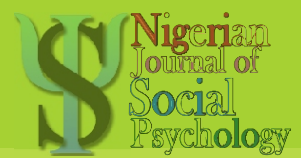


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Integrative Review of the Relationship between Workloads and the Psychological Well-Being of Mental Health Nurses

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Abstract

Overwhelming workloads for mental health nurses (MHNs) can result in psychological problems like depression, anxiety, and burnout. This study assesses the impact of workload on the psychological well-being of MHN. The study investigated the relationship between workload and psychological well-being among MHNs. An integrative review design was adopted, and a search was conducted in the databases PubMed, Web of Science, and CINAHL from June 26 to August 15 to identify primary articles investigating the relationship between psychological well-being and the workload of hospital-based MHNs. The search included both quantitative and qualitative studies. Seven (7) studies (5 quantitative, 2 qualitative) were reviewed following the screening of 123 studies retrieved from the search across the databases. Studies have revealed that MHNs face psychological threats from high job demands and aggressive patient behaviour. A large-scale study is needed to establish a causal relationship between workload and psychological stress among MHNs.

Keywords: *Mental Health Nurses, Workload, Psychological Well-Being*

INTRODUCTION

Psychological well-being is a vital aspect of mental health, encompassing an individual's sense of fulfilment, satisfaction, and achievement (Van-Agteren et al., 2021). It is influenced by factors such as emotion, relationships, environmental conditions, and purposefulness (Anglim et al., 2020). Psychological well-being predicts self-awareness and productivity and is positively associated with performance (Cobo-Rendon et al., 2020). Habib (2012) highlights that factors like place of residence, age, social status, academic achievement, and gender can act as stressors contributing to psychological ill-health. Furthermore, Schwartz et al. (2022) emphasise that cultural factors shape psychological well-being, indicating that an imbalance between stressors and well-being may lead to psychological problems. Self-acceptance is a fundamental element of psychological well-being, essential for assessing individual abilities and perceptions (Zho & Xu, 2019). Psychological health depends on self-acceptance, and having a sense of meaning in life is crucial for both psychological well-being and self-acceptance. This sense of meaning is directly linked to levels of happiness and purpose (Yousefi et al., 2024).

Mental Health Nursing and Mental Health Burden

Mental health nursing is a specialised branch of nursing that provides care to patients with mental health conditions (Happell & Gaskin, 2013). It is often called psychiatric nursing because it specifically involves caring for individuals with mental illnesses, whether they live in specialised homes or hospitals (Fortinash & Worret, 2011). In the UK, the mental health nursing programme gained prominence in the early 1980s with the introduction of the regulated Registered Mental Nurse programme (Nolan, 1998).

Mental health conditions contribute significantly (418 million) to the increase in disability-adjusted life year (DALY), which is a measure of the burden of the impact of mental health disorders (Wu et al., 2023). This accounts for about \$5 trillion in terms of financial burden caused by mental health diseases (Charlson et al., 2016). This figure may be underestimated because there is a dearth of literature from resource-constrained countries, such as those in sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, the quality of care provided by MHN is important for reducing disability associated with mental health disorders (Arias, Saxena & Verguet, 2022).

Workload and Stress

Workload is a broad term encompassing various aspects of mental, physical, and psychological energy committed to completing tasks (Choudhury, 2013). Caring for individuals with mental illnesses demands considerable mental, emotional, and physical energy (Rabe, Giacomuzzi & Nügeling, 2012). Consequently, MHNs face a substantial workload that varies by practice setting. According to Teng et al. (2024), MHNS in emergency and intensive care units may experience higher work demands than those in less busy outpatient clinics or departments. Similarly, mental health nurses working in community and house-to-house settings might have lighter workloads than hospital-based nurses (Endsley, 2017).

However, an appropriate workload depends on various factors that may differ among nurses, such as age, health, experience level, and innate ability to handle tasks (Fuentes-Olavar Rodríguez, Rodríguez-Rivas & Romo-Neira, 2024). The level of stress caused by workload is influenced by psychosocial factors, according to Fuentes-Olavar Rodríguez and colleagues. Since it is difficult to measure the impact of non-work-related factors like work-life balance, workload is therefore relative, and mental exhaustion related to workload is complex (Buruck et al., 2020). Nonetheless, Foster et al. (2020) argue that increased workload stress has made MHNs more resilient.

