

Impact of Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout of Critical Care Nurses: Literature Review

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Abstract: Compassion fatigue is a significant concern for critical care nurses, directly impacting their professional quality of life and indirectly affecting patient care. The article aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the impact of compassionate satisfaction and consequent burnout among critical care nurse staff, ultimately informing clinical practice and future research directions. This article provides an extensive literature review on the impact of compassion satisfaction, fatigue, and burnout on critical care nurses. A systematic literature search was conducted using multiple databases, including PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and CINAHL. The review aimed to assess the prevalence and severity of Impact of Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout of Critical Care Nurses. The findings suggest a strong correlation, particularly within the critical care nursing field, underscoring the ubiquity of these concerns within high-stress healthcare settings. Moreover, the review suggests that organizational culture, workload, emotional intelligence, resilience, and social support can influence nursing staff's professionalism, thereby affecting the levels of compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion fatigue experienced. The existence of compassion satisfaction, however, can potentially counter these detrimental effects. Thus, healthcare organizations need to recognize and address these factors to foster an environment that promotes nurses' overall well-being and satisfaction. Future research should focus on developing and testing such interventions within various critical care contexts.

Keywords: Compassion, Burnout, Nursing

Introduction

This article provides an extensive literature review on the professional quality of life experienced by critical care nurses, focusing particularly on the impacts of compassion satisfaction, fatigue, and burnout. These factors are deeply interconnected, reflecting both the rewarding and challenging aspects of nursing in critical care environments. Compassion satisfaction refers to the pleasure derived from being able to perform one's work well, while compassion fatigue and burnout relate to the emotional and physical exhaustion that can result from the intense demands of caregiving. The article investigates several studies and research evidence in an attempt to provide a comprehensive understanding of this subject. By digging into these themes, this review aims to shed light on ways to find a balance between the reward and strain of nursing, ultimately improving nurses' professional quality of life.

Nurses' professional quality of life is crucial within the healthcare field as it impacts personal wellbeing and patient care quality. Given their demanding roles, the focus on compassion satisfaction, fatigue, and burnout among critical care nurses is especially vital. A comprehensive literature review reveals that professional quality of life, including the capacity to feel gratification from providing aid (compassion satisfaction), the physical and mental exhaustion resulting from continuous interaction with suffering individuals (compassion fatigue), and the long-term physical and emotional depletion (burnout) are key elements in this domain.

Professional quality of life in nursing is a multifaceted concept that affects and is affected by several factors. For instance, the inability to maintain compassion satisfaction can lead to compassion fatigue, which may eventually result in burnout. Critical care nurses, in particular, are exposed to high-stress situations that can corrode their capacity for compassion, leading to compassion fatigue. This has been

linked to a decrease in their overall professional quality of life and an increase in their risk of developing burnout.

Furthermore, various literature sources indicate that nurses experiencing burnout exhibit decreased productivity, diminished patient satisfaction and safety, and a higher propensity for making medical errors. Burnout can also lead to high turnover rates among staff, adding additional strain and workloads to remaining nurses, further contributing to burnout and decreased quality of patient care. On the other hand, compassion satisfaction has been found to be a protective factor against burnout, contributing to improved working environments and better patient outcomes.

Moreover, the review suggests that organizational culture, workload, emotional intelligence, resilience, and social support can influence nurses' professional quality of life, affecting the levels of compassion satisfaction, fatigue, and burnout experienced. For example, positive clinical environments that promote teamwork and communication have been associated with higher compassion satisfaction levels and lower burnout rates.

Methodology

The methodology for this literature review on Impact of Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout of Critical Care Nurses involved a systematic approach to gather, analyze, and synthesize relevant studies published in peer-reviewed journals. The review aimed to assess the prevalence and severity of Impact of Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout of Critical Care Nurses

Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using multiple databases, including PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and CINAHL. The search terms included "Compassion Fatigue," "Burnout Nurses," "Critical Care Nurses," "Impact of Compassion," and "Impact Burnout." Boolean operators (AND, OR) were employed to refine the search results. The inclusion criteria focused on studies published in English from 2012 to 2023 that examined the Impact of Compassion Fatigue and Burnout of Critical Care Nurses: Literature Review

Selection Criteria

Studies were included if they met the following criteria: (1) original research articles, (2) focused on adult Compassion Fatigue, (3) assessed levels of Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout using validated tools, and (4) reported on correlates of Impact of Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout of Critical Care Nurses. Exclusion criteria comprised articles that did not provide empirical data, and studies focused on interventions and those that did not specifically address Impact of Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout of Critical Care Nurses

Data Extraction

Data were extracted using a standardized form that included information on study design, sample characteristics, Compassion Fatigue tools employed, findings related to Burnout levels, and identified correlates of Impact of Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout of Critical Care Nurses. The extracted data were systematically organized to facilitate comparative analysis across studies.

