


Impact of Stress, Burnout on Interpersonal Conflicts: Study of Nursing Professionals

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to understand the relationship between stress, burnout, and interpersonal conflicts among hospital nurses in Karnataka, India. The authors propose, in an Affective Events Theory (AET) perspective, that high stress and burnout are antecedents of interpersonal conflicts. A quantitative research method was used, and 636 nurses participated in responding to the stress, burnout, and interpersonal conflict questionnaire. Factorial and regression analyses were used to analyze data, which indicated a significant positive association among stress, burnout, and interpersonal conflict. The investigation suggests stress and burnout are powerful predictors of interpersonal conflict. To prevent the impact of stress and burnout on nursing staff, as well as to ensure a healthy work environment, the study highlights the need for effective interventions, including stress management strategies and policy changes.

KEYWORDS

Stress, Interpersonal Conflict, Burnout, Nurses

INTRODUCTION

Nursing is one of the most important and noble professions in the world, known for delivering high-quality patient care and working for human wellbeing (Chongloi et al., 2024; Vandali, 2017). This profession is associated with high levels of stress, burnout, interpersonal conflict, and various other issues. They are greatly in need of working towards these challenges to provide better healthcare

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for society; hence, it is critical to understand the need for better techniques in handling nurse stress, burnout, and interpersonal conflict.

Stress

Stress is experienced by nurses due to duty shifts, workload, patient situations, and other challenges (Vallone & Zurlo, 2024). They also face the risks of getting contagious diseases while handling patients (Chen et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022). Due to the lack of time and intense workload, nurses also develop unhealthy eating habits and lack physical exercise; this contributes to an increase in stress levels (Faghri & Mignano, 2013; Goudarzian et al., 2024). Prolonged exposure to these stress factors can lead to mental concerns and related forms of depression (Huang et al., 2024) along with other physical health issues like diabetes and heart disease, which can result in lower quality of life (Ganesh et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2017). High levels of stress can also lead to reduced job satisfaction (Buivydiene et al., 2025; Randall & Bodenmann, 2017). Identifying and accepting the warning signs of stress is very significant for developing strategies to handle them.

Burnout

The dimensions of burnout include depersonalization, low personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion (Abrahamson et al., 2009). In nursing, the emotional exhaustion dimension is more significant due to the high level of job demands and the sudden assignments of healthcare systems (Demerouti, 2024; Friganović et al., 2019). Burnout factors in nurses also include lower income levels and less or no organizational support (Abdulmohdi, 2024; Prasad, 2016). Burnout syndromes can increase cortisol levels or can lead to cortisol suppression in an individual (Privitera et al., 2015; Pruessner et al., 1999). Addressing burnout requires modifying risk factors and promoting protective factors, such as social support and resilience (Ungur et al., 2024). Preventive strategies and organizational initiatives, particularly in demanding job roles, are also needed (Di Giuseppe et al., 2021). Applicable stress management interventions, counselling sessions, and appropriate work goals can reduce the occurrence of nurses' burnout (Chesak et al., 2019; Danauskė et al., 2023).

Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict arises between individuals due to various reasons like communication concerns, unclear job clarity, and other reasons. They affect job satisfaction and team unity, leading to lower performance at work. Although technology has advanced and various modes of communication are in use, interpersonal conflicts are still being experienced by individuals at work (Aydogdu & Disbudak, 2025). Prevailing tensions in teams and role unclarity also contribute to interpersonal conflicts with healthcare employees (Kim et al., 2019; Kundi & Badar, 2021). Research indicates a strong negative correlation between interpersonal conflicts and job satisfaction levels among nurses, underscoring the adverse effects of such conflicts (Schieman & Reid, 2008). Figure 1 shows the relationship between stress, burnout, and interpersonal conflict.

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