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Work-Life Balance Best Practices

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Abstract

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MS, Walden University, 2016

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Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Poor balance between workplace and family life has been shown to increase stress and impact emotional well-being. Nurses continue to report burnout and high stress levels from time spent in the workplace which contributes to an inability to balance work with life. The gap in nursing practice leadership is the lack of knowledge and tools for supporting the emotional well-being of managers and direct care nursing staff. The purpose of this systematic review was to compile a summary of rigorous evidence-based literature on programs and strategies that nursing leaders can use to provide support in achieving work-life balance for nursing staff. Guided by Cooper's seven step process for research synthesis, a total of 18 articles were chosen that pertained to key elements of sustaining balance between the workplace and personal life. Evidence-based options that make a difference include flexible staffing, stress management programs, and personal health and wellness programs. There is evidence these activities are valuable in maintaining optimal productivity and retention. Improving the autonomy and support perceived by nurses while eliminating pressures such as increased productivity and higher workloads can improve the nursing experience, ultimately improving patient experience and outcomes. This information can be used by nurse leaders to create and implement strategies to support the nursing workforce and ultimately decrease the turnover and the loss of experienced nurses from the profession. This project facilitates positive social change by contributing to a supportive work environment that allows nurses to provide quality patient care.

Work-Life Balance Best Practices: A Systematic Review

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my family who have endured the brunt of my journey, but have always understood and supported me: My boyfriend Chris, who has dealt with the day to day trials of this process including my forgetfulness because my mind is "elsewhere"; my adult son Austin, who was so very proud of me through my MSN and made sure I knew it, and inspired me to show him that anything really is possible: "Dr. Mom"; my siblings who have seen less of me than ever before and yet always rallied when I found time to get everyone together; my Dad, Aunt and Stepmom who understood the sacrifice of time and effort this took; my Mom and Grandparents in heaven who I know have cheered me on from above every step of the way; and lastly my coworkers and friends who reminded me that I would finish!

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Section 1: Nature of the Project

Introduction

Nurses continue to report burn-out and high stress levels from time spent in the workplace. Clinical sites are reporting work call-offs, turnover, and increased numbers of nurses leaving the profession (Haryanto, 2018). Decisions to leave healthcare, especially bedside nursing, have implications beyond that of actual physical nursing care of the patient care. Experienced nurses are needed because of the maturity of their clinical judgement and for support for less experienced nurses and to keep the delicate balance in staffing ratios and expertise (Barnard, 2018). The loss of nurses in health care requires a closer examination when intent to leave and actual turnover is noted (Halter, Boiko, Pelone, Beighton, Harris, Gale, Gourlay, & Drennan, 2017).

There is a gap in nursing practice management in the lack of knowledge and tools for supporting the emotional well-being of managers and direct care nursing staff. Leaders are focusing on better understanding these factors and finding job retention strategies that are effective in addressing this growing phenomenon (Fasbender, Heijden, & Grimshaw, 2018). Much information is available regarding the importance of self-care and wellness, but locating information specifically for the nurse is difficult. The purpose of this systematic review was to compile a summary of rigorous evidence-based literature on programs that can address the stress associated with achieving work-life balance. This information can then be used by nurse leaders to create and implement strategies to support their nursing workforce and to ultimately decrease the turnover and the loss of experienced nurses from the profession. The positive social change is to promote a

positive work environment which supports nurses in providing high quality patient care while achieving a balance between work and life. Implementation of best practices to improve morale while working is expected to result in better patient outcomes. Boamah, Read, and Laschinger (2016) reported the link between burnout and job satisfaction to be important because of the successive effects on the quality of patient care. Work-life balance is complex, particularly in healthcare, where the emotional well-being is so tightly linked to the retention and stress-levels of the nurses who struggle with satisfaction on the job and provision of quality patient care (Raja & Stein, 2014).

Problem Statement

Finding balance between work and life appears to improve job satisfaction and retention. Retention in nursing and absence for the workplace is reportedly increased due to high stress levels and burn-out leading to struggles with the idea of leaving the profession itself (Haryanto, 2018). Even patient care suffers at the cost of retention where the loss of nurses at the bedside financially affects the bottom line. Staffing ratios and nursing experience must be carefully monitored to maintain balance to avoid work overload and insufficient resources (Boamah, Read, & Laschinger, 2016). Disruptions in patient care happen when experienced nurses are lost (Barnard, 2018). Intent to leave the nursing profession and actual turnover is an international concern and one that requires a closer examination (Halter, Boiko, Pelone, Beighton, Harris, Gale, Gourlay & Drennan, 2017).

Research suggests that work-life balance is an important factor for all working nurses (McKew, 2017). Today many nurses are required by their jobs to obtain a

bachelor's degree, adding to the stresses of work and life. Studies from the education research note that nurses continuing their education while working and having family responsibilities experience higher stress level relating to work, life, and school balance (Tagher, 2017). Those with difficulties in work-life balance have higher rates of dropping out of school or taking longer to complete degrees (Owens, 2017). Balancing the responsibilities of a nursing position, family obligations, and educational endeavors can post conflicts between work-family relationships (Shatell, 2017).

Nurses of all ages and levels of experience appear to be struggling to find a balance with work and life in general, and adding an educational goal will naturally impose additional conflicts with nurse-family relationships, resulting in imbalances that increase the struggle (Galletta, Portoghese, Melis, Aviles Gonzalez, Finco, D'Aloja, Contu, & Campagna, 2019). Evidence exists showing that younger generations have now reached management levels, and GenXers, in particular, are struggling to prove self-reliance and quick adaptivity to change. It is not a question of loyalty, but a quest to find balance with job satisfaction (Christopher, Walters & Chiarella, 2017). Nurses of all ages struggle for balance.

Patient safety is a top priority in the healthcare setting. The Joint Commission developed National Patient Safety Goals to improve the safety of our patients with the goal of careful review of problems in health care safety and determine solutions to these problems (The Joint Commission, 2020). Studies are being conducted on issues that may be associated with increased levels of turnover, stress, and emotional exhaustion (Vogus, Cooil, Sitterding, & Everett, 2014). Balancing nurse staffing ratios with increasingly

complex older adult patients, and frequent updates in treatments and medications are conditions that impact the nursing workplace environment. Negative behaviors such as workplace hostility, incivility, microaggresions, and bullying are often cited as problematic in the work environment (Sauer & McCoy, 2018). These are contributing factors associated with job satisfaction, job stress, and turnover intentions. Leaders are focusing on better understanding these factors and finding job retention strategies that are effective in addressing this growing phenomenon (Fasbender, Heijden, & Grimshaw, 2018). Understanding the reasons nurses stay committed to their organization and their vocation can help leaders understand how to influence levels of commitment and turnover intentions within the profession, and improve nursing attitudes in the workplace (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, Gellatly, Cummings, & Ogilvie, 2018).

Turnover is expensive and contributes to poor outcomes in patient care; therefore, addressing the knowledge gaps regarding techniques to support nurses at all levels can contribute to utilization of targeted strategies (Adams, 2016). Gathering more information on ways to keep nurses balanced and satisfied can improve their overall quality of life (Lee, Dai, Chang, Chang, Yao, & Liu, 2017). Businesses and some hospitals have been offering stress reduction seminars, mindfulness exercises, etc., but there are no systemic reviews of the use of these techniques in addressing work-life balance in nursing. This project may offer insights for nurse leaders on best practices for addressing work-life balance, and creating a workplace environment that acknowledges this stressor and provides supportive services.

Purpose

The gap in nursing management practice is a lack of knowledge and tools for nurse leaders in supporting the work life balance of an organization's managers and the nursing staff. The purpose of this systematic review is to compile a summary of evidence-based research on key causes of work-life balance stressors and evidence-based programs that could be adopted in the acute care hospital setting. This information can then be used by nurse leaders to adapt and implement strategies to support staff. The goal being to ultimately decrease the turnover and the loss of experienced nurses from the profession by better prioritization of work and life activities (Raja, & Stein, 2014).

The practice-focused question is *what are the best evidence-based practices of nurse leadership that can provide support in achieving work-life balance for nursing staff*? Nursing literature is replete with peer-reviewed journal articles on compassion fatigue, burnout, and chronic stress experienced by practicing nurses. For a giving profession such as nursing these negative effects can be a heavy burden if an opportunity to replenish and rejuvenate are not taken (Phillips, Androski & Winks, 2018) both needed to help nurses maintain homeostasis. As caregiving professionals, nurses can be compromised by the toll of the negative effects from performing required duties. It is important to understand the multiple aspects of job satisfaction, the system issues that may affect that satisfaction, and the delicate balance of work and life demands (Wilkes, Doull, Chok & Mashingaidze, 2015).

