Moral Distress and Structural Empowerment among a national sample of Israeli ICU nurses

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A project sponsored by the Evidenced Based Practice Working Group of the Israeli Cardiology and Critical Care Nursing Society
Background

- Moral distress (MD) is defined as knowing the “right” thing to do but not being able to do so due to institutional constraints.
- High levels of MD have been found among ICU caregivers.
- MD has been associated with increased job dissatisfaction, burnout and worker turnover.
Another work related characteristic that might be associated with MD is structural empowerment (SE)

SE is defined as worker perception of access to 4 sources of power in an organization (opportunity, information, support and resources) (4)

This association has been implied by others but has not been investigated
Aims of this study were to determine

- The level of MD frequency and intensity
- The level of SE
- The association between MD and SE
Method

Sample
A convenience sample of Israeli ICU registered nurses

Instruments
- Demographic and work characteristics questionnaire
- Moral Distress Scale (2) to measure MD
- Conditions of Work Effectiveness Questionnaire II (to measure SE) (5)
Data Collection:
National Study
8 medical Centers
Adult ICUs: RICU, SICU, MICU CCU, CVICU, Neuro ICU and recovery room
Data Analysis SPSS version 15
Descriptive statistics + Pearson product Moment Correlations
Results (N= 291)

Personal Characteristics
- Gender 210 female (75.3%)
- Family Status
  - Married 198 (71.2%)
  - Divorced/widowed: 35 (12.6%)
  - Single: 45 (16.2%)
Results (cont)

- Religion
  - Jewish: 207 (75.3%)
  - Moslem: 52 (18.9%)
  - Other: 16 (5.8%)
- Born in Israel: 118 (42.8%)
Results - Work Characteristics

- Post Basic Certification: 219 (79.1%)
- Education
  - RN 62 (22.5%) RN+ BA 180 (65.2%)
  - RN+ MA 34 (12.3%)
- Role
  - Staff nurse: 232 (84.1%)
  - Asst/Head nurse: 32 (11.9%)
  - Other: 11 (4%)
  - Full time work: 179 (64.2%)
## Results (cont)

### Moral distress Frequency and Intensity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Subscale mean</th>
<th>Subscale SD</th>
<th>Item mean</th>
<th>Item SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity</td>
<td>139.9</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Results (cont)

**Structural Empowerment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subscale</th>
<th>Subscale mean</th>
<th>Subscale SD</th>
<th>Item mean</th>
<th>Item SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal power</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal power</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total SE</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Discussion

- Levels of MD and SE similar to previous studies
  1. Moderate-high empowerment
  2. Low frequency of MD
  3. Moderate-high intensity of MD
- MD intensity > frequency
- Personal characteristics are not risk factors for MD intensity
- Younger nurses and those with a higher frequency of MD are at increased risk for intense feelings of MD
- There is some minor evidence that frequency might be related to SE
Conclusions

- Need to repeat study with other populations
- Further investigate how other aspects of the work environment affect moral distress
- Possibly aim interventions to decrease MD among younger nurses, those with a lower general feeling of structural empowerment and high feelings of MD intensity
References


Thank you for your attention!