Rationale of the Study

Frontline healthcare professionals such as MHN face stress in the discharge of their duties (Lal et al., 2021). The job of mental health nurses requires sound physical and emotional health (Delgado et al., 2021). Thus, understanding how workload impacts their psychological well-being is important to improve the quality of care for people with mental health conditions.

Mental health nurses face stressful working conditions due to the nature of their job, and these challenges are worsened by increasing workloads, which impact their psychological well-being (Edwards et al., 2000). Studies have shown that high workload is the most

significant factor contributing to psychological stress among MHNs (Mark & Smith, 2012; Lee et al., 2015). Therefore, increasing workload and the demanding nature of the job are stressors affecting the psychological well-being of MHNS (Ilies, Dimotakis & De Pater, 2010). Moreover, MHNS struggle to balance a demanding workload with social life, including family pressures (Ward, 2011). According to Van-Bogaert et al. (2013), factors such as a lack of organisational support for MHNS, nurses' overall health, and poor socio-economic conditions may intensify the impact of workload on the psychological well-being of MHNS. These factors can affect their performance, as higher workloads are likely to lead to more clinical mistakes by MHNs (Rahimian & Ghodrati, 2013).

Although studies have examined the influence of workload on the psychological well-being of MHNs, no comprehensive review has assessed how workload affects the psychological well-being of hospital-based mental health nurses. The current study investigated the relationship between the workload experienced by MHNs and its impact on their psychological well-being. Synthesising evidence from existing literature to fill this gap will enhance understanding of how workload influences the psychological well-being of MHNs.

Research Question

What is the relationship between workload and the psychological well-being of mental health nurses based in the hospital?

Objectives

The primary objective of this integrative review is to examine the impact of workload on MHNs' psychological well-being.

Significance of the Study

This integrative review examined a wide range of primary studies, both experimental and non-experimental, conducted over the last 20 years on the topic. Therefore, the study's findings are likely to influence changes in clinical practice and research. The results can guide policy initiatives to manage MHNs' workload and lessen the impact of high workload on the psychological well-being of these specialised nurses. Furthermore, this research has the potential to inform healthcare policy and improve MHN productivity. The study's design is comprehensive and draws on data from various sources. It is likely to enhance understanding of how workload affects the psychological well-being of MHNS. The findings may be extrapolated to develop programmes addressing the stress experienced by other healthcare nurses.

METHOD

Study Design: This research offers an integrative review examining the connection between workload and the psychological well-being of mental health nurses (MHNs). Primary studies exploring this connection among hospital-based MHNs were included, using an integrative approach. The integrative review method was chosen to include both experimental and non-experimental primary studies, thereby expanding the scope of the analysis (Toronto, 2020). This approach suits the research question, as it allows a comprehensive analysis of key

themes across varied data sources (Cronin & George, 2023). Additionally, a mixed-methods strategy was employed, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative primary studies to explore the relationship between workload and psychological well-being. This thorough approach enables a deeper understanding of how workload impacts MHNs' psychological well-being.

PICO Framework

In identifying relevant papers for this review, the PICO framework was utilised to develop the search strategy, ensuring a comprehensive search that included all pertinent articles (Cooper et al., 2018). The table below displays the details of the search terms derived from the PICO framework.

Table 1: PICO Framework

Population	Intervention or exposure	Outcome
Mental health nurses OR psychiatric nurses	Workload OR Stress OR Caseload OR Burnout	Psychological well-being OR mental well-being

Databases

A search was conducted in three databases: Web of Science, PubMed, and CINAHL.

Search Strategy

The search strategy was organised by combining keywords from the research question using Boolean operators. A search across the databases was carried out from 26th June to 15th August 2024. The search was refined using database filters aligned with the eligibility criteria. The search strategy employed was: (("Mental health nurses" OR "psychiatric nurses")) AND ((Workload OR Stress OR Caseload OR Burnout)) AND (("Psychological well-being" OR "mental well-being")). Appendices 1, 2, and 3 illustrate the searches conducted in the databases using this strategy.

