

Sigma's 30th International Nursing Research Congress

Relationship Between Mindful Eating and Mental Well-Being Among Clinical Nurses

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Background: Nurses' eating time is irregular as they have to deal with various unpredictable situations in busy clinical settings. They rush through their meals and are often unable to finish eating properly because they have to handle various urgent duties during their meal breaks. Many nurses develop the habit of rushed eating within a short time due to the nature of their work environment. When nurses focus on finishing the meal within a limited time in the hectic work environment, they are often unable to recognize how much and what they eat. Consequently, many of them complain of indigestion or other gastric problems caused by overeating, bulimia, or the hurried eating without chewing properly. Mindful eating is a concept that changes the traditional paradigm of diet. It helps one realize the pleasure of eating and eating only as much as our body needs, thus helping to overcome obesity and maintain healthy eating habits (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007). Several existing studies have applied mindfulness together with meditation to interventions in order to improve mental health problems such as depression and stress (Nombela et al., 2017; Van der Gucht et al., 2017) or eating disorders (Alberts et al., 2012; Katterman et al., 2014). Some studies on nurses have implemented mindfulness-based interventions to manage stress in nurses (Bazarko et al., 2013; Cohen-Katz et al., 2009; Pipe et al., 2009). However, it is difficult to find any existing study that applied "mindful eating" directly to nurses' eating habits and mental health problems.

Purpose: This study examined the degree of mindful eating practice in clinical nurses and its effect on their mental well-being. Based on this, it aims to provide basic data for developing intervention programs to help nurses develop healthy dietary habits and maintain mental well-being.

Methods: This study was a descriptive investigation to identify clinical nurses' mindful eating status and its related factors including dietary behavior, mental well-being, and occupational stress. In this study, a structured questionnaire was used. The questionnaire contained 85 questions, 12 about general characteristics, two about body image, five about health promotion behavior, 14 about dietary behavior or habit, 28 about mindful eating, 14 about mental well-being, and 10 about perceived stress. The subjects in this study were 205 nurses in three hospitals in Seoul, Kyunggi, and Chungnam in South Korea, who provided informed consent. Data were analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS version 18; Armonk, NY, USA). The threshold for statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$ for all analyses. The general characteristics and variables of study subjects were calculated using real numbers, percentage, average, and standard deviation. Mindful eating habit score, mental health score, and stress score according to the general characteristics of study participants were analyzed using t-test or one-way ANOVA. The relationship between study participants' mindful eating, mental health, and stress was analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of the general characteristics, mental health, and stress on participants' mindful eating.

Results: The major findings are summarized as follows. Only 1.5% of the total subjects responded that they took care of their health on a daily basis. The subjects believed that stress management (39.9%) and exercise (30.5%) were the most important in health management. They managed their health through rest (46.8%), exercise (22.5%), and stress management (17.6%). The first reason for not being able to take care of their health was lack of time (64.4%). Among the Mindful eating questionnaire (MEQ) subcategories, a logistic regression was performed on variables that were identified as significant in the univariate. The average MEQ score was higher for subjects with better mental health; the score was

lower for obese subjects than non-obese ones. Moreover, the MEQ score tended to be lower when stress was higher. Among the MEQ subcategories, disinhibition was higher when mental well-being and dietary pattern were higher, and lower in obese than non-obese subjects. Emotional response was higher when the subject was older and had better mental health, and lower in obese individuals than non-obese ones. Distraction was higher in subjects without children than those with children.

Conclusion: The mean MEQ score was similar to that of college students in Korea. The MEQ score was higher in nurses with better mental health, lower in obese people than who have normal body weight, and lower as job stress score was higher. It is needed to develop mindful eating skills for nurses who in busy and demanding clinical scenes. Also, it might be helpful to enhance their mental health and reduce job stress among clinical nurses.

Title:

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Keywords:

Clinical Nurses, Mental Well-being and Mindful Eating

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Abstract Summary:

The results of this study will provide clinical managers and nursing researchers with an inspiration to develop intervention programs to help nurses have healthy dietary habits and maintain mental well-being.

Content Outline:

I . Introduction

1) Background

- Nurses' eating time is irregular as they have to deal with various unpredictable situations in busy clinical settings.

- Many nurses develop the habit of rushed eating within a short time due to the nature of their work environment. Consequently, many of them complain of indigestion or other gastric problems caused by overeating, bulimia, or the hurried eating without chewing properly.

- Mindful eating is a concept that changes the traditional paradigm of diet. It helps one realize the pleasure of eating and eating only as much as our body needs, thus helping to overcome obesity and maintain healthy eating habits.

2) Purpose

To examine the degree of mindful eating practice in clinical nurses and its effect on their mental well-being.

II . Methods

1) Research design: descriptive research (cross-sectional study)

2) Participants: 205 clinical nurses in South Korea

3) Measurements: A structured questionnaire (85 questions) was used.

4) Analysis: t-test or one-way ANOVA, Pearson's correlation coefficient, Multiple regression analysis

III. Results

MEQ mean score was higher in nurses with better mental health, lower in obese people than who have normal body weight, and lower as job stress score was higher.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the findings, establishing measures to improve unhealthy eating habits that nurses develop easily in busy and demanding clinical scenes and enhancing their mental health along with physical health are suggested.

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