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Determinants of workplace stress in affecting stress of conscience among nurses working in acute settings

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Background: Workload stress has a great impact on workforce, which suggests that intensity and frequency of stress contributes to the cumulative effects of workplace stressors. Nurses in acute healthcare systems are predisposed to work-related stress based on moral factors. Stress results when nurses are exposed to ambiguous moral situations, they experience distress when they face a situation with contradictory demands or are hindered to take actions that they experience as ethically demanding. Nurses who have high moral sensitivity will experience ethical demands that may give them a bad conscience when they do not act in accordance with these demands. Such experiences have been described as stress of conscience because they give rise to a troubled conscience.

Purpose: To assess the level of *stress of conscience* of nurses in acute settings, identify situations that result in high levels of moral distress, explore implications of moral distress, and evaluate associations among moral distress and the characteristics of nurses.

Method: A correlational, cross-sectional design was used in this study to examine the predictive relationship between levels of stress of conscience and workplace stressors among nurses working in acute hospitals.

Results: Data were analyzed from 199 nurses licensed. Correlations among the variables demonstrated a moderate positive and significant relationship among Workplace stress factors and stress of conscience intensity ($r = 0.46$, $p< .01$), however, a lower significant relation was between Workplace stress variables and Stress of Conscience frequency ($r = 0.19$, $P < 0.1$). Regression analysis resulted in a model that explained approximately 53% of the total variation in Stress of Conscience intensity (R= 0.53, Adjusted R2= 0.24, $P< 0.01$).

Conclusion: Workplace stress was perceived as a constraint in the workplace environment, prohibiting nurses from acting in what they believed was the ethically correct manner, impacting their actions in relation to patient care, and provoking emotions associated with Stress of Conscience. Furthermore, there is a need for support from the managers and a supportive organization for reducing nurses' work-related stress, which in turn can create a positive caring climate where the nurses are able to provide high quality care.

Biography:

Muder Alkrisat is an Associate Professor of Chamberlain College of Nursing. He completed his doctoral degree in Nursing from Azusa Pacific University. His focus are work place conditions and patient safety, he completed his dissertation on impact of workplace stress in acute settings. He received his Bachelor of Science in nursing and Master in nursing from Jordan University. In 2000, he received two years of training with Natal University in South Africa with research proposals on the "Role of the Facilitator in Case Based and Experiential Learning". In 2012 he also received extensive training Quality Matter. In 2014-2016 he received extensive training in competency based training to participate actively in curriculum development for BSN-MSN.

His extensive clinical experience spans multiple health care settings, including acute care facilities, specialty and long term facilities, and community-based clinics. He has held a variety of practice and leadership roles in these settings and has been actively involved in local and regional health initiatives. His extensive background in quality, Risk management compliance and regulatory arena helped him to serve for many years as corporate director for Clinical processes (quality, Infection control, Education and Risk Management). He is certified in Six Sigma Black Belt and lean thinking (CSSBB), Certified Performance Improvement Advisor (PIA), Certified Specialist in Healthcare Accreditation (CSHA) and Certified Healthcare Specialist Accreditation (HACP).

Dr. Alkrisat is a Subject Matter Expert in the MSN and teaches health policy, healthcare economics and healthcare policy and leadership courses in the MSN program. His current research and policy interests include examining the relationships between structures, processes, and outcomes of acute settings, with an emphasis on work place conditions and parent-provider interaction and patient safety, andthe impact of legislative and regulatory change on the delivery of health services.

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