

Impact of Prolonged working hours, work stress and fatigue among Nurses

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BACKGROUND:

Job stress can endanger the physical and mental health of nurses, decrease energy and work efficiency, and fail to provide proper nursing care, which ultimately has a negative impact on patient outcomes. Therefore, it is required to investigate the stressors and effective planning to eliminate these factors. Fatigue can impair the ability to think clearly, make sound judgments and act decisively. While it is the nurse's and employer's responsibility to find the right balance between work and time off, only the nurse can determine her or his tolerance level for stress, anxiety and fatigue.

Prolonged and Extended working hours and those periods without rest can seriously impair cognitive and motor performance at work, decrease alertness and productivity and increase risk of adverse events and outcomes such as tiredness, fatigue, poor performance, and safety and health care errors.

A study conducted across many countries has revealed that chronic psychosocial work stressors such as low job control (low skill discretion and low decision authority), high level of psychological job demands, lack of supervisor and co-worker support at work, bullying or harassment at work, a lack of social interactions with co-workers, job insecurity, and long working hours per week, etc. cause severe adverse effects on both physical and psychological health of the workers, which sometimes even could lead to suicidal ideation in the workers.

OBJECTIVES:

- i. To identify the causes of prolonged working hours, work stress and fatigue among nurses.
- ii. To find out the effects of above mentioned on quality of patient care.

MATERIALS:

- TYPE OF STUDY: Exploratory study
- SAMPLING TECHNIQUE: Stratified Random Sampling
- SAMPLE SIZE: 60
- Tool: structured questionnaire to assess prolonged working hours and its relevant causes. Rating scale to assess causes of work stress and fatigue and adverse events.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

