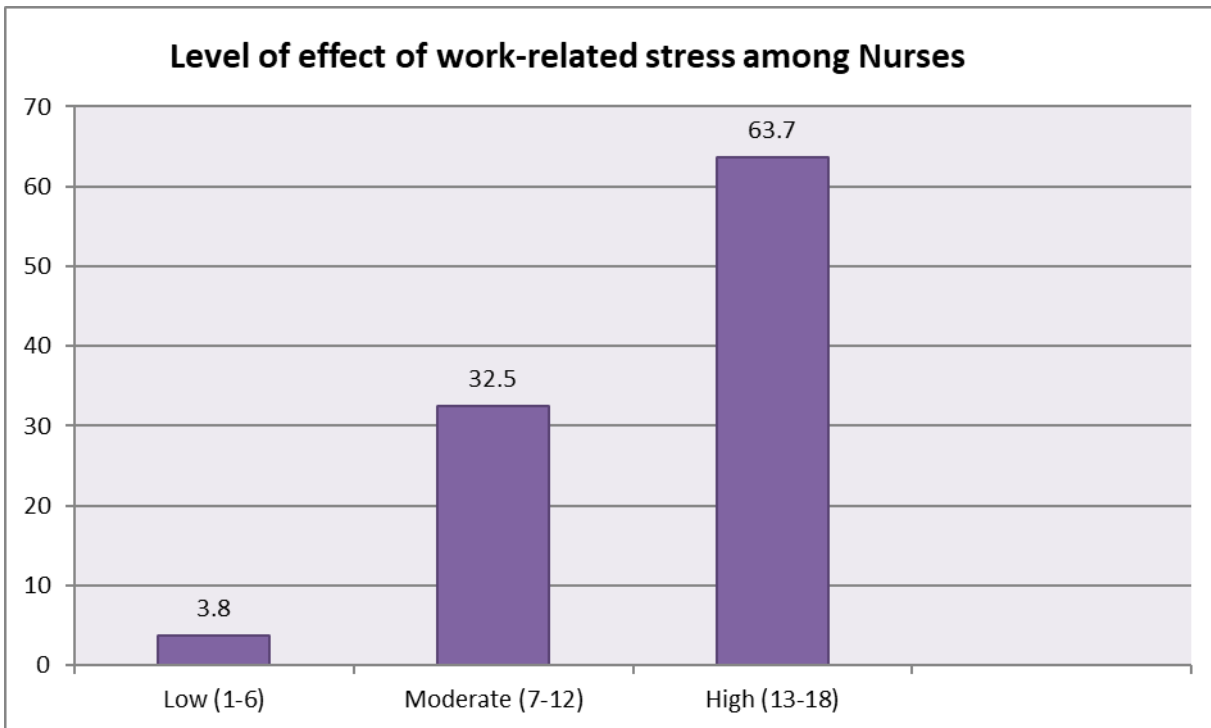


Figure ii: Bar chart showing the effects of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses

Research Question 3: What are the perceived coping strategies required to manage work-related stress on professional practice among nurses?

Table 4: Mean Scores of coping strategies required to manage work-related stress

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	Remark
1.	Employment of more nursing staff	1.92	Agreed
2.	Optimal and regular sleeping pattern should be encouraged	1.95	Agreed
3.	Provision of adequate equipment to support professional nurses	1.89	Agreed
4.	Adequate remuneration for professional nurses	1.82	Agreed
5.	Management should provide proper intervention on staff welfare	1.92	Agreed
6.	Involvement of professional nurses in activities to reduce mental or emotional strain	1.81	Agreed
7.	Good dietary habits should be encouraged among professional nurses	1.87	Agreed
8.	There should be a conceptual training on the effects of work-related stress for professional nurses	1.80	Agreed
9.	There should be adequate awareness to help sensitize professional nurses on occupational stress management	1.89	Agreed
10.	There should be adequate health education to further improve quality of health	1.92	Agreed
11.	Social support from different sources should be encouraged	1.80	Agreed
	Average Mean	1.87	

Mean Cut-off: 1.00

Using the criterion mean score of 1.00 as cut-off to determine the affirmative of each items in table 4, all the 11 items were accepted because their mean marks were greater than 1.00. No item was rejected. This implies that the level of perceived coping strategies required to manage work-related stress on professional practice among nurses was high.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that the work-related stressors nurses are mostly exposed to during professional practice is the nature of nursing profession which include: shift work, caring for dead and dying, difficult patients and relatives, monotonous and repetitive work, rigid rules and regulation and heavy workload. This finding is in consonance with the finding of Halpin, et al (2017) who concluded that the majority of nurses agreed that the common factors associated with stress are long hours, excessive workload, dealing with death and dying, interpersonal conflicts with other staff, patient expectations and threat of malpractice litigation. Also, Labrague, et al (2016) concluded that the major sources of work stress are lack of social support (65%), no time for leisure (60%), overwork (51.3%). Folkard (2016) also found that working rotating shifts, particularly night shift, can affect individuals as well as their families health-related outcomes and overall subjective well-being.

The study revealed that the level of effect of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses was high. This finding is related to the submission of Lemaire and Wallace (2016) revealed that out of the 30,000 nurses surveyed, 38.7% reported "moderate" stress, and 8.7% reported "tremendous" stress. The researchers ranked stress as their highest health impediment, followed with sleep issues, depression, and anxiety. Additionally, 84% of the nurses felt overwhelmed, and 28% reported depression severe enough to limit their ability to function. Also, Labrague, et al (2016) found that stressors can lead to negative health outcome like physical and mental health issues, burnout syndrome, high turnover, job strain and poor practices that abhor professionalism, if there are no stabilizing factors.

It was further revealed that the level of perceived coping strategies required to manage work-related stress on professional practice among nurses was high. In support of this finding, Naholi, et al (2015) concluded that ethnic, cultural and socio-economic characteristics have a role to play in the coping behaviour expressed by an individual. Also, Hanson, et al (2017) highlighted that the following coping strategies adopted by healthcare workers will deal with work stress: sleep/rest, relaxation, acceptance, inspiration from religious belief and humour.

Conclusion

It was concluded that the level of work-related stressor nurses are mostly exposed to during professional practice in selected hospitals in Lagos State was moderate while level of effect of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses was high. It was also concluded that the nature of nursing work stressors were the work-related stressor nurses are mostly exposed to in selected tertiary hospitals closely followed by relationship issues and organizational issues, while work environment issues was the least barrier affecting nursing process utilization. Also, it was concluded that level of effect of work-related stress on professional practice among nurses in selected hospitals in Lagos State was high. Moreover, the level of perceived coping strategies required to manage work-related stress on professional practice among nurses was high.



Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that

1. The Hospital management should organise regular in-service training on the management of work-related stress for nurse clinicians, to continually update their knowledge and necessary coping strategies required to manage stress.
2. Nursing administration should put measures in place to ensure that the nurses identify and understand the primary source and cause of stress.
3. The management should ensure that workloads are in line with workers capabilities and resources.
4. The hospital management should ensure compulsory time off and breaks to mitigate the effects of stress.

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