

Work Life Balance in COVID Time

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ABSTRACT

Health care workers on the front line who are directly involved in the diagnosis, treatment and care of patients with COVID-19 are at risk of developing psychological distress and other mental health symptoms. The ever-increasing number of confirmed and suspected cases, overwhelming workload, extended shifts with increased volume and severity of patients, depletion of personal protection equipment, widespread media coverage, lack of specific drugs, job insecurity, financial instability, fear of carrying the virus to home or inability of visiting family due to pandemic and feelings of being inadequately supported may all contribute to the mental burden of Nurses. To prevent such events to occur, there is a high need of balancing the work and life among these front line workers. Nurses as well as organizations must work together in order to balance the work and life and hence preserve the mental health of these front line workers.

Keywords: COVID-19; Workload; Pandemic; Work life balance of nurses

INTRODUCTION

In order to buffer the effect of the recent COVID-19 pandemic on our healthcare systems and society as a whole all the health care workers like nurses, doctors, technicians, and also the sanitation workers are working day in and day out. Society relies heavily on the extent to which these individuals can function in a cohesive, effective manner. Facing this critical situation, health care workers on the front line who are directly involved in the diagnosis, treatment, and care of patients with COVID-19 are at risk of developing psychological distress and other mental health symptoms [1]. The pressure of caring for patients is amplified in the setting of a virus with human to human transmission and no specific lifesaving treatment [2]. A recent study in Wuhan, China demonstrated that women, nurses and frontline healthcare workers are particularly vulnerable to experiencing depression, anxiety, insomnia and distress in these work conditions. Another cross sectional study on psychological status and fatigue of frontline staff concluded that there is a high incidence of depression, anxiety, insomnia, and fatigue among the staff fighting COVID-19 [3]. The ever-increasing number of confirmed and suspected cases, overwhelming workload, extended shifts with increased volume and severity of patients, depletion of personal protection equipment, widespread media coverage, lack of specific drugs, job insecurity, financial instability, fear of carrying the virus to home or inability of visiting family due to pandemic and feelings of being inadequately supported may all contribute to the mental burden of nurses (Figure 1).

To prevent such events to occur, there is a high need of balancing the work and life among these front line workers. Work-life balance (WLB) is a contemporary acronym for achieving balance between work and lifestyle ambitions [4]. It means bringing work and leisure time into balance to live life to its fullest [5]. Here in this review few points are suggested for the nurses in order to balance work and life at individual as well as the organization level especially during this COVID crisis.

Strategies to balance work and life

- Plan your time well in advance. Make a next day to do list before you go to bed. Make sure you include fun activities too in that list along with work related activities. Don't stress to complete all the tasks. Pat yourself even if you have finished fifty percent of the list you had planned a night before.
- Take time for relaxation activity, anything which you like and feel relaxed after doing such as meditation, gardening, painting or simply talking to near and dear ones.
- Make exercise part of your life; 20 to 30 minutes a day has been proven to increase alertness and energy levels [6].
- Spend time with your family. Play with kids in the house, talk to elderly, and share your thoughts as well as concerns with each other. Those who are unable to visit family due to pandemic must virtually keep in touch with family and friends. Ensure you utilize some part of your day by connecting those who love you and whom you love back.