Furthermore, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) tool was utilised to assess the quality of the articles included in this review. The CASP is a validated appraisal instrument comprising a series of checklists that evaluate the quality of studies in an integrative review (Buccheri & Sharifi, 2017).

Eligibility Criteria

The eligibility criteria were employed to ensure that only relevant studies were included in the review and to improve the repeatability of the study (McCrae, Blackstock & Pursell, 2015). The criteria used to select relevant articles encompassed various aspects of the paper's quality, the publication date, and the language of publication.

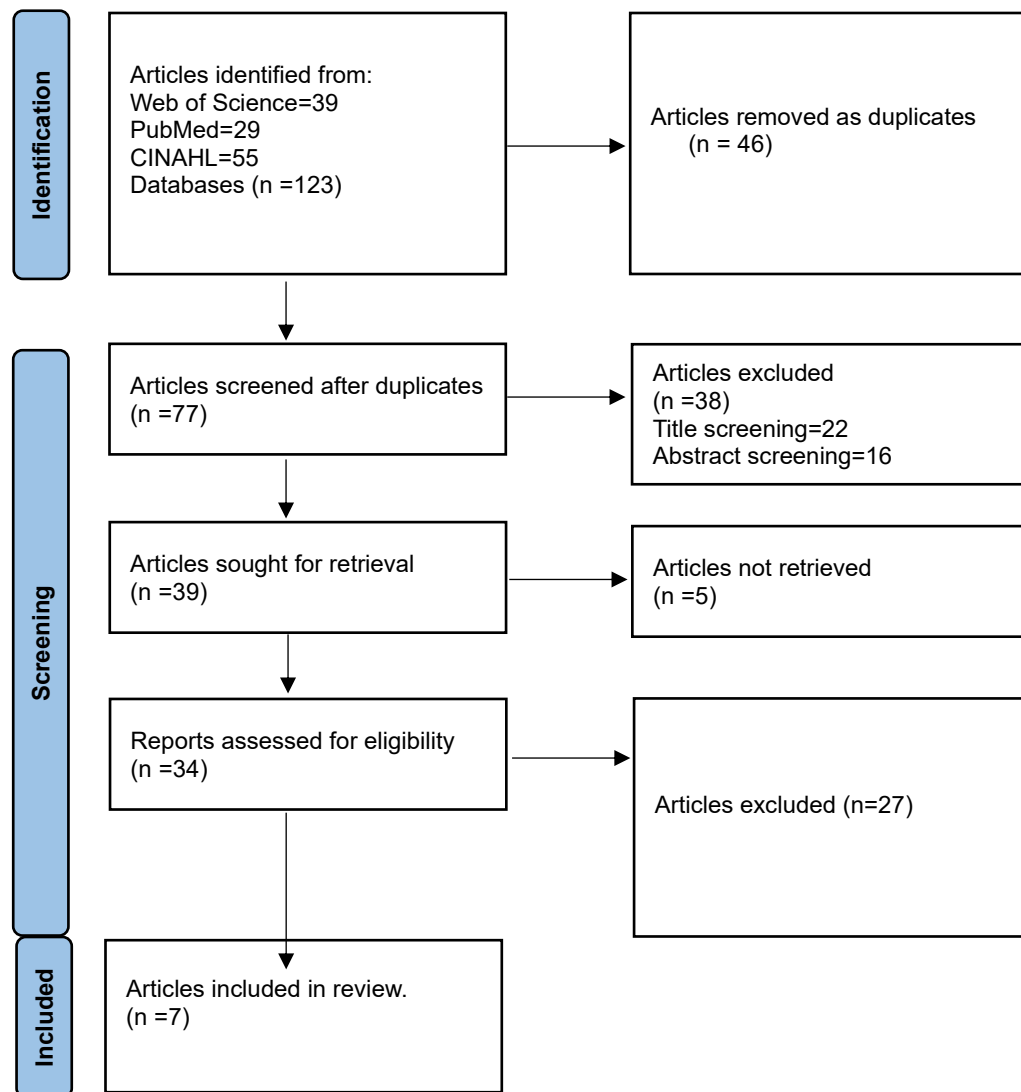
Table 2: Eligibility Criteria

SN	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion criteria
1	Studies investigating the relationship between workload and the psychological well-being of MHN were included in this integrative review.	Studies not focused on the relationship between workload and the psychological well-being of MHN were excluded from this integrative review.
2	Primary studies examining the relationship between workload and the psychological well-being of MHN were included in this integrative review.	Grey literature and review studies focusing on the relationship between workload and the psychological well-being of MHN were not included in this integrative review because review studies are not part of such reviews. Grey literature offers limited evidence for a review study.
3	Only studies published in the English language were included in the review.	Studies published in languages other than English were excluded due to language restrictions.
4	Only studies published in the last twenty years were included in the research.	Articles published before 1 January 2004 were excluded from the review. Limited articles were retrieved when the search was restricted to those published in the last ten years. Consequently, the search was expanded to include studies from the past twenty years.
5	The study included peer-reviewed articles.	Non-peer reviewed articles and conference papers were excluded due to the poor level of evidence they offer.
6	Articles with full texts that are accessible were included in the study.	Articles with inaccessible full texts were excluded from the study.

Selection and Screening of Papers

The first step in the selection of the relevant articles was conducting a search in the selected databases. This process of selection and screening of articles included in the review is in line with the method used by previous related integrative reviews and validated by studies (Labrague et al., 2018; Levin, Naimi & Saban, 2024). The selection and screening of papers included in the review is presented pictorially in a Prisma flowchart. Figure 1 below shows the steps involved in the identification and screening of the articles included in the review.

Figure 1: Prisma flow diagram



LITERATURE REVIEW

This focuses on reviewing relevant articles included in the integrative review. The chapter is dedicated to critiquing the articles that meet the eligibility criteria. This chapter presents the integrative analysis of the articles. The critique of each article is based on the research design, sampling technique, data collection and analysis methods, study results or findings, ethical considerations, discussion of key findings, and the study's strengths and limitations.