Nature of the Doctoral Project

This systematic study was conducted following the "Walden Manual for

Systematic Reviews" (2019). This systematic review was conducted using a summary of studies published from 2015-2019 that examined the factors associated with work-life balance. Specific focus was on the best-practices for supporting nurses and other healthcare workers in achieving work-life balance. When the research fell short on evidence, additional studies from the business sector on wellness initiatives were considered. The systematic review was conducted using search engines including the Walden University library database, the Pennsylvania State University library database, and Google Scholar. Key words used in the search included *work-life balance, nursing turnover, burn out, evidence-based techniques, stress management techniques*, and *stress*. The search was limited to English language full text, peer reviewed scholarly journals, and academic journals published in the last four years.

The systematic literature review followed a seven-step process for research synthesis outlined by Cooper (2009): formulation of the problem, literature search, information gathered from the studies, quality evaluation, analysis and integration of study outcomes, interpretation of evidence, and presentation of results. The ability to locate and synthesize this evidence required careful selection of studies, extraction, appraisal of the findings, and interpretation and presentation of the information.

Significance

As concerns regarding the shortage of nurses in the workforce continue, the need exists to find better ways to assist nurses in finding a healthy balance between the demands of work and their overall quality of life (Smeltzer, Cantrell, Sharts-Hopko, Heverly, Jeninson, & Nthenge, 2016). Evidence can be used by healthcare administrators

to assist their nursing and other professional staff with balancing work-life stress, and their perception of overall quality of life. This may lead to improved nursing morale and satisfaction, decreased turnover, and an improvement in patient outcomes. This review can impact nursing by giving researchers and leaders evidence-based tools for implementation and evaluation, which would further add to the literature (Alazzam, AbuAlRub, & Nazzal, 2017). Additional research would allow leadership to evaluate the nurse based on the current life situation impacting each individual nurse.

Individual nurses may benefit from a more supportive work environment. Isa, Ibrahim, Abdul-Manan, Mohd-Salleh, Abdul-Mumin and Rahman (2018) quoted the World Health Organization regarding work-related stress, citing that this response is the result of work demands and pressures that are unmatched by individual's abilities and straining their ability to cope. In the in-patient hospital setting, stress reduction programs may assist the allied health team with things such as elder care, single parenting, and financial concerns (AlAzzam, AbuAlRub, & Nazzal, 2017). Leadership is aware the stress that balancing work and family demands is a reality. Human resource professionals and other health professionals, physicians, therapists, pharmacy, and laboratory technicians would benefit from additional information and tools on addressing work/life balance issues (Henderson, 2020). A positive social change in the workplace milieu can improve the climate for nurses. This can positively impact patient safety and patient outcomes even in new nurses (Boamah, Read & Laschinger, 2016).

Summary

Supporting the nursing workforce and providing tools to assist staff with achieving work-life balance is essential in combating nursing turnover, burn-out, and combating the high-stress demands of the profession. The reported burn-out and high levels of stress by nurses has led to absence from the workplace and turnover with many deciding to leave the practice completely (Haryanto, 2018). Decisions to leave healthcare, especially bedside nursing, have implications beyond that of actual physical nursing care of the patient (Henderson, 2020). Nursing practice management lacks knowledge and tools for supporting the emotional well-being of managers and direct care nursing staff. The purpose of this systematic review was to compile a synopsis of rigorous evidence-based literature on programs that addressed the stress associated with achieving work-life balance in nursing. The practice-focused question was *what are the best evidence-based practices of nurse leadership that can provide support in achieving work-life balance for nursing staff*? This information will then be used by nurse leaders to create and implement strategies to support their nursing workforce and to ultimately decrease the turnover and the loss of experienced nurses from the profession. Section two will discuss the background and context for the review.

Section 2: Background and Context

Introduction

There is an abundance of literature that relates to the concept of work-life balance, and the implications of an imbalance including stress, burn-out, and the trickle-down effects on patient care. These imbalances push nurses in directions that impact the institutions and their patients (Henderson, 2020). The decision of nurses to leave the profession resulting from nurse reported burn-out and higher stress levels leads to workplace absence and turnover carry consequences beyond staffing (Haryanto, 2018) as these decisions impact patient care, and carry with it implications concerning to leadership. Nursing practice management needs tools to support the emotional well-being of both manager and direct care nursing staff. The compilation of rigorous evidence-based literature in this systematic review focuses on programs that can address the achievement of work-life balance answering the practice-focused question: *what are the best evidence-based practices of nurse leadership that can provide support in achieving work-life balance for nursing staff*? The end goal is to decrease turnover and reduce the number of seasoned nurses from the profession by gathering useful evidence-based practice ideas that can be implemented in programs, and give leadership the tools needed. This section will review the concepts, relevance to nursing practice, local background, and role of the DNP student.

Concepts, Models, and Theories

The theoretical model that grounded this project was the Watson Theory of Human Caring, which supports the assumption that an improvement in nursing self-care

behaviors has the potential to benefit patients in several ways (Watson, 2012). Self-care

is vital. Needing to take time for themselves is often overlooked by many nurses who

then are charged with taking care of others (Goodwin, & Richards, 2017). Watson's

theory stated that the mind-body-soul is the essence of engaging with one another and the

moral ideal is the act of caring (Polit & Beck, 2012). Considered a behavioral learning

theory, much akin to Pavlov, and classical conditioning and extinguishing behaviors,

Watson's work has been used in explaining response to events (McEwen & Wills, 2014).

Better understanding of the gap in nursing practice will help move the selfcare initiative

in the right direction (Goodwin, & Richards, 2017). The behavior of caring for self in an

effort to provide better care for others is the foundation of work-life-balance (Fencl, &

Grant, 2017).

The model for change that was also useful in this project was Donebedian's

Structure-Process-Outcome Model, which has been used extensively in healthcare

improvement studies (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2011). The model

proposed that the structure of organizations is a key element in designing the environment

of care (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2011). In the case of improving

work-life balance in the professional role of nursing, the structure would refer to the

support services available for hospital staff experiencing stress due to work-life balance

issues, which could fall under both human resources and clinical services. Donebedian

posits that structures impact process, in this case the delivery of nursing care, and the

outcomes of quality nursing care and quality patient care (Agency for Healthcare

Research and Quality, 2011).

Figure 1 demonstrates the application of the conceptual model and defines the structure, the process, and the outcomes.
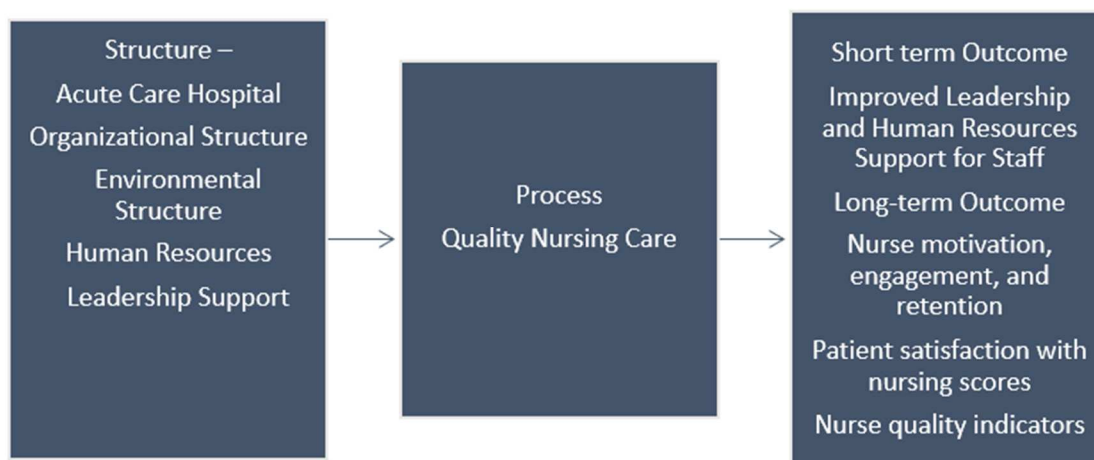
Figure 1. Application of Donebedian's Conceptual Model

Relevance to Nursing Practice

Work-family conflicts add to job demands stress faced by todays professionals. Studies suggest that investments in the promotion of balance between the demands of the job and the availability of resources can create positive conditions (Ghislieri, Gatti, Molino, & Cortese, 2016). Increasing awareness of the effects of job satisfaction on patient satisfaction and quality of nursing care is found throughout the literature. Studies like the work of Stevanin, Palese, Bressan, Vehvilainen-Julkunen and Kvist (2018) explore the work engagement factors on the generations and compare to resiliency and cohesiveness. A number of studies find a positive relationship between the ability to reduce conflicts of work-family and the satisfaction level of the nurses (AlAzzam,

AbuAlRub, & Nazzi, 2017). Work-life balance is dependent upon individual situations and internal factors, factors that influence satisfaction and balance.

