



## ***Research Proposal***

### **Impact on Nurse Mental Health Amongst Stressors of Global Pandemic**

Kathrina Vakili, Adriana Nurrachmayani, Mayra Flores  
Graduate Students at California State University, East Bay

#### **Abstract**

*With the COVID-19 global pandemic, many are deceased, many are sick, and many recovering in hospitals worldwide. There are high physical and mental demands for nurses to be present and able to provide care for the sick and the unable, but such demands come with repercussions. While nurses are consistently caring for patients, are we properly taking care of our nurses in return? The motivation of this study is to further investigate the source of truth for the problem of nurse burnout and the impact it has on their outlook on job satisfaction.*

Key words: Job Satisfaction, Nurses, Stress, Mental Health, Healthcare Administration.

#### **Introduction**

Nurse burnout is not a new phenomenon; multiple studies have shown that the issue has existed long before a global pandemic. The purpose of this research proposal is to better understand and build the connection between many existing pieces of literature on nurse burnout. Our research proposal will focus on studying the answer to the following question: what factors influence nurse burnout, and how much of an impact it has on job satisfaction? The problem of nurse burnout is intricate. Patient care is a strenuous, thankless job. If burnout is not properly addressed and reviewed, job satisfaction among nurses will be low. Albeit intricate and complicated, the topic of nurse burnout must not be ignored.

Our research proposal hopes to bridge the connection between existing studies for nurse burnout and the many possible causes. Hopefully determining the correct actions hospitals and healthcare establishments must take in order to improve workplace satisfaction and increase employee retention and commitment. Organizations that properly address and actively prevent

nurse burnout will have employees with higher job satisfaction, which will lead to better organizational commitment and a lower turnover rate.

## **Literature Review**

In order to further investigate the causative factors of nurse burnout and the impact it has on job satisfaction, our group focused on several publications using CSUEB Library Database and Google Scholar. We evaluated a wide variety of existing literature. Our review consists of: publications that seek to identify factors that cause nurse burnout, existing national guidelines for addressing nurse burnout, and different methods of research esteemed scholars have completed to determine the quantitative and qualitative depth of the impact of nurse burnout. Our hope is to be thorough and decisive in our commitment to this research proposal.

### **Nurses' Burnout and Its Associated Factors**

Our first chosen article takes the issue of nurse burnout and decides to use a scientific approach to further understand the factors that play into people experiencing burnout. A total of 214 nurses were selected for this particular study. The goal of the researchers was to identify factors that made an impact on nurse burnout and observe what (if any) impact was made on the quality of their work. The survey in this study consisted of a series of questions about: service quality, burnout, workload, work-life balance, and social support questions (Agustina & Tahil, 2022). The goal was not only to attain valuable insight into what causes nurse burnout but also into the demographic of their subjects to see if there is any correlation in the data.. Having a wide variety of subjects provides valuable insight since the research is given data from multiple perspectives.

The results of the study showed that the most impactful factors are workload, work-family conflict, and job control. The more negative the experience in one of these categories, the higher the chance nurses experience burnout. This is valuable information, providing insight into what factors have a greater influence on nurse morale at any given job site. This article effectively demonstrated what a majority of nurses identify as sources for their burnout in the work environment, and though it may not impact the quality of their work, it does impact their job satisfaction.

### **Internationally Trained Nurses and Host Nurses' Perceptions**

The next article focused on the rising issue of nurse shortages throughout many different countries. To combat the rising demand for nurses, many internationally trained nurses have been hired and brought onto teams for aid. This research group in Germany decided to investigate job satisfaction among the internationally trained nurses who have traveled for work and the nurses who live/work in their country of origin. This article uses qualitative data research to identify nurses' perceptions of safety culture, work-life balance, burnout, and job demands (Roth et al., 2021).

