Cross-sectional study

Personality and interpersonal behaviour may impact on burnout in nurses

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Implications for practice and research

► Personality characteristics are an important vulnerability factor to consider when exploring the generation of burnout.
► A better understanding of individual factors associated with burnout could allow the development of bespoke prevention programmes.
► Individual-directed and organisation-directed interventions can be combined to cope with this problem.

Context

Much has been said about the negative impact of burnout on nurses’ health, but the causes of this phenomenon are still unclear. Shimizutani and colleagues found that neuroticism was related to burnout, and a systematic review by Khamisa et al regarding this question concluded that, in a broad perspective, burnout, job satisfaction and general health are related.

This study sought to identify the influence of personality and interpersonal variables on burnout development, addressing the vulnerability dimensions underlying this health problem. The five-factor model, one of the most used personality models, and Leary’s interpersonal circumplex model of social behaviour were used as frameworks for the study. Both models try to describe the personal and interpersonal interface of the person suffering burnout.

Methods

The descriptive-correlational study included a broad stratified random sample of nurses from different specialties. Burnout was measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory, personality by the NEO Five-Factor Inventory, and interpersonal behaviour by the Interpersonal Behaviour Scale. Through general linear regression modelling, the relationships between personality, interpersonal variables and burnout were tested.

Findings

The results confirmed the influence of the ‘Big Five’ personality factors in burnout. Women experienced 31% less emotional exhaustion than men, contrary to other findings. Emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation decreased when interpersonal behaviour was friendly submissive or friendly. Emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation increased when interpersonal behaviour was more directed towards dominance.

Competing interests None declared.

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References