Results of Screening

The initial search across the selected databases retrieved 123 articles. These articles were subjected to various stages of screening, including examination of titles, abstracts, and full texts to assess their relevance to the research question. Forty-six (46) duplicate articles were removed from the 123, leaving 77 articles. The titles of these 77 articles were checked for

relevance; 22 were excluded as not pertinent to the research question, leaving 55. The abstracts of the remaining 55 articles were reviewed to determine their relevance, and 16 articles were discarded for not being relevant after this review. Full texts of the remaining 39 articles were sought; however, full texts of 5 articles could not be accessed, resulting in 34 articles with complete texts for thorough review. Of these, an additional 27 articles were excluded as they did not focus on the relationship between workload and the psychological well-being of MHN. Ultimately, seven (7) articles meeting the eligibility criteria were included for analysis. A summary of the key characteristics of these seven (7) articles is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 3: Summary Table of Characteristics using the CASP Tool

Author/year	Title	Population	Number of subjects/ Participants	Study design	Sampling
Fuentes-Olavarría, D., Rodríguez-Rivas, M. E., & Romo-Neira, J. (2024)	Workload and psychosocial risks among nurses in mental health and psychiatry in Chile	Chile	174	Observational, cross-sectional study	Convenient Sampling technique
Cranage, K., & Foster, K. (2022)	Mental health nurses' experience of challenging workplace situations: A qualitative descriptive study	Australia	374	Qualitative descriptive/ explorative study	Convenient Sampling technique
Hasan, A. A., & Tumah, H. (2019).	The correlation between occupational stress, coping strategies, and the levels of psychological distress among nurses working in mental health hospital in Jordan	Jordan	190	Cross-sectional exploratory study	Convenient sampling
Sugawara, N., Danjo, K., Furukori, H., Sato, Y., Tomita, T., Fujii, A., Nakagami, T., Kitaoka, K., & Yasui-Furukori, N. (2017).	Work-family conflict as a mediator between occupational stress and psychological health among mental health nurses in Japan.	Japan	180	Cross-sectional	Random sampling
Park, M. S.-A., Goto, N., Kennedy, A., Raj, S., Dutson, A., Park, L., & Sovet, L. (2021).	Positive orientation, job satisfaction and psychological well-being of mental health practitioners in Malaysia	Malaysia	100	Cross-sectional study	Convenient sampling technique
Wang, S. M., Lai, C. Y., Chang, Y.-Y., Huang, C.-Y., Zauszniewski, J. A., & Yu, C.-Y. (2015)	The Relationships Among Work Stress, Resourcefulness, and Depression Level in Psychiatric Nurses.	Taiwan	154	Cross-sectional study	Random sampling
Jenkins, R., & Elliott, P. (2004)	Stressors, burnout and social support: nurses in acute mental health settings	England	93	Cross-sectional study	Convenient Sampling

