
Stress Management Among Nurses In Dealing With Job Stress In The Intensive Care Unit (ICU) At Rsud Tgk Chik Ditiro Sigli

Jauhariyadi¹⁾, Fauziah²⁾, Syamsul Bahri³⁾, Fitriani⁴⁾, Anwar⁵⁾
^{1,2,3,4,5)} Universitas Bumi Persada, Kota Lhokseumawe

*Corresponding Author

Email : ns.fauziah1982@gmail.com

Abstract

Work stress among nurses is a significant issue, particularly in high-intensity units such as the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), where job demands are complex and emotionally challenging. Nurses in the ICU are required to provide continuous monitoring, respond quickly to critical patient conditions, and operate advanced medical equipment, all of which may contribute to increased stress levels. This study aimed to describe stress management strategies used by nurses in dealing with work-related stress in the ICU at RSUD Tgk Chik Ditiro Sigli. A quantitative descriptive design was employed involving 30 nurses working in the ICU. The findings showed that the majority of nurses applied good physical stress management strategies (83.3%), good cognitive strategies (66.7%), and good social strategies (90.0%). However, emotional strategies were mostly categorized as moderate (66.7%). These results indicate that ICU nurses predominantly utilize effective stress management approaches, particularly social and physical strategies, in coping with job stress. Strengthening emotional coping skills through training and organizational support is recommended to further enhance nurses' psychological well-being and maintain the quality of patient care.

Keywords: *Stress Management, Job Stress, ICU Nurses, Coping Strategies.*

INTRODUCTION

Hospitals are unique and highly complex organizations, characterized as capital-intensive, labor-intensive, technology-intensive, profession-intensive, and problem-intensive institutions (Aditama, 2019). They provide a wide range of health services aimed at maintaining and improving public health. The uniqueness and complexity of hospitals result in various activities, including medical procedures, nursing care, financial operations, and individual as well as group interactions. The implementation of these activities often gives rise to differences and potential conflicts, which may become sources of stress for individuals involved in hospital settings (Stordeur, 2021).

Stress can be defined as the body's response to situations that create pressure, change, and emotional tension. The emergence of stress in individuals may be caused by various triggering factors. According to Girdano, stressors are generally classified into four types: personality stress, psychosocial stress, bio-ecological stress, and job stress. Among these, job stress is one of the most commonly encountered types (Hilda, 2018). In the hospital work environment, stress can be interpreted as a complex emotional and physical response experienced by healthcare workers as a result of high job demands, time pressure, heavy workloads, and interactions with ill patients (Margiati, 2019).

Research conducted by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) indicates that hospital and healthcare-related occupations have a high tendency toward job stress and depression (Rahman, 2020). Meanwhile, the American National Association for Occupational Health (ANAHO) ranks nurses at the top among the first forty occupations experiencing work-related stress. This condition may be attributed to nurses' often monotonous tasks and confined working spaces, particularly in inpatient wards. The demand to act quickly and accurately in handling patients is especially experienced by nurses working in emergency departments (Rahman, 2020).

Feelings of helplessness and pressure experienced by nurses when facing job stressors can lead to various negative impacts. Excessive stress may cause physical and emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, stress can affect work productivity and ultimately influence the quality of healthcare services provided to patients (Mealer, 2018). Therefore, prevention and management of these impacts

are necessary.

Stress management can be carried out through several strategies, including physical strategies aimed at calming oneself and reducing bodily stimulation; emotional strategies that focus on managing emotions arising from problems; cognitive strategies such as positive reappraisal of problems; and social strategies by seeking support groups (Wade & Tavis, 2021).

One of the stress management approaches used by nurses to cope with job stress is coping strategies. Research conducted by Fathi, Nasae, and Thiangchanya (2020) found that the majority of coping strategies used by nurses in China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand include planful problem-solving, seeking social support, self-control, and positive reappraisal. In contrast, the same study found that Indonesian nurses predominantly use emotion-focused coping strategies, with religion being the most commonly utilized coping mechanism. These findings indicate differences in coping strategies in managing job stress, which may be influenced by nurses' characteristics and the cultural environment of their workplace (Greenberg, 2021).

