
The Impacts of Nurse-Led Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) on Pediatric Nurses: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the impact of nurse-led child-centered play therapy (CCPT) on pediatric nurses in Qatar using a qualitative phenomenological approach. Through interviews and observations, nurses shared their experiences with using CCPT in pediatric care. The findings showed that CCPT helped reduce children's anxiety, improved cooperation during procedures, and strengthened nurse-patient relationships. Nurses also experienced increased empathy, job satisfaction, emotional well-being, and professional growth. However, challenges such as heavy workloads, limited time, resource constraints, and insufficient support hindered its consistent use. Overall, the study highlights that nurse-led CCPT benefits both children and nurses and supports more compassionate and holistic pediatric care.

Keywords: Child-Centered Play Therapy, Pediatric Nursing, Qualitative Study, Nurse-led, Pediatric Nurses

INTRODUCTION

Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) helps children express their feelings and cope with hospitalization through play. Pediatric nurses, who spend most of their time with children, are well-positioned to incorporate CCPT into holistic, child-centered care. In Qatar, the growing focus on child health and family-centered care supports the use of therapeutic approaches such as CCPT.

While many studies have shown the benefits of CCPT for children, little is known about its impact on pediatric nurses. Using CCPT may enhance nurses' empathy, communication skills, professional growth, and job satisfaction, but challenges such as limited time, heavy workloads, and lack of resources may affect its use. Therefore, this study explores the experiences of pediatric nurses and examines how nurse-led CCPT influences their emotional well-being, professional development, and caregiving practices. The findings may help improve nursing education, practice, and policies for holistic pediatric care.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to explore the impact of Nurse-Led Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) on pediatric nurses in Qatar. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. Describe pediatric nurses' experiences in using CCPT in hospital settings.
2. Examine the emotional and professional effects of CCPT on nurses.
3. Explore how CCPT influences nurses' relationships with pediatric patients.
4. Identify the challenges and supports in implementing CCPT in daily practice.
5. Understand how CCPT affects nurses' coping skills and job satisfaction.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This study examined the experiences of pediatric nurses using Nurse-Led Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) in a hospital setting. It focused on how CCPT influenced their caregiving practices, emotional well-being, and professional development. The study included only nurses' perspectives and did not examine the views of children, parents, or other interventions. Since it was conducted in specific hospital units and used a qualitative approach, the findings provide in-depth insights but may not be generalizable to all healthcare settings in Qatar.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Recent studies highlight the importance of creating child-friendly and supportive healthcare environments. In Qatar, children reported greater satisfaction with hospitals that were colorful, attractive, and designed with their needs in mind (Pattabi et al., 2024).

Research also indicates that play is essential for children's well-being during hospitalization. Nurses play a key role in supporting play activities, although heavy workloads and limited time can make their efforts challenging (Stonehouse et al., 2024).

Studies on Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) found that play-based interventions help children regulate emotions and cope with difficult experiences, promoting healing and well-being (Perryman et al., 2024). Similarly, interactive and play-based health programs have been shown to improve children's emotional and social well-being (Kubota et al., 2024). Overall, these studies emphasize the value of play, emotional support, and child-centered care, while highlighting the important role of nurses in improving children's healthcare experiences.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study explores the experiences of pediatric nurses using Nurse-Led Child-Centered Play Therapy in Qatar. It is guided by the triangulation of theories explaining its emotional, professional, and clinical impact on nurses.

Rogers' Person-Centered Theory emphasizes empathy and building meaningful relationships. Through CCPT, nurses develop stronger connections with children and enhance their compassionate care. Meanwhile, **Henderson's Nursing Need Theory** focuses on holistic care by addressing both the physical and emotional needs of children, helping nurses to provide more comprehensive support. Lastly, **Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory** explains how nurses learn through experience and reflection. By practicing CCPT, nurses strengthen their skills, confidence, and professional growth.

Together, these theories show that CCPT benefits both children and nurses by promoting emotional well-being, holistic care, and professional development.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research study examined the impacts of nurse-led CCPT on pediatric nurses who have facilitated CCPT sessions in hospital settings across Qatar. Through qualitative inquiry, the study captured the emotional, psychological, and professional impacts of engaging in therapeutic play with children.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design to explore the experiences of pediatric nurses implementing Nurse-Led Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) in Qatar. Through interviews and observations, the study collected nurses' experiences and perspectives on the use of CCPT. It examined how CCPT influences their caregiving approach, communication with children, and professional growth. Overall, the study provided a deeper understanding of the value of CCPT in pediatric nursing practice.

