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Work-related stress among occupational health nurse practitioners in Gauteng province

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners (OHNPs) engage in a specialised field that examines the relationship between the workplace and employee health in order to promote, protect, and restore employee health. The expanded role of OHNPs includes health promotion and education that provides stress reduction and management. Work-related stress among nurses is a well-documented and researched growing crisis; nonetheless, the majority of prior research focused on nurses working in hospitals, either in specialised or acute units. Workplace stress is a negative physical and psychological reaction that occurs when there is a dispute between the range of work responsibilities provided to an employee or employer and the amount of control they are given to overcome a situation. Stress is hazardous to one's health; thus, OHNPs must be aware of their stressors and how to effectively manage them in the workplace; consequently, this study will focus on the sources and levels of stress in OHNPs as employees.

Methods: A self-administered online questionnaire with biographical details and a Likert style scale that measured the domains of work-related stress was used. A sample size of 105 was calculated, and this research yielded a 98% response rate with 103 questionnaires completed over a five-month period. Data was captured in Microsoft Excel and STATA Version 15 (Stata Corp 2017) software for descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.

Results: The findings revealed that OHNPs experience a heavy workload with minimal managerial support, especially when workplace changes have an impact on their role and function as an OHNP. The OHNPs excel in their control over their work and in their roles and functions. More than half of OHNPs have support from their colleagues; however, more than half are reporting strained relationships at their workplaces.

Recommendations/Conclusion: Further research is recommended regarding the work-related stress of OHNPs in other provinces in the RSA, in Africa, and internationally. The development of a work-related stress questionnaire designed specifically for the OHNP to investigate the demands placed on OHNPs in greater depth needs to be developed. It is recommended that OHNPs consider resilience, mindfulness, and work-life balance training as it is important in the maintenance of good mental health.

Key Words: occupational health nurse practitioners; occupational health nurses; work-related stress; occupational stress; occupational health; mental health in the workplace