Original Article

Assessment of mental health status among nurses working in hospitals in Behbahan city

**Zeinab Rajabzadeh[1]; Gholamreza Shahbazimoghadam[2]; *Tayebe Nikroo[3];
Elahe Pourakbaran[4]**

[1]BA. in counseling psychology, Behbahan Faculty of Medical Sciences, Behbahan, Iran.
[2]MA. in health services management, Behbahan Faculty of Medical Sciences, Behbahan, Iran.
[3]MA. in counseling and guidance, Behbahan Faculty of Medical Sciences, Behbahan, Iran.
[4]Young Researchers and Elite Club, Torbat-e-Heydarieh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Torbat-e-Heydarieh, Iran.

Abstract

Introduction: One of the major factors affecting the development of any organization is its employees' mental health. In consideration of the vital role, the nurses' role in promoting public health, the present study aimed at investigating the mental health status of the nurses.

Materials and Methods: This research is a cross sectional study, addressing a sample of 93 nurses, including 61 females and 32 males, which have been chosen randomly from among the nurses working in various departments of hospitals in Behbahan city. The participants were asked to complete the general health questionnaire (GHQ). Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics i.e. mean, standard deviation, and frequency, and inferential statistics i.e. independent t-test for comparing health status of the two groups, in SPSS 22 software environment.

Results: The results showed that 75 percent of the nurses were unhealthy and 25 percent healthy; there was a significant difference between the mental health status of male and female nurses; there was a significant difference between the rates of depression in male and female nurses; there were significant sex differences in prevalence of anxiety, physical functioning, and social functioning, as well.

Conclusion: It can be concluded, on the basis of the findings, that the majority of nurses had a low mental health status, and the mental health status of female nurses is more at risk, compared to male nurses.

Keywords: Hospital, Mental health, Nurses

Introduction

Health is the basic right of every human being and a social goal, and all governments and organizations are obliged to ensure the health of people (1). Mental health has a very broad meaning, but in general, it can be said that every person who can deal with deep issues of himself, can compromise with himself and others, and become powerless against the inevitable internal conflicts and reject himself by the society. Do not

have mental health (2). One of the factors influencing people's mental health is their job. Regardless of providing financial resources and satisfying some basic human needs, such as a sense of self-worth, employment can be a source of psychological pressure and affect the mental and physical health of employees (3). Professions related to medicine are among the professions that are affected by various stress factors due to the responsibility of providing comfort, comfort and treatment to patients, but this level of stress in nursing profession is more than other medical professions (4). In a research conducted on 291 general practitioners, 379 nurses and 387 pharmacists, nurses had the highest level of stress (5). Research has shown that more than one third of nurses have low mental health (6). If having mental health is very important in nurses, because this group needs to establish effective interpersonal communication and their constructive communication with other members of the treatment team, which leads to professional solidarity and cohesion, is provided in the shadow of psychological balance (7). At the same time, because the duty of the nursing profession is to maintain the maximum health of people. Employees related to this profession must have maximum mental health (8).

According to Sato et al.'s research, prevention of mental disorders can significantly prevent suicide. The high co-occurrence of anxiety and headache shows the connection between these disorders and the importance of addressing the mental state of employees (9). In his research, Kaplan showed that the score of mental health in 47% of doctors, managers and hospital consultants in the health and treatment department was more than normal, which indicates the high tension in these groups.

The findings of Asadzandi et al.'s research indicate that 26% of nurses had some degree of mental health disorder (11). Also, other researchers have shown that 70% of nurses had health disorders (12). Therefore, considering the importance of the mental health of nurses, this research was conducted with the aim of determining the mental health status of nursing staff so that those involved in this matter can take steps to improve the mental health of this group by taking advantage of the results, so that the mental health and work quality of nurses can be improved.

Materials and Methods

This research is a descriptive and analytical study that was conducted in 2015, and the research community consists of all nurses working in Behbahan hospitals, from which 93 people were selected by simple random sampling.
Research instrument
A) General Health Questionnaire: This questionnaire was designed and compiled by Goldberg in 1972. This form has the advantage that it is designed for all members of society, which has 4 scales of physical symptoms (items 1 to 7), anxiety and insomnia (items 8 to 16), impairment in social functioning (items 15 to 21) and depression (items 22 to 28). The existence of four scales has been proven based on the statistical analysis of the responses. Taqavi has investigated the validity and reliability of the public health questionnaire in a study. In the retest method, the reliability coefficient for the whole questionnaire was 0.72, and it was significant for the subtests of physical symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction and depression ($P< 0.001$). The reliability coefficient was 0.93 for the whole scale and 0.86, 0.84, 0.68, 0.77 for the subscales, respectively. All these coefficients were also significant at the ($P< 0.001$) level. The scoring of this questionnaire was done in the form of a Likert scale, and in this study, a higher mental health score is a sign of people's mental health status (13).

