



Coping Strategies to Compassion Fatigue among Nurses in Pemba Provincial Hospital in Mozambique

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ABSTRACT

Management of compassion fatigue is of significance importance to the mental well-being among the healthcare professionals. The current study aimed to explore the coping strategies towards management of compassion fatigue among nurses in Pemba provincial hospital in Mozambique. The study employed exploratory research design. The study utilized a sample size of 10 participants using purposive sampling. The data was collected using Interview Guide and analyzed using thematic analysis. From the data the themes of psychological support, self-care, emotional awareness and improving the work condition emerged as strategies of coping with compassion fatigue among the nurses in Pemba Provincial hospital. Additionally, advice from experienced nurses emphasizes maintaining a sense of purpose, seeking professional help, and fostering strong work relationships. The study recommends to the administration to address workplace challenges, foster a culture of self-care, provide psychological support, and enact supportive policies. All stakeholders can work together to create a healthier and more resilient nursing workforce. Ultimately, these efforts will not only benefit the nurses themselves but also enhance the quality of patient care and overall healthcare services in Mozambique.

Key Words: Coping strategies, Compassion fatigue, Nurses, Pemba Provincial hospital, Mozambique

INTRODUCTION

Figley (2002) defines compassion fatigue as a state of emotional, physical, and spiritual depletion that can occur in those who are exposed to the suffering of others, particularly in care giving professions. The study by Bentley (2022) during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, on Compassion practice as an antidote for compassion fatigue, showed some practices such as mindfulness, loving-kindness meditation, self-compassion and self-to-others practices as ways to reduce compassion fatigue. The study was carried out in the United States of America, and the target population was the counselors, and for the current study looked at the same perspective, but it was carried out in Mozambique and the target population was the nurses who work at the Pemba Provincial Hospital. A similar study conducted by Melissa et al. (2022), reported that self-care, prevention, and resilience are ways to reduce compassion fatigue. The study was on building compassion fatigue resilience awareness Prevention and intervention among Practitioners in South Carolina in the United States of America.

Alharbi et al. (2019) conducted a study on compassion fatigue among critical care nurses suggested self-care, education, and training initiatives as strategies to lessen compassion fatigue. The purpose of the study was to critically assess the available empirical data on the incidence, causes, and effects of compassion fatigue in critical care nurses. A sophisticated search of healthcare databases, namely ProQuest, Science Direct, and CINAHL, for research publications on compassion fatigue among nurses in critical care settings, yielded data, which was then gathered using an integrated review approach. In order to determine the main themes and problems associated with compassion fatigue in critical care settings, an analysis was conducted on the ten studies that satisfied the inclusion criteria for this review. Articles were assessed for quality and rigor using the Critical Appraisal Checklist for Analytical Cross-Sectional Studies. The search was limited to research studies undertaken from 2000 to 2018. Although the study was not carried out in the Mozambican context, it had an impact on the current study. Education, training programs and self-care are crucial components for the health and well-being of nurses.

Along the same line, Ondrejková and Halamová (2022) carried out a qualitative study on coping strategies to compassion fatigue among nurses in Europe with the objective, of investigating stressful factors contributing to the development of compassion fatigue in nurses, their experiences of compassion fatigue, and the coping strategies they used to cope with compassion fatigue. The convenience sample of 86 nurses from Central Europe was recruited via social networking sites during the pandemic of COVID-19. Data collection was conducted via an online battery of questionnaires. The data were analyzed using a theoretical thematic analysis based on Figley's descriptions of compassion fatigue. The study reported that bodily care, spiritual care, relations with closes others, working on behavior, or work-related coping strategies as the ways to reduce compassion fatigue. This study had the same target population as the current study despite not using the same methodology; this had a relevant impact on the ongoing study since the focus is on nurses.

