Relationship of Workload and Perception with Futile Care Among Nurses of Neonatal Care Units

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) are challenging environments where nurses might provide futile care to vulnerable and critically ill newborns. Such conditions lead to high workloads due to complex patient cases and emergencies. This study explored the relationship between workload and nurses' perceptions of futile care.

Methods and Materials: This descriptive-correlational study was conducted among 130 NICU nurses of two hospitals in West Azerbaijan Province in 2023. Data were collected using a demographic questionnaire, the NASA-Task Load Index, and the 17-item perception of futile care questionnaire, and they were analyzed using SPSS 16 software.

Results: The mean score of workload was 37.37 ± 7.36. A total of 71.95% of the nurses had a high workload. Regarding the perception of futile care, the frequency and intensity scores were 2.78 ± 0.71 (1.29-4.94) and 3.43 ± 0.48 (2.41-5), respectively, indicating a moderate level. The study found a moderate positive correlation between workload and the perception of futile care (r = 0.357). Furthermore, the mental demand (r = 0.175; p = 0.04) and requiring more time (r = 0.307; p = 0.001) were positively related to the perception of futile care. Conversely, frustration as one of the aspects of workload had a significant negative correlation with the perception of futile care (r = -0.383; p = 0.002). Thus, the frequency of the perception of futile care was higher among nurses with permanent (p = 0.001) and temporary (p = 0.003) positions compared to novice nurses. Ultimately, age, gender, experience providing care to critically ill patients, and frustration were identified as variables that explained 43% of the variance in nurses' job performance.

Conclusion and Discussion: This study sheds light on the significant relationship between workload and perception of futile care among nurses in NICU settings to find effective interventions to improve nurses' well-being and job performance, especially in neonate care, as they are one of the vulnerable groups. Related studies have also emphasized the importance of addressing high workload levels in healthcare settings due to its potential impact on burnout, decreased job satisfaction and care quality. Further studies are necessary to explore strategies to address these challenges effectively in healthcare environments.

Keywords: Neonatal intensive care unit, Nurses, Workload

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