

ABSTRACT

Introduction and background

Stress is the harmful physical and emotional response caused by an imbalance between the perceived demands and the perceived resources and abilities of individuals to cope up with those demands. Nursing is generally perceived as a demanding and highly stressful occupation.

National Hospital in Sri Lanka (NHSL) is the largest government hospital in Sri Lanka, functions as a tertiary care referral center. Nursing officers working in the in-ward setting have to take care of a diverse group of patients who are referred from all parts of the country as well as direct admissions to the hospital. Therefore, it is useful to study a group of nursing officers in the ward setting of the NHSL who are exposed to multiple factors related to work stress.

Objectives

To determine the level of work-related stress and associated factors among ward nursing officers in the National Hospital of Sri Lanka.

Methodology

This study was carried out as an institutional-based descriptive cross-sectional study over a three month period.

Three hundred and sixty-one nursing officers' working in in-ward settings at National Hospital Sri Lanka were included through two-stage stratification with the simple random sampling method.

A self-administered questionnaire was used to obtain demographic and work-related data. Nursing Stress Score was used as a tool to assess work-related stress. Univariate analysis performed to detect an association between selected factors and work-related stress and $p < 0.05$ was considered as statistical significant level. Frequency tables, mean and median values were used to describe the variables, while associations between key variables were tested by the Mann-Whitney U Test due to non-normal distribution of stress score.

Results

The response rate was 84.5%. The majority of the nursing officers were females (98.1%) with the age group of 25 years to 35 years. Marital status showed that 43% were either unmarried, divorced widowed or separated. The majority (55%) were getting a salary of between Rs.60, 000 to Rs.75, 000. Out of the population, around 59% have no children. The majority (83%) were not having detectable chronic illnesses.

More than 90 % (N=330) of the nursing officers had more than 3 years, work experience in the government sector. The majority (82.3%) were doing more than 6-night shifts per month. 98% were doing more than 31 shifts per month. Out of the population, 79% were doing more than five times double shifts per month in a row.

Considering the subscales of the NSS, a subscale of death and dying had the highest stress score which a mean of 2.2 (SD=0.42) and a median 2.1 (IQR=1.8-2.6). Total NSS had a mean of 53.6(SD=8.8) and the following a median of 55(IQR=47-61).

The highest stress score was reported in two wards which the General Medical ward (mean=59, SD=6.8, median=61, IQR=57-63) and Accident Service (mean=59, SD=3.6, median=61, IQR=57-63). Work-related stress was positively and

significantly associated with not having children ($p < 0.05$), increased number of night shifts per month ($p < 0.001$), increase total shifts per month ($p < 0.001$), increased number of double shifts in a row per month ($p < 0.001$), unable for adjustment to the shift work ($p < 0.05$), inadequacy of the nursing and minor staff ($p < 0.001$), and inadequacy of salary payment ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusions and recommendations

The results of the study indicate that nurses undergo considerable stress. Therefore, it's recommended that supporting mechanisms for reducing the stress of nursing offices be formulated by policymakers and implemented by hospital authorities.

Keywords: *Work-related stress, inward nursing officers, National Hospital Sri Lanka,*