

LITERATURE REVIEW : MENTAL HEALTH IN NURSING

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Abstract:

Mental health is a very important aspect of nursing. Several studies have reported how nurses in different areas of the field are affected mentally. This literature review explores which areas of nursing have the highest rates of certain mental health issues. Some mental health issues addressed in this review include depression, work burnout, anxiety, and happiness. Data from previous research articles is used within this review to expand upon information about how nurses are affected mentally by their profession.

Keywords: mental health, positive factors, negative factors, nursing, depression, social determinants, emotional vulnerability, cognitive flexibility

Introduction:

Good mental health is a component of life that is vital to thriving. Mental health is important for everyone, but especially for nurses. This is because nurses are taking care of people and are supposed to be there for patients when they are at some of their lowest points in their lives. Wu et al. (2023) discussed the effects of mental health in nursing and claimed, "Poor mental health may adversely affect an individual's professional performance and can lead to serious safety incidents" (p. 1). This shows that if a nurse's mental health is not up to par, they are more likely to make mistakes that can lead to poor patient outcomes.

It is important that nurses are in a good state of mind, especially when patient's lives are on the line.

Depression in ICU Nurses

One mental health component that is prevalent in nurses is depression. This could be for a variety of different reasons such as patient deaths, and which area of nursing you work in. For example, the ICU is where the most critical patients are and likely where nurses see the most deaths. According to research by Huang et al. (2022), nurses in the ICU have more stress daily due to high acuity patients, which makes them more vulnerable for developing depression. In this study conducted by Huang et al. (2022), 7,196 ICU nurses from 11 different countries were surveyed in cross-sectional studies. It was found that the prevalence of depression, or symptoms of depression was 24.99 percent. These results show that according to this study, about 1 in 4 nurses who work in the ICU suffer from depression or have symptoms of depression. According to the article, "Findings of this review indicate that regular screening for depressive symptoms might be helpful" (Huang et al., 2022, p.1). It is very important that screening for depression is done in all nurses but especially in ICU nurses. This could help ICU nurses get the help that they need and prevent them from suffering mentally everyday

Mental Health and Burnout in Psychiatric Nurses

Occupational burnout has been a topic of heavy discussion in the field of nursing. Due to the extremely arduous working conditions, not to mention the emotional strain on all of the staff, burnout has become very common. One of the most emotionally strenuous nursing specialties is psychiatric nursing, attributable to the type of patients they care for. An article by Łopatkiewicz et al. (2023), studied 327 nurses working in psychiatric hospitals from six different European countries. This study utilized two different measuring tools: the first

was the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-HSS) which was used to determine occupational burnout, and the second was the General Health Questionnaire -28 (GHQ-28) which measured the nurse's mental health symptoms. Their research discovered that the nurses in Germany had an increased rate of burnout in comparison to the other countries. This was due to the increased average societal age and the amount of work shortages in that country. This information shows that a large determinant of workplace burnout is related to staffing shortages. The country with the highest rate of mental health symptoms was Hungary and the Czech Republic. The social determinants that are thought to lead to this are decreased salary and the standard of living in those countries. This study exhibits that the type of burnout nurses experience whether that be occupational or mental, is linked to the social and economic environment. This will help future employers prevent burnout through different support systems that could include better staff organization or pay differentials.

Emotional Vulnerability and Anxiety in Nurses

One component of mental health that makes a large impact on nurses is anxiety. Anxiety can and does lead to an increase in emotional vulnerability. Due to the work that nurses do and the environments that they work within that has only gotten more complex since covid happened including continued exposure to death and the trauma of the job nurses face an increase in compassion fatigue and anxiety. According to research by Arimon-Pages (2022) of a total of 1302 nurses that were interviewed, 18.6% presented with a low compassion satisfaction, 19.7% reported high burnout, 7.2% had anxiety, and 36.4% had high secondary traumatic stress. The nurses that participated in the study were identified to have compassion satisfaction but not great enough to combat and prevent anxiety and compassion fatigue. These working conditions on the units along with the above variables presented a high correlation to the nurses desire

to leave not just their job but the bedside altogether.

Happiness in Nursing

On the other hand, there are a lot of nurses who are very happy and love their jobs. A study by Polat et al. (2022) on cognitive flexibility related to happiness in nurses explored factors that may affect nurses' happiness, like day-night shift vs other types of shifts and what kind of setting they work in. This study's results showed that "Nurses in inpatient clinics, operation-rooms, and intensive care units had significantly lower cognitive flexibility...and happiness scores than nurses working in other units," (Polat, et al., 2022). It also showed that "participants who worked day-night shifts (mostly night) had significantly higher cognitive flexibility...and happiness scores," (Polat, et al., 2022).

So, while there are a lot of struggles in nursing regarding mental health, there are also a lot of people whose mental health is thriving with their jobs. Polat, et al. (2022) found that nurses who worked in inpatient clinics or intensive care units may have struggled with their mental health, but nurses who worked in units such as a med-surg unit or a mother-baby unit tended to be happier with their jobs. Nursing is different for every individual; it is important for nurses to find a place in nursing that will promote their mental health, and that will look different for each nurse. ■

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