

# Perceived Mental Health Issues, Challenges, and Help-Seeking Behavior Among Hospital Nurses in Panay Island, Philippines: Implications to Mental Health Policies

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## Abstract

This study investigates the perceived mental health issues, challenges, and help-seeking behavior among hospital nurses in Panay Island, Philippines. Using a survey-correlational research design, data were gathered from 100 nurses through a researcher-made questionnaire. The findings revealed that nurses face significant mental health challenges, including stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout. The most commonly reported stressors were high workloads, emotional burdens, and limited access to mental health services. Challenges such as stigmatization, workplace discrimination, and insufficient organizational support were identified as major barriers to help-seeking behavior. However, supportive work environments, peer support, and mental health education were found to facilitate help-seeking behavior among nurses. The study concludes that improving mental health education, access to services, and organizational support is essential to enhancing nurses' well-being and job satisfaction. The results have important implications for mental health policies in healthcare settings.

**Keywords:** Mental Health Issues, Challenges, Help-Seeking Behavior, Hospital Nurses, Philippines, Mental Health Policies, Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Burnout, Stigmatization, Organizational Support.

## Introduction

### Background of the Study

The Philippine Mental Health Act (Republic Act No. 11036), enacted in 2018, aims to integrate mental health services into the primary healthcare system, reduce treatment gaps, and improve early detection and intervention. Despite these efforts, hospital nurses in the Philippines, including those in Panay Island, continue to experience significant mental health challenges due to work-related stress, long hours, heavy workloads, emotional burdens, and organizational limitations in support structures. The stigma associated with mental health problems further discourages nurses from seeking help (Girgis et al., 2019).

This study investigates the mental health challenges faced by hospital nurses in Panay Island, Philippines. It aims to explore the perceived mental health issues, challenges, and help-seeking behavior of nurses and contribute valuable insights to the development of policies and interventions that address these concerns.

## Objectives

The study has the following specific objectives:

1. Describe the demographic profile of hospital nurses, including age, sex, years of experience, unit of work, highest educational attainment, marital status, and personal stressors.
2. Identify the perceived mental health issues (stress, anxiety, depression, burnout) among nurses.
3. Examine the challenges faced by hospital nurses, such as stigmatization, workplace discrimination, and limited access to mental health services.
4. Investigate the help-seeking behaviors of hospital nurses in terms of supportive work environments, peer support, and the availability of mental health resources.
5. Analyze significant differences in the perceived mental health issues, challenges, and help-seeking behaviors based on demographic characteristics.
6. Explore the relationships between perceived mental health issues, challenges, and help-seeking behavior.

## Hypotheses

1. No significant differences will exist in perceived mental health issues (stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout) based on demographic characteristics.
2. No significant differences will exist in the challenges faced by nurses based on demographic characteristics.
3. No significant relationships will exist between perceived mental health issues, challenges, and help-seeking behaviors among hospital nurses.

## Methods

### Study Design

This study utilized a survey-correlational research design, which is suitable for exploring relationships between variables (perceived mental health issues, challenges, and help-seeking behavior).

### Participants

The study included 100 hospital nurses from Panay Island, Philippines, selected through simple random sampling. The sample consisted predominantly of females (75%) aged 30-39 years (45%). Most nurses (40%) had more than 10 years of experience, and 15% held postgraduate degrees.

### Data Collection

Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire that covered demographic information, perceived mental health issues, challenges, and help-seeking behavior. The questionnaire was distributed online after receiving ethical approval from the Research Ethics Review Board of Central Philippine University. Data collection occurred between December 2023 and December 2024.

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics (frequency count, percentages, mean, and standard deviation) were used for initial analysis. Inferential statistics (Chi-Square tests, t-tests, and one-way ANOVA) were conducted to assess significant differences between demographic variables, with a significance level of 0.05.

## Results

### Demographic Profile

- **Gender:** 75% of the participants were female.
- **Age:** 45% were aged 30-39 years.
- **Years of Experience:** 40% of nurses had more than 10 years of experience.
- **Educational Attainment:** 15% of the nurses held postgraduate degrees.

### Perceived Mental Health Issues

- **Stress:** 60% of nurses reported moderate to severe stress.
- **Anxiety:** 70% reported experiencing severe anxiety.
- **Depression and Burnout:** 45% of nurses reported moderate levels of depression, and burnout was moderately prevalent across all groups.

### Challenges Faced by Nurses

- **Stigmatization:** 55% of nurses feared professional consequences if they disclosed mental health issues.
- **Workplace Discrimination:** 50% observed discrimination related to mental health problems in the workplace.
- **Limited Access to Mental Health Services:** 60% reported insufficient access to mental health resources.
- **Organizational Support:** Organizational support was generally perceived as moderate, with gaps in mentorship and resources.

### Help-Seeking Behavior

- **Supportive Work Environment:** Nurses in supportive environments were more likely to seek help.
- **Peer and Social Support:** 65% of respondents cited peer support as a key factor in their help-seeking behavior.
- **Mental Health Education:** 40% of nurses indicated that mental health education helped reduce stigma and facilitated help-seeking.

## Discussion

### Interpretation of Results

The findings revealed that hospital nurses in Panay Island face high levels of stress and anxiety, particularly in high-demand units. The significant presence of depression and burnout further emphasizes the mental health strain nurses endure. These findings are consistent with existing studies (Poghosyan et al., 2018), which highlight the link between work-related stress and mental health problems in healthcare workers.

The study also identified stigma and workplace discrimination as barriers to help-seeking behavior. Younger and less experienced nurses were more likely to fear professional consequences for disclosing mental health struggles. However, supportive work environments and peer support emerged as essential facilitators of help-seeking behavior.

### Implications for Mental Health Policies

The findings suggest that mental health policies should focus on:

- **Improving mental health education** and reducing stigma in the healthcare setting.
- **Enhancing access to mental health services** for nurses, especially in remote areas like Panay Island.

- **Providing stronger organizational support**, including mentorship programs, training, and access to confidential mental health resources.

### Limitations

The study's limitations include its small sample size and the regional focus on Panay Island, which may not fully capture the broader mental health challenges faced by nurses across the Philippines. Future studies should explore a larger, more diverse sample and utilize longitudinal data to assess long-term effects.

### Conclusion

This study highlights the significant mental health challenges faced by hospital nurses in Panay Island, particularly stress, anxiety, and burnout. Key challenges such as stigmatization, discrimination, and limited access to mental health services hinder nurses' ability to seek help. However, supportive work environments, peer support, and mental health education can encourage help-seeking behavior and improve overall mental well-being.

Improving organizational support, providing accessible mental health services, and reducing stigma are essential steps for addressing the mental health needs of hospital nurses. By implementing these changes, healthcare organizations can improve nurses' well-being, job satisfaction, and ultimately the quality of patient care.

### References

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