

Coping strategies used by professional nurses caring for patients with chronic mental illness in selected mental health institutions in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

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## Overview

- ❖ Introduction
- ❖ Aim of the study
- ❖ Methodology
- ❖ Results
- ❖ Conclusion
- ❖ References

# Introduction

- ▶ According to studies, nurses who treat institutionalised chronically mentally ill patients are often confronted with multiple unique challenges (Yusuf et al., 2006; Sobekwa & Arunachallam, 2015; Mokoena, 2017; Joubert & Bhagwan, 2018).
- ▶ These challenges can be divided into four themes, namely: work-related challenges, shortage of personnel, inadequate safety measures and inadequate resources. These four themes were further broken down into sub-themes, such as the violent behavior of mental health care users (MHCUs), the lack of drugs, the lack of funding, stress, burnout, insufficient security measures, the lack of running water, the state of the infrastructure, the lack of trained mental health care professional nurses, and the lack of psychiatrists (Mulaudzi et al. (2020).
- ▶ Correspondingly, Mthombeni (2021) discovered that nurses come across the following challenges when providing care: shortage of safety in the ward, results of patient violent behaviour, stigma amongst professionals, not complying with treatment, compromised healthcare, no value of the registered nurse, and lastly, alternative treatment.
- ▶ Consequently, they tend to use various coping strategies to manage and cope with their challenges.

# Introduction continues

- ▶ Coping strategies are basic categories utilised to classify how individuals often react to stress.
- ▶ Coping strategies are the actions and thoughts a person takes in response to a circumstance or an event (Huang et al., 2008).
- ▶ Coping strategies are either problem focused (adaptive/positive) or emotional focused (maladaptive/negative) coping strategies.
- ▶ Coping strategies can be perceived as negative or positive, either enhancing the well-being of someone or being dangerous to the well-being of someone (Hogan, 2016).
- ▶ The degree of stress, the type of the stressful experiences, and individual traits like age, gender, Level of intelligence, and character and its supplies are all important components of coping.
- ▶ People use physical, psychological, spiritual, and behavioural coping strategies to deal with challenges.

# Aim of the study

- ▶ To identify coping strategies that are used by professional nurses (PNs) to cope while caring for patients with chronic mental illness in selected mental health institutions in Limpopo Province, South Africa.

# Methodology

- ▶ A qualitative descriptive phenomenological design was used.
- ▶ Data was collected at Hayani, Evuxakeni and Thabamooopo mental health institutions.
- ▶ Purposive homogenous sampling was used in the present study.
- ▶ A total of thirty participants (male = 7; females = 23) between 27 and 64 years.
- ▶ Semi-structured interviews were employed in this study as a method of gathering data.
- ▶ Hycner's adapted phenomenological explication method was used to analyse the data.

# Results

- ▶ The results from this study reveals that professional nurses (PNs) apply both maladaptive (negative) and adaptive (positive) coping strategies to manage their caring roles.
- ▶ Most (PNs) seem to use positive coping mechanisms to deal with their caring duties and responsibilities.
- ▶ These positive coping strategies are teamwork, social support, self-counselling, adaptation, prayer and faith in God. Absenteeism was the only negative coping strategy used by few (PNs).
- ▶ Teamwork was also found in the current study to be used as a positively focused coping strategy. Another participant presented an illustration of a scenario in which an MHCU would turn hostile and require confinement. In order to calm the patient and move the MHCU into a seclusion room, the participant said that the nurses worked together.
- ▶ Ramalisa et al. (2018) share the same view by indicating that teamwork between colleagues, multidisciplinary members, and supervisors improved participant's resilience.

# Results continues.....

- ▶ Social support: Social support from colleagues was seen a positive attitude in these PNs, which included habit of going to others for communication, advice and comfort.
- ▶ PNs received support both at home and at work, specifically from family members, spouses, and friends.
- ▶ Psychiatric nurses regard social support, particularly family support, as an essential component of stress management. It is suggested that health organisations recognise the need to provide adequate support to nurses, possibly in accordance with Western initiatives (Abdalrahim, 2013).



# Results continues.....

- ▶ Self-counselling: was highlighted as another adaptive coping mechanism used by PNs to maintain their psychological health while rendering professional service.
- ▶ Considering that most PNs have studied basic psychological counselling as part of their modules, they decided to use what they had learnt and to counsel themselves when they encounter problems.
- ▶ These PNs also mentioned that the other reason for self-counselling is that the psychological services offered in these hospitals are mainly for patients, not for staff.
- ▶ The reasons for not seeking psychological services are unavailability of psychological practitioners, fear of discussing their personal issues with a colleague, and poor relationships between the nursing and psychology department.

# Results continues.....

- ▶ Adaptation: has been discovered as one of the methods that PNs use to cope with their caring burden.
- ▶ Adaptation is defined as the human ability to adapt to different situations.
- ▶ This coping strategy is often used after acceptance of the situation. According to these PNs, after realising that they cannot fix most of their challenges, they decided to adapt to the situation.

# Results continues.....

- ▶ Faith in God: Faith in God was also found to be one of the coping strategies utilised by the PNs interviewed in this study.
- ▶ These nurses believe strongly that their faith in God assists them to cope well with their caring burden. The PNs revealed that they get their strength to care for patients with chronic mental illness from God.
- ▶ The participant's faith in God served assisted the nurses to accept their circumstances, and simultaneously giving a source of meaning in life. Numerous researchers agreed with this concept that nurses practicing a religion, spirituality and faith have greater coping abilities (Cameron & Brownie 2010; Zander et al, 2010; Zheng et al. 2017).
- ▶ These PNs are of the opinion that God sees the good service they render to patients and will reward them in due season.
- ▶ Most people use self-talk to cope, believing that God will reward them for their good deeds and that what nurses do is appreciated (Hasan, 2017).
- ▶ The majority of them stated that in order to deal with difficult circumstances, their trust in God helped them cope better and continue working.

# Results continues.....

- ▶ Prayer: The PNs participating in this study reported using prayer as a way of coping with their caring duties and their problems.
- ▶ Most of PNs use prayer to cope with the challenges that they come across because they are Christian.
- ▶ Prayer has been found to be a commonly used coping strategy in most Christian PNs. Consistent with the findings of this study, Koen et al. (2011) discovered that healthy lifestyle and spirituality are coping mechanisms used by nurses.
- ▶ PNs have morning devotions with patients every morning to uplift their spirit and enhance their mood and morale.

# Results continues.....

- ▶ Absenteeism was one of the negative coping strategy used by few PNs.
- ▶ Nurses use absenteeism as a way of coping with work demands.
- ▶ They mentioned that they take sick leave as a way of coping with their caring burden.
- ▶ According to the these nurses, this negative coping strategy is perpetuated by the shortage of staff and by financial problems that are prevalent in these institutions.
- ▶ According to Singh (2012), absenteeism has been seen to predominate among PNs working with chronic mentally ill patients.

# Conclusion

- ▶ The above results give a clear indication that PNs utilise different coping strategies while caring for chronic ill patients. Seemingly, most of these coping strategies are adaptive and a few are maladaptive. Formal support structures and programmes are essential to nurses and would aid them to cope well with the caring burden.



# Thank you

Questions and recommendations

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