Data was collected using anonymous based questionnaires containing standardized questions, which were put into three sections. Upon seeing the results of the questionnaires, the researchers noticed that many nurses had migrated to Germany for better work-life balance and

better working conditions. The results encourage more integration to help nurses feel supported in the workforce and increase staff satisfaction. The article shows us that if nurses constantly feel inadequate in the work environment, they will leave the organization they are currently working in. This article also provides data that is distinct from others mentioned so far, as it acknowledges that nurses look for better job opportunities and focuses on what drives this behavior. "For effective recruitment and retention, it is important to identify why nurses migrate and if their expectations are met to ensure their successful integration and promote a satisfying work climate for the entire nursing team" (Roth et al., 2021, p.12).

### **Nurses' Perception of Stress and Its Influencing Factors**

Following those articles, our team investigated what perceptions nurses have on work-related stressors. Nurses' perception of occupational stress and its influencing factors: A qualitative study conducted in Kashan, Iran, studied the nurses at Kashan University of Medical Sciences Hospital. Data were collected through deep individual interviews with 19 nurses working in hospitals affiliated with Kashan University of Medical Sciences. This method involves certain fundamental steps such as unitizing, sampling and reduction, inference, and data interpretation, as well as reaching a conclusion. "Three categories emerged including nurses' perception of the job stress, "professional interest," and "prioritizing career over family life," (Adib-Hajbaghery et al, 2012). Participants in the survey characterized professional stress as a situation where a nurse is under pressure. Continual pressure, a lack of respect for others, and the conduct of nurse managers were some of the major causes of job stress. The pressures in the nursing profession may be reduced by providing enough logistics, enhancing cooperation among hospital subsystems, and enhancing manager-nurse relationships.

### **Factors Influencing New Graduate Nurse Burnout Development**

Our group discovered a brief peer-reviewed article that is decisive in correlating new graduate nurses and their overall rating of job satisfaction and patient care quality. The researchers focused their study on recent Canadian graduates and sent out a survey to their subjects. The first survey was dated from November 2012 to March 2013. The second survey was dated from May 2014 to July 2014. Based on the results from the surveys, the authors concluded that the upcoming nurse-managers behavior has a significant influence on their staff. Members in leadership positions can help "...create and sustain empowering work environments may help reduce burnout, increase nurse job satisfaction and improve patient care quality" (Boamah et al., 2017). This article can be used to emphasize that when employees begin to feel emotionally depleted, there is a need for supervisors to lead and implement protocols and regulations to help alleviate staff burnout.

### **The Relationship Between Burnout and Job Satisfaction**

The next article that will be discussed conducted a study at the Psychiatry Department in Tanta University Mental Health Hospital looking into nurse burnout. The study consisted of a sample of 50 nurses. The two tools for data collection utilized were Maslach's Burnout Inventory and the job satisfaction Scale. After the study was finalized, it was determined that most nurses had job dissatisfaction. One of the most common factors that led to an increase in job

dissatisfaction in this unit was the lack of teamwork between nurses and management. A large percentage of nurses had emotional exhaustion as a result of burnout. A study done by Zaki (2016) showed the following "psychiatric nurses are suffering from job burnout, majority of the psychiatric nurses did not have the psychiatric nursing ability, not have knowledge about the laws, the institutions other than the policies that are important to nursing" (p.104). Psychiatric nurses did not have the proper preparation to deal with psychiatric patients, which led to a stress increase, and they lacked the ability to perform their tasks effortlessly.

Burnout levels were high among psychiatric nurses, relating to poor work environments and low social support from supervisors and colleagues. Another attributing factor to psychiatric nurse burnout was dealing with uncooperative patients related to their disease. Nurses who worked more than seven shifts per month had higher dissatisfaction. The patient ratio also played a role in the dissatisfaction of nurses; those who had a 1-4 patient ratio also expressed developed discontent (Behilak et al., 2019). Lastly, the nurses that expressed low levels of work satisfaction were also thinking of quitting their job.