Quality Assessment

The methodological quality of the included studies was assessed using critical appraisal tools. Each study was evaluated based on criteria such as clarity of objectives, appropriateness of methodology, sample size, and statistical analysis. Studies that met the quality thresholds were included in the final synthesis.

Data Synthesis

The findings from the selected studies were synthesized qualitatively. Themes related to the prevalence of Compassion Fatigue, demographic factors influencing Burnout levels, and effective interventions for enhancing of Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout of Critical Care Nurses

were identified. The synthesis aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge regarding Impact of Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout of Critical Care Nurses.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was not required as this study involved a review of existing literature. However, the authors adhered to ethical guidelines in reporting the findings, ensuring proper citation of all included studies, and acknowledging the contribution of previous researchers in the field. This literature review aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on Impact of Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout of Critical Care Nurses, ultimately informing clinical practice and future research directions.

Literature Review

This comprehensive literature review underlines the necessity of understanding critical care nurses' professional quality of life. It also highlights the need for healthcare institutions to ensure they have policies and procedures in place that support these individuals, enhancing compassion satisfaction, minimizing compassion fatigue and burnout, and ultimately improving the quality of care for patients.

Results and Discussion

The role of compassion satisfaction in nursing

Compassion satisfaction in nursing is extremely crucial, as it not only implies the pleasure derived from being able to perform one's job well but also relates to the sense of accomplishment and satisfaction nurses attain from making a positive difference in their patients' lives. A significant body of literature validates the role of compassion satisfaction in enhancing critical care nurses' professional quality of life. Seppälä et al. (2017) reported that compassion satisfaction is a protective factor, reducing the risk of burnout, compassion fatigue, and emotional exhaustion, bolstering resilience, and fostering professional longevity. Meanwhile, Hinderer et al. (2014) found that greater levels of compassion satisfaction were associated with lower levels of burnout and compassion fatigue, resulting in increased vitality and decreased work-related stress.

Similarly, Cocker and Joss (2016) indicated that the sense of accomplishment garnered from providing high-quality care can enhance psychological well-being, leading to improved personal and job satisfaction. Moreover, Potter et al. (2013) highlighted the role of compassion satisfaction in reducing turnover intentions, suggesting that it can lead to greater job satisfaction, increased commitment, and improved work performance. Furthermore, compassion satisfaction was linked to increased nurse-patient communication, collaboration, patient satisfaction, and improved therapeutic outcomes (O'Connor et al., 2018; Maben et al., 2012).

Choi et al., (2015) explored the relationship between compassion satisfaction, burnout, and the role of organizational factors, finding that empowerment and positive relationships are critical in ensuring the maintenance of compassion satisfaction. This suggests that compassion satisfaction is intrinsically rewarding and can influence the broader nursing domain, impacting the general quality of patient care and nurses' sense of well-being. In conclusion, the literature reinforces the importance of compassion satisfaction as a cornerstone of the nursing profession. Given its reciprocal relationship with critical care nurses' well-being and professional quality of life, healthcare environments need to promote and foster such satisfaction within their nursing staff. Drawing insights from existing literature would facilitate the implementation of interventions that nurture compassion satisfaction and mitigate burnout and compassion fatigue, thereby enhancing the overall quality of nursing care.

Compassion fatigue: what it means for critical care nurses

Compassion fatigue, a term introduced in the 90s, is a condition characterized by emotional, physical, and social exhaustion that results from a constant and intense caregiver-patient relationship. For critical care nurses working in highly stressful and demanding environments, compassion fatigue can lead to decreased productivity, decreased patient care quality, low morale, and even staff turnover. It is now recognized as a distinct form of burnout in the nursing literature.

The professional quality of life is a conceptual model that addresses the positive and the negative aspects of helping others who experience trauma and suffering. It embraces both the concept of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue. Compassion satisfaction is about the pleasure derived from being able to perform one's job well, while compassion fatigue is the negative aspect of helping, composed of secondary traumatic stress and burnout.

In a literature review addressing the impact of compassion satisfaction, fatigue, and burnout on critical care nurses, numerous studies indicate a high prevalence of these factors among critical care nurses. They are repeatedly exposed to traumatic events, ethical dilemmas, and the continuous need to make critical decisions under pressure that can induce moral distress and emotional exhaustion, which, in turn, contribute to compassion fatigue and burnout.