Research Steps

The research design was carefully developed after a comprehensive review of the literature to ensure it was consistent with the study's objectives. The research used qualitative data-gathering techniques, including semi-structured interviews and observations, to examine the impacts of CCPT on pediatric nurses and the challenges they face in sustaining it in pediatric care.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The data collection process commenced with selecting pediatric nurses who use CCPT as part of their nursing interventions, followed by semi-structured interviews and observations during their play sessions. Each interview lasted between 15 minutes and half an hour, depending on participants' convenience and preferences. Furthermore, non-participant observations of CCPT sessions and a field diary were added to support the interview findings.

Data Analysis Methods

The data gathered from interviews, observations, and field notes were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed, observation notes were reviewed to deepen understanding of the nurses' experiences, and the data were grouped into meaningful themes. These themes reflected the nurses' emotional experiences, professional growth, job satisfaction, and challenges in implementing CCPT. Throughout the analysis, themes were reviewed and refined to accurately represent the participants' perspectives.

Research Hypotheses and Validation

The study ensured trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Multiple data sources, detailed documentation, clear descriptions, and reflective practices were used to enhance the accuracy, reliability, and credibility of the findings, ensuring they genuinely reflected the experiences of pediatric nurses in Qatar.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical standards by obtaining ethical approval, obtaining informed consent, and ensuring voluntary participation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected, and all nurses were treated with respect, fairness, and professionalism. These measures helped ensure a safe, ethical, and trustworthy research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

THEME 1: Experience in Implementing Nurse-Led CCPT

Nurses described their experience in implementing CCPT as a valuable therapeutic intervention that improved the quality of care they provided to hospitalized children. Proper training and preparation helped them feel more confident in using this approach. Pediatric

nurses were able to provide more compassionate, child-centered care that improves both the patient experience and clinical outcomes.

THEME 2: Emotional and Professional Impact of CCPT

The results showed that CCPT had a significant emotional and professional impact on nurses. Many shared feelings of emotional fulfillment, improved coping skills, and professional growth through enhanced communication and caregiving abilities. In short, CCPT provides a constructive way for nurses to regulate emotions, contributing to better performance and improved well-being.

THEME 3: CCPT and Therapeutic Nurse–Patient Relationship

The findings demonstrated that CCPT strengthened the therapeutic nurse–patient relationship by improving communication, building trust, and helping nurses better understand the emotional needs of children. Therefore, CCPT improves emotional understanding in pediatric nursing. This allowed nurses to offer more suitable and considerate nursing care.

THEME 4: Challenges in Implementing CCPT

The findings showed that challenges to consistent implementation were also found, such as workload, time restraints, resource restrictions, and institutional barriers. In order to ensure the effective and sustainable implementation of CCPT, the results also emphasized the significance of organizational support, sufficient resources, and suitable environments. With the right support, these challenges can transform into opportunities.

THEME 5: Impact of CCPT on Outcomes

The results showed that CCPT created positive and meaningful experiences for nurses in the workplace. By focusing on therapeutic play and connections with children, nurses were able to manage stress more effectively and experience greater job satisfaction. These positive interactions helped reduce emotional exhaustion and the risk of burnout, contributing to better well-being and a more compassionate healthcare environment.

SUMMARY

This study explored the impacts of nurse-led Child-Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) on pediatric nurses in Qatar. The findings showed that CCPT reduced children's anxiety, improved communication, encouraged emotional expression, and supported more holistic, child-centered care. Nurses also experienced greater empathy, job satisfaction, and professional growth, as well as reduced stress. Despite challenges such as workload, time constraints, and limited resources, the study concluded that CCPT benefits both children and nurses and should be supported through ongoing training and organizational support.

CONCLUSIONS

The study found that nurse-led CCPT benefited both children and pediatric nurses. It helped reduce children's anxiety, improve communication, and encourage emotional expression while strengthening nurses' caregiving practices. Overall, CCPT enhanced professional growth, emotional connection, quality of care, and nurse well-being, making it a valuable and compassionate child-centered approach in pediatric nursing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommended strengthening the implementation of nurse-led Child-Centered Play Therapy in pediatric healthcare settings. Pediatric nurses were encouraged to continue using CCPT to promote holistic and child-centered care. Hospitals and healthcare administrators were advised to provide adequate training, resources, and organizational support to ensure the successful implementation. Nursing educators and leaders were encouraged to integrate CCPT into educational programs and healthcare policies. Additionally, future researchers were encouraged to explore the long-term effects of CCPT in different healthcare settings and populations to further support its use in pediatric nursing practice.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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