### **Nurse Burnout Attributed Turnover in Costs**

To further understand the implication of nurse burnout, we focus our attention towards the cost of nurse burnout-attributed turnovers with a focus on hypothetical quantitative data analysis. The method of research was a cost analysis using the Markov model structure, which states that the future depends only on the present state and is independent of the past (Muir et al., 2022). Results of this study show that a status quo hospital spends \$5,000+ more dollars PER nurse per year employed on nurse-burnout-attributed turnover costs than the hospital with a burnout reduction program (Muir et al., 2022). This article served as a purpose for hospitals to invest their resources and allocate funds for a nurse burnout reduction program, further reinforcing the urgent need to address the issue of nurse burnout and the impact it has on job satisfaction-related turnovers (Muir et al., 2022).

### **Resiliency as Skill for Positive Nurse Job Satisfaction**

Further taking a focused look specifically towards critical care nurses, Olaleye et al.(2022) focuses on the core development of a critical care nurse behavior that produces positive nurse work satisfaction: resiliency skills. This article discusses critical care nurses and the effects their line of work has on the delivery of care. Critical care nurses are constantly facing traumatic events as part of their work on a daily basis. The authors found that excessive workload, poor staffing ratios, and overtime shifts are the main factors identified as contributing to negative workplace conditions (Olaleye et al., 2022). This article strengthens the theory that nurse burnout is a phenomenon that can be solved and that skill sets can be developed to combat the issue.

### **Persistent Nurse Burnout and Leadership Influence**

Furthering the importance of addressing the crisis of nurse burnout, Bogue & Carter explores the unknown of why health professional (nurse) burnout persists and continues to increase despite a plethora of evidence of effective strategies to mitigate burnout (2022). Their analysis enforces the importance of Leadership Influence as an important step to improving well-

being by successfully managing or mitigating stressors that result in burnout (Bogue & Carter, 2022). The research was conducted by licensed nurses within a non-profit regional healthcare system in the Southeastern US. It uses a psychometric approach to the evaluation of the Nurse Wellbeing Self-Assessment, containing four 10-item scales, which is then resulted for application for the Model of Leadership Influence. The study finds that the optimal well-being of health professionals involves a cohesive balance of fundamental life issues; such as rest, nourishment, security, and reward (Bogue & Carter, 2022). Professional and personal relationships directly affect the health of oneself. Gaining a feeling of deep purpose and positive connection results in maximizing one's own sense of well-being and the health of one's patient (Bogue & Carter, 2022).

### **Burnout in Nursing: What Have We Learned and What is Still Unknown?**

Further, analyzing the factors that lead to nurse burnout and the effects it has on nurses, the healthcare organization, and the patients, the next article studies the relationship between burnout and work-related variables (Dall'Ora et al, 2021). Using Maslach's theory, the study will attempt to identify burnout and the consequence it has on nurses.

"Maslach was the first to propose a theory about burnout and to measure it as a concept distinct from, for example, stress. She developed the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI, Maslach, & Jackson, 1981) to measure burnout; this scale is still one of the most widely used internationally" (Dall'Ora et al, 2021). Maslach characterizes burnout as the following: being emotionally drained, Severe detachment from patients, lacking confidence in one's job, increased workload with no resources, no control, lack of reward or recognition, lack of community, fairness, and values. The study took samples from approximately 300,000 nurses, measuring "emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment" (Dall'Ora et al., 2021, p. 44).

The results of this study determined the following: nurses with a higher workload resulted in emotional exhaustion. It was also concluded that the nurses who had more flexibility with their schedule and worked fewer hours, under 12 hours, were unlikely to report emotional exhaustion. The study determined that nurses that experienced burnout had higher intentions of quitting their job. Our research group was inspired by the results of this article and aimed to use MBI in our own study.

### **The Mediating Role of Life Satisfaction Between Mental Stressors**

Our last article, in reference to our research proposal, is a study focusing on nurse mental health and burnout amidst the Covid pandemic. The article correlates the pandemic to an increase in nurses being diagnosed with depression, anxiety, and increased stress. In their article, the authors define burnout as a "...psychological syndrome of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by the prolonged exposure to high emotional demands in the workplace" (Martins et al., 2022, p.2). This research article aims to tackle the long-term issues when nurses are feeling the emotional strain at work, which is the high turnover that occurs in an organization.

