

# **INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT SOCIOLOGY & HUMANITIES**



**ISSN 2277 – 9809 (online)**

**ISSN 2348 - 9359 (Print)**

*An Internationally Indexed Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal*

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## **THE EXPERIENCE OF NIGHT SHIFT REGISTERED NURSES IN AN ACUTE CARE SETTING: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

**Doli Deori**

### **Abstract**

This descriptive exploratory study was conducted to describe the effect of night shift on Indian nurses at critical care units. A convenience sample of Indian nurses working at critical care units in a hospital were studied using a structured questionnaire developed by Sizeni Madide(2003) that describe the effect of night shift among nurses working in critical care units. The findings showed that female nurses had a significant difference on sufficient sleep, and interpersonal conflicts. In addition, the results indicated that nurses experience health problem and their work performance affected by the night shift. The study findings indicated that night shift affect critical care nurses well being. Consequently, this study emphasizes and urges the need to design proper nursing manager interventions that help nurses to improve nursing care quality.

*Keywords: night shift, nurses, health problem, critical care*

### **Introduction**

Shift work is a reality for about 35% of working population. Interest in the effect of shift work on people; have developed because many experts have blamed rotating shifts for human error connected to a number of accidents and catastrophes related to disturbance of circadian rhythms which result in an increased risk of accidents and injury. (Coffey, Skipper, & Jung, 1998). The international council of nursing (ICN) recognizes that many health care providers' services are accessible on twenty-four hour basis, making shift work a necessity, at the same time ICN is very concerned that shift work may have a negative impact on the individual's health, ability to function, thus affecting the services provided.

Nurses as health care providers are obliged to work during the day and during the night to cater for the needs of sick people. While Intensive care nurses were vulnerable to a stressful environment because of the complex nature of patient's health problems that requiring an extensive use of very sophisticated technology. Furthermore, few researchers' studies the effect of night on critical care nurses for example Mathew and Campbell (1990) stated that Nurses turnover is expensive. It affects the safety and Effect of Night Shift on Nurses Working In Intensive Care Units. And they hypothesized that frequent night duty is a major factor influencing turnover therefore they conduct a study nurses, who choose to leave intensive care unit within last eight month, The results of the study support the hypothesis and they found that

50% of the staff left intensive care unit, because of general dissatisfaction with a variety of aspects of their job, specifically night duty.

Furthermore, in examining the influence of day, afternoon, night and rotating shifts on job performance and stress on nurses, found that job performances and satisfaction was less on a rotating roster than on a fixed roster. Although there has been a move towards studies of nursing turnover, there is still a general absence of research that attempts to associate perceptions of night duty with job satisfaction and ultimately staff turnover.(Ohida, "et al". 2001).

### **Literature Review**

It is well established that nursing was done amongst the earliest people, with women protecting and caring for children, the sick, elderly members of the family and neighbours throughout the night during periods of illness (Dolan, 1967:1). Yet indications are that nurses today doing night-shift work still have difficulty in having their work recognised as equally valued and viewed as equally important as that of day workers(Brooks, 1999b:356; Hubbard, 1997:28).

A review of the relevant literature was undertaken to determine what the experiences of other night nurses were and what authors had previously said with regard to this topic. The literature review also assisted in establishing what the current thoughts regarding the physical, social and work-related effects of night-shift nursing are. The literature study provided information regarding the

- background views on night-shift nursing,
- physical effects which relate to the night-shift nursing experience,
- social effects relating to the night-shift nursing experience, and
- work-related effects pertaining to the night-shift nursing experience.

Monk (In Slon, 1997:106) says that those who have never worked night shift may have the perception that modifying ones' life in an attempt to adapt to night work might appear to be relatively simple – a quick change that would require a few days of adjustment. He argues, however, that this is a false perception as it was far from the reality and real truth of having to adjust from day to night duty. Monk (In Slon,1997:106) also indicates that even those workers who choose to work night shift cannot really fully appreciate the challenges they are required to face. 'When you deliberately try to shift the 'sleep/wake cycle', it's like having a symphony with two conductors, each one beating out a different time...' (Monk, in Slon, 1997:106).

Westfall-Lake and McBride (2000:25) express their concern about the shift workers and their safety and state that working shifts can be demanding. Crace (1999:26) argues that this economic demand which requires people to be away from their families at these 'odd' times for night work could result in adverse effects being experienced.

