

Psychological Well-being and Social Support for Male and Female Nurses in Zahedan city: a Comparative Study

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 04 March 2014

Received in revised form 14 April 2014

Accepted 24 April 2014

Keywords:

Well-Being

Social Support

Nurses

ABSTRACT

Objective: Workplace stress affects individuals' mental health and psychological well-being. Since any nurse who enters workplace is faced with stressors, and mental health of medical staff is exposed to environmental pressures, it seems essential to adopt ways to maintain mental health of nurses as important members of the medical staff. **Methodology:** This study aimed to conduct a comparative study about psychological well-being of male and female nurses and social support for nurses working in the hospitals of Zahedan city in 2013 through convenience sampling. All participants completed Diener's psychological well-being test and answered items of perceived social support questionnaire. **Results:** The results showed a significant difference between psychological well-being and social support in terms of gender. **Conclusion:** Regarding the relationship between psychological well-being and social support, we can raise the nurses' health and well-being through enhancing social support for them.

1. Introduction

Nursing is known as a stressful profession and its employees are likely to face severe stresses. The National Association of America refers nursing as one of 40 professions with high prevalence of stress (Ghaddar et al, 2008). Within these various studies, there is an attempt to know what can reduce the stressors effects (Hamaideh et al., 2008). Since mental health is an essential element for a healthy and productive life, it is important to pay attention to mental health in all aspects of life including personal, social, and professional. As a concept of mental health, psychological well-being means lack of negative emotions, and life satisfaction (Darvizeh & Kahaki, 2008). It consists of emotional and cognitive components. People with a high sense of well-being perceive positive emotions and have a positive assessment of the surrounding events, as well; while, those with a low sense of well-being assess their life events unpleasant and are more affected by depression and anxiety (Darvizeh & Kahaki, 2008).

Mental health and psychological well-being prevent the emersion of mental illness, make a healthy psychological environment, and help individuals have a more effective relationship with their environment (Lobadi et al, 2008). It seems that social support acts as a shield in stressful times and prevents or reduces the occurrence of stress. Research has shown that social support has always had a moderating effect on stress, and results in gaining positive emotions by people. In addition, social support exerts an important role in health maintenance through protection and reduction of disastrous effects of stressful events (Hajebi & Faridnia, 2009). Social support is a way of coping with stress; it is also presented as a combination of social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral relations. Social support can increase people's mental health and psychological well-being, since it reduces the intensity of stress experience. (Hamaideh et al., 2008)

On the other hand, one important area in the development and promotion of health in the community is the treatment sector, consisting of nurses, in particular, who are exposed to more stress. The nature of their job is such that makes them involve in their work psychologically, socially, and physically; they are in contact with patients and undergo more psychological stress. Research has shown that social support improves health and well-being of the people who are under stressful conditions (Albar Marín & García-Ramírez, 2005).

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24200/jsshr.vol2iss02pp9-11>

With respect to this issue, the present article sought to find out whether a significant difference exists between psychological well-being of and social support for male and female nurses. (Lambert, 2003)

2. Materials and Methods

In this study, a total of 150 nurses (75 males and 75 females) were selected as participants. The participants of this causal-comparative correlational study were randomly selected from the nurses of two hospitals in Zahedan city, in 2012.

The data collection tools were Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS).

- **Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale**

Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale (MPSSS) by Shmith et al is a 12 item tool used for assessing the perceived support from three sources of family, friends and significant other. (McDowall & Fletcher, 2004)

The MPSSS has been examined on different samples. The last studied sample included 154 college students (122 females and 32 males) with a mean age of 26.5 years.

The validity and reliability of the MPSSS had an internal and desirable consistency. The total Cronbach's alpha of the test was 91% and the alpha for each scale was within 91% to 95%. Moreover, it had desirable factor and concurrent validities. (Scanfura, 1999)

- **Satisfaction with Life Scale**

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was first developed by Diener et al. (1985). This scale has 5 items which generally assess an individual's satisfaction with life. The participant's score range from 5 to 35. In this scale, 1 is assigned to completely disagree and 7 to completely agree.

Soltanizadeh determined the reliability of the SWLS as 78% by administering it on 35 students using Cronbach's alpha. Furthermore, the reliability of this scale was determined as 86% using Cronbach's alpha and administering it on 102 individuals. All two scales were given to the nurses of Ali Ibn Abi Taleb Hospital and Social Security of Zahedan. The data from returned questionnaires were extracted and analyzed using SPSS 18.

3. Discussion and Results

The independent samples t-test was used to examine the difference between social support for and psychological well-being of nurses with respect to their gender. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of independent samples t-test to examine the difference between social support and life satisfaction with respect to nurses'

| gender | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------|----|-------|-------|-----|------|
| variable | gender | N | M | S | df | t |
| Social support | female | 75 | 49.19 | 18.88 | 148 | 7.25 |
| | male | 75 | 66.53 | 8.92 | | |
| Well being | female | 75 | 26.08 | 1.57 | 148 | 3.50 |
| | male | 75 | 44.59 | 1.78 | | |

The findings of Table 1 showed the existence of a significant difference between social support and psychological well-being among male and female nurses at 99% level. Based on the mean scores of the groups, men gained higher scores than women in terms of social support and psychological well-being.

4. Conclusion

In today's world, everyone encounters stressful situations jeopardizing his/her mental health. Mental health is a science developed for social welfare and reasonable compromise with life events. The science of mental health and its branches, including welfare, seek to create health and happiness for people. In general, mental health is essential for maintaining social functioning of people, and hence its promotion should be considered as one of the major programs in each community. Annually, due to the lack of necessary social support, many people experience difficulties in their field of work resulting in their reduced efficiency. Nurses are amongst those people who require more well-being and health so as to have a better performance. Since medical staff is in direct contact with people, and thus their health can affect people's health, in the present study, we compared psychological well-being of the male and female nurses and social support for them. The findings of this study indicated the presence of a significant difference between psychological well-being of male and female nurses and social support among them. These results are consistent with the findings of other researchers in terms of the existence of difference between social support for male and female nurses and mental health of male and female nurses (Lobadi et al, 2008; Hajebi and Faridnia, 2009). Lobadi et al (2008) suggested that family and colleagues could be considered as effective support resources for mental health, with male nurses considering themselves as possessing these resources more than their female colleagues. In this regard, Hall (2007) showed in his research that nurses with more support had better job performance and less stress. Moreover, Coffy & Coleman (2001) showed that nurses with lower mental health scores had non-supportive managers. Albar Marin & Garcia-Ramirez (2005) showed that female nurses experienced more disorders in their physical functioning than men.

According to what discussed above, in order to provide mental health for nurses, it is better to support them through better planning; Reducing the work hours of nurses and other medical staff, increasing bonus, creating an appropriate working environment, as well as enhancing their mental health, and supporting them emotionally and socially in the workplace will help maintain their mental health.

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How to Cite this Article:

Khaki F. and Jenaabadi H., Psychological Well-being and Social Support for Male and Female Nurses in Zahedan city: a Comparative Study, *Uct Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research* 02 (2014) 9–11.