

Assessment of burn-out and quality of life in nursing professionals: the contribution of perceived social support

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Abstract

Burnout has received increased research attention in recent years. The aim of the present study is to examine levels of burnout as well as quality of life (QOL) in nursing staff in Greece. The association of social support with burnout and QOL is also investigated. One-hundred individuals working in Mental and General Hospitals in the broader area of Athens will participate in this study. The measurement tools include i) the Maslach Burnout Inventory, ii) the SF-36 Health Survey and iii) the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. Burnout and QOL are expected to be related to the evaluation of social environment.

Background

Burnout may be defined as a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that results from long-term involvement in work situations that are emotionally demanding. A great deal of research has been devoted to the understanding of factors contributing to burnout and to its consequences for individuals and their health. Research indicates that stress and burnout are significant factors in the development of both physical and psychological illness.¹ Moreover, other studies have indicated the association of burnout with different self-reported measures of distress.²⁻⁴ Apart from the fact that several studies have been conducted regarding the assessment of burnout, there are a limited number of studies in Greece investigating the influence of social

support on nurses' burnout and their quality of life (QOL). The present study aims to: i) assess burnout and QOL in nursing staff working in hospitals in the broader area of Athens; ii) examine possible correlations between burnout as well as QOL and social environment; iii) investigate differences with regards to the levels of burnout and QOL in nursing professionals working in General and Mental hospitals respectively.

Methods

A cohort of 100 nurses will be recruited from General and Mental hospitals located within the broader area of Athens. The inclusion criteria are i) 18 years of age and older; ii) ability to speak and read Greek; and iii) being a registered nurse or nurse, working in the public or private sector. The psychometric tools included in the study are presented below.

Instruments

The data will be obtained with a Greek version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS).⁵ The questionnaire consists of twenty-two items assessing individual's burnout. These items are answered on a seven point Likert-scale, ranging from 0 (Never) to 6 (Everyday). According to Maslach *et al.*,⁵ the instrument is made up of three subscales: Personal Accomplishment (PA) (8 items), Emotional Exhaustion (EE) (9 items), and Depersonalization (DP) (5 items).

The 36-Item Short Form Health Survey (SF-36) will also be used.⁶ The specific tool is comprised of 36 questions which provide an eight-scale profile of functional health and well-being scores (physical function, role function, bodily pain, general health, vitality, social functioning, emotional well-being and mental health) as well as physical and mental health measures.^{6,7} The SF-36 has been used in many population surveys.

During the last years, researchers have shown a great interest in the use of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) in order to assess perceived social support in clinical and social context.⁸⁻¹⁰ MSPSS was developed by Zimet *et al.*^{11,12} and consists of 12 items. The scale is comprised of 3 groups. These are family,^{3,4,8,11} friends,^{6,7,9,12} and a special person.^{1,2,5,10} The sum of 4 items under each sub-scale gives the sub-scale score, while the sum of all sub-scale scores gives the overall scale score. MSPSS has shown satisfactory psychometric properties with high internal consistency and test-retest reliability.^{11,12} The scale has been translated and validated into Greek with excellent results.¹³

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Discussion

The aim of the present study is to examine levels of burnout as well as QOL in nursing staff in Greece. The association of social support with burnout and QOL is also investigated. We believe that the findings will contribute to the scientific community demonstrating the importance of social network in the evaluation of nurses' QOL and burnout.

Moreover, the findings of the present study can be used in the development of health care services and health professionals' management. QOL in particular may play an important role and could therefore be identified as a new area for psychological intervention among nurses.

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