The risk of self-injury was increased in people who worked night shifts, and was found to be the highest round about midnight. It also increased during the latter span of the shift (Smith, Folkard & Poole, 1994:1099; Folkard & Akerstedt, 2004:161). Regular rest breaks have been found to have decreased the risk of accidents during shift work (Tucker, Folkard & MacDonald, 2003:680). Slon (1997:111) stated that alertness decreased in the early hours of the morning which increased the risk of accidents. He further stated that night-shift workers might fall asleep behind the steering wheel when they drive home in the mornings.

It had been shown that long-term night shift nursing continued to be appealing for a 'considerably' small number of nurses, mostly female with family obligations. Brooks (1999b:348) in his ethnographic study on the 'Culture of night shift nursing,' found that 87 per cent of the night nurses indicated that they found their permanent night shifts convenient.

In a different study conducted by Brooks and Swailes (2002:117) that examined the relationship between nurses' shift patterns, influence over shift patterns and realisation of shift preference and commitment to nursing, results revealed that permanent night shift nurses reportedly had lower levels of commitment to nursing.

The correlation of night-shift tolerance scores with other tolerance to shift-work scores established from questionnaire assessments done by Vidacek, Kaliterna, Radosevic-Vidacek and Prizmic (in Costa et al., 1989:218) indicated that 'better tolerance to night shift was associated with better sleep quality, longer duration of sleep after the night shift, and fewer health complaints, especially the psychosomatic-digestive ones.'

Costa et al. (1990:15) cautioned that, when researching the topic of 'night-shift work', it has to be kept in mind that 'women working at night has a very different social impact depending on each culture's attitudes towards women, and their place in society.'

A study by Heymann (2000:1) found that all age groups working the night shift had work disruptions because of family problems. The most alarming revelation was the effect that parental working conditions had on the children's educational outcome, with special emphasis on the effects that were associated with parents working evening and night hours. 'For every hour a parent worked between 6:00 pm and 9:00 p.m., says the report, his or her child was 16% more likely to score in the bottom quartile on math tests' (Heymann, 2000:1).

A significant attribute grounded in research conducted with regard to night shift was the belief amongst night nurses that they were different and were ‘unappreciated, misunderstood and not valued’ as much as their day-duty colleagues were (Brooks, 1999b:356; Brookes, 1999a:41). Night-charge nurses were left to work with minimal means and less supervision. In addition, feelings of stress and isolation were increased amongst night nurses, as generalised beliefs prevailed that night work had lower value (Hubbard, 1997:28).

### **Research Methodology**

This research study design is a descriptive, quantitative, survey approach. The research design was an overall plan followed to conduct the study i.e., to ‘...obtain answers to the questions being studied and for handling some of the difficulties encountered during the research process’ (Polit & Beck, 2004:49).

The study population consisted of all the available nurses on night shift, at the hospital, which totalled 220. Two hundred and nineteen (219) night nurses consented to participate and accepted the questionnaire.

Only the resident nurses employed by the designated city hospital who were on night shift in July 2012, were asked to participate in the study. Nurses who were in the employ of the various nursing agencies and nurses who were working overtime for the hospital and who were on duty on the nights that the questionnaire was conducted, were not viewed as regular night-shift nurses and hence were excluded from participation in this study. The length of time any participant had been working night duty was not an exclusion criterion.

The researcher both publicised and informed the participants about the pilot study and the prospective study at several meetings before the onset of recruitment. These forums included two senior nursing management meetings also known as Deputy Director Nursing Group Meeting (DDN), one meeting for head nurses (unit supervisors) and at two ‘night sisters’ meetings (two opposite shifts). The researcher also conducted smaller floor meetings with the night nurses to promote and ensure that information about the study had been received by the prospective participants in all of the six major clinical areas of the hospital.

### **Data Collection and Instrument**

Participation in the study is voluntary and based on the nurses ability to give an informed consent, all data and information’s gathered will be strictly confidential and will not be accessed by any other without prior permission from the participants, moreover, the participant has the right to withdrew at any time if he can not complete the questionnaire. The returned questionnaires were removed from the sealed envelopes by the researcher only. Each \

questionnaire was allocated a subject number where after the researcher then captured this data by making use of the Microsoft Excel 2000 programme. The data entered into the Excel programme was re-checked twice with the assistance of another person to verify its correctness.

### **Result Analysis**

In order to meet the demand for an improved efficiency of dealing with the extended hours of work in some industries, there has been an increasing drive towards the use of shift- workers. The main purpose of this descriptive study was to identify the effects of night shift on Jordanian nurses working in critical care units.