In East Africa, a study was conducted by Kabunga et al. (2022), in Uganda on emotional intelligence and compassion fatigue among psychotherapists in selected districts, reported self-awareness as a way to reduce compassion fatigue. A cross-sectional correlation research design employing a quantitative approach was used. The study used registration records by the Gulu District Non-Government Organization Forum (2016) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2015) from which 24 organizations employing a total of 382 psychotherapists provided psycho-social support. Survey questionnaires were used to collect data. The participants in the study included 4 psychiatrists, 29 psychologists, 35 professional counselors, 45 mental health nurses, 33 clinical social workers, and 22 marriage and family therapists with working experience of at least 2 years and above. The tool consisted of 72 items distributed on the four dimensions (self-awareness, social management, self-management, and social skills). The study focused on different professional groups, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and mental health nurses, but the current study focused only on nurses. Although the study was not carried out among nurses, it had contributed to the present study, because, self-awareness among nurses can have a profound positive impact on their professional practice, patient care, and overall workplace environment also self-awareness is a critical component of effective nursing practice that not only benefits the individual nurse but also enhances the quality of care provided to patients and the overall functioning of healthcare teams.

A similar study was conducted in Durban, South Africa by Wentzel et al. (2023), on an intervention to manage compassion fatigue in oncology nurses, which showed self-awareness, self-care practices, proactive interventions and self-reflection as ways to reduce compassion fatigue in nurses. The study's objective was to create and provide an in-facility intervention to help oncology nurses deal with compassion fatigue. A mixed methods sequential explanatory design was used in the development of the Self-Care Intervention for Oncology Nurses (SCION). Descriptive and inferential statistics were produced from the quantitative data using statistical software, and manifest content analysis was used to evaluate the qualitative data. This study has made a significant contribution to the understanding and management of compassion fatigue among oncology nurses in Durban, South Africa. Its relevance, practical implications and cultural context may increase its value in the field of nursing and healthcare and had contributed significantly in the current study to the understanding and implementation of strategies to reduce compassion fatigue among nurses.

Supportive work environment, resilience-building programs and coping strategies programs were presented as one of the ways to reduce compassion fatigue among nurses, in the study conducted in Egypt by Hashish and Atalla (2023) on the Relationship between Coping Strategies, Compassion Satisfaction, and Compassion Fatigue during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Compassion satisfaction and compassion weariness on the professional quality of life scale. Regression analysis, Pearson correlation, and descriptive statistics were used to examine the data. The study offered a useful investigation of how coping mechanisms, compassion satisfaction, and compassion fatigue interact during a pivotal stage of the COVID-19 epidemic. It had the potential to significantly impact the current study on understanding and managing compassion fatigue. The current study aimed to explore the coping strategies towards management of compassion fatigue among nurses in Pemba provincial hospital in Mozambique.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed exploratory research design to explore the coping strategies to compassion fatigue among nurses. The study was carried out at Pemba Provincial Hospital, in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. Pemba Provincial Hospital is the largest hospital in the province of Cabo Delgado located in the city of Pemba. The study targeted nurses working in Pemba Provincial Hospital, in Mozambique. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select a sample size of 10 participants who participated in the current study. The study utilized Interview Guide to collect data from the participants. During the interviews the key demographic of age, gender, educational level, marital status, denomination and number of working years were captured. Before conducting the interviews from the participants, they were given consent form to fill and they gave consent to allow the research to record the interviews. The interviews were conducted between 30 minutes and 1 hour. The participants were assured the data collected was to be used only for the research purposes. At the end of the interviews each participants was thanked for accepting to participate in the study. The collected data was transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings were presented in form of themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to explore the coping strategies towards management of compassion fatigue among nurses in Pemba provincial hospital in Mozambique. The demographic details of the participants are presented followed by the findings and discussions. The study captured the demographic details of the participants such as Gender, age, educational level, marital status, denomination and years of working. The demographic details are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Details of the Participants

Respondents Identity	Gender	Age	Ed. level	Marital status	Denomination	Years as nurse
Respondent R1	Male	30-39 years	Bachelor's degree	Married	Catholic	11-20 years
Respondent R2	Female	18-29 years	Bachelor's degree	Single	Catholic	1-10 years

Respondent R3	Female	30-39 years	Bachelor's degree	Married	Catholic	11-20 years
Respondent R4	Female	50-59 years	Bachelor's degree	Married	Catholic	21-30 years
Respondent R5	Female	30-39 years	Bachelor's degree	Single	Catholic	11-20 years
Respondent R6	Female	40-49 years	Bachelor's degree	Married	Protestant	11-20 years
Respondent R7	Female	30-39 years	Bachelor's degree	Married	Other	11-20 years
Respondent R8	Female	30-39 years	Bachelor's degree	Single	Other	11-20 years
Respondent R9	Female	30-39 years	Bachelor's degree	Single	Catholic	11-20 years
Respondent R10	Female	50-59 years	Bachelor's degree	Married	Protestant	21-30 years

The interviewed participants consisted of ten nurses, with a majority being female and only one male respondent. The age range varied from 18 to 59 years, with most participants falling within the 30-39 age groups. All respondents held a Bachelor's degree in nursing. Marital status was evenly distributed, with five participants being married and five single. In terms of religious affiliation, six were Catholic, two were Protestant, and two belonged to other denominations. Regarding work experience, participants had between 1 and 30 years of experience as nurses, with most having 11-20 years in the profession.