The coping strategies chosen by nurses to manage job stress represent a unique phenomenon. This uniqueness can be observed in the natural process of nurses' experiences when facing stress, interpreting stressors, and determining the basis for selecting coping strategies. Understanding daily life experiences is essential to gain deeper insight into a phenomenon. Therefore, nurses' experiences in dealing with job stress need to be comprehensively understood (Hawari, 2020).

The work experience of nurses in the Emergency Department (ED) and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) differs from those in other units. ICU nurses are required to possess specialized knowledge and skills to respond quickly to critically ill patients (Hays, 2019). Hays et al. further state that ICU nurses must be proficient in operating advanced technological equipment. These demands can trigger stress among ICU nurses.

Equipment used in the ICU is highly complex and sophisticated. In general, ICU equipment can be categorized into monitoring devices such as ECG, EEG, intravascular and intracranial pressure monitors, cardiac output computers, pulse oximeters, pulmonary function monitors, bedside and central monitors, carbon dioxide analyzers, cerebral function monitors, temperature monitors, blood chemistry analyzers, blood gas and electrolyte analyzers, radiology equipment (X-ray viewers, portable X-ray machines, image intensifiers); respiratory equipment including ventilators, humidifiers, oxygen therapy devices, airway control equipment, automatic resuscitators; hemodialysis machines; and defibrillators (Ministry of Health, 2018).

Nurses working in the ED and ICU are particularly vulnerable to job stress. According to Mansour et al. (2011), the primary stressors in the ICU are exhaustion and demoralization. These conditions may affect the quality of patient care in the ICU and influence the overall quality of hospital services, as the ICU is an integral part of hospital care.

Various factors can influence job stress, including individual characteristics. Demographic characteristics are associated with the level of stress experienced in relation to work (Greenberg, 2021). Several studies reveal that age, gender, field of work, work experience (Wijono, 2020), and marital status affect job stress levels. Research by Assegaf (2020) shows a significant influence of educational level on job stress among nurses working in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, nationality has been found to influence job stress levels, with Indonesian nurses included as research subjects in that study.

A preliminary study conducted by the researcher in the ICU of RSUD Tgk Chik di Tiro revealed that the ICU has 14 beds and 30 nurses, with an average educational background of Diploma III in Nursing. Interviews with two nurses indicated that the first nurse experienced work stress due to the need for continuous patient monitoring, while the second nurse reported stress when facing complex problems that were difficult to resolve due to limited knowledge and authority. The first nurse managed stress by collaborating with colleagues and consulting supervisors to address work-related issues, whereas the second nurse coped by engaging in physical exercise during days off to relieve boredom and stress.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative descriptive research design to examine stress management strategies among nurses in dealing with job stress in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at RSUD Tgk Chik Ditiro Sigli. The study population consisted of all nurses working in the ICU, with a total of 30 respondents selected using a total sampling technique. Data were collected using structured questionnaires that measured four stress management strategies: physical, emotional, cognitive, and social strategies. The data were analyzed using univariate analysis to determine the frequency distribution and percentage of each variable. The results were presented in tables to describe the characteristics of respondents and the categories of stress management strategies applied by ICU nurses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

The respondent characteristics are described by the majority of nurses' age, education, and length of service, as presented in the following table:

Table 5.1

Frequency Distribution Of Respondents At Dr. Fauziah Bireuen Regional Hospital (N=30)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	20-40 years	22	73.3
	41-65 years	8	26.7
Total		30	100.0
Gender	Male	10	33.3
	Female	20	66.7
Total		30	100.0
Education	D-III	12	40.0
	SI	18	60.0
Total		30	100.0
Marital status	Not married yet	7	23.3
	married	23	76.7
Total		30	100.0

Related Table 5.1 shows the frequency distribution of respondents based on demographic characteristics at Dr. Fauziah Bireuen Regional General Hospital. Of the 30 respondents involved in this study, the majority were between 20 and 40 years old (22 respondents (73.3%), while only 8 (26.7%) were between 41 and 65 years old. Regarding gender, the majority of respondents were female (20 respondents (66.7%), while 10 (33.3%) were male.

In terms of educational level, the majority of respondents had a bachelor's degree (18 respondents (60.0%), while 12 (40.0%) had a diploma or higher.

Regarding marital status, the majority of respondents were married (23 respondents (76.7%), while 7 (23.3%) were single.