Analysis of Articles

The analysis of the articles included in this review is based on the key elements of the CASP appraisal tool. These include research design, sampling and population, data collection and analysis, results and critical discussion of findings, bias and validity or worthiness of studies, ethical considerations, strengths and weaknesses or limitations of the articles. Each article is analysed under the CASP key headings above.

Paper 1: Fuentes-Olavarria, D., Rodríguez-Rivas, M. E., & Romo-Neira, J. (2024). Workload and psychosocial risks among nurses in mental health and psychiatry in Chile. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 33(4), 869–884. <https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.13286>

Fuentes-Olavarria et al. (2024) conducted a cross-sectional study of 174 Chilean mental health nurses to explore how workload and psychosocial factors influence their well-being. Using a modified Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ) and sociodemographic questions, they found that higher workload—particularly in demanding units, with larger patient loads, and in urban areas—was associated with increased mental burnout, especially among younger nurses. The study's strengths include a clear aim, suitable quantitative methods, and ethical approval. Limitations involve a small, convenience sample, potential selection bias from internet-based recruitment, absence of randomisation or long-term follow-up, and the lack of socioeconomic variables such as marital or financial status. Overall, the authors conclude that excessive workload notably harms nurses' psychological health and call for larger, more rigorous studies to confirm these results.

Paper 2: Cranage, K., & Foster, K. (2022). Mental health nurses' experience of challenging workplace situations: A qualitative descriptive study. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing*, 31(3), 665–676. <https://doi.org/10.1111/inm.12986>

Cranage & Foster (2022), using a qualitative cross-sectional study, examined the psychological distress experienced by Australian mental health nurses (MHNs) due to high job demands. Using an online, open-ended questionnaire, 374 nurses from Victoria described stressors across four domains: patient interactions, relationships with colleagues, the general nursing role, and hospital management. Convenience and snowball sampling facilitated access but introduced selection bias, and the lack of clear eligibility criteria was noted as a gap. Demographic data were collected alongside the qualitative responses. Data were analysed both descriptively and deductively, yielding 645 codes organised into four main challenges: managing violent patient behaviour, issues with colleagues, organisational problems, and overall job stress. Ethical approval was secured, and anonymity was guaranteed, although written informed consent details were missing. The results link heavy workloads to physical injuries, assaults, PTSD, suicidal thoughts, and lower job satisfaction, highlighting the need for better organisational support. Strengths include a solid qualitative design and clear presentation of results; limitations include potential recall and sampling bias, as well as the absence of visual data displays. Overall, the

study emphasises that workload-related stress for MHNs arises from a combination of patient, colleague, and systemic factors, not simply patient aggression.

Paper 3: Hasan, A. A., & Tumah, H. (2019). The correlation between occupational stress, coping strategies, and the levels of psychological distress among nurses working in mental health hospitals in Jordan. *Perspectives in Psychiatric Care*, 55(2), 153–160. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ppc.12292>

Hasan and Tumah (2019) conducted a cross-sectional, quantitative study to examine the relationship between workload, psychological stress, and coping among mental health nurses (MHNs) in Amman, Jordan. Using two self-report questionnaires, they collected sociodemographic data and measured stress (Devilliers-Carson-Leary 5-point Likert scale), depression (Beck Depression Inventory), and coping skills (Psych Nurse Methods of Coping questionnaire). Of 119 nurses invited, 114 completed the survey; five withdrew for documented reasons. The authors found that 60.5% of participants reported high stress. Stress showed a significant correlation with coping ability ($r = -0.54$, $p = .01$) and depression ($r = 0.74$, $p = .01$). Multiple regression analysis indicated that stress levels varied with age, education, marital status, and work hours, but not with years of experience. Ethical approval was obtained, and informed consent was secured, although details on data anonymisation were not provided. Strengths include the use of validated instruments and precise statistical analysis. Limitations include a non-random, convenience sample from a single city, reliance on English questionnaires (which may affect comprehension), and a cross-sectional design, which precludes causal inference. The authors suggest that developing internal coping mechanisms can help mitigate the impact of work-related stress on nurses' well-being.