Coping strategies to Compassion Fatigue among Nurses in Pemba Provincial Hospital, Mozambique

The objective of the study was to identify the coping strategies to compassion fatigue among nurses at Pemba Provincial Hospital in Mozambique. Qualitative data was collected from 10 respondents using face to face semi-structured interviews. Compassion fatigue among nurses can be reduced through various coping strategies and workplace interventions. From the data the following themes emerged including psychological support, self-care and emotional awareness, and improving workplace conditions. Additionally, advice from experienced nurses emphasizes maintaining a sense of purpose, seeking professional help, and fostering strong work relationships.

Seeking psychological support

One of the most effective ways to mitigate compassion fatigue is by seeking psychological support. Most of the participants reported that therapy, clinical tutoring, and counseling helped them process emotional distress and develop resilience. Access to psychological interventions provides nurses with a safe space to express their emotions, preventing emotional exhaustion and burnout. The theme of seeking psychological support was supported by participant 3 who said, *"The strategies I consider effective for managing fatigue associated with my work include: Being aware of the reality of our work and seeking help from a health professional, such as a psychologist"* (Interview 22nd December 2024).

In the same line, the theme was echoed by participant 4 who said,

The strategies I consider effective for managing fatigue associated with my work as a nurse include: increasing human resources at the provincial hospital of Pemba, restricting visits regarding companions, improving material conditions for work, seeking psychological therapies, and raising awareness among nurses to adhere to these therapies (Interview 23rd December 2024).

Similar opinions were voiced by participants 5,6 and 8, who emphasized the following:

Participant 5 emphasized the importance of increasing human resources and engaging in psychological therapies as key approaches to alleviating fatigue *"The strategies I consider effective for managing the fatigue associated with my work are: increasing human resources and engaging in psychological therapies"* (Interview, 26th December 2024). Similarly, Participant 6 highlighted the significance of participating in the therapeutic process as a means to improve fatigue; *"The strategy I consider effective for improving fatigue is to engage in the therapeutic process"* (Interview, 27th December 2024). Echoing these views, Participant 8 underscored the value of seeking professional help to mitigate fatigue and stress; *"Seeking professional help, which will help reduce fatigue or stress"* (Interview, 4th January 2025). Collectively, these responses highlight the role of psychological support and resource enhancement in addressing work-related fatigue.

Self-care and Emotional Awareness

Self-care and emotional awareness emerged as another theme on coping with compassion fatigue among the nurses from some of the participants. This is to be achieved through setting personal boundaries and maintaining a positive mindset allow nurses to manage stress more effectively. Emotional awareness helps them recognize early signs of burnout and take proactive measures to protect their well-being. Participant 1 highlighted the significance

of empathy, self-care, and maintaining good relationships among nurses as essential strategies for coping with work-related fatigue. *"The strategies I consider effective for managing fatigue associated with my work as a nurse include being aware of the importance of empathy, practicing self-care"* (Interview 18th of December 2024).

In agreement with this perspective, Participant 9 emphasized that self-care and awareness of the nature of the work are key to managing stress and fatigue effectively. *"The strategies I consider effective for improving fatigue or stress: the first strategy would be self-care and being aware of the nature of the work"* (Interview 04th January 2025). Similarly, Participant 10 reinforced these views, stating that preventing fatigue involves self-care, good communication, and fostering strong relationships among nurses, aligning with the strategies pointed out by the other participants. *"The strategies for improving fatigue or stress: first, it is to prevent this situation by creating: Self-care, good communication and good relationships among nurses"* (Interview 04th January 2025).