Univariate Analysis

Table 5.2

Frequency Distribution Of Physical Stress Management Strategies Among Nurses In Dealing With Occupational Stress In The Intensive Care Unit (Icu) At Tgk Chik Ditiro Sigli Regional Hospital (N=30)

Physical strategies for dealing with work stress that you want to try too	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Enough	5	16.7
Good	25	83.3
Total	30	100.0

Table 5.2 shows the frequency distribution of physical strategies employed by nurses to cope with work stress in the ICU at Tgk Chik Ditiro Regional Hospital, Sigli. Most nurses (83.3%) reported that they used effective physical strategies to cope with work stress. Only 5 (16.7%) nurses stated that their physical strategies were adequate for coping with work stress. Overall, it can be concluded that the majority of nurses in the ICU at Tgk Chik Ditiro Regional Hospital, Sigli, employ effective physical strategies to manage their work stress.

Table 5.3

Frequency Distribution Of Emotional Stress Management Strategies Among Nurses In Cope With Work Stress In The Intensive Care Unit (Icu) At Tgk Chik Ditiro Regional Hospital, Sigli (N=30)

Emotional Strategies in Dealing with Work Stress	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Enough	20	66.7
Good	10	33.3
Total	30	100.0

Table 5.3 shows the frequency distribution of emotional strategies used by nurses to cope with work stress in the ICU at Tgk Chik Ditiro Regional Hospital, Sigli. Most nurses (66.7%) reported that their emotional strategies for coping with work stress were adequate. Meanwhile, 10 nurses (33.3%) stated that they used good emotional strategies to manage work stress.

From this data, it can be concluded that the majority of nurses in the ICU at Tgk Chik Ditiro Regional Hospital, Sigli, use adequate emotional strategies to cope with work stress, although a small number have implemented good emotional strategies.

Table 5.4

Frequency Distribution Of Cognitive Stress Management Strategies Among Nurses In Cope With Work Stress In The Intensive Care Unit (Icu) At Tgk Chik Ditiro Regional Hospital, Sigli (N=30)

Cognitive Strategies in Dealing with Work Stress	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Enough	10	33.3
Good	20	66.7
Total	30	100.0

Table 5.4 shows the frequency distribution of cognitive strategies employed by nurses to cope with work stress in the ICU at Tgk Chik Ditiro Regional Hospital, Sigli. Most nurses (66.7%) reported using good cognitive strategies to manage work stress. Meanwhile, 10 nurses (33.3%) stated that their cognitive strategies were adequate in coping with work stress.

From these results, it can be concluded that the majority of nurses in the ICU at Tgk Chik Ditiro Regional Hospital, Sigli, use good cognitive strategies to cope with their work stress.

Table 5.5

Frequency Distribution Of Social Stress Management Strategies Among Nurses In Cope With Work Stress In The Intensive Care Unit (Icu) At Tgk Chik Ditiro Regional Hospital, Sigli (N=30)

Social Strategies in Dealing with Work Stress	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Enough	3	10.0
Good	27	90.0
Total	30	100.0

Table 5.5 shows the frequency distribution of social strategies employed by nurses to cope with work stress in the ICU at Tgk Chik Ditiro Sigli Regional Hospital. The majority of nurses (90.0%) reported using effective social strategies to manage work stress. Only three (10.0%) nurses stated that their social strategies were adequate for coping with work stress.

Based on these data, it can be concluded that almost all nurses in the ICU at Tgk Chik Ditiro Sigli Regional Hospital employ effective social strategies to cope with work stress.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings presented in Table 5.2, the majority of nurses working in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at RSUD Tgk Chik Ditiro Sigli reported that they applied good physical strategies in coping with job stress, with a percentage of 83.3%. This indicates that most nurses recognize the importance of maintaining physical health as a means of managing stress arising from their demanding roles, particularly in the ICU, which is characterized by high intensity and high-risk working conditions.