Local Background and Context

There is a gap in the relationship between leadership support (organizational and supervisory) and the interventions that can help nurses tackle the demands of the job while addressing work-family conflicts affecting the balance between work and life. A brief literature review was conducted to allow for the development of the context in which these breakdowns occur. Identified were areas where research provides underpinning for the promotion of the support in creating balance to resolve work and family conflicts. The following themes were identified in this initial search and are detailed as follows:

Occupational Stress

Prolonged occupational stress is a principal component rooted in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment (Wilson, Raj, Narayan, Ghiya, Murtly, & Joseph, 2017). Nursing is a high stress occupation. Prolonged stress can result in increased physical strain, poor sleep, and the use of unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, alcohol, and eating disorders (Idress & Abdul-Sattar, 2015).

With so many age groups in the nursing profession, one might expect that different generations with their different experiences will have varying degrees of skill when handling work and life related stresses. In a mixed-method systematic review, Stevanin, Palese, Bressan, Vehvilalnen-Julkunen, and Kvist (2018) compared generations

to find attitudes, emotions, leadership, and practice differences existed. Research involving nurses from different generations is something to consider with the vast range of years of experience within the healthcare settings. Job satisfaction from each generation sampled would require consideration of the characteristics of each age group (Cetinkaya, Akbulut, Dur, Eryalcin, & Korkmaz, 2017).

Maintaining the right work-life balance involves many components: demanding work, socialization, and sleep (Cowen, 2017). Without maintenance, providers are at risk for burn-out. The recommendations for maintenance that healthcare puts providers in is compounded by time constraints, interactions both at work and at home, and the physical demands that job stress puts on them can translate into higher burnout based on the support or lack thereof from supervisors (Sulkowska, Kuzmicz, Malinowski-Lipien, Lickiewicz, Brzostek, & Makara-Studzinski, 2017). Work engagement, organizational citizenship behaviors, psychological contract breaches, affective commitments, and perceived organizational support all impact the culture of the workplace (Gupta, Agarwal, & Kahtri, 2016). Development of culture and a supportive psychological bonding is thought to improve performance and connection with leadership and organization in turn enhancing performance (Gupta, Agarwal, & Kahtri, 2016). A nurses' ability to bond with and identify itself with an organization that develops a sense of security and confidence (Gupta, Agarwal, & Kahtri, 2016).

Anything that effects the work environment is a potential factor for both increased stress and risk of burnout. While burnout is often perceived as a problem that an individual may face while working as a nurse, there are data that show that ineffective

leadership can impact this significantly (Schwartz & Simon, 2018). Finding ways to help supervisors reduce the negative impact on workplace demands and provide employees ways to cope with the effects of these and other stressors are demonstrated in much of the literature when reviewing the studies included in this report (Tucker, Jimmieson, & Bordia, 2016). Much research focuses on the leadership roles. With increased education, problem solving expectations, and independent workstyles, understanding the effects of what research has termed "Followership" remains a mystery. Followership too may impact the culture and balance and further influence ways in which nurses respond to stressors at work and in life (Leung, Lucas, Brindley, Anderson, Park, Vergis, & Gillman, 2018).

Issues of short staffing adds to the problem as does the interference work has in their personal lives, both influencing the risks of burnout (Boamah, Read, & Laschinger, 2016). Twelve-hour shifts have been shown to cause increased job dissatisfaction, fatigue, and stress among nurses (Advisory Board, 2017). The Advisory Board helps healthcare organizations worldwide in improving performance through best practices identified in current research and data. Issues with critical thinking and overall wellbeing proliferate in an evaluation conducted by the Advisory Board (2017). Significant findings were reported in the general health of nurses working longer shifts and specifically cited stress as a result. Statistically significant findings were reported in Coronary Heart Disease risks in nurses working the night shift (Vetter, Devore, Wegrzyn, Massa, Speizer, Kawachi, Rosner, Stampfer & Schernhammer, 2016) thought to be a result of the disruption of both social and biological rhythms.

The World Health Organization (Boniol, McIsaac, Xu, Wuliji, Diallo, & Campbell, 2019) estimated that 70% of the healthcare workforce, nurses included, was composed of women. Add to the role of nurse with wife, mother, caregiver and sometimes student, role adaptation may be a key factor associated with stress. The Cleveland Clinic (2019) discussed stress both positive and negative, its impact, and even suggested ways that women can combat stress to improve the physical, emotional, mental, occupational, social, and spiritual components of their lives. The clinic suggested a personal wellness plan encompassing their personal goals (Cleveland Clinic, 2019). Adaptation and coping with stress are challenging when the stress is chronic or excessive and takes its toll on the lives of the women affected by it (Seaward, 2019). In addition to our work roles, family obligations, and personal relationships, nurses are breadwinners, single moms, and students too.

Xu and Song (2015) also explored the registered nurse pursuing an advanced degree and the need for social support focusing on the work-family-school role conflicts. Goong, Xu, and Li (2016) evaluated the effects of work-family-school role conflicts in conjunction with role-related social support on burnout among registered nurses. Their correlational study looked at multiple roles and conflicts among those roles. With many healthcare organizations supporting continued formal education, this additional role may add to the stress. The researchers found a partial mediating role between work-family school role conflicts and burnout and, while their study looked particularly at nursing expanding their roles by working to attain advanced degrees, it clearly demonstrated the usefulness of implementing family and school friendly policies.

Addressing Work-Life Balance and Self-Care

  Stress and adaptation. The interpretation of stress is an individualized as the person affected by stress. Defined by some as a stimulus and others as a reaction, it is known that there are both positive and negative forms of stress and the ability to cope with it is as equally individualized (Papathanasiou, Tsaras, Neroliatsiou, & Roupa, 2015). Positive stressors could be defined as planning a wedding, preparing for an upcoming graduation, or completing a major proposal. Negative stressors were defined as work, illness or relationship issues. Undoubtedly the reaction to stress: the fight or flight response, has profound effects on the mind and body. Seaward (2021) details holistic stress management and encourages a personal resilience program that may help participants to cope with the stress of life.

  Studies further demonstrated the need to improve work climate to assist with strategies of retention (Lee, Dai, Chang, Chang, Grace, & Liu, 2017). Evidence shows that focusing on employee engagement reduces the turnover in nursing and empowers quality improvement (Maurer, Canacari, Eng, Foley, Phelan, Sulmote, & Wandel, 2018). Research findings demonstrate that evidence-based stress reduction techniques improve the quality of life, prevent or lower indicators of disease, and enhance health overall (Seaward, 2018). These sources can assist in the systematic literature review exploring the evidence-based approaches to reach the goal of attaining of work-life balance in nursing.

  The concern of how to actually find that balance exists and is the subject of much investigation. Cindy Peternelj-Taylor (2017) concedes: "We are very efficient in telling

other to make self-care a priority, while failing to make self-care a priority for ourselves",
(2017, p. 1). Business and information technology companies have been reviewing the
programs offering best-practices to offer work-life balance to their employees (Jha &
Mishra, 2016). The momentum and recent flood of attention given to this topic leads to
the need to further research the strategies that work and the consequences of inability to
find this delicate balance. This is particularly important in light of the drive for women
to strive for further financial independence, career aspiration, and attainment of higher
education (Akter, 2016).

