

Emotional Strain: A Concept Analysis for Nursing



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Purpose

Emotional strain is referenced in the literature in the context of job demands and caregiving, but is seldom defined as a distinct concept. This analysis serves to encourage communication, promote reflection, and enhance concept understanding in order to meet the needs of nurses and nursing students affected by emotional strain.

Results

Antecedents

- Chronic emotional demands perceived as stressful
- Insufficient cognitive and external emotional resources

Attributes

- Emotional exhaustion
- Perceived ineffective coping
- Adverse emotional responses

Consequences

- Withdrawal from the offending stimulus
- Burnout
- Unfavorable quality of life

Conclusion

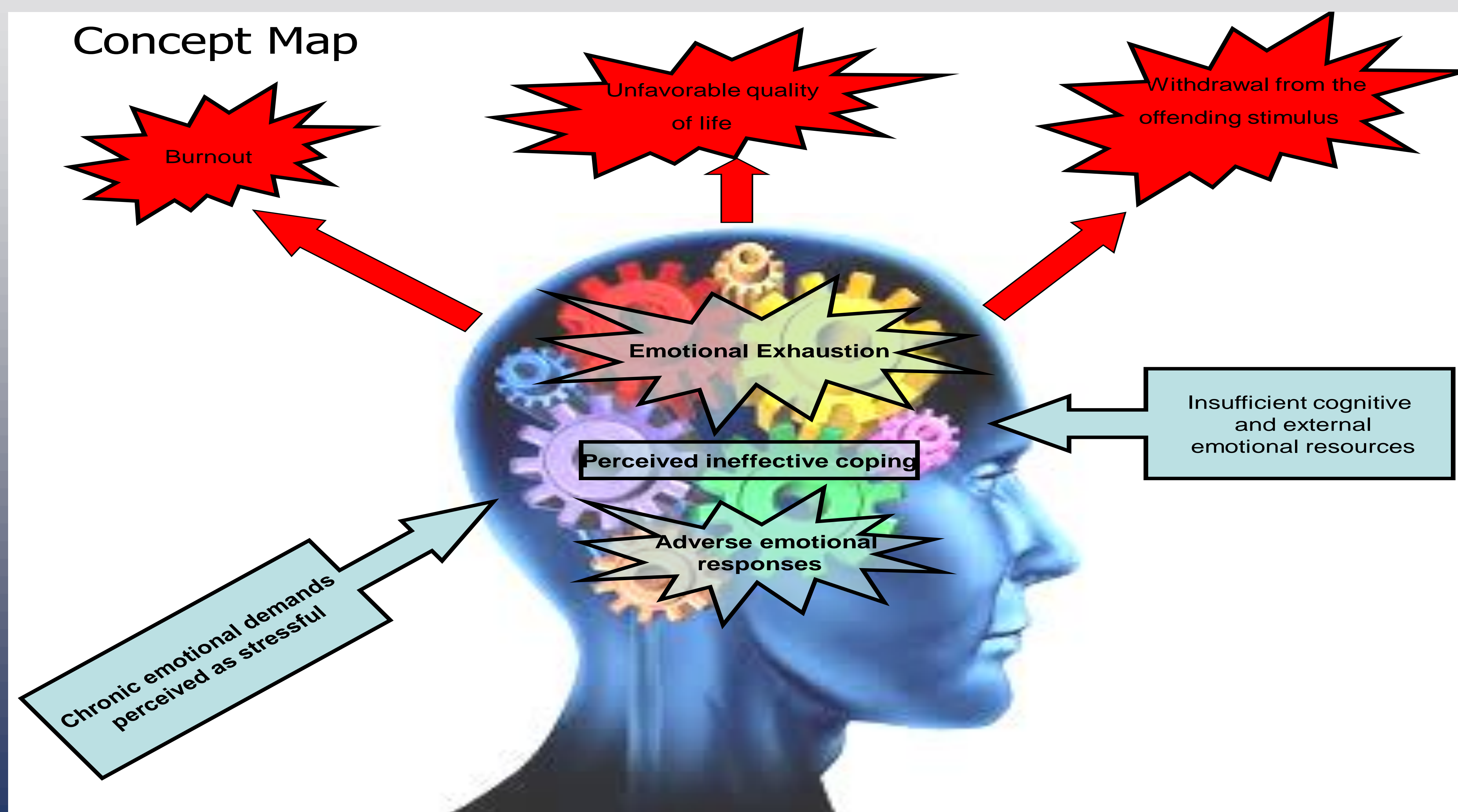
Emotional strain in nursing needs to be recognized as a key factor in the delivery of safe patient care. The definition contributes to the development of nursing knowledge and enhances efforts to serve nurses and students affected by emotional strain.

Methods

- 8 step method of Walker and Avant (2011) used as a framework
- Literature search in The Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) Complete, ProQuest Central, PubMed, Business Source Elite, and PsycINFO
- 48 articles from the English-language literature published from 1980 through 2016 were included
- Key words: emotional strain, strain, nursing, concept analysis, and stress

Operational Definition

Emotional strain is defined as “Emotional exhaustion and adverse emotional responses occurring in the absence of resources and perceived effective coping, which result from prolonged exposure to emotional demands perceived by the individual as stressful “



Implications

It is crucial, in these days of increasing patient acuity, nursing shortages, and an aging nurse population, to recognize the impact of emotional strain on nurses. We must ensure that nurses have effective stress management training, particularly during their early years of practical experience. The provision of effective stress management training for undergraduate nursing students in managing the stresses they are likely to encounter could be an important requirement for avoiding long-term maladaptive effects of emotional strain in nursing. Clinical nursing faculty must be educated about the importance of preparing students for stressful and shocking patient experiences.