The researchers looked at 'psychological resilience,' which referred to an individual's capability to adapt and overcome stressful events. Website-based surveys were used to collect data in this study. The end results of the surveys and questionnaires show that there was a link between nurse burnout and the quality of life they have. Nurses who had increased levels of depression were linked to physical/psychological fatigue. Meanwhile, higher ratings of stress showed that there was an increase in frustration and tension within that category of nurses. Nurses with higher anxiety/stress levels experienced client-related burnout; nurses with depression had higher personal burnout. It is suggested that facilities offer better teaching methods to their staff and how to have more mental training and support groups. This article is significant in demonstrating the mental health portion of nurse burnout. The prior articles discuss the circumstances in which strain is put on the mental health of nursing staff; meanwhile, this article focuses on mental health and ways it can be alleviated in the workplace. Attaining a multi-faceted variety of information regarding a topic will hopefully strengthen the significance of our own research proposal.

### **Hypothesis**

Our research will be in accordance with the result of past research results: nurses are indeed experiencing burnout, and it is reflected in their dissatisfaction with their job. Our hypothesis is that nurses are experiencing job burnout due to a lack of support from upper management and consequently. As a result of this nurse burnout and job dissatisfaction are in a parallel relationship resulting in a lack of organizational commitment and high turnover rate of hospitals around the nation.

### **Methodology**

For our quantitative research proposal, we have decided to use electronically submitted surveys as one of our methods of obtaining data. It is a reliable method of collecting data and has been frequently used in past scholarly research. The first survey is in a Likert-scale format. This is a 7-point scale used to answer a series of questions. The questions' answers ranged from a strong 'yes' and gradually transitioned to a strong 'no.' The benefits of the Likertscale are how they allow subjects to respond to the best of their ability, without feeling like they have to limit themselves to a particular answer. If the questions were a simple yes vs. no, there would be an insufficient amount of data retrieved.

Our research proposal intends to create a survey and send it out to our subjects via a google format. The targeted subjects would be 300 nurses total and using three different Kaiser hospitals our subjects work at. We will be using the following Kaiser locations: Walnut Creek Kaiser, Kaiser Santa Clara, and Panorama City Kaiser in Los Angeles. Due to our access to each location, we will be able to reach out and have participants for our research. From each hospital, we will use 100 nurses and send out questionnaires to them. The questions focus on burnout and consist of scenario-based topics. The topics include, but are not limited to: The impact burnout has on their work-life balance, how much burnout impacts their daily tasks, is there a sufficient support system at their work to help them, etc. Some of our questions will be generic and focus more on an individual topic (i.e., stress or emotional exhaustion), while others will have very

specific scenarios. We propose that the questionnaire would consist of 10-15 inquiries from each subject.

Our research group will collect the data from our subjects and work through the results. When working with this particular scale, it is important to take the data from the subjects and analyze the mean and standard deviation of the values. Our research is based on the correlation between nurse burnout and job satisfaction; gaining data via quantitative research methods allows insight into our topic. We may expect to see a strong confirmation response from our subjects regarding the impact burnout has on their day-to-day lives. Our prediction is the mean would demonstrate that the majority of our subjects would be negatively influenced by their nurse burnout and find correlations between burnout and lack of resources at a job location. This portion of our expectations relies on how carefully the questions are typed out and presented to our subjects. The rest of our data collection will proceed with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI).

MBI consists of three questionnaires: the Human Services Survey, the General Survey, and the Educator Survey. Utilizing three general scales, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment, to determine the levels of burnout. There are six dimensions that Maslach theorizes affect nurse burnout: Workload, Control, Reward, Community, Fairness, and Values. This scale utilizes a 5-point scale system similar to the Likert scale. Maslach's burnout inventory has proven to be reliable based on previous studies. Along with the Likert scale, the MBI survey will further provide insight into the type of burnout experienced by the nurses at these Kaiser facilities. The MBI survey would be presented to these nurses via a google survey form document through the employees' email. The goal will be to work with management or leaders in order to gain access to these emails. The goal of utilizing the MBI survey is to support the theory that nurses who experience burnout do tend to have lower job satisfaction. Results can provide leaders with feedback, and it would be the hope that after the survey is concluded, leaders would gather with their team to discuss results, analyze any problems possibly presented and work towards solutions.