Ideas like autogenic training in the emergency room staff give alternative methods
to coping with quality of life, work motivation, and perceptions of stress and burn-out.
Seward (2018) explains autogenic training as a relaxation technique in which parts of the
body are consciously given a message of warmth and heaviness. The intent is to use
vasodilation to induce feelings of relaxation. Caponnetto, Magro, Inguscio, and Cannella
(2018) explored the idea focusing on the unique group of nurses found in the emergency
room where the stressors are seen as a risk factor for reduced quality of life and burn-out.
While their work lacked a control group and their sample size was small, their findings
were helpful in confirming that the program implementation was met with much positive
feedback.

Munro & Savel (2017) use "Guided by Why" to introduce a method suggested to
critical care nurses, who are among some of the highest self-reported stressed providers,
to help them understand theoretical and conceptual frameworks, research questions, and
analyses within their practice. Many studies indicated that this type of activity helps to

empower the nurses and improve relationships while providing a scientific premise that will lead to the development and testing of interventions that are novel to the practice.

Healthcare providers in many areas face critical incidents that lead to things like unmanaged stress giving way to long term issues such as posttraumatic stress and burnout, both problems known lead to higher turnovers (Mayer & Hamilton, 2018). One wellness strategy used in workplace wellness is mindfulness training. Mindfulness training helps to combat the negative effects by positively impacting cognition, emotion, behavior, and psychology (Valley & Stallones, 2018). Eswaran, Veezhinathan, Balasubramaninan, & Taneja (2018) explored the role of virtual reality as a potential therapy to help reduce stress among students. Virtual reality mimics real world situations and stimulations allowing studies of the brain's response to stressors without the risks and has been developed as a work around in therapy (Eswaran, Veezhinathan, Balasubramaninan, & Taneja, 2018). Their work targeted mental stress, particularly in students, but its findings appear to be potentially useful when looking at burnout and caregiver fatigue in the nursing field.

Self-care. Moffatt-Bruce, Nguyen, Steinberg, & Klatt (2019) looked specifically at the interventions to reduce burnout and improve resilience. Their work explored the impact that it had on the outcomes of a health system. Practices such as mindfulness training, and other wellness offerings were examined. Asking what interventions could be implemented and using a multistep, multi-professional, and multiyear approach they investigated both feasibility and effectiveness. The program focused on promoting provider compassion and mindfulness. Studies such as these need to be carefully

explored to determine the practices that might provide the most bang for the buck in the healthcare setting. The determination of best practices will allow agencies to use programs that are known to work to help improve the lives of the providers and the outcomes of the patients.

Exploring activities that affect employee attitudes about work and overall mental health, such as the positive effects of sunlight and other natural elements (An, Colarelli, O'Brien, & Boyajian, 2016) bring to the forefront additional ideas that may prove to be beneficial to the systems searching for solutions. Stress-related illnesses affect the providers in more ways than one: physical and mental illness are known causes of increases in missed work and poor employee health. A look at studies to isolate best practices will allow identification of dominant predictors affecting mood and job satisfaction and eliminate or greatly reduce issues that plague many providers including sleep disorders, respiratory problems, lower back pain, hypertension, anxiety, depression, and even gut aliments (An, Colarelli, O'Brien, & Boyajian, 2016).

Keeping staff, particularly nurses, happy has known implications on the workforce and requires well-being strategies that will improve staff engagement (Oates, 2018). Gathering information that will identify strategies that help delineate clear separation between work life and personal life has been shown to improve well-being. Activities such as spending time in nature, listening to music, physical exercise, and mindful practices are among the top findings but the results will be ultimately explored through a systematic review of the literature and allow the identification of those activities showing the most profound results among nurses today.

Mindfullness and coping strategies. The development of coping strategies is an essential element to all aspects of life, but for nurses entrusted in the care of others, this skill is associated with an ability to provide better patient care and ensure better outcomes (Isa, Ibrahim, Abdul-Manan, Mohd-Shalleh, Abdul-Mumin, & Rahman, 2018). Studies exploring the psychological well-being focus on the coping strategies and the negative effects of stress and internal factors such as self-efficacy, mindfulness, and resilience along with external factors such as social support to have positive effects (He, Turnbull, Kirshbaum, Phillips, & Klainin-Yobas, 2018). With work environments in healthcare ever changing, patient care complex and demanding, the need to discover which practices work best to promote improved satisfaction in the workplace and better outcomes in regard to a balance between work and life is ever pressing.

Dowd (2018) shares insights on a mindful presence and the impact on patients and their families, but as a student herself fails to consider her own needs in her reflections that she considered integral to nursing care. Leaving time for ourselves imposes additional stressors that will reduce a nurse's ability to combat compassion fatigue and burnout (Abbaszadeh, Elmi, Borhani, & Sefidkar, 2017). Even Emergency Medical Service (EMS) providers are keenly aware that longevity requires strategies besides loving what you do but being certain that your work is part of your life not the defining part (Dick, 2016).

Studies have looked at the opportunity to introduce things like mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) on stress and burnout in nursing. In one such study, researchers investigated the nurse's response to interventions that included stress management

programs offered at work as part of their employee wellness program (Cohen-Katz,

Wiley, Capuano, Baker, & Shapiro, 2005). With stress evidenced to affect things like

blood pressure and cardiovascular health in general, many companies are including stress

related programs into their regular health and wellness activities to help combat the long-

term effects of stress on the body and mind. The introduction of mindfulness to the

nurses who participated showed to have extraordinarily positive results thought real

qualitative data is hard to collect in a study such as this, however, results made a strong

case for MBSR in the healthcare workforce.

Much research looks at the opportunity for MBSR on the patient and their

outcomes, such as those opportunities where advanced practice nurses can explore the

options with their patient population. Growing literature supports the ability to change

outcomes both biological and psychological on things like pain, hypertension and even

the prevention of disease (Williams, Simmons, & Tanabe, 2015). These same wellness

practices could be used in place of pharmacological tactics to battle the onslaught of

stress on the nurses caring for these patients. Promoting health using alternative therapies

to tackle psychosocial and mental health, as well as chronic disease, will likely continue

to grow in popularity as the changes in delivery of healthcare and providers responsible

for that delivery are ever changing.

Workplace wellness programs. High-reliability organizations are known for

their attention to quality and safety and lower turn-over rates, with positive changes in

staff when it comes to anxiety, stress, resiliency, mindfulness, and burnout symptoms.

Progressive ideas include the inclusion of mindful practices within the ranks of the

healthcare providers (Gilmartin, Goyal, Hamati, Mann, Saint, & Chopra, 2017).

Undoubtedly the focus on patient outcomes, including safety and quality of care are

paramount, but what if the impact of the providers themselves were influential in those

outcomes. The idea that better rested and less stressed providers are able to offer better

care and higher quality care to their patients is not new to the healthcare industry.

Finding best practices to the delivery of this opportunity for change is essential to the

outcomes.

Healthcare delivery requires long hours in a face-paced and stressful environment

with long-term effects on the bodies and minds of those delivering the care.

Opportunities to offer worksite wellness programs intended to focus on the physical

issues such as fit for duty exercises, addressing high cholesterol and elevated blood

pressure, and offering a yearly flu vaccine can be all it takes to encourage staff to care for

themselves. Many programs are tied to the insurance offered within the organization

increasing the system's ability to gain access to a larger target audience when discounts

or incentives for participation are presented. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

estimates that 83% of hospitals in the United States provide workplace wellness programs

(CDC, 2019). Ignoring our own health while caring for others is a very real problem but

workplace opportunities increase the likelihood that providers will use the tools and

opportunity provided to improve their own personal health, both physical and mental

helping to prevent burnout and long-term illnesses.

With an aging workforce, special opportunities may need consideration to address

generational specific concerns. Perhaps the addition of physical activities that addressed

both the movement and mental stressors may improve outcomes in wellness. One such study proved just that by adding a Tai Chi group to the wellness program that demonstrated a 3% increase in productivity and no work-related injuries (Palumbo, Wu, Shaner-McRae, Rambus, & McIntosh, 2012). Knowing that these workplace wellness activities improve the overall well-being of the healthcare providers workforce, perhaps tackling the delicate balance between work and life won't be as challenging as once thought. Finding the answers to things like causes of burnout, what implications resiliency has on the effects of stress, what healthcare leadership can do to help staff with work-life balance are essential to the future of turnover reduction and improved outcomes (Brown, Whichello, & Price, 2018). Finding the best practices can lead to improved patient care, increased patient satisfaction, and better longevity in the healthcare field for the providers themselves. Many wellness series produce positive outcomes and improved job performance (Zadeh, Gamba, Hudson, & Wiener, 2012) pointing out that careful examination of these practices and ideas using a systematic review will reveal better evidence that will contribute to overall wellness.