### **Sample characteristic**

One hundred questionnaires were distributed to critical care nurses in city hospital. The overall return rate (response rate) of the questionnaires was 100%. The sample consisted of eighty seven registered nurses (87%) and eleven (11%) practical nurses. Moreover the largest number of nurse respondents were single (71%) and in the age range from 21 years to 30 years old. Nearly half of them female nurses (56%) and (44%) male. Regarding sample distribution among the six units: 26% of sample from surgical intensive care unit SICU first floor. (17%) seventeen percent from coronary care unit, (20%) twenty percent from medical intensive care unit, (10%) ten percent from Neuro Intensive care unit and nine percent (9%) from surgical intensive care unit (third floor).

### **Results of The influence of gender**

The influence of gender has its own highlights in this study. Male regardless of marital status respondents requested to work on a day shift. This is probably due to fact that they need to be with their families or their young age. The married male nurse regarded night shift as strenuous, this was in contract to the suggestion made by the unmarried male nurse. Who regarded night shift as comfortable and had enough energy to perform his duties, but did not have enough sleep when on night shift. They needed to induce sleep by reading. Night shift affected the social life of male nurses but did not seriously affect their health. However, they complained about feet ailments.

### **Results of the effects of night shift on psychosocial aspect.**

It is important to note that even though nurses make a request to work on a night shift, they still regard it as being strenuous. This study examined concentration as one of the psychological concepts of night shift, any shifts revealed that 28% of respondent felt that their concentration is low, 64% felt that their concentration is normal, and 8% felt that is almost high even on night

shift. The nurses experience physical and mental workload since their job involves standing, walking, bending, lifting and making decisions about patient care and other administrative work. All this leads to exhaustion, which disturbs concentration. This means that a tired person is unable to think clearly.

### **Effects of night shift on social life**

Night shift causes an imbalance between desired lifestyle and work, women have a major role to play in the domestic life and they compromise their sleep to undertake the domestic chores such as care to their children and family chores. To find out whether night shift affects the social aspect of nurses or not 60% of respondents stated that their social life is sometimes affected, 33% stated that always their social life is affected that is mean 93% of the nurses are affected and 7% not affected. The aspect of social life involves nurses families, work relationships and other social groups.

### **Results of the effects of night shift on the Work performance**

Nurses regarded the time of 10 hours allocated for night shift is too long. 78% of nurses feel that night shift has a heavier workload than the day shift, nevertheless their present shift either morning, evening or night. They attribute this to the fact that there are fewer nurses working at night, 73% of nurses revealed that the ratio of nurses to patient is not appropriate. The temporary supporting night nurses not as competent as permanent staff to deal with peculiar problems encountered in specialized units. This makes it necessary for night nurses to work extra hard to keep their sections functioning to the desired health care standards. The workload of the night nurses is dependent on the intake of patients during a particular day. Management is facing a problem of an unpredictable patient influx on each day.

### **Results of The effects of night shift on health status of the night workers**

Regarding health status of the respondents during night shift, 74% of the nurses felt that their health is affected, 26% had no health problems and 11% did not know whether night shift affect them or not. Amongst the respondents, 61% are troubled by frequent headaches, 49% by backache, 36% by persistent tiredness, and 44% by insomnia and 23% suffered from feet ailments. Sleep is a major concern since it affects the health and the performance of nurses who are dealing with human lives. The health care workers in this study have indicated that they are exposed to such hazards and mistakes. Any mistake or accident resulting from fatigue or stress can cost a life of the next person, resulting in law suites and claims from patients.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Study shows that all age groups are subject to exposure to physiological and psychological hazards brought about by night shift as indicated in their subjective response. The recent developments regarding shift work is aimed towards improvement of health of shift workers, the physical and psychosocial well being as stated by International Labor Office ILO. ILO has highlighted that recommendation should be relevant to specific groups and work systems. Noted is that each sector has its own specific needs, especially health sector as it deals with patient care.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study suggest that it may valuable to replicate this study with larger and more heterogeneous randomly selected sample and well-defined valid instrument that fit and sensitive to Indian culture Assessment of advantages and disadvantages of shift system should be done based on objective criteria. Adjustment of physiological function to night work, level of well being, health problems, and disturbances in personal life, accident rate and performance efficiency, are all taken into consideration in shift work design. Upon the study findings, I recommended that nurses need a continuous medical screen.

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