

Exploring the Experiences of Nurses in Rendering Care to Psychiatric Patients

Fatima Nataszhe Hashim, RN¹, Agaton Manuel Gerardo T. Alzate, Jr.²

<https://orcid.or//9-1-7578-1687>¹

St. Bernadette of Lourdes College^{1,2}

fmhashim@sbllc.edu.ph¹, nalzate@sbllc.edu.ph²

ABSTRACT

This qualitative exploratory study examined the experiences of nurses in rendering care to psychiatric patients. Specifically, it explored nurses' experiences in psychiatric care, the challenges they encountered, coping strategies they utilized, therapeutic relationships they established, and the insights they gained from their practice. Purposive sampling was used to select registered nurses from Maimbung District Hospital with direct experience in psychiatric nursing. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that nurses viewed psychiatric nursing as both challenging and rewarding. Participants identified aggressive patient behaviors, emotional demands, communication barriers, and workplace stress as common challenges. Despite these difficulties, nurses maintained compassionate care through emotional resilience, teamwork, self-care, and effective therapeutic communication. They also reported that psychiatric nursing strengthened their professional competence, empathy, patience, and understanding of mental health. The study highlights the importance of continuous professional development, adequate staffing, emotional support programs, and organizational commitment to strengthen psychiatric nursing practice. Although limited to one healthcare institution, the findings provide valuable insights that may guide future mental health policies, nursing education, and workforce support programs.

Keywords: *Psychiatric nursing, nurses' experiences, therapeutic communication, coping strategies, mental health, qualitative research*

INTRODUCTION

Mental health disorders have emerged as a major global public health concern, contributing substantially to morbidity, disability, and premature mortality. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), approximately one in every eight individuals worldwide lives with a mental health condition, with depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and other psychiatric disorders significantly affecting quality of life and overall health outcomes. Mental health conditions are also associated with increased mortality due to suicide, self-harm, substance use disorders, and the exacerbation of comorbid physical illnesses. Globally, suicide remains one of the leading causes of death among young people, accounting for more than 700,000 deaths annually. These statistics highlight the urgent need for comprehensive and effective mental health services across healthcare settings.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the experiences of nurses in rendering care to psychiatric patients.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of nurses in rendering care to psychiatric patients?
2. What challenges do nurses encounter while caring for psychiatric patients?
3. What coping strategies do nurses utilize in managing workplace demands?
4. How do nurses establish therapeutic relationships with psychiatric patients?
5. What insights and realizations do nurses gain from rendering psychiatric care?
6. Based on the findings, what developmental program may be proposed to strengthen psychiatric nursing practice?

Scope and Limitations

This study focused on the experiences of nurses providing psychiatric care at Maimbung District Hospital, Sulu. It explored their experiences, workplace challenges, coping strategies, therapeutic relationships, and professional insights. The findings were limited to the selected participants and may not represent psychiatric nurses in other healthcare institutions.

Review of Related Literature

Psychiatric nurses provide therapeutic care while managing emotionally demanding situations. Studies have shown that workplace stress, compassion fatigue, communication barriers, and occupational burnout commonly affect psychiatric nurses (Jansen et al., 2022; Hartley et al., 2022; Kołodziej et al., 2025).

Despite these challenges, resilience, teamwork, reflective practice, and organizational support help nurses maintain quality patient care and professional well-being (Kim et al., 2023; Mumba et al., 2024; Ortega et al., 2025).

These findings highlight the importance of strengthening psychiatric nursing support systems.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Peplau's Interpersonal Relations Theory, Jean Watson's Theory of Human Caring, and Lazarus and Folkman's Stress and Coping Theory. These theories explain the importance of therapeutic relationships, compassionate nursing care, and effective coping strategies in psychiatric nursing practice.

Conceptual Framework

The study adopted the Input–Process–Output (IPO) Model. The input included nurses' experiences, workplace challenges, coping strategies, therapeutic relationships, and professional insights. The process involved semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. The output was the development of recommendations and a proposed developmental program to strengthen psychiatric nursing practice.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of nurses in rendering care to psychiatric patients.

Research Design

A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to understand the participants' experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and professional insights while providing psychiatric nursing care. This design enabled the researcher to explore the meaning of nurses' lived experiences from their own perspectives.

Research Steps

The study began with a review of related literature, followed by the preparation and validation of the interview guide. After securing ethical approval and informed consent, interviews were conducted with the participants. The collected data were transcribed, coded, analyzed using thematic analysis, and interpreted to identify common themes.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

Purposive sampling was used to select registered nurses with experience in caring for psychiatric patients at Maimbung District Hospital. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share their personal experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in psychiatric nursing practice.

Data Analysis Methods

The interview transcripts were analyzed using **thematic analysis**. Similar responses were coded, categorized, and organized into themes that reflected the lived experiences of nurses in psychiatric care.

Research Validation

The interview guide underwent expert validation before data collection. Credibility was strengthened through member checking, careful coding, and verification of emerging themes to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, and participants were free to withdraw at any stage. The findings were limited to the experiences of nurses from the selected hospital.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1. What are the experiences of nurses in caring for psychiatric patients?

Nurses described psychiatric nursing as both challenging and rewarding. They emphasized that patience, empathy, and effective communication are essential in providing quality care.

SOP 2. What challenges do nurses face while caring for psychiatric patients?

Participants identified aggressive behavior, communication difficulties, emotional stress, and heavy workload as the most common challenges encountered in psychiatric care.

SOP 3. How do nurses cope with these challenges?

Nurses managed stress through teamwork, family support, prayer, self-care, and maintaining a positive attitude, which helped them continue providing quality care.

SOP 4. How do nurses build therapeutic relationships with psychiatric patients?

Participants established therapeutic relationships by showing empathy, active listening, respect, patience, and trust, helping create a safe and supportive environment for patients.

SOP 5. What lessons do nurses gain from caring for psychiatric patients?

The participants shared that psychiatric nursing strengthened their compassion, patience, resilience, and appreciation for mental health care.

SOP 6. What program can be proposed based on the findings?

The findings support implementing continuing education, stress management programs, and competency-based training to improve psychiatric nursing practice and patient care.

SUMMARY

The study explored the experiences of nurses in rendering care to psychiatric patients. Findings revealed that psychiatric nursing is both challenging and rewarding, requiring empathy, patience, and effective communication. Although nurses experienced workplace stress, aggressive patient behaviors, and emotional demands, they remained committed to providing compassionate care through resilience, teamwork, and appropriate coping strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

Nurses providing psychiatric care demonstrate professionalism, resilience, and compassion despite the challenges encountered in mental health settings. Therapeutic communication, emotional support, and continuous professional development remain essential in delivering safe and quality psychiatric nursing care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Healthcare institutions should strengthen mental health support and wellness programs for psychiatric nurses.
2. Hospital administrators should provide regular competency-based training on psychiatric nursing and crisis management.
3. Nurses should continue participating in professional development activities to improve therapeutic communication and coping skills.
4. Future researchers should conduct similar studies involving larger samples and multiple healthcare institutions.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

This research discloses the restricted application of artificial intelligence tools solely for literature review and initial drafting. No participant data that could be sensitive was utilized,

and every piece of AI-generated content was examined manually to guarantee precision and adherence to ethical standards.

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