Reducing occupational stressors, addressing work-life balance and self-care, including workplace wellness opportunities, and learning useful coping strategies are indicated in the literature as essential to the work-life balance of nursing staff. Finding ways to ensure nursing leadership can effectively utilize these ideas in restoring the balance of work and life in their nursing staff is critical. Nursing is a profession of giving, but negative effects result when the delicate balance of work and life cannot be restored (Phillips, Androski, & Winks, 2018).

Role of the DNP Student

As a full-time university nursing and allied health instructor, my classrooms are full of bodies tired from work and life. Most are seeking the goal of earning the BSN degree; sometimes a requirement of the employer, but most often a self-directed goal to improve the quality of life for a nurse. The goal of this project is to share useful information to leaders in nursing to allow support for staff and for struggling students to improve quality of life during what is usually a stress provoking endeavor. There should not be any conflicts of interest or bias in research while conducting this systematic literature review. This DNP scholarly project was conducted from my home office. The approval of the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) was attained prior to the start of the project. The issue was identified through years of struggling personally with the delicate balance of work and life. The literature was obtained, analyzed, and summarized by myself as the final component of my DNP Program.

Summary

Work-life balance in nursing, a demanding and often stressful occupation with frequently high turnover rates, challenges leadership with the fallout resulting from disparity. These imbalances are a cause for concern in nursing leadership as they often result in turnover and burnout. Turnover costs of human resources add to the financial burden of the institutions and affects their bottom line in cost (Healthstream, 2020). Such costs are typically passed on to the consumer and the patients, leaving gaps in care that affect both the quality and outcomes. There is still considerable work to be done in developing wellness programs to address the demands of nursing and help improve

satisfaction among those practicing in the field of nursing. Careful review of current data detailing best practices reveals ideas that can be shared across the nursing spectrum and provide much needed tools to help reduce the stressors, both those found at the workplace and at home. These best practices can then be supported by leadership to promote the return of polarity between the life and the work of the nursing staff. Section three will discuss the collection and analysis of evidence.

Section 3: Collection and Analysis of Evidence

Introduction

Synthesizing best practice information that is useful to nursing leadership is important to addressing work-life-balance issues within the nursing profession. The gap in nursing practice management is the lack of knowledge and tools for supporting the emotional well-being of managers and direct care nursing staff. The purpose of this systematic review was to compile a synopsis of rigorous evidence-based literature on programs that can address the stress associated with achieving work-life balance. The clinical practice question *what are the best evidence-based practices of nurse leadership that can provide support in achieving work-life balance for nursing staff*? This information can then be used by nurse leaders to create and implement strategies to support their nursing workforce and to ultimately decrease the turnover and the loss of experienced nurses from the profession. The positive social change is a positive work environment which supports nurses in providing high quality patient care.

Sources of Evidence

The "Walden Manual for Systematic Reviews" (2019) was used to conduct this study. The evidence-based practice movement drives the current systematic evidence reviews of today and the methods developed by the Cochran Collaboration. Nurses today are afforded many opportunities to improve patient care. Translation of evidence and opportunities to improve self-care are afforded by the strategies extracted from the study of literature (White, Dudley-Brown, & Terhaar, 2016).

This systematic review was conducted through careful review of peer-reviewed, full text studies published between 2015 and the present that explore work-life balance in healthcare workers using the Walden University library database, the Pennsylvania State University library database, and Google Scholar. Various combinations of key words included: *nursing burnout*, *caregiver stress*, *nurse retention*, *mindfulness*, *work-life balance*, *best practices*, *nursing turnover*, and *stress reduction*.

The seven-step process for research synthesis as outlined by Cooper (2009) was used: formulation of the problem, literature search, information gathered from the studies, quality evaluation, analysis and integration of study outcomes, interpretation of evidence and presentation of the results. The ability to locate and synthesize this evidence was demonstrated by careful selection of studies, extraction, appraisal of the findings, and interpretation and presentation of the information.

Using the four levels of evidence, the GRADE criteria ratings of very low, low, moderate, and high were used to organize the key concepts of the data (BMJ, 2020). The evaluation categories included the first author and date, aim of the study, sample size and setting, design and methodology, interventions used, findings reported, limitations, and levels of evidence. Key concepts included the stress reduction programs with results, formal wellness programs with results, human resource support for life events and role changes, debriefing and de-escalation activities, spiritual support for caregivers, and identification of additional concepts found.

Protection of Human Subjects

This literature review did not require the participation of human subjects. The proposal was submitted to the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) and approved.

Summary

The systematic review of literature is intended to support better understanding of the stressors associated with work-life balance and the strategies for improving better self-care of nursing staff. This may result in higher job satisfaction by identifying key elements to create healthier work environments. The review process was structured and transparent to draw out the current, available evidence to better understand those key strategies to support nurses with their struggle to maintain balance at work and at home. Finding the appropriate tools to keep today's nurses viable within the settings in which they work while helping them to find the best possible ways to maintain homeostasis in their lives is critical to the continuation of high-quality patient care and the retention of those providing the care (Goodwin & Richards, 2017). The end goal was to arm the leadership of today with proven methods to help keep their experienced staff in place while improving the overall sustainability of nursing as a profession. Research in the past has revealed the influences of stress and the quality of life in a negative light (Sarafis, et al, 2016). Struggles with supervisors and other staff combined with ineffective coping has impacted the ability to care for patients in the manner defined by the standard of care. These deficits may also in turn affect the nurse's ability to promote self-care. There is much yet to be discovered in the interactions between the stressors of a demanding career such as nursing and the challenges of maintaining the delicate balance that is life

(Pearce,2018). Section four addresses the findings of the systematic review and

recommendations for nurse leaders.

Section 4: Findings and Recommendations

Introduction

In a recent spotlight on Walden, a collection of stories and insight from staff, faculty, alumni, and students from Walden University, Dr. Phyllis Morgan, coordinator of the Family Nurse Practitioner specialization (2017) explained the importance of improving physical and emotional health by finding time for small changes to help minimize anxiety and stress while trying to balance work, life and school challenges. Her insight sparked interest in the opportunities available to help nurses find and maintain better work-life balance. This project provided further insight into the following question: *what are the best evidence-based practices of nurse leadership that can provide support in achieving work-life balance for nursing staff*?

The idea of work-life balance is not a new concept, but as nursing has evolved so do the solutions to help support nurses to achieve this balance. As early as the 1800s manufacturing laws limited the amount of time women and children were permitted to work but it was not until the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1980s that the idea of work-life balance was further explored (Raja & Stein, 2014). Nurses have patients with higher acuity illnesses, are working longer hours, are often faced with short staffing problems. This leaves the nurse routinely skipping breaks and results in increasing risk of harm to the patient population (Pearce, 2020). Employers are looking to promote a culture of change from the circumstances facing healthcare providers, in particular, nursing staff. Changes to the demographics of the nursing population, influenced by demands of home and work, have signified changes in how nurses handle juggling the

demands placed on them. When nursing leadership is able to discover the appropriate tools to help nurses meet their needs, they are able to invest in incentive programs that not only help the workforce but also improve the bottom line (Henderson, 2019).

The purpose of this systematic review was to examine recent evidence from the literature that can be used to identify the stressors associated with the balance between work and life. The meaningful gap in practice that this synopsis addressed was the lack of knowledge and tools to successfully support nurses struggling with achieving homeostasis. It is hopeful that the information gleaned from the evaluation of the literature will be useful to nursing leadership in choosing evidence-based methods to better support todays nursing workforce in an effort to decrease the loss of the valuable human resources at the bedside. This project may offer solutions to the prevention of future nursing shortages by contributing information useable to those in leadership positions. It is expected that the results of this doctoral project, utilizing current, credible sources and recently published peer-reviewed journal articles, will later help to support the idea that the balance between work and life is critical to the retention and satisfaction of today's healthcare leaders. The Walden IRB approval number is 01-30-20-0070940.