Paper 4: Park, M. S.-A., Goto, N., Kennedy, A., Raj, S., Dutson, A., Park, L., & Sovet, L. (2021). Positive orientation, job satisfaction and psychological well-being of mental health practitioners in Malaysia. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 26(10), 1219–1229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13548506.2020.1804599>

Park et al. (2021) used a quantitative cross-sectional study to examine how mental-health nurses' positive perceptions of their work influence their ability to cope with job-related stress and how this coping affects their performance. Using a convenience/purposive sample of 100 nurses, the researchers collected sociodemographic data. They administered validated Likert-type scales—PHQ-9 for mental health, Perceived Stress Scale, LOT-R for optimism, and a Job Satisfaction Scale. SPSS was used for descriptive and correlational analyses, which revealed a strong negative relationship between psychological well-being and positive orientation ($r = -.56$, $p < .001$). Ethical approval was obtained, though details on confidentiality safeguards were not provided. The authors discuss the buffering role of optimism, self-esteem, and job satisfaction in relation to stress, linking their findings to recent literature (e.g., Park et al. 2021) and suggesting interventions to boost positive perceptions among nurses. Strengths include robust statistical handling and clear presentation; limitations involve non-random, convenience sampling,

potential exclusion of nurses without internet/email access, and recall bias from self-administered questionnaires. Overall, the study adds evidence that a positive orientation can mitigate the psychological impact of heavy workloads on mental health nurses.

Paper 5: Sugawara, N., Danjo, K., Furukori, H., Sato, Y., Tomita, T., Fujii, A., Nakagami, T., Kitaoka, K., & Yasui-Furukori, N. (2017). Work-family conflict as a mediator between occupational stress and psychological health among mental health nurses in Japan. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*, 13, 779–784. <https://doi.org/10.2147/ndt.s127053>

Sugawara et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative cross-sectional study to investigate how work-family conflict mediates the relationship between workload and mental well-being among Japanese mental health nurses (MHN). The researchers surveyed 318 nurses from three mental health hospitals and four general hospitals, selecting institutions randomly (though the exact sampling method was not specified). Details about eligibility criteria and recruitment were not fully provided, but sociodemographic data were included. Data were collected through online questionnaires (Work-Family Conflict Scale, Generic Job Stress Questionnaire, Maslach Burnout Inventory- General Survey, and CES-D for depression). Of the 318 questionnaires distributed, 240 completed surveys were used for analysis (two were incomplete). All instruments were validated and adapted for Japan, although specific modifications were not described. Statistical analyses (descriptive statistics, t-tests, chi-square tests, Pearson correlations, linear regression) on 180 questionnaires from a homogeneous subgroup revealed a significant link between workload-related stress and poorer psychological health. Work-family conflict was found to mediate this relationship strongly. Ethical approval was obtained from Hirosaki University School of Medicine, and informed consent was secured, with participants free to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality procedures were not described. The discussion relates the findings to prior research, notes an unexpected lack of association between work-family conflict and service quality, and discusses practical implications. Strengths include a rigorous design, appropriate sampling, validated measures, and comprehensive analysis. Limitations include the cross-sectional design, which limits causal conclusions; reliance on self-report (potential bias); and insufficient detail on sampling and eligibility criteria. Overall, the study demonstrates that reducing work-family conflict could enhance Japanese MHNS' capacity to cope with workload-related psychological stress.

