

# Physical and Psychological Health of Nursing Staff During the Pandemic: Effect of Stress

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## Abstract

Stress is part of life and it affects the people in different ways. If stress is not managed properly it can lead to anger, frustration or depression. High stress levels can cause physical or psychological issues. It might cause headache, weight loss or weight gain, dizziness, teeth grinding, lack of sleep, laziness, body pain, anger, irritation, anxiety or depression. The nursing staff being part of a sector which falls under essential services was at work in hospitals during the pandemic COVID 19. They had to report to services in spite of the fact that they were equally exposed to the risk of getting the infection. In such situation the nursing staff was working under stress. This study aims to investigate the relationship between the stress and health of nursing staff employed in the COVID 19 ward.

**Key Words:** Stress, Nursing, Physical issues, psychological issues

## Introduction

Every individual faces some situations in life which exposes them to stress. Stress can affect the people in different ways.<sup>1,2</sup> However not all the individuals can deal with stress easily and have to face the consequences. The people who are not able to manage their stress levels can have negative impact on their health.<sup>3</sup> Stress does not cause illness but it makes the body vulnerable to various diseases. The higher stress levels cause various health issues which are the symptoms of negative impact on health.<sup>4</sup> High stress levels can cause physical or psychological issues. It might cause headache, weight loss or weight gain, dizziness, teeth grinding, lack of sleep, laziness, body pain, anger, irritation, anxiety or depression.<sup>5,6</sup>

The sudden outbreak of pandemic had led to increase in stress level of all the individuals and especially of the health care professionals.<sup>7</sup> As the health care professionals doctors, nurses etc had to deal with the corona infected patients directly. The situation was very turbulent the infection rates were increasing erratically and the even the death rate was very high.<sup>8,9</sup> This situation exposed to the risk of getting infected by the novel Corona virus. At such a point the Nursing staffs employed in the COVID 19 ward were suspended to the risk of infection.<sup>10</sup> This increased the stress level among the nursing staff which started having a negative impact on their physical and psychological wellbeing. The fear of infection led to increased absenteeism also higher dissatisfaction, increased organization turnover.<sup>11,12</sup>

This Research focuses on the impact of higher stress levels on the physical and mental health of the nursing staff employed in the COVID ward. For the purpose of the study primary data was collected from 50 nurses employed in the COVID ward through a questionnaire with a variety of questions to examine their stress levels and health issues caused. The data so collected was further analysed and interpreted to reach the conclusion.

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**Objective of Study**

1. To investigate the relationship between the stress and health of nursing staff employed in the COVID 19 ward.
2. To evaluate the impact of Stress on the health of nursing staff employed in the COVID 19 ward.

Data Collection:

Primary data was collected for the purpose of the

study. The data was collected through a questionnaire form 50 nurses employed in the COVID 19 ward.

**Technique of Data Analysis:**

The primary data collected is analyzed using statistical tools and techniques. Analysis was made using MS-Excel and SPSS software.

**Results**

**Table 1: Data Analysis and Interpretation:**

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Health issues physical and psychological increase of the staff employed in the COVID 19 ward due because of the stress due to increased risk of infection	4.08	0.941
Health issues of the nursing staff increased whenever there is increase in stress levels	3.58	1.244
Health issues physical and psychological does not increase if the stress levels increased	2.29	1.425
More health issues both physical and psychological will be caused even if the nursing staff id exposed to higher level of stress	2.77	1.713
Average	3.18	1.33075

The analysis represents that the respondents agreed the objective with a mean range of 3.18. It shows that the Health issues physical and psychological have increased due to the increased stress level of the nursing staff in the hospitals. The increased stress is because the nursing staff employed in the COVID ward is exposed to the risk of getting infected. It is also found that the stress levels increases it leads to increase in both physical and psychological health problems.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation**

		Stress	Health Issues
Stress	Pearson Correlation	1	0.454**
	Sig. (tailed)		0.004
	N	35	35
Health issues	Pearson Correlation	0.454**	
	Sig. (tailed)	0.004	
	N	35	35

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) committee

The above analysis shows the correlation between the stress levels and health of the nursing staff employed in the COVID 19 ward based on the primary data collected from the respondents, the correlation between the two variables is positive. However the significance of relationship between the two variables is lower than the significant level of 0.01.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The research concluded that the nurses employed in the COVID 19 ward were working under high stress levels. The stress was caused mainly due to the risk of exposure to the corona infection. The other factors were fear of infection to the family, strict hospital norms, household responsibilities during the lockdown, etc. Increased stress levels had led to a negative impact on the health of the nursing staff. Common health issues include frequent headaches, dizziness, sleeplessness, anxiety, anger, frustration, lack of appetite, body pain and weight loss. Thus the increased stress levels have impacted the health of the nursing staff. In order to avoid the health hazards the nursing staff must ensure a balance diet, adequate sleep, practicing regular exercise, meditation. The staff must ensure having positive attitude toward their health. The hospitals must provide utmost safety top the nursing staff in form of all the facilities to protect them from the risk of infection. The staff must be employed in the COVID ward on rotation so that the staff gets relaxation time. Hospitals must provide social security, Insurance, training, best quality PPE kits, masks and sanitizers and also incentives must be provided to keep the nursing staff motivated and positive during such difficult times.

### Scope & Limitations:

The study suggests the impact of stress due to the pandemic on the physical and psychological health of the nursing staff. The study concentrates on the impact of only stress on the physical and psychological health of the nursing staff owing to the pandemic. The data is time bounded. The sample is restricted to the Nagpur city

**Conflict of Interest:** Nil

**Source of Funding:** Nil

**Ethical Clearance:** taken from institutional ethics

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