Improving working conditions

Improving workplace conditions is also emerged from the data as essential in reducing compassion fatigue. According to some of the respondents, addressing staff shortages, increasing available resources, and implementing better hospital policies significantly alleviate work-related stress. When nurses have a manageable workload and access to necessary resources, they can provide quality patient care without becoming overwhelmed. The ways identified by participants underscore the crucial role of improving workplace conditions in managing fatigue. Participant 1 emphasized that enhancing material conditions within the hospital contributes to a healthier work environment, which is vital for alleviating fatigue. *"The strategies I consider effective for managing fatigue include creating material conditions within the hospital, as a healthy environment is important for dealing with fatigue"* (Interview 18th December 2024).

Similarly, Participant 4 stressed the importance of increasing human resources, regulating companion visits, and improving material conditions, as these measures help reduce work-related stress; *"The strategies I consider effective for managing fatigue include increasing human resources at the provincial hospital, restricting visits regarding companions, and improving material conditions for work"* (Interview 27th December 2024). Echoing this perspective, Participant 5 pointed out that expanding the workforce is a fundamental step in addressing fatigue; *"The strategies I consider effective for managing the fatigue associated with my work are increasing human resources"* (Interview 26th December 2024).

Likewise, Participant 7 reinforced this viewpoint by highlighting that both increasing human resources and fostering teamwork among colleagues are essential in mitigating stress and exhaustion in the workplace. *"The strategies I consider to improve fatigue or stresses are increasing the number of human resources and collaboration among colleagues"* (Interview 04th January 2025). In addition to these strategies, nurses shared valuable advice for reducing compassion fatigue. Maintaining a sense of purpose was identified as a crucial factor in sustaining motivation and emotional resilience. Focusing on the mission of saving lives helps nurses stay committed to their work, counteracting feelings of emotional detachment. Seeking professional psychological help was also recommended, as it equips nurses with coping mechanisms to manage stress, anxiety, and exhaustion effectively. Lastly, building strong work relationships through teamwork and communication fosters a positive work environment. Support from colleagues reduces feelings of isolation and provides emotional relief.

The themes of psychological support, self-care and emotional awareness, and improving workplace conditions that emerged as a coping strategies to compassion fatigue among nurses in Pembe Provincial hospital, Mozambique was supported by previous studies conducted with helping professionals. For instance, these findings align with the study conducted in Egypt by Hashish and Atalla (2023), which reinforces the idea that compassion fatigue can be effectively reduced through structured coping mechanisms, psychological support, and workplace interventions. Both studies emphasize the crucial role of coping strategies and workplace improvements in helping nurses manage stress, prevent burnout, and sustain their well-being while delivering compassionate care. The findings also, align with those of Figley (2002), who proposed strategies of seeking psychological support, practicing self-care and emotional awareness, and improving workplace conditions are significant to mitigating compassion fatigue.

Similarly, the findings of this study was consistent with the findings of Ondrejková and Halamová (2022) who highlighted self-care, psychological support, and workplace improvements as essential coping strategies to cope with compassion fatigue. Their emphasis on bodily and spiritual care, relationships, and work-related coping aligns with the current study's focus on emotional awareness, professional support, and better workplace conditions, reinforcing the importance of structured coping mechanisms for nurses. Likewise, Wentzel et al. (2023) further validate these findings by emphasizing self-awareness, self-care practices, and proactive interventions as effective strategies for reducing compassion fatigue. Their study highlights self-reflection and structured interventions, complementing the current study's focus on psychological support, emotional awareness, and workplace improvements. Finally, the current findings were supported by the findings of Wentzel et al. (2023) who a study conducted in Durban, South Africa on an intervention to manage compassion fatigue among oncology nurses and findings showed self-awareness, self-care practices, proactive interventions and self-reflection as ways to reduce compassion fatigue in nurses.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded the coping strategies to compassion fatigue among nurses at Pemba Provincial Hospital in Mozambique include psychological support, self-care and emotional awareness, and improving workplace conditions. Additionally, advice from experienced nurses emphasizes maintaining a sense of purpose, seeking professional help, and fostering strong work relationships. By addressing workplace challenges, fostering a culture of self-care, providing psychological support, and enacting supportive policies, all stakeholders can work together to create a healthier and more resilient nursing

workforce. Ultimately, these efforts will not only benefit the nurses themselves but also enhance the quality of patient care and overall healthcare services in Mozambique.

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