### **Data Collection**

For this research study, a quantitative approach will be used for data collection. Through various Kaiser Hospitals in Northern California, we plan to speak to the head supervisor/administrative leader to have permission to send out mass-survey to staff. There is usually a staff directory we can access to reach a person in charge of a unit. Oftentimes there is a volunteer coordinator within organizations that are open to working with individuals; especially with students in a similar field. An initial email can be sent prior to the survey being sent out, notifying staff of the purpose of our study and what we hope to achieve with our research.

The first survey to be sent out for obtaining data will be formatted using the Likert scale. The survey will be formatted by using Google Forms as an online questionnaire. The questions will be the usual 5-point answer format, containing a variety of scenario-based questions and topics on how nurses perceive overall wellbeing and atmosphere of the workplace. For this portion of the data collection, we would like to use Google Sheets as a method of organizing the data once it is collected. Google Sheets also has programming software that will help us analyze

the data previously collected. Resources to broaden the demographics for this study will likely include advertisements on Kaiser hospital social media and the hospital communications board per department. Participants will be recruited with the help of head supervisors and administrative leaders to obtain permission to send out mass-survey to staff. We would like to utilize volunteer coordinator within the healthcare organization that are open to working with individuals, especially students in a similar field. An initial email will be sent prior to the survey distribution, which will notify staff of research study purpose and goal. Limitations of the Likert Scale study include incapability to provide in-depth explanation for each answer the nurses will respond with. The nurses will answer questionnaires via survey, which enables them to either agree or disagree with each statement. We do not have a method of obtaining further elaboration on individual responses unlike a study conducted in an interview format.

The second form of data collection will be through the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) Scale. MBI Survey will be presented as part of a 22-questionnaire covering three areas Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low sense of personal accomplishment answer choices for questions are based on a frequency rating choice being: *Never, A few times a year or less, Once a month or less, A few times a month, Once a week, A few times a week, or Every day.* Google spreadsheets will also be utilized to organize data collected. Kaiser Permanente leadership from the facilities planned to conduct the surveys will be contacted and informed that all data collected will be disclosed to leadership to utilize in any areas that may need improvement. Based on the response choices limited information would be available on details of what may lead to burnout. MBI questions do not focus on other possible categories of burnout. Nurses will be notified of the survey prior to receiving email requesting the completion of the survey. Nurses who partake in the survey will be rewarded with a gift card as an incentive.

## **Conclusion**

Our team set out to seek solutions for the imposing concerns on nurse burnout in our society. Nurses are in high demand, and yet many positions in hospitals and organizations are unfilled due to the lack of numbers to meet the demands of the public. Our team aims to solve the question: "What factors influence nurse burnout, and how much of an impact it has on job satisfaction". In hopes of finding solutions to why there is an increase in turnover amongst nurses in the healthcare industry.

In preparation for our proposal, our team conducted thorough research from prior studies. We hoped to analyze the findings of past articles in order to assess what type of study could be best suited for our own study. When aiming to answer the 'why' of a problem, quantitative research was favored. Quantitative research allows data with more definitive and precise responses. After finalizing the type of research we would be conducting, our team discussed which methodologies we would like to use. A quantitative survey was our group favorite, since this method of data is reliable and effective in allowing us to obtain a large amount of subject data in a speedy manner. Many of our research articles also used a Likert scale (or another questionnaire with a similar structure) when conducting their quantitative research. With this scale, we would be able to have our subjects respond to our statements/questions without feeling like the solution would be black-and-white. Our team also decided to use the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). This method of data collection provides more information on our subjects. The



decision to also use the MBI combats the limitations of our study that come from a lack of qualitative data. We hope our research proposal highlights the issues of nurse burnout and encourages intervention to take care of our nurses.

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