

**MANAGING OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG
NURSING OFFICERS IN SRI LANKA**

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Degree of Master of Science in Occupational Safety and Health
Management

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Declaration

I declare that this is my own work and this dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a Degree or Diploma in any other University or Institute of higher learning and to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where the acknowledgement is made in the text.

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Abstract

Managing occupational stress among nursing officers in Sri Lanka

Occupational stress is a significant concern for the global nursing community due to highly demanding job role, psychological challenges and composite work environments. Occupational stressors among nursing officers, coping mechanisms employed to cope with stressors and correlations among the stressors and coping mechanisms are investigated by this study. A quantitative, cross sectional study design was adopted. Data was collected from a sample of 131 nursing officers of a government tertiary care hospital using a structured online questionnaire consisting of three sections; demographic data section, Expanded Nursing Stress Scale (ENSS), Brief COPE inventory.

Work load related stressors (Mean-3.74) and supervisor related stressors (Mean-3.59) were the most commonly experienced according to descriptive statistics where the least reported stressors were related to treatment uncertainty (Mean-0.87) and discrimination (Mean-0.82). Emotion focused stress coping strategies as humour (Mean-3.76), self-blame (Mean-3.72) and venting (Mean-3.69) were frequently used by the nursing officers instead of problem focused coping strategies like planning and active coping. Statistically significant negative associations were identified using the Pearson correlation analysis between all nine subscales of the ENSS and coping strategies. Correlations related to work load ($r = -0.913$) and supervisor problems ($r = -0.874$) were strongly negative suggesting the decreased use of effective coping strategies with increased stress levels. Oneway ANOVA test demonstrated significant differences among the coping strategy usage (4.162). Tukey's HSD test further confirmed significant difference ($p < 0.001$) in usage of humour, self-blame and venting as coping strategies.

Results of the study conclude the major contribution of work related and supervisor related stressors to occupational stress among nursing officers while emotion focused coping strategies were dominantly used. Study findings emphasize the importance of occupational stress management among nursing officers and training needs to employ effective healthy coping strategies.

Key words – occupational stress, coping strategies, nursing officers, Sri Lanka

Dedication

This thesis is respectfully dedicated to my research supervisor, Dr. Piumi Dissanayaka, whose expert guidance, insightful critique, and steadfast encouragement have been indispensable throughout every stage of this work.

I also dedicate this effort to my family, to my parents, for their unwavering faith in my abilities and the sacrifices they have made to enable my academic pursuits; and to my loved ones, for their constant support and understanding.

Lastly, I extend this dedication to my colleagues whose collaboration, thoughtful discussion and mutual pursuit of excellence have enriched this journey.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
WHO	World Health Organization
ENSS	Expanded Nursing Stress Scale
COPE	Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
GAS	General Adaptation Syndrome
MBSR	Mindfulness based stress reduction

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