The physical strategies referred to include activities such as regular exercise, adequate sleep, physical relaxation techniques, and maintaining a healthy diet. Proper physical activity has been shown to reduce stress levels by increasing endorphin production, which acts as a natural calming hormone (Harrison et al., 2018). Maintaining physical fitness also enables nurses to sustain the energy and concentration required to manage heavy workloads. Barnett et al. (2017) found that regular exercise improves both mental and physical well-being and serves as an effective stress management method. However, five nurses (16.7%) reported that their use of physical strategies was only moderate. This suggests that although most nurses implement good physical coping strategies, a small proportion may not fully utilize their potential due to factors such as heavy workloads, tight schedules, or limited awareness of the importance of physical self-care in stress management (Leka et al., 2023). Etemadi et al. (2019) further emphasize that effective stress management strategies, particularly physical and emotional approaches, are crucial in reducing the negative impact of intense job stress among healthcare professionals.

Table 5.3 presents the frequency distribution of emotional strategies used by ICU nurses in managing job stress. The majority of nurses (66.7%) reported that their emotional coping strategies were moderate, while 33.3% indicated that they applied good emotional strategies. Emotional coping strategies may include discussing problems with colleagues, seeking social support, or practicing relaxation techniques to maintain emotional stability. Rafferty et al. (2019) highlight the importance of social support from colleagues and family in helping individuals manage stress. Although most nurses demonstrated moderate emotional coping, this suggests that there is still room for improvement in maximizing emotional coping mechanisms. Kim et al. (2018) found that nurses who effectively utilize emotional strategies such as meditation or confiding in trusted individuals are better able to minimize the negative effects of stress. Therefore, further education and training on effective emotional stress management techniques are particularly important in high-pressure environments such as the ICU.

Table 5.4 shows the distribution of cognitive strategies applied by ICU nurses in coping with job stress. Most nurses (66.7%) reported using good cognitive strategies, while 33.3% categorized their cognitive coping as moderate. Cognitive strategies typically involve mental processes such as problem-solving, reframing negative perceptions into positive ones, and using relaxation techniques to calm the mind. According to Selye (2019), cognitive stress management is essential because it enables individuals to reinterpret stressful situations and reduce negative emotional reactions. The majority of nurses who reported good cognitive strategies demonstrate their ability to assess stressful situations effectively, identify appropriate solutions, and maintain a

positive outlook. Awa et al. (2020) support this finding, noting that appropriate cognitive coping strategies can reduce emotional exhaustion and improve mental well-being among healthcare workers. Nevertheless, the proportion of nurses with moderate cognitive coping indicates the need for additional training or workshops to further strengthen cognitive stress management skills, especially given the demanding nature of ICU work.

Table 5.5 presents the frequency distribution of social strategies used by ICU nurses in managing job stress. The vast majority (90.0%) reported applying good social strategies, while only 10.0% indicated moderate use. Social coping strategies involve seeking emotional and practical support from colleagues, supervisors, family, or friends. Research has consistently shown that social support plays a crucial role in reducing stress levels among nurses working in high-pressure settings such as the ICU (Smith et al., 2023). Support may include sharing experiences with colleagues, receiving encouragement, or obtaining assistance from supervisors. Family support also serves as an important buffer against emotional strain following long shifts or highly stressful situations. Patel et al. (2024) confirm that strong social support significantly reduces the negative impact of job stress and enhances mental well-being.

Overall, the findings indicate that most ICU nurses at RSUD Tgk Chik Ditiro Sigli effectively apply physical, cognitive, and social coping strategies, while emotional coping strategies tend to be moderate. Although the majority demonstrate positive stress management practices, continuous institutional support, training programs, and the creation of a supportive work environment remain essential to further strengthen nurses' coping capacities and ensure optimal psychological well-being in high-pressure ICU settings.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion outlined in the previous chapter on Stress Management in Nurses Dealing with Work Stress in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Tgk Chik Di Tiro Regional Hospital, Sigli, the researchers made several conclusions and recommendations, as follows:

1. Physical stress management strategies for nurses coping with work stress in the ICU at Tgk Chik Di Tiro Regional Hospital, Sigli, were in the good category (83.3%).
2. Emotional stress management strategies for nurses coping with work stress in the ICU at Tgk Chik Di Tiro Regional Hospital, Sigli, were in the good category (66.7%).
3. Cognitive stress management strategies for nurses coping with work stress in the ICU at Tgk Chik Di Tiro Regional Hospital, Sigli, were in the good category (66.7%).
4. Social stress management strategies for nurses coping with work stress in the ICU at Tgk Chik Di Tiro Regional Hospital, Sigli, were in the good category (90.00%).

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