

A Study to Assess the Work-Life Balance and Burnout of Nurses during Covid-19

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Abstract

Nurses work and live in two separate worlds. In one they live rather mechanically. In the other, nurses are steadfast friends, caring family members. Sometimes nurses are unable to balance the contrasting demands of work place and their family, wellness, and personal needs, which can lead to inner turmoil, physical and mental health concerns, and burnout. The Covid-19 pandemic had a serious impact on nurses' burnout.

Key words: Work-life balance, Nurses' burnout, Pandemic

Nurses' work-life balance is an important factor because they are taking care of their family as well as their patients. Nurses often struggle with work-life balance because of the working schedule. Nurses work and live in two separate worlds. In one world, they're caregivers who often put the needs of patients before their own.

On the other hand, nurses are steadfast friends, caring family members, and lifelong learners, individuals striving to find fulfilment in their personal lives. When worlds collide, the inability of nurses to balance the contrasting demands of work and their family, wellness, and personal needs can lead to inner turmoil, physical and mental health concerns, and burnout. So, nurses should pay extra attention to manage work-life balance to ensure they derive maximum satisfaction from their work while maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Nurse burnout is a serious job-related condition that can have major consequences for nurses and their patients. It is important to remember that burnout or compassion fatigue is a result of working conditions, not a failure or a lack of compassion or work ethic on your part.

Work of nurses during the pandemic differs from their normal routine work. Routine lifestyle is disrupted, leading to an imbalance in life and work. Poor work-life balance can lead to severe distress, depression, and hurt nurses' lives.

This study aimed to evaluate the work-life balance of nurses and nurses burn out during the pandemic of Covid-19. Work of nurses during the

pandemic varies from their normal routine work. During the outbreak of Covid-19, new protocols and procedures were implemented, which had to be learned and updated by nurses. At the same time, a lot of changes took place at home concerning finance, child care and other additional support systems required during a pandemic.

Need for the study

The investigator worked a lot with the nurses and experienced many psychological and social burdens during the pandemic period. The pandemic disrupted a lot in the work-life balance of nurses in that period. There was no documented evidence regarding the work-life balance of nurses and nurses' burnout during the pandemic. Hence, this study aimed to evaluate the work-life balance and nurse's burnout of nurses.

Objectives

The study was set out with following objectives.

- To assess the work-life balance of Nurses during a pandemic.
- To assess burnout of Nurses during a pandemic.
- To find out the association between the work-life balance of nurses with their selective demographic variables.
- To find out the association between Burnout of nurses with their selective demographic variables.
- To find out the relationship between the work-life balance of nurses and nurses' burnout.

Operational Definitions

Work-life balance - Defined as harmony between

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work and non-work aspects of the life of nurses. It was measured by a structured questionnaire.

Burnout of nurses - Defined as a state of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion caused by exposure to stressful situations like Covid-19. Burnout of nurses was measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

Covid-19-Defined as an acute disease in humans caused by a coronavirus, which became a pandemic in 2020.

Hypothesis

H_{01} - Is there any significant association between the work-life balance of nurses with their selective demographic variables

H_{02} - Is there any significant association between nurses' burnout with their selective demographic variables

H_{03} - There does not exist any significant relationship between work-life balance of nurses and nurses' burnout.

Conceptual framework: The conceptual framework for work-life balance for nurses can include the following factors:

Work environment: Nurses may face barriers to work-life balance due to long hours, heavy workloads, and leadership issues.

Multiple roles: Nurses must balance work, personal, and family demands.

Prioritisation: Nurses must prioritise between work and lifestyle, and balance the two.

Stress: Nurses can experience stress due to understaffing, miscommunication, and incompetent management.

Job satisfaction: Work-life balance is a key factor in job satisfaction and intentions to leave.

Review of literature: Much literature, books and different studies were reviewed before and during the study period (details not covered here because of word limitations).

Review of the literature was done in the following areas: Nurses work-life balance; Nurses burn out; Psychological changes in nurses due to the pandemic; Impact of Covid-19 on nurses.

Materials and Methods

Research approach: In this study, a descriptive quantitative research approach was adopted.

Research design: descriptive correlational research design was adopted.

Period of the study: This study started in the year 2022 and was completed in 2023.

Setting of the study: It was set out in Govt Hospital of Kolkata.

Sample population: The nurses working in the Government Hospital, having at least 6 months of work experience constituted the sample.

Sample size: 60.

Sampling technique: On probability, convenience sampling was adopted for the study.

Variables: Demographic variables included age; educational qualification; family income; marital status; year(s) of experience; size of family; Residence; availability of food; length of duty hours, working conditions; adequacy of PPE for work-life balance; support from peers and seniors; rest, availability of food.

Research variables: Work-life balance and Nurses' burnout.

Participants' consent and ethical permission: Informed consent was taken from the sample participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the research committee of the institution.

Inclusion Criteria: Staff nurses working in the hospital who had a minimum of 6 months of experience were included.