Systematic Review Search Strategy

The data collected came from studies published from 2015-present that examine factors associated with work-life balance. Specific focus was on the evidence-based practices that support nurses and other healthcare workers in achieving work-life balance. The data was collected from the Walden University library database, the Pennsylvania State University library database, and Google Scholar using the following key words:

work-life balance, nursing turnover, burn out, evidence-based techniques, stress management techniques, and *stress.* The search was limited to English language full text, peer reviewed scholarly journals, and academic journals published in the last five years. The initial search used very general terms, such as "burn-out" but the finding were narrowed by selecting only those discussing nurses achieving work-life balance resulting in 18 studies that met the inclusion criteria.

Findings and Implications

Once the articles were gathered, the suitable articles were organized into a Microsoft Word matrix and PRISMA flowchart to demonstrate the process used in selecting articles and the final number of articles used. The total number of articles found were just 18 after the elimination of duplicate articles therefore this systematic review included just 18 (n=18) articles in the analysis section of this project (see Appendix C). The evaluation categories were adjusted to include the full reference, the aim of the study, the design of research methodology, the conclusion, and the GRADE of evidence while the details of sample size, interventions, and significant findings and limitations. Following the intended themes identified during the contextual review of literature, the articles were then separated into four categories: Organizational Strategies, Self-Care, Mindfulness (Coping Strategies) and Workplace Wellness.

Organizational Strategies

The articles falling under the Organizational Strategies category numbered only seven. Brown, Whichello, and Price (2018) point out the identification of leadership strategies used to help nurses in high-risk work environments by identifying risks

associated with burnout. Their integrative literature review tied the need for increased resiliency in nurses to the improved turnover rates. While their work also crossed over into the category of coping mechanisms in nurses with strategies that help tackle the stressors of the profession, their focus on workshops that teach nurses skills such as Mindfulness-base stress reduction (MBSR), conflict and emotional distancing training added to the significant reduction in stress reported after occupational interventions.

One study included in the organizational strategy category included nurses and other healthcare staff within the Veteran Affairs (VA) Healthcare System (Leary, Weingart, Topp, & Bormann, 2018). The sample size was small, numbering 39 participants, their study found partial support in their theory that the organizational programs can help reduce burnout and improved quality of life. Ultimately the researchers suggested the addition of mindful techniques into nursing programs to help preprogram nursing to better cope with the acute care environment.

While nursing a key word used in the search, an interesting article surfaced on the information and communication technologies (ICT) effects in an exploratory study (Ninaus, Diehl, Terlutter, Chan, & Huang, 2015.) The idea that technology is a benefit to society is not a new idea in today's world, but it comes with a price. Digital toxicity, screen addictions and the term "Technostress" (Seaward, 2020) paved the way with a "tsunami of cyber-information" (Seaward, 2020, p. 29) and an inability to easily disconnect from these new age stressors. The researchers concluded through an interpretive approach that companies that raise awareness of the stressors and benefits of ICT may ultimately increase and help maintain an employees' well-being. Bringing

attention to the benefits as well as the added stressors brought on by the advancement of technology may shed additional insight into the need to "unplug".

Moloney, Boxall, Parsons, and Cheung (2017) surveyed a large number, nearly 3,000, of registered nurses in New Zealand to conclude the interference of work in their personal lives and the increased workloads are major threats to the retention of staff. The researchers encouraged engagement and burnout reduction in an effort to help improve retention of nurses in the field. The use of cross-sectional surveying added that the aging profession and the additional strains on today's nurses are rapidly increasing the likelihood that nurses will leave the profession all together. Ng, Chen, Ng, Lin, & Kuar (2017) also explored job-control, citing that work practices, born out of organizational strategies, should include flexible work practices to lessen the demands of the job, allows for more interactive balance at home, and increased job engagement. While the study was a screenshot of Taiwanese nurses, this review included international research, and lead to empirical questions about the impact that culture might have on the work-life balance among nurses and other healthcare providers.

Continuing with the idea that flexible working is good for the nurses and other healthcare providers, Barraclough (2018) summarized that practitioners are brought together and allowed to reflect on the impact that their knowledge and skills have on the outcomes when clinical supervision is developed in sessions. Incorporation of the idea that their work is planned around their life rather than the reverse has illustrated the benefits of work that is flexible in nature. The organization that promotes teamwork delivers better care to their patients and that promotes satisfaction for all (Barraclough,

2018). Lastly, the focus of interventions discussed by Wentzel and Brysiewicz (2017) reviewed compassion fatigue among oncology nurses. Analysis of 164 studies concluded that while additional research is needed, the lack of empirical precision in evaluations left much to be desired; there are too many variables and more rigorous studies are needed in the future.

Self-care

Using Walker and Avant's method of concept analysis, Emily Peters (2018) explored compassion fatigue in nursing and concluded that all nurses are at risk. Peters (2018) encouraged the prevention can be achieved through professional boundaries, measure that address self-care and self-awareness, and education at both the organizational and individual levels. A unique code has been implemented: "Code Lavender", a crisis intervention tool used to support healthcare staff and volunteers, but is also available for patients and their families (Stone, 2018). "Code Lavender" offered at Hillcrest Hospital, part of the Cleveland Clinic hospital system, brings support services to those in need. Stone (2018) shares the information as an approach using evidence-based interventions to help with relaxation and restoration to add to the healing environment of the hospital.

Fencl and Grant (2017) summarized promotion of self-care on nurturing the mind, body and spirit helps nurses by involving them in activities. Activities that improve their diet, enhance their physical activity, promotes sufficient sleep practices, relax, and balance their personal and professional lives while engaging in preventive care activities such as routine checkups, while maintaining an active social life. Commitments to basic

personal care, development of stress management, and creating a healthy balance between family and work time demonstrated the value of self-care.

Mindfulness

Hasan and Tumah (2018) reviewed Jordanian nurses working in a mental health hospital and found effective stress management techniques influential on the wellbeing of the staff. The research concluded that offering training to help with the implementation of more effective stress management techniques, they developed problem-solving skills and coping mechanisms more effective that benefited not only themselves, but those around them.

Saifan, AlZoubi, Alrimawi, & Melhem (2018) recommended that policy makers and managers carefully address the psychological concerns of oncology nurses in an effort to assist the unique challenges they face. The work environment in oncology nursing is plagued with difficulty maintaining a good balance between their own emotional response to patients with cancer and their professional roles resulting in highly stressful work environments. Absenteeism and high turnover along with physical and psychological issues were results of limited experience, lack of continuing education and staff shortages (Saifan, AlZoubi, Alrimawi, & Melhem, 2018). This work was limited by the research being conducted in one facility with a small sample size of nurses. The idea that the workplace may need to address the unique concerns of these specialized nurses goes without saying.

Workplace Wellness

Workplace wellness that focus on both the management and reduction of stress and the development of healthy coping skills were the recommendations of Jordan, Khubchandani and Wiblishauser (2016). This pilot investigation demonstrated the impact that the ability to cope effectively and the perception of stress had on the health of the nurses. A cross-sectional observational study was designed based on best practices in their survey research and was aimed at the delineation of the relationship between the health and work performance of nurses, their ability to cope with stress, and they did so through the assessment of their health status and self-reported stress levels. Frequently the nurses reported insufficient sleep and inadequate physical activity along with poor eating habits. While their study was small, it clearly defined the implications of workplace wellness and health promotion along with disease prevention activities as key indicators to the improvement of employee satisfaction and retention, as well as improved patient care and satisfaction.

The qualitative work of Gauche, de Beer, and Brink (2017) focused on the identification of both job and personal resources that impact on the well-being of the employee. The purpose of this study was to empower organizations to better understand what resources have the greatest impact on the well-being of employees. Gauche, de Beer, and Brink (2017, e2) cite: "The availability of job resources allows employees to better cope with the demands experienced in the workplace and contribute to improved employee well-being." While their research setting was not nursing based, but rather a South African-based financial services organization, their findings related to wellness in

the workplace, and the impact on retention, and the role that rich and insightful data has on the support offered to employees in an effort to decrease turnover, and increase productivity.

Well-being at work in the health care professional arena has been shown to directly correlate with the development and/or avoidance of burnout. Romppanen and Haggman-Laitila (2016) synthesized current research knowledge through a quantitative systematic review that looked at two basic ideas for tackling workplace well-being: stress management and improved interactions within the workplace. The researchers concluded that research for interventions to combat workplace well-being was sporadic and varied, and they suggested a standardized research process.