Paper 6: Wang, S. M., Lai, C. Y., Chang, Y.-Y., Huang, C.-Y., Zauszniewski, J. A., & Yu, C.-Y. (2015). The Relationships Among Work Stress, Resourcefulness, and Depression Level in Psychiatric Nurses. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 29(1), 64–70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnu.2014.10.002>

Wang et al. (2015) used a quantitative cross-sectional study to examine how workload, depression, and resourcefulness interact among mental-health nurses (MHNs) in China. The researchers recruited 154 nurses from six hospitals using random sampling, though details about the hospital settings were not given. Structured questionnaires measured workload (Nurse Stress

Checklist), depression (Depression Questionnaire), and resourcefulness (Resourcefulness Scale), all using Likert-type items and previously validated for Chinese populations. No participants dropped out. Descriptive statistics (means, SDs, frequencies) and inferential tests (t-tests, Pearson correlations, ANOVA) were run after checking data normality. Key findings include:

- Single nurses reported higher depression than married nurses ($t = 2.14, p < .01$).
- Depression correlated strongly and positively with workload ($r = .70, p < .001$).
- Total resourcefulness showed a weak negative link to depression ($r = -.15, p = .05$), while personal resourcefulness was more clearly negative ($r = -.17, p < .05$).
- Workload and resourcefulness were modestly negatively correlated ($r = -.20, p < .05$).

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board overseeing the six hospitals, but the report does not specify how participant confidentiality was protected. The authors discuss how these results fit with prior literature, note the higher depression among single nurses, and suggest that resourcefulness may buffer the impact of workload on mental health. They acknowledge the cross-sectional design limits causal inference and that self-report questionnaires can introduce bias; a longitudinal approach would have strengthened the study. Overall, the research adds evidence that heavier workloads are tied to greater depressive symptoms in MHN, and that personal resourcefulness can modestly mitigate that effect.

Paper 7: Jenkins, R., & Elliott, P. (2004). Stressors, burnout and social support: nurses in acute mental health settings. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 48(6), 622–631. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03240.x>

Jenkins and Elliott (2004) conducted a quantitative, cross-sectional study to examine work-related stressors and burnout among mental-health nurses (MHN). The authors set three clear aims and surveyed 93 MHNs who completed a modified questionnaire (adapted from prior research) that captured sociodemographic data, employment history, stress (Mental Health Professionals Stress Scale), and burnout (Maslach Burnout Inventory). Participants were recruited from an MHN database using convenience sampling; only 93 of 240 invited participants returned the questionnaire, and detailed sociodemographic information beyond basic personal and job details was not provided. Data were analysed with descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, multivariate analysis and Mann-Whitney U-tests (chosen because the data were not normally distributed). The p-value used for significance was not specified. Results showed a statistically significant difference in mental exhaustion between MHN assistants and qualified MHNs, with assistants reporting less burnout. Key stressors identified were violent patient behaviour, inadequate staffing and insufficient support, all linked to high workload. Ethical approval was obtained and questionnaires were anonymised. The discussion highlighted these stressors and compared findings with previous literature, though it lacked a deeper exploration of practical implications. Strengths include robust statistical analysis (despite limited visual presentation) and acknowledgement of selection bias and low response rate, which limit

generalisability. Limitations also stem from convenience sampling and self-report bias. Overall, the study underscores that excessive workload and poor staffing contribute to burnout among MHNs, with assistants being relatively less affected than qualified nurses. The authors call for better staffing and support, while noting the need for more representative sampling and more transparent reporting of statistical thresholds.

DISCUSSION (Thematic)

Psychological stress

This review highlights the association between workload and psychological stress in mental health nurses (MHNs). Key elements of stress identified include mental exhaustion, anxiety, depression, PTSD, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment. Stressful workloads, particularly from managing challenging patient behaviours, significantly impact the psychological health of MHN, with those in emergency and intensive care units facing higher risks of mental stress compared to those in outpatient settings. Sociodemographic factors, particularly age and experience, also influence stress levels; younger nurses experience more stress due to their lesser coping skills and workplace experience. Interestingly, fully qualified MHNs report higher mental exhaustion than assistants, possibly due to additional administrative burdens. The findings align with existing literature on the psychological toll of demanding healthcare environments.

Work-related stressors

A study highlights that mental health nurses (MHNs) face a fourfold workload, comprising patient interactions, relationships with colleagues, administrative tasks, and public engagement. Key stressors include violent patient behaviour, colleague conflicts, and poor work-family balance, which can exacerbate mental burnout and increase susceptibility to disorders like depression and PTSD. The research correlates with findings by Vasconcelos et al. (2016) and Fernandes, Soares & Silva (2018), which identify similar stressors among general nurses. Managing these stressors, including work-family balance, is crucial, yet quantifying their impact is challenging due to the unique circumstances of each nurse.