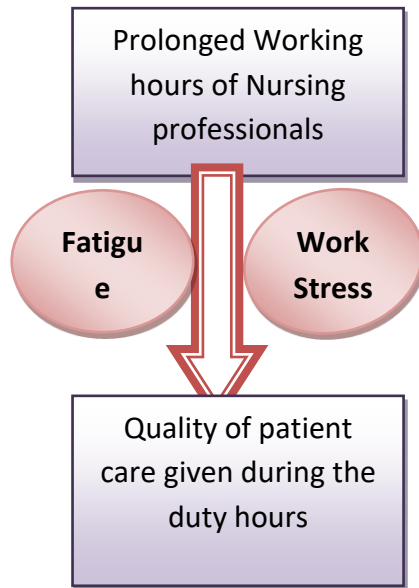
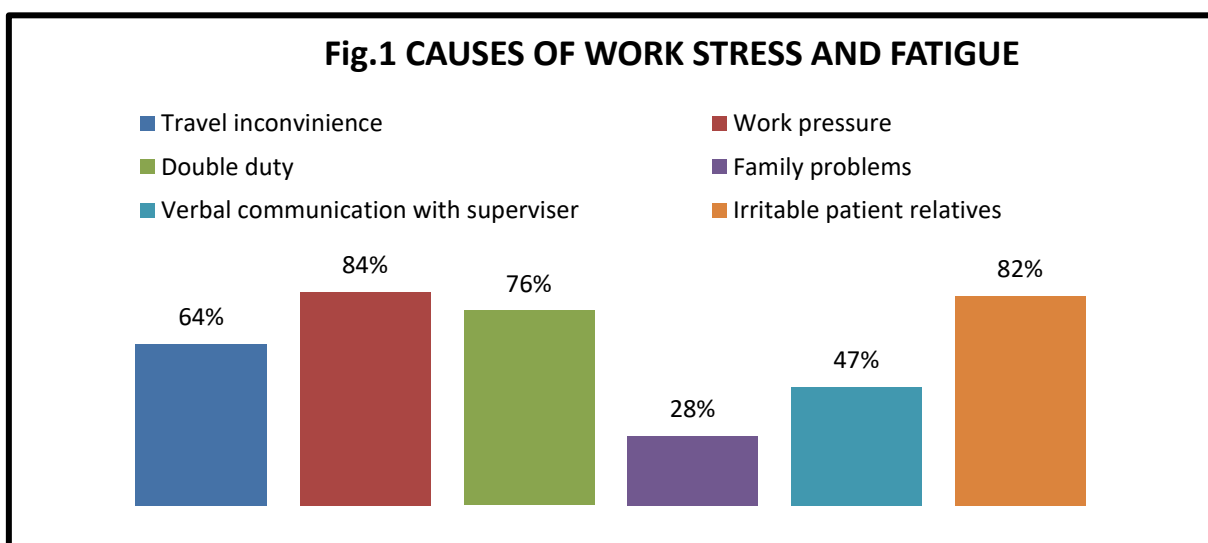
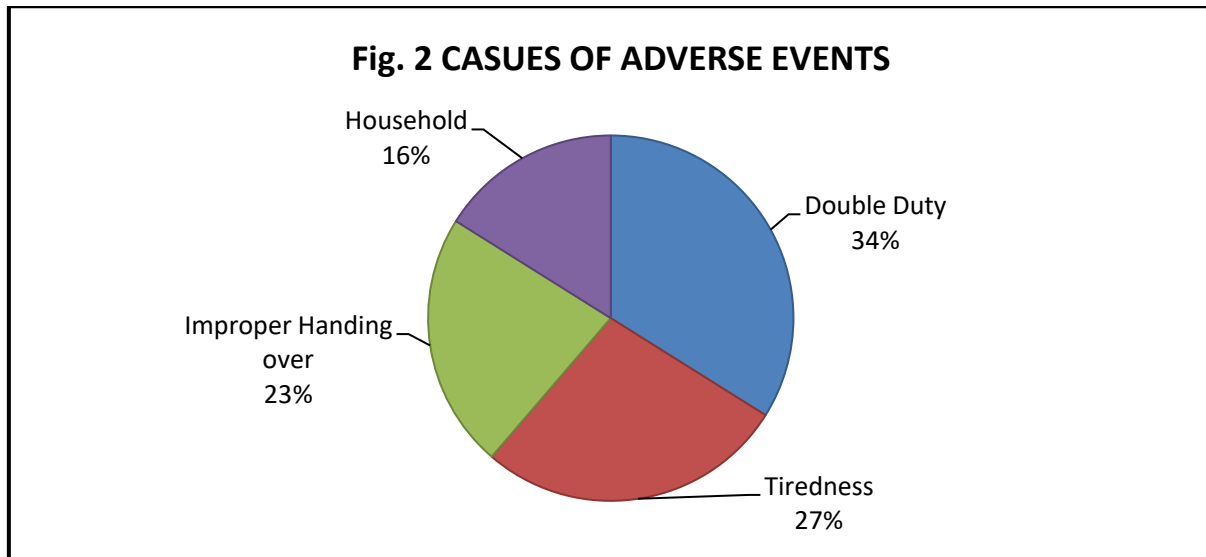


Table.1 Working Hours of Nursing professionals

Working Hours		Percent (%)
	Nurses	7.91
Causes of extra duties	Less manpower	78
	Increased workload	13
	Financial reason	8
Difficulties in Night shifts/ extra duties	Sleepiness	65
	Tiredness and sluggishness	35

Fig.1 CAUSES OF WORK STRESS AND FATIGUE





RESULTS: As the working hours increases, the number of medical errors (related to fatigue, sleep disturbances and stress) also increases, which directly affects the quality of patient care. Acute continuous sleep deprivation has direct impact on fatigue, alertness and performance.

CONCLUSION: Physiological consequences of prolonged working hour's causes disruption of circadian rhythm which can have deleterious effect on performance, sleep patterns, accident rates and mental health. Working long shifts, night shifts, and rotating shifts, as well as mandatory or voluntary overtime, contributes to nurse fatigue, which results in accidents, mistakes, and errors. But beyond the safety and ethical implications, fatigue can also lead to legal consequences, including loss of license.

A more comprehensive and functional strategies needed to overcome these issues. Helping them to cope, good workplace environment and proper shift scheduling will help in least disruption to mental, physical and social wellbeing.

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