Interestingly, researchers also found that compassion satisfaction could act as a protective factor against the development of compassion fatigue and burnout. It appears that by finding joy and satisfaction in their work, critical care nurses are able to cope better with the stresses of their job. However, many hospitals and healthcare institutions do not provide adequate support for their nursing staff to help them handle compassion fatigue and burnout, potentially compromising their well-being and patient care outcomes.

Compassion fatigue poses a significant concern for critical care nurses, directly impacting their professional quality of life and indirectly affecting patient care. Organizational interventions to manage compassion fatigue and burnout, along with initiatives to promote compassion satisfaction, are crucial for maintaining nurses' well-being and sustaining high standards of patient care.

Impact of burnout on the life of nurses

The impact of burnout on nurses is a significant concern within the healthcare system, with numerous studies exploring its various dimensions. Much literature has focused on professional quality of life (ProQOL) components such as compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, and burnout within nursing. For instance, 'Professional Quality of Life: Impact of Compassion Satisfaction, Fatigue, and Burnout of Critical Care Nurses' offers an in-depth literature review about the profound effects of burnout on critical care nurses.

Research indicates that compassion satisfaction, the pleasure drawn from performing one's work well, can be negatively impacted by severe stress levels, causing a decrease in job satisfaction and quality of patient care. Due to arduous work conditions, the diminished ability to find joy and contentment in their work life often culminates in burnout, an extreme form of emotional fatigue resulting from constant exposure to stressful situations. This appears to be particularly pronounced among critical care nurses who are continually dealing with life-or-death scenarios.

Furthermore, the literature also highlights compassion fatigue, a state of physical and emotional exhaustion often accompanied by a shift in a caregiver's worldview. Primarily, it results from the nurses' prolonged exposure to patients' trauma and suffering. This emotional drain commonly morphs into burnout, causing significant emotional, psychological, and physical tolls on the individuals affected. Burnout not only leads to health hazards such as chronic fatigue, insomnia, and depression but also reduces the concentration and decision-making abilities of nurses, thus affecting patient care quality.

Moreover, the literature observes a strong correlation between burnout and career attrition in nursing. High stress levels and burnout lead to increased turnover rates, creating a significant workforce problem for the healthcare sector. Besides career attrition, burnout also results in reduced productivity, compromised patient safety, and damaging effects on healthcare workers' morale.

Correlation between professional quality of life and compassion fatigue

Numerous scholarly studies have explored the correlation between professional quality of life and compassion fatigue, particularly focusing on individuals in nursing. A significant body of research underpins this correlation, highlighting the profound effect of continuous caregiving roles on healthcare

professionals' physical and psychological well-being, especially those involved in critical care situations.

As highlighted in the literature review, previous research succinctly draws the relationship between the quality of professional life and compassion fatigue, particularly in critical-care settings. Nurses working in such environments are constantly exposed to high-stress scenarios, leading to compassion fatigue, often manifested as physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion. In the long run, this can decrease their professional quality of life and increase the risk for errors, absenteeism and turnover.

Furthermore, the literature review strikingly shows that compassion fatigue can eventually transpire into burnout, which severely impacts nurses' professional quality of life and may affect their level of compassion satisfaction. With burnout, nurses might feel emotionally drained, less competent and productive, and start distancing themselves from patients. This will affect the delivery of care, resulting in compromised patient outcomes.

By improving the understanding of compassion satisfaction, fatigue, and burnout, it will be possible to develop strategies to boost professional quality of life, alleviate compassion fatigue and consequent burnout in nurses, thus ensuring more sustainable healthcare practices. In conclusion, the professional quality of life and compassion fatigue demonstrate a strong correlation, specifically within the critical care nursing field, underscoring the ubiquity of these concerns within high-stress healthcare settings.

Mitigating burnout: strategies for enhancement of professional quality

Mitigating burnout and enhancing professional quality of life among critical care nurses requires comprehensive strategies focusing on producing compassion satisfaction and reducing compassion fatigue and burnout. Existing literature emphasizes that nurses in critical care units are particularly susceptible to experiencing high levels of psychological distress, leading to burnout due to the demanding nature of their work, which involves round-the-clock care for critically ill patients.

A study by Hooper et al. (2010) explores the concepts of compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, and burnout as crucial components of professional quality of life. In their study, compassion satisfaction is defined as the pleasure derived from being able to perform one's work well, and it is believed to buffer against the negative effects of compassion fatigue and burnout. The negative aspects, compassion fatigue and burnout, occur due to prolonged exposure to traumatic and stressful events experienced by patients. This may result in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decrease nurses' sense of personal accomplishment.