Kim and Windsor (2015) examine the resilience shaped by separation of work and life, flexibility, positive thinking, and the assumption of responsibility. The focus on the mangers and the retention of the workforce led to the conclusion that it was a dynamic and reflective process involving response to organizational demands and nurses' personal lives. The additional flexibility and the implementation of principles that were perceived as strategically complementary in managers with more experience and the institutional support integral to the promotion of work-life balance (Kim & Windsor, 2015).

Additional focus on the nursing managers was elicited in the integrative review that explored the broader perspective of the critical organizational issue in coping and stress (Larague, McEnroe-Petitte, Leocadio, Van Bogaert, & Cummings, 2017). Staffing, organizational resources, support services, stress management training, staffing, and leadership all affect the supportive structures of professional practice in the nurse's day to

day dealings with stress. Their systematic review concluded that enhancing social support along with the promotion of job control topped the list for hospital administration, and could be used to guide future interventions of supportive structures to prevent the physiological and psychological consequences of imbalances in work and life (Larague, McEnroe-Petitte, Leocadio, Van Bogaert, & Cummings, 2017).

The qualitative work of Bagely, Abubaker and Sawyerr (2018) detailed the initiation of a program built on co-counseling and social support. This study, framed within the disciplinary approach of Critical Realism, "identifies the value basis for research and dialogue in developing strategies for social change" (Baefley, Abubaker, & Sawyerr, 2018, p. 2076). The special sample used hospital nurses in England, and measured personality, self-esteem, depression, burn-out, work-life balance stress, "hardy personality," and the intention to leave nursing. Their work is instrumental in the development of new ways to explore professional excellence and the need for support in an effort to combat the nursing shortage as without improvements in the turnover, the crisis continues.

Summary

This systematic review addressing work-life balance best practices through evidence-based research findings acknowledges that supportive services through organizational and work-place wellness can be helpful while practices such as mindfulness coping strategies and self-care can be useful as well. The need to support nurses' ability to deal with work and life stressors, the need for change in nursing through activities that promote professional growth and their intellectual improvement in a work-

environment that is growth-oriented, may require more than just organizational or personal steps but with migration of nurses a governmental change may be required (Pujari, 2018). This specific topic is important and certainly clearly requires more research to be able to specifically identify individual activities that might mitigate imbalances in work and life.

For nursing leadership, it is clear that the degree to which an organization can impact its nurses takes both time and money. Strategies that invest in policies that acknowledge stressors in practice and promote the creation of workplaces that support the resolution of conflicts are likely to generate greater stability in its workforce (Akter, 2016) The impact of nursing leadership is instrumental in terms of investing time and money for programs to assist along with methods to improve the work environment for the nurses. Options in the clinical setting such as self-scheduling provide some additional flexibility and may provide managers with at least one tool to help their workforce improve the balance between work and life (Barrett & Holme, 2018).

Recommendations

Research indicated that the impact that an organization has upon the wellness of its nurses can be seen through the support that it offers them. Options that appeared to be valued as making a difference included flexible staffing, stress management programs, and personal health and wellness programs. Research indicated that there is evidence to support the value of these activities in maintaining optimal productivity and retention. Improving the autonomy and support perceived by nurses while eliminating pressures, such as increased productivity and higher workloads, has been thought to improve the

patient experience (Kieft, Brouwer, Francke, & Delnoij, 2014). Further research is recommended to explore the significance of improved nursing work-life balance on the outcomes of patients.

Strengths and Limitations of the Project

A strength identified in this DNP Project is the knowledge gained through the process of collection, analysis, and careful integration of information into a format useful to others. An additional strength is the insight the information offers those responsible for the support and well-being of today's nurse by the leadership. This project allowed for the idea that further research is needed to assist with the declining numbers in healthcare, and the idea that improvements can be made by an organizations leadership to help staff cope with the stressors of life, and the integration of activities that will help them cope with their job. The project was limited in the number of articles produced in the search for evidence and the lack of a definitive solution to the looming question of what are the best-practices in achieving work-life balance.

Section 5: Dissemination Plan

Introduction

The plan for dissemination of this final DNP Project is to submit to ProQuest as is the requirement of the Doctor of Nursing Practice program at Walden University. Dissertations from a variety of colleges and universities are contained within ProQuest and it is seen as valuable to others who may also be interested in the topic of Work-Life Balance. As nursing faculty at Pennsylvania State University, the submission of this work will demonstrate that the delicate balance of work and life is essential to the longevity of the nursing profession and that more support is needed to research this topic. Following the submission to ProQuest, the distribution of this evidence by presentation to the local hospital's leadership council as well as the leadership at the local university.

As a current faculty in nursing and allied health member, the results of this study can be shared with students and faculty to assist both the current and future generations in healthcare the importance of finding balance in work and life. The creation of a poster to educate others and the presentation at local and state nursing events with eventual presentation at either nursing or other allied health conferences for continuing education credits will be considered. The dissemination of this information at all levels will act to promote further inquiry in the best practices in stress reduction and retention through the concept of work-life balance.

Analysis of Self

In a personal introspection, preparation to undergo a topic that is personally meaningful to any working nurse is the wellness of the nurse, including emotional,

physical, and spiritual. The course work and clinical requirements of this program presented a unique challenge to the delicate balance between work and life. Insecure about fitting into the big picture that is the terminal degree and challenged by life stressors, hours were spent pouring over articles and using Walden University coursework to guide these pages. The methodology and principles of research reviewed in the classes previously struggled through while trying to live life, paved the way to a final project that required a scholarly voice that prior to this were nonexistent and pushed for writing skills and research still very raw. This project has allowed insight into information on a level far beyond previous expectations and has resulted in so many looming questions that now need answered: what about the culture stressors on a nurse? Does it affect the way we perceive work-life balance? Do gender differences play a role in how we achieve a balance in work and life? This inquisitive nature that is fueled by research in nursing has provided skills that can be used as a nursing leader. The role this has provided preparation for will play a part in the future of nursing. Research such as this is critical to the future of nursing. Striving to be a mentor, a colleague, and an educator in the nursing profession, this will proceed with a pride in knowing that this DNP degree awarded by Walden University was earned by practicing some of the very work-life balance elements written about here in this project.

Summary

The information within this systematic review was an analysis and synthesis of current research about the best practices in helping leadership provide tools to support nursing staff in achieving work-life balance using evidence-based research. While much

more information is out there and even more research is needed, the preceding pages can provide a foundation for nurses and leadership to build upon in an effort to improve the inescapable challenges faced by nurses struggling to find delicate balance in both work and life. The goal of accomplishing a relatively harmonious balance between the demands of life itself and our work, with the support of the workplace and the coping strategies discussed herein, is achievable. With the support of nursing and other healthcare leadership, the dynamic balance may be attained and while further research is needed to help fill the knowledge gap, the publication of this project may be used as a catalyst for call for more focus on such a critical topic.

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29(5), 294-299.

Appendix A: Data Analysis and Evaluation

Full Reference	Research Question(s)/Hypothesis/Aim of research	Research Methodology	Conclusions	Grading the Evidence
Alshutwi, S. S. (2016). The Influences of Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors on the Relationships Among Work-Family Conflict, Stress, and Turnover Intention in Saudi Arabian Registered Nurses.	Evaluate the influence of family supportive supervisor behaviors on the relationship among work-family conflict (WFC), stress, and turnover intention (TI) in Saudi Arabian registered nurses.	A cross-sectional study	Both WFC and stress associated with TI; though associations were buffered (weaken), when nurses had higher FSSB.	High
Bagley, C., Abubaker, M., & Sawyerr, A. (2018). Personality, Work-Life Balance, Hardiness, and Vocation: A Typology of Nurses and Nursing Values in a Special Sample of English Hospital Nurses. Administrative Sciences (2076-3387), 8(4), 79. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.3390/admsci8040079	Explored that commitment to Nursing Values would be predicted by or at least correlate significantly with personal strengths (incl social stressors such as Work-Life-Balance (WLB) issues).	Longitudinal study	The approach yielded 4 types of individuals in nursing the last being those needing support that they were not getting.	High
Barraclough, K. (2018). Flexible working is good for staff and patient care. British Journal of Nursing, 27(11), 592. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.12968/bjon.2018.27.11.592	Discussed the importance of nurses ability to schedule work around life.	Expert opinion	Suggested that increased control over their working lives improved the balance	Low

