

STRESSFUL LIFE EVENTS AMONG NEW NURSES: ARE THEY PREDICTORS OF UNSCHEDULED ABSENCES AND/OR JOB RETENTION?

Lene Symes, PhD, RN
Texas Woman's University
1130 John Freeman Blvd.
Houston, TX 77071

Stress Retention Graduate-nurses

Purpose: To explore the types and prevalence of traumatic and current stressors among new nurses and to investigate the relationship of past and present stressful life events to unscheduled absences and job retention among newly registered nurses. Goals are to:

1. Identify the breadth and scope of stressful life events in a group of beginning nurse professionals.
2. Identify the degree of psychological distress, the general health status, and the help experiences reported by new nurses.
3. Ascertain the effect of stressful life events on unscheduled absences of nurses during their first year of employment.
4. Ascertain the effect of stressful life events on retention rates of nurses one year after hiring.

Method: A sample of 100 new nurses from 4 hospitals complete a 7-part questionnaire designed to describe their traumatic experiences, current stressors, help experiences, psychological distress, and general health status. They will complete a similar questionnaire in one year to evaluate traumatic experiences, current stressors, and help experiences since they began work as graduate nurses, and to evaluate their current psychological distress and general health status. The participant's employer will provide the number of unscheduled absences during the year, and whether the nurse was retained.

Preliminary findings: 1) 25% had children under the age of 12 and reported that childcare was never, or seldom, a worry. 2) 25% had responsibility for the care of others (not their children) and 64% of those responsible for the care of others reported that it was often, or almost always, a worry. 3) 25% reported that they were not born in the US. 4) 50% reported that finances were often, or almost always, a worry. 5) 32% reported scores indicating major levels of stress on the *Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS)*. 6) 75% report experiencing a traumatic event. Examples of traumas include having a life threatening illness or accident, the death by accident, homicide, or suicide of an immediate family member, experiencing sexual abuse, experiencing other physical forms of abuse, or being present when someone else was seriously injured, assaulted, or killed. 7) On the *Impact of Event Scale – Revised*, 35% reported some symptoms associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but only 2% reported symptoms indicating PTSD.

Discussion: Knowing the breadth and scope of stressful life events, the degree of psychological distress, the general health status, and the help experiences reported by new nurses, and the ability of stressful experiences to predict job retention and attrition will help nurse managers to determine what areas they should target when developing retention strategies.