Poor job satisfaction, decreased motivation and poor quality of life.

Another key theme is the link between poor job satisfaction, low motivation, and negative attitudes among mental health nurses (MHNs), stemming from mental exhaustion and burnout caused by heavy workloads. Park et al. (2021) state that high workloads directly decrease job satisfaction and affect care quality. Psychological effects include a lower quality of life. A positive work attitude might help MHNs manage stress, but excessive workloads can cause despair. The Job Demands-Resources theory suggests that balancing demands with support is helpful. The study points out a gap in understanding how resource limitations influence outcomes. Previous research shows that workload negatively affects satisfaction and motivation, but does not establish causality. Research limitations, such as a regional focus, restrict broader applicability.

Mediating factors of the relationship between workload and psychological well-being

Workload significantly affects the psychological well-being of mental health nurses (MHNs), but this impact is moderated by their coping abilities, stress perceptions, and work-family conflict. Higher resilience among MHN correlates with better management of workload-related burnout. This review also highlights inadequate staffing and lack of support as key contributors to mental exhaustion, although some studies found no significant effect of support on workload-induced stress. Learned resourcefulness theory suggests that knowledge and experience aid in stress management. Further research is needed to examine the role of work-family conflict and coping mechanisms, while accounting for other health-related factors among MHNs.

Implications of Study Findings

The study highlights important implications for practice in mental health nursing (MHN), especially concerning the high demands placed on practitioners, which lead to psychological stress, reduced motivation, and negative perceptions of their jobs. Addressing work-related stress could improve MHN productivity and help prevent mental burnout. Furthermore, enhanced organisational support is essential to reduce stressors associated with heavy workloads, as current evidence-based measures are insufficient. The study advocates further research into the development of customised workload models for MHNs to promote their psychological well-being.

Strengths of the Study

The main strength of this integrative review arises from its synthesis of evidence on the impact of workload and psychological well-being of hospital-based mental health nurses. The evidence presented in this review is drawn from both quantitative and qualitative studies, based on a comprehensive search of databases and meticulous screening and appraisal of eligible studies. This study lays a foundation for future research on the impact of workload on the psychological well-being of mental health nurses.

Limitations of the Study

The study has notable limitations, including potential bias from self-reported data, and inherent limitations in the individual papers reviewed. The findings depend on the accuracy of these studies, and their robustness may have been influenced by the search strategy and key term combinations, which could have restricted the inclusion of relevant research.

Conclusion

This integrative review examines how workload impacts the psychological well-being of mental health nurses (MHNs). It highlights risk factors linked to increased workload, assesses mental health issues—such as stress, burnout, job satisfaction, and mental health conditions—and provides evidence-based recommendations for stakeholders. The findings reveal that MHNs face

unique psychological challenges, especially from managing violent behaviours of patients, as well as difficulties in staff relationships and administrative duties, emphasising the importance of reducing non-clinical tasks. The review shows that MHNs are susceptible to burnout, anxiety, and depression, which can affect their motivation and quality of care. Contributing factors include coping strategies and sociodemographic variables such as age, marital status, and training level. Recommendations for targeted programmes to improve MHNs' psychological well-being are offered, although further research is needed to establish a causal link between workload and mental exhaustion.

Recommendations

1. Based on the findings of this study, enhancing organisational support, particularly in terms of emotional and physical backing for MHN, can reduce work-related burnout, which in turn positively influences the quality of care for mental health patients (Cranage & Foster, 2022). Practically, hospitals might consider providing sufficient childcare support for female MHNs with young children. This can decrease work-family conflict and improve the quality of service they deliver.
2. Developing stress management training tailored to the unique circumstances of MHN will help them better manage stressors associated with the high demands of their job (Park et al., 2021).
3. It is important to evaluate the contributions of various stressors, including work-family balance and specific aspects related to the work environment. This helps to understand and reduce non-essential workload elements such as administrative duties (Yan et al., 2022).
4. Assessing the overall workload of MHNs and reducing the number of patients per MHN could help reduce their stress, as the primary psychological threat comes from aggressive patients (Fuentes-Olavarria, Rodríguez-Rivas & Romo-Neira, 2024).

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