			between work and life.	
Brown, S., Whichello, R., & Price, S. (2018). The impact of resiliency on nurse burnout: An integrative literature review. MedSurg Nursing, 27(6), 349.	Identification of causes of nurse burnout, characteristics of nurses with high resiliency, and strategies to increase nurse resiliency.	Literature review	Workshops effective in skill development to overcome difficult situations. Resiliency improved with mindfulness-based interventions, writing exercises, conflict resolution training, and communication skills.	Moderate
Fencl, J. L., & Grant, D. (2017). Self-care promotes safer patient care. AORN Journal, 105(5), 506-509. doi:10.1016/j.aorn.2017.03.008	Looking at self-care to ensure healthy work-life balance.	Expert opinion	Focusing on nurturing of self (the mind, body and spirit) can help nurses better care for their patients.	Low
Gauche, C., De Beer, L. T., & Brink, L. (2017). Managing employee well-being: A qualitative study exploring job and personal resources of at-risk employees. SA Journal of Human Resource Management, 15(2), e1-e13. doi:10.4102/sajhrm.v15i0.957	Investigation of job experience and personal resources from the perspective of the employee that has been	Qualitative approach	Identification of job and personal resources as factors influencing	High

	identified as at-risk for burnout.		their well-being.	
Hasan, A. A., & Tumah, H. (2019). The correlation between occupational stress, coping strategies, and the levels of psychological distress among nurses working in mental health hospital in Jordan. Perspectives in Psychiatric Care, 55(2), 153-160. doi:10.1111/ppc.12292	Assessment of workplace stress, coping strategies, and psychiatric distress among psychiatric nurses.	Descriptive explanatory design	Results identified the use of different coping mechanisms among participants and those participants also experienced a moderate level of occupational stress and psychiatric distress.	Low
Jordan, T. R., Khubchandani, J., & Wiblishauser, M. (2016). The impact of perceived stress and coping adequacy on the health of nurses: A pilot investigation. Nursing Research and Practice, 2016, 5843256-11. doi:10.1155/2016/5843256	Set out to explain the relationship between stress, coping adequacy and health.	Cross-sectional observational study	Results indicated that both coping abilities and stress influence the work performance and health of nurses.	High
Kim, M., & Windsor, C. (2015). Resilience and work-life balance in first-line nurse manager. Asian Nursing Research, 9(1), 21-27. doi:10.1016/j.anr.2014.09.003	Aimed to explore the meaning of resilience and the relationship in work-life balance for first-line nurse managers effects on Korean nursing workforce retention.	Combination of inductive and deductive approaches	Results indicated that strengthening resilience in first-line nurse managers improved work-life balance for	Moderate

			married nurses.	
Labrague, L. J., McEnroe☐Petitte, D. M., Leocadio, M. C., Van Bogaert, P., & Cummings, G. G. (2018). Stress and ways of coping among nurse managers: An integrative review. Journal of Clinical Nursing, 27(7-8), 1346-1359. doi:10.1111/jocn.14165	Assess and marry information from empirical studies examining sources of occupational stress and ways to cope with stress used by nurse managers.	Integrat ive review.	Work stress reductions found when job control and social support were enhanced/p romoted.	Very low
Leary, S., Weingart, K., Topp, R., & Bormann, J. (2018). The effect of mantram repetition on burnout and stress among VA staff. Workplace Health & Safety, 66(3), 120-128. doi:10.1177/2165079917697215	Exploration of a Mantram Repetition Program (MRP) on burnout and stress of conscience (SOC) and determine the results of mindful practices (such as meditation) prior to the program.	Single group measure s design.	An MRP intervention in individuals who are naïve to practicing medication may reduce burnout.	High
Moloney, W., Boxall, P., Parsons, M., & Cheung, G. (2018). Factors predicting registered nurses' intentions to leave their organization and profession: A job demands☐resources framework. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 74(4), 864-875. doi:10.1111/jan.13497	Examination of effects of resources and demands of the job, personal demands and resources, and engagement at work on the intention to leave the nursing profession/organ ization.	Cross-sectiona l survey design.	The impact of resources and demands of the job and personal demands and resources play a significant role in burnout and engagement at work and	High

			effect retention while higher levels of self-efficacy and challenge demands support retention.	
Ng, L. □ P., Chen, I. □ C., Ng, H. □ F., Lin, B. □ Y., & Kuar, L. □ S. (2017). Influence of job demands and job control on work-life balance among Taiwanese nurses. Journal of Nursing Management (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.), 25(6), 438–448. https://doi-org.ezp.waldenulibrary.org/10.111 1/jonm.12482	Investigated the extent that work-life balance was affected by job demands and job control in nursing.	Taiwan es study (used questio naries)	The reduction in the level of demands (job related) between career developme nt and family while maintaining a proper level of job control showed to be instrumenta l in achieving work-life balance.	Mod erate
Ninaus, K., Diehl, S., Terlutter, R., Chan, K., & Huang, A. (2015). Benefits and stressors - perceived effects of ICT use on employee health and work stress: An exploratory study from Austria and Hong Kong. International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being, 10(1),	Examine stressors and benefits of technologies among practitioners in advertising, public relations and journalism	Interpre tive approac h using qualitati ve research .	Both benefits of the technology as well as increased issues related to the use of	Low

28838-15. doi:10.3402/qhw.v10.28838	industries in Hong Kong and Austria.		technology emerged.	
Peters, E. (2018). Compassion fatigue in nursing: A concept analysis. Nursing Forum, 53(4), 466-480. doi:10.1111/nuf.12274 Pujari, V., & Pal, S. (2018). an overview of challenges and migration among nursing professionals. Teorija in Praksa, 55(3), 572-690.	Sought clarification of the compassion fatigue concept in an effort to develop methods to prevent/mitigate it in nursing.	Walker and Avant's method of concept analysis.	Nurses are all at risk of compassion fatigue. Establishing professional boundaries, self-care measures, self-awareness, and education on the subject of compassion fatigue were found to assist in preventing this issue.	Low
Pujari, V., & Pal, S. (2018). an overview of challenges and migration among nursing professionals. Teorija in Praksa, 55(3), 572-690.	Exploration of various aspect of a nurses' work life.	Expert opinion	Occupational stress, hazards, shift work, conditions of one's physical health, burnout, feminism in the profession all relate to the emigration of nurses.	Low
Romppanen, J., & Häggman‐ Laitila, A. (2017). Interventions	Exploration of interventions	Quantit ative	Moderate evidence	High

for nurses' well☐being at work: A quantitative systematic review. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 73(7), 1555-1569. doi:10.1111/jan.13210	aimed at improving nurses' well-being at work through current research.	systematic review.	supported the use of a number of interventions.	
Saifan, A. R., Al Zoubi, A. M., Alrimawi, I., & Melhem, O. (2019). Exploring the psychological status of Jordanian nurses working with cancer patients. Journal of Nursing Management, 27(1), 215-222. doi:10.1111/jonm.12667	Exploration of psychological status of Jordanian nurses working in oncology.	Qualitative descriptive approach.	Oncology nursing is highly stressful and can impact a nurses satisfaction on the job and affect the quality of the care that they provide.	High
Wentzel, D., & Brysiewicz, P. (2017). Integrative review of facility interventions to manage compassion fatigue in oncology nurses. Oncology Nursing Forum, 44(3), E124-E140. doi:10.1188/17.ONF.E124-E140	Identification and assessment of evidence on management of compassion fatigue in oncology nurses through the in-facility interventions and evaluate the efficacy and feasibility as well the evaluation of the nurses' experiences.	Integrative review method.	Failure to gain high scores in terms of quality in both quantitative and qualitative studies combined with questions regarding cross-cultural and limited conclusions.	Moderate

Appendix B: Level of Evidence Hierarchy

Table 1. GRADE certainty ratings

Certainty	What it means
Very low	The true effect is probably markedly different from the estimated effect
Low	The true effect might be markedly different from the estimated effect
Moderate	The authors believe that the true effect is probably close to the estimated effect
High	The authors have a lot of confidence that the true effect is similar to the estimated effect

Reference

BMJ Best Practice (2020). What is GRADE? Retrieved from

https://bestpractice.bmj.com/info/us/toolkit/learn-ebm/what-is-grade/

Appendix C: Search Matrix

Initial search for all key
words/terms/dates

Useable articles

Walden University
Library Search

3 useable articles

Pennsylvania University
Library Search

15 useable articles

Google Scholar Search

1 useable article

18 Total useable
articles

N=18