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COVID-19 anxiety among frontline nurses: Predictive role of organizational support, personal resilience and social support

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Abstract

Anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic is prevalent in the nursing workforce, potentially affecting nurses' well-being and work performance. Identifying factors that could help maintain mental health and reduce corona virus-related anxiety among frontline nurses is Imperative. Currently, no studies have been conducted examining the influence of personal Resilience, social support and organizational support in reducing COVID-19 anxiety among nurses.

Keywords: COVID-19, coronavirus, nursing, resilience, social support, organizational support, pandemic

Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is a substantial health burden that has major implications for public health globally. COVID19 is a pneumonia-like disease caused by a novel coronavirus that emerged in the Province of Wuhan in China in November 2019. Worldwide, confirmed cases of the disease had reached 9,289,255 as of June 25, 2020, while in the Western Pacific Region, the confirmed cases climbed to 206,948. Moreover, at this time there were 478,160 confirmed deaths and confirmed cases had been reported in more than 200 countries. The USA, Brazil, Russia, and India remained the countries with highest numbers of confirmed cases, accounting for 49% of all confirmed cases globally (WHO, 2020). Of the confirmed cases worldwide, 6%, or 90,000, were in healthcare workers. In a short span of time, COVID-19 has proven to be a fatal disease that has caused serious damage to the health and economy of the Philippines. The emergence of COVID-19 exerted unprecedented pressure on the country's healthcare system and presented various challenges to its nursing workforce, potentially affecting their work performance and mental health, and even putting their lives at risk.

Aim

This study examines the relative influence of personal resilience, social support and organizational support in reducing COVID-19 anxiety in frontline nurses.

Review of Literature

Anxiety in nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic was fear of becoming infected or unknowingly infecting others (Mo *et al.*, 2020). Shanafelt *et al.* (2020) identified other sources of anxiety in nurses, including lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), fear of harbouring the novel coronavirus at work, lack of access to COVID-19 testing, fear of transmitting the virus at work, doubt that their institution would support them if they became infected, lack of access to childcare facilities during lockdown, fear of being deployed in an unfamiliar ward or unit and lack of accurate information regarding the disease. While a low level of anxiety is helpful to motivate and arouse excitement in an individual, persistent exposure to anxiety may have negative consequences on their physiopsychological health and work performance. A vast number of studies have highlighted the negative effects of a higher levels of anxiety, including loss of desire to eat, dizziness, sleep disturbance and vomiting or nausea (Lee, 2020; Lee *et al.*, 2020). To effectively address nurses' anxiety or fears of COVID-19, it is vitally important to support their mental, psychological and emotional health through evidence-based measures (Mo *et al.*, 2020; Catton, 2020) [4].

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Personal resilience and social and organizational support were identified in the literature as vital factors protecting against adversity and stress by nurses, allowing them to maintain their mental well-being and psychological health. A person's capacity to 'bounce back' or recover quickly from a specific event, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Cooper *et al.*, 2020) [3], along with support drawn from colleagues, managers, friends, families and the organisation (Maben & Bridges, 2020), may help nurses effectively endure the burden caused by the pandemic.

Methods

This cross-sectional study involved 325 registered nurses from the Philippines using four standardized scales.

Instrumentation

Four standardized, self-reported scales were used for data collection: the COVID-19 Anxiety Scale, Brief Resilient Coping Scale (BRCS), the Perceived Social Support Questionnaire (PSSQ) and the Perceived Organizational Support (POS) questionnaire

Results

Of the 325 nurses in the study, 123 (37.8%) were found to have dysfunctional levels of anxiety. Using multiple linear regression analyses, social support ($\beta = -0.142, p = 0.011$), personal resilience ($\beta = -0.151, p = 0.008$) and organizational support ($\beta = -0.127, p = 0.023$) predicted COVID-19 anxiety. Nurse characteristics were not associated with COVID-19 anxiety.

Implication for nursing management

COVID-19 anxiety may be addressed through organizational interventions, including increasing social support, assuring adequate organizational support, providing psychological and mental support services and providing resilience-promoting and stress management interventions.

Discussion

This study was conducted to examine the roles of personal resilience, organizational support and social support in predicting COVID-19 anxiety among nurses. Using a cut-off score of ≥ 9.0 on the COVID-19 Anxiety Scale, 37.8% of the respondents were identified to have dysfunctional levels of anxiety.

The most important findings of this study were the significant direct effects of personal resilience, social support and organizational support on COVID-19 anxiety levels in nurses above and beyond the influence of nurse characteristics. To author's knowledge, this study is the first to confirm such relationships; thus, the study contributes knowledge to the nursing literature on this important topic. First, the reduced COVID-19 anxiety levels in nurses who had higher scores on the resilience scale demonstrate the protective role of personal resilience, which enables an individual to positively adapt in stressful and anxiety-provoking situations and bounce back successfully despite adverse circumstances (Foster *et al.*, 2019). This result highlights the importance of developing measures or interventions to promote or optimise personal resilience in frontline nurses in order to reduce their anxiety related to COVID-19. This result is in line with previous studies linking higher resilience in nurses to reduced burnout, compassion fatigue, anxiety, depression and psychological

distress (Mealer *et al.*, 2017; Cooper *et al.*, 2020) [3]. Higher resilience was also associated with enhanced outcomes in an individual, such as increased psychological health and mental well-being (Foster *et al.*, 2020; Gao *et al.*, 2017).

Conclusions

Resilient nurses and those who perceived higher organizational and social support were more likely to report lower anxiety related to COVID-19.

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