Exclusion Criteria: Staff who were sick during the time of data collection were excluded.

Data Collection Tools

Part I - Socio-demographic profile sheet

Part II - Work-life Balance Scale: structured questionnaire for Nurses working in hospitals

Part III - Maslach Burnout Inventory was used to assess the burnout of the staff.

Results

This study showed that the majority, 24 (40%) of the nurses were in the age group of 22-30 years of age. Only 12 (20%) of the nurses had a very good work-life balance, and 21 (35%) had a moderate work-life balance; 27 (45%) of them had poor work-life balance.

Categorisation of the sample in their differential level on Maslach burnout inventory:

- (a) Emotional Exhaustion - burnout: Only 24 (40%) had high burnout.
- (b) Depersonalisation burnout- Only 12 (20%) had high burnout.

(Personal accomplishment Burnout)-Only 48 (80%) had high burnout.

There was a significant association between the work-life balance of nurses with age (χ^2 -15.638, $p=0.05$) and Gender (χ^2 -12.592, $p=0.05$).

There was a significant association between Burnout of nurses with Marital (χ^2 -10.885, $p=0.05$) and years of experience (χ^2 -14.464, $p=0.05$).

There is a negative correlation between work-life balance and burnout in nurses ($r= -0.73$, $p=0.05$).

The Covid-19 pandemic had a positive correlation with burnout ($r=0.69$, $p=0.05$).

Discussion

A study by Dall Ora et al (2020) in their study on burnout in nursing showed that among the outcomes of burnout, there are reduced job performance, poor quality of care, poor patient safety, adverse events, patient negative experience.

The present study shows that only 12 (20%) of the nurses had a very good work-life balance, 21 (35%) had a moderate work-life balance, and 27 (45%) of them had poor work-life balance.

Alotni & Samia (2020) in their study on the investigation of burnout, and its associated factors among nurses found the quality-of-life measure to be of moderate levels of physical, mental component score and total score of quality for the critical care nurses. Factors associated with burnout including age, nationality, and years of experience, and the wish to change department showed statistical significance. Burnout and quality of life score had a significant negative correlation.

The present study shows that there was a significant association between the work-life balance of nurses with Age (χ^2 - 15.638, $p=0.05$) and Gender (χ^2 -12.592, $p=0.05$).

Rohita et al (2022) conducted a systematic study on the relationship quality of nursing work life and burnout among nurses. Most reviews of the results showed a significant relationship between QNWL and burnout among nurses.

Furthermore, the factors related to QNWL, and burnout include environmental factors including role conflict, workload, lack of social support, pressure from patients, bullying at work, lack of professional development opportunities, alcohol consumption, and level of flexibility in working time while personal factors are gender, age, marital status, personality, expectations,

length of work, and having children.

The present study shows that there was a significant association between Burnout of nurses, Marital status (χ^2 -10.885, $p=0.05$) and years of experience (χ^2 -14.464, $p=0.05$).

Implications of the Study

Nursing practice: Nurses need to practice donning and doffing of PPE to get acquainted with this practice.

Nursing education: Regarding work-life balance and burnout, nurses need to give different types of teaching to combat the situation.

Nursing administration: Nurse administrators can practice mock drills to handle different types of pandemics. Counselling session also needs to be arranged after assessing the work-life balance and for nurses' burnout.

Nursing research: More emphasis should be placed on research on nurses' work-life balance and burnout and the associated factors.

Limitations

- The sample size was relatively small, so its findings could not be generalised.
- The study was done with only a structured questionnaire and the Maslach Burnout Inventory.
- The study was conducted for a limited period, and it was limited to only the Govt Hospital.

Recommendations

- A similar study can be done in private hospitals also.
- A comparative study can be done in a different setting.
- A similar study can be done with other health professionals.

Conclusion

Work-life balance is very important for Nursing professionals. The findings of this study revealed that only 12 (20%) of the nurses had a very good work-life balance. Ongoing online/offline debriefing and counselling sessions were planned frequently in hospitals to enhance the work-life balance of nurses. Male nurses had a better work-life balance than their female colleagues. Most of the nurses had higher levels of depersonalisation and emotional weariness compared to low accomplishment when it came to burnout components, particularly concerning emotional exhaustion. Most nurses experienced severe burnout and low levels of job satisfaction. Nurses with poor work-life balance are at a higher

risk of experiencing burnout that can lead to several negative consequences. Younger nurses had a higher work-life imbalance. Good work-life balance was among nurses aged 40 and older. Other factors associated with burnout in nursing include: high workload, low staffing levels, long shifts, and low control. To improve work performance, organisations can address work-related stressors that contribute to nurse burnout.

Nursing professionals' job has significant burnout in psychological dimensions. Nurses experienced excessive physical and emotional strain due to the stress, panic and overwork brought on by the pandemic of yester years. Workplace wellness programmes can be used to address and manage the issue of burnout among nursing staff. Health professionals worldwide, who were at the frontline of the Covid-19 pandemic, deserve better working conditions and recognition.

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