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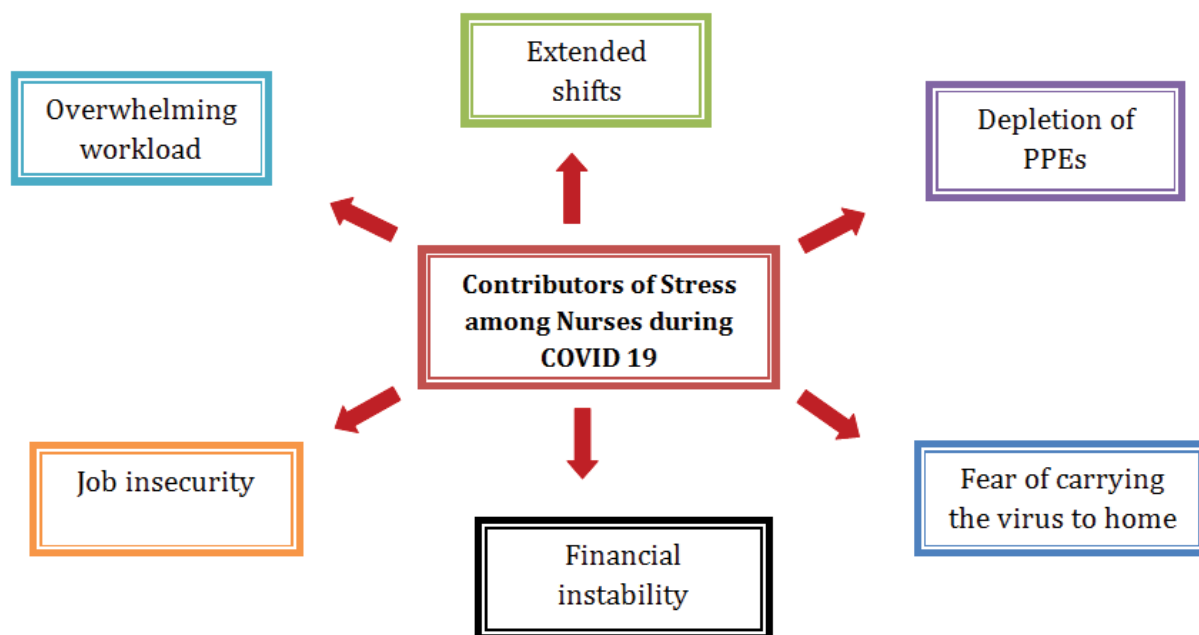


Figure 1: Contributors of Stress among Nurses during COVID 19

- Keep reminding yourself that you are doing a great job in this pandemic. Your skills are being used for the best during most crucial time.
- Discuss your problems with the ones who can provide solution to them like peer group, immediate supervisors etc. Work in collaboration with each other to find the solution of the issues.
- Make sure not to bring work to home. Try completing the work at workplace only.
- Keep yourself updated on COVID-19 related information. Knowing about the recent pandemic will provide the necessary confidence to deal with such patients and ultimately lessen the stress.
- Try to only control the controllable. Many times the situation or circumstances are not in our hand. We tend to lose precious time thinking how can we modify or change that situation. Don't put unnecessary burden on you by stressing on those stressors you can't control or do anything about.
- Practice positive self talk. Every time you do a good job or accomplish a significant task, reward yourself in small proportions. It will boost your confidence and will improve your morale.
- Maintain a gratitude journal. Write the things you are grateful for on everyday basis or every alternative day. This may help you to distress yourself and make you more positive towards life.
- Practice mindfulness. Staying focused and in the present moment is a key to enjoy life.

Strategies organizations can adopt for Nurses' welfare

Organizations are responsible to provide a conducive environment to work in. It is indeed the responsibility of the organizations to provide positive and healthy work environment to its employees. Motivated staff always perform better in any work environment be it nursing or any other field. To ensure the Nurse' welfare in this crisis situation, various steps can be undertaken by organizations. These steps are arranging trainings for updating the Nurses,

impartial rotation of Nurses to COVID and non COVID areas of the hospital, provision of adequate quality and quantity of personal protective devices, preparation and communication of various COVID related protocols to all, reduction in the working areas of the staff who work in COVID areas, on job meditation sessions, regular breaks, positive reinforcement in terms of appreciation letters or awards, timely salary plus bonuses, and involvement of Nurses in various decision making activities etc.

CONCLUSION

The meteoric rise in COVID-19 cases worldwide has resulted in an immense rise in the work pressure of Nurses all around the world. Hence, there is a high need of balancing the work and life among these front line workers. Nurses as well as organizations must work together in order to maintain a positive work -life balance and conquer this growing monster.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Not applicable.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

All authors are participated in the interpretation and reporting of the study's outcomes.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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