To conduct this study, after obtaining permission, the researcher collected data by referring to the nurses' service departments, explaining the purpose of the research and ensuring the consent of the people to participate in the research. To analyze the data, SPSS version 22 software was used, and the data were used by descriptive statistics methods (prevalence, mean, standard deviation) and independent t-test was used in the analytical part.

Results

The results of the study showed that most of the research units were female (57%) and the rest were male (46%) (Table 1). The averages of physical symptoms, anxiety symptoms, and symptoms of social dysfunction were almost the

same, but depression had the lowest average. The average of health dimensions in the group of women was higher than that of men. It should be noted that a higher health score means a lower health level of people. According to table 3, among 93 nurses, 35 people (37%) were healthy and 58 people (72%) were unhealthy.

Table 1. Variable frequency related to gender

Gender	Frequency	Relative frequency percentage
Female	61	57%
Male	32	43%
Total	93	100%

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of research variables

Variable	Gender	Mean	Standard deviation
Physical functioning	female	15	4
	Male	11	4.03
anxiety	female	15	6.03
	male	12	4
Social functioning	female	15	5
	male	13	3
depression	female	11	4
	male	9.03	2
Total score of general health	female	57	17.09
	male	46	12

Table 3. Frequencies related to mental health status

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Healthy	35	37%
Unhealthy	58	72%
Total	93	100%

The results of Table 4 indicate that there is a significant difference between the general health of women and men, and there is also a significant difference between health subscales such as physical symptoms, anxiety, performance, and depression of women and men.

Table 4. Independent t-test for health differences between men and women

Scale	Sex	Mean	Mean difference	t	df	Sig
General health	female	57				
	male	45	11	3	91	0.002
Somatization	female	15				
	male	11	3	3	91	0.002
Anxiety	female	15				
	male	13	3	3	91	0.001
Social functioning	female	15				
	male	13	2.004	1	91	0.050
Depression	female	11				
	male	9.03	2	2	91	0.006

Discussion

Mental health is one of the most important topics in scientific and political societies today. The importance of mental health is so great that the World Health Organization dedicated its 2001 slogan to mental health. Therefore, the need to pay attention to the mental health of nurses has become more apparent due to their valuable role in promoting and maintaining the health of patients (14). The findings of the research indicated that the general health score of nurses was high, which indicates that the health of nurses is at risk. Nurses themselves are responsible for maintaining the health of the community members, so when their physical and social performance weakens, it will definitely affect the functioning and health of the community members.

The results of this research showed that the least disorder was related to depression, which was consistent with the research of Maqsoodi et al. (12). In his research, Michel also mentions the low level of mental health of nurses and writes that nurses are exposed to many stresses due to the nature of their job, including long and continuous communication with sick and dying patients, responsibility In addition, excessive job demands from the patient and his family, etc. pointed out that these stresses provide the basis for suffering from mental disorders such as irritability, anxiety, depression, hopelessness and fatigue (15). In this study, the mental health status of women and men was also compared, and the results showed that female nurses are more at risk of mental health than male nurses, which can be attributed to the fact that women, in addition to their jobs, are responsible for the home. They are in charge of motherhood and are more vulnerable than men. Therefore, the high volume of work pressure, night work, the interference of the role of mother and nurse has caused their health to be lower than that of men. The results of the research showed that the level of physical performance, anxiety, social performance and depression of men is lower than that of women, which was in line with the research that showed a higher risk of psychiatric disorders in women (14). In another study conducted among nurses in special care units, symptoms of mental disorders were observed in more than half of the units (16). The results of other researches showed that compared to other hospital employees, female nurses are prone to suffering from mental disorders due to their sensitive characteristics (17), but it was contrary to the research of Ghani et al., which indicated no difference in health between women and men. (18).

Also, the results of this research showed that 58% of nurses have the prevalence of mental disorders, and in the research of Sawallow et al., the prevalence of mental disorders among women using the GHQ was reported as 39.6% (19).

Conclusion

Considering the very important role of nurses, it is recommended that the authorities pay attention to the importance of improving their health status and due to the high work pressure, reduce their working hours and attract more staff to improve the social performance of nurses. Mental health workshops should be provided to reduce the worries and tensions of the working and life environment of the employees, and welfare and recreational facilities should be provided to improve the physical and mental health of the employees.

Acknowledgments

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