



Nurses' Stress and Coping: In the Midst of Work and Back to School

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Purpose of the Study

- Compare stress levels and coping styles against demographic variables
- Explore nurses' incentives, barriers and supports related to their decision to return to school

Method

- Registered nurses returning to a small liberal arts school in the northeast United States completed an internet-based survey
- (n = 51, 31.48% return rate)

Method

- Survey included demographic questionnaire, the Nursing Stress Index and Brief Coping Questionnaire.
- Three open ended questions assessed nurses' incentives, barriers and supports related to their decision to return to school.

Results - Quantitative Analyses

- RN to BSN students reported significantly higher frequency of distraction coping methods ($M = 5.86$) compared to both the Masters students ($M = 4.74$) and the Nurse Practitioners ($M = 4.31$), $F(2, 36) = 4.88, p < .05$.

Results - Quantitative Analyses

- The age of the nurse yielded several significant correlations, including a negative relationship with stress due to dealing with patients
- ($r = -0.42$).

Results - Quantitative Analyses

- The only stressor not associated with any coping strategy was work-life conflict.
- Dealing with patients was the only stress source to have significant correlations with a coping strategies (negatively with Religion; positively with Venting).

Results - Quantitative Analyses

- The following paired variables were significantly positively correlated:
 - Hours worked - Distraction techniques
 - Stress due to Work Relationships with: Distraction, Venting, Humor, and Religion
 - Stress due to Conflicting Priorities with: Distraction, Behavior Disengagement, Venting, Planning, Humor and Self Blame.

Results - Quantitative Analyses

- The following paired variables were significantly positively correlated:
 - Stress of maintaining role competence and confidence with: Denial, Behavior Disengagement, Venting, and Positive Reframing.
 - Stress due to time pressures with 11 of the 14 coping strategies.

Results - Qualitative Analyses

- Thirty textual responses were obtained from the open-ended questions.
- The textual responses, referred to as participant' statements, were subject to hand analysis using a five step method for each research question

Results - Qualitative Analyses

Themes incentives for adult learners to return to school for advanced degrees?

- Personal goal
- Financial influence
- Employment requirement
- Career advancement

Results - Qualitative Analyses

- Themes identified regarding barriers included:
 - Finances
 - Balance
 - Challenges

Results - Qualitative Analyses

- Themes identified regarding solutions to return to school included:
 - Support
 - Personal drive
 - Career advancement
 - Finances

Conclusions

- This study supports some interesting “coping profiles” that accompany the six dimensions of stress of the NSI.
- Age of the nurse was found to be a frequent predictor of coping behavior frequency.

Conclusions

- Qualitative themes emerged from narrative responses to the incentives, challenges, and sources of support that have allowed nurses to embrace the daunting task of returning to school.

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