The study by Cimiotti et al. (2012) further elaborates on the impact of burnout on nurses' well-being, noting that chronic exposure to work-related stress and inadequate recovery time can trigger emotional exhaustion. Additionally, patient safety outcomes are compromised, manifesting in higher rates of healthcare-associated infections. Therefore, there is emphasis on the importance of providing supportive measures in the work environment to assist nurses in managing work-related stress, thus reducing compassion fatigue and burnout.

Another body of literature pivots on the role of resilience in ameliorating burnout. Studies such as those by Mealer et al. (2012) suggest that strengthening resilience, defined as the ability to bounce back or recover from stress, can potentially mitigate burnout and improve professional quality of life. Interventions such as resilience training programs have been proposed, which include elements such as promoting self-care activities, fostering work-life balance, and cultivating a positive outlook.

How critical care nurses can maintain compassion satisfaction

Critical care nurses often face high-stress levels due to demanding working conditions. This can result in compassion fatigue and burnout; however, the literature suggests that maintaining compassion satisfaction can mitigate these adverse effects. Compassion satisfaction is defined as the pleasure derived from being able to do one's work well (Stamm, 2010). According to a study by Roney and Acri (2018), it is crucial for the emotional well-being of critical care nurses and can act as a buffer against the negative impact of compassion fatigue and burnout.

Several strategies have been proposed in the literature to help nurses maintain compassion satisfaction. Kelly and Lefton (2017) emphasized the role of education in promoting an understanding of compassion fatigue and burnout and providing coping mechanisms. Regular training and workshops can increase knowledge about stressors and equip nurses with skills to handle them effectively. Nash and Schiller (2013) recommended improving work-life balance and reducing worktime overload, as exhaustion can impede the ability to derive satisfaction from compassionate care.

The concept of resilience is also pointed out as essential. Rushton (2014) proposed that strengthening resilience can help nurses adapt to challenges and maintain compassion satisfaction. This can be fostered through mindfulness practices, peer group discussions, and professional coaching. Meanwhile, Tawfik et al. (2017) suggested increased social support in the workplace. Positive workplace relationships and good team dynamics improve job satisfaction and provide emotional support, reducing the risk of compassion fatigue and burnout.

Furthermore, the importance of self-care should not be overlooked. Hooper et al. (2010) indicated that taking care of physical and emotional health helps to reduce stress and improve overall professional quality of life, enabling nurses to continue providing compassionate care. Eating a balanced diet, getting adequate sleep, exercising regularly, and relaxing have been highlighted as fundamental self-care practices.

Study outcomes on the impact of professional quality of life among critical care nurses

Literature on the subject of professional quality of life among critical care nurses gives insight into the multi-faceted impact of compassion satisfaction, fatigue, and burnout on these healthcare providers. Several studies highlighted the positive outcomes of high levels of compassion satisfaction; it can relieve stress, improve performance, and increase job satisfaction. For instance, a study by Sacco, Ciurzynski, Harvey, and Ingersoll (2015) revealed that nurses whose work involved high emotional labor felt more compassionate satisfaction, leading to lower turnover and burnout rates.

However, the positive side of caring is often overshadowed by the downsides, namely fatigue and burnout. The adverse consequences of compassion fatigue (also known as second-hand shock or secondary traumatic stress) among critical care nurses have been well documented. Mealer, Jones, and Moss (2012) found a significant correlation between severe emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment with high degrees of compassion fatigue. These factors culminated in substantially affecting patients' care and nurses' health, eventually leading to high turnover rates.

Burnout, another negative aspect of the professional quality of life, impacts critical care nurses equally. A study conducted by Moss, Good, Gozal, Kleinpell, and Sessler (2016) highlighted that critical care nurses who experienced burnout suffered from decreased job satisfaction, increased mental health problems, and a higher incidence of medical errors, collectively deteriorating the nursing care quality.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed emphasized the fact that the physical and emotional toll of providing high-intensity care can lead to elevated levels of fatigue and burnout, negatively affecting the quality of care provided. The existence of compassion satisfaction, however, can potentially counter these detrimental effects. Thus, healthcare organizations need to recognize and address these factors to foster an environment that promotes nurses' overall well-being and satisfaction. Therefore, interventions targeting the mitigation of compassion fatigue and burnout and strategies to enhance compassion satisfaction should be implemented and evaluated for effectiveness regularly. Future research should focus on developing and testing such interventions within various critical care contexts.

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