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Original Article

**PERSONAL CHALLENGES FACED BY FRONTLINE NURSE MANAGERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AT KAWEMPE NATIONAL REFERRAL HOSPITAL, KAMPALA DISTRICT.
A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY.**

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Abstract.

Background.

Since early 2020, healthcare systems have been challenged worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and multiple challenges, such as rapid spread and limited treatment options for a formerly unknown disease, the number of contagious patients, and the prolonged duration of the pandemic, posed a significant burden on healthcare systems. This study examined Personal challenges faced by frontline nurse managers during the COVID-19 pandemic at Kawempe National Referral Hospital, Kampala District.

Methodology.

A descriptive cross-sectional study design and quantitative data collection method was used, 30 respondents were selected using convenience sampling procedure. Data was collected using questionnaires. Data was analyzed using excel data base and the results were presented inform of figures and tables.

Results.

18 (60%) of the respondents were in the age range of 26 – 35 years, and 21 (70%) of the respondents were female. 25 (83.3%) of the respondents reported increased levels of stress, 21 (70%) reported increased anxiety and depression, 30 (100%) reported moral distress due to being unable to provide patients with the care they needed, 20 (66.7%) reported limited communication with patients, their families, and other health care professionals due to infection control measures, 18 (60%) reported failure to provide appropriate and adequate support to patients, 18 (60%) reported failure to make patient-centered decisions during provision of care and 30 (100%) reported burnout.

Conclusion.

Respondents reported various personal challenges faced by frontline Nurse managers during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as increased levels of stress, increased anxiety and depression, and moral distress due to being unable to provide patients with the care they needed.

Recommendations

There is a need to employ adequate numbers of staff to reduce workload and ensure that respondents can provide patient-centered care and effective service provision.

Keywords: Personal challenges, COVID-19 pandemic, Frontline nurse managers, Kawempe National Referral Hospital.

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Background.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the causative agent of COVID-19, has spread to several countries and territories, tremendously impacting health, education, trade, transport, and economies

(McKibbin and Fernando, 2020). The virus has affected 213 countries and territories, resulting in greater loss of life and a broader economic crisis; more than 18 million people have been infected, and half a million deaths were caused by the pandemic worldwide (Azene et al., 2020).



Since early 2020, healthcare systems have been challenged worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple challenges such as rapid spread and limited treatment options for a formerly unknown disease, the number of contagious patients, and the prolonged duration of the pandemic posed a significant burden on health care systems (Nicola, Alsafi and Sohrabi, 2020). HCWs were considered a vulnerable group themselves, mainly through continuous exposure while caring for patients and lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (Adams and Walls, 2020).

Particularly at the beginning of the pandemic, HCWs were applauded and made heroes by the public in many countries (Galloway et al., 2020). However, many HCWs did not identify themselves as heroes but were overworked and bore the physical and mental burden of their commitment (Feng et al., 2020). Initially driven by enthusiasm and optimism, most feel exhausted due to the prolonged pandemic response (Feng et al., 2020). Front-line health workers had to deal with the physical and mental burden of working extensively in a highly demanding situation, struck by fear of infecting family members as well as a social stigma among others (Van Bavel, Baicker and Boggio, 2020).

Globally, front-line health workers have had to deal with various challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, in developing countries such as Venezuela, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, front-line health workers face challenges such as lack of support, increased exposure to infectious diseases, social stigma, and increased anxiety, among others (Shammi et al., 2020).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in economically deprived communities, frontline health workers faced many challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, in Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Ghana, challenges such as burnout and fatigue and inadequate infrastructure such as beds and equipment were reported to be prevalent (Adeshakin, Ayanshina, and Essien-Baidoo, 2020).

Similarly, in East African countries such as Kenya, front-line health workers faced various challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, and these included heavy workload and understaffing, inadequate provision of equipment, lack of support, as well as burnout and stress, among many other challenges (Gilmore, Ndejjo and Tchetchia, 2020).

Conversely, in Uganda, front-line health workers faced various challenges during the covid 19 pandemic as evidenced by (Nannyonga et al, 2020) whose study revealed challenges including lack of equipment and infrastructure, lack of essential resources such as oxygen, extremely heavy workload, fear of infection as well as infecting family

members, inadequate provision of PPE among many other challenges. This study examined Personal challenges faced by frontline nurse managers during the COVID-19 pandemic at Kawempe National Referral Hospital, Kampala District.

Methodology

Study design.

A descriptive cross-sectional design was used, employing a quantitative method.

Study Area

The study was conducted at Kawempe National Referral Hospital, Kampala District, off Kampala – Bombo highway, 4 km from Kampala city center. The hospital provides many health services, although it majorly focuses on maternal and child health services. The study setting was selected because it was well known to the researcher, and the problem under study was on the increase.

Study Population

The study included frontline Nurse Managers providing health care services to patients at Kawempe National Referral Hospital, Kampala District.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size was determined using the Morgan and Krejcie table for sample size determination. Based on the table for sample size determination above, with a study population of 35 frontline Nurse Managers providing health care services to patients at Kawempe National Referral Hospital, Kampala District, the sample size was 30 respondents.

Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling procedure was used to select respondents for the study.

Sampling Procedure

A convenience sampling procedure was used to select respondents for the study. In this procedure, the researcher conveniently selected the eligible available respondents who met the study criteria and consented to participate in the study and included them in the study. This continued until the total number of respondents to be interviewed per day was achieved.



Data Collection Method

Questionnaires were distributed to respondents in the different wards or departments where they were found, giving them time to fill out the questionnaire and later go back and collect them.

Data Collection Tools

Data was collected using an approved semi-structured questionnaire, which consisted of both open and closed-ended questions. This tool was selected because the study involved only literate respondents who were thus able to read, write, and understand English.

Data Collection Procedure

Before approaching and collecting data from respondents at the hospital, the researcher was accompanied and introduced to the respondents by the in-charges of the participating wards and departments where respondents were found. Then the researcher introduced herself and the research topic, distributed questionnaires to the respondents and gave them time to answer, then went back later and collected them. The researcher sampled 10 respondents per day for a total of 30 respondents for 3 days.

Study Variables

The dependent variables for the study included.

Challenges faced by frontline nurse managers

The independent variables for the study included.

Patients and health facility-related challenges faced by frontline nurse managers.

Quality Control.

The questionnaire was pre-tested among 10 frontline Nurse Managers providing health care services at Kawempe National Referral Hospital, Kampala district, to enable the researcher to assess its clarity, accuracy, and reliability and thereafter make any necessary adjustments before applying the interview guide in the study area. The questionnaire was checked for consistency, meaningfulness, and reliability before it was used for data collection in the study.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The collected data was first analyzed manually by the use of papers and pens and tallying, after which the researcher presented them in tables, graphs, and pie charts generated by Microsoft Excel.

Ethical approval.

Ethical approval to carry out the study was obtained, and a letter of introduction will be obtained from the Uganda Institute of Allied Health and Management Sciences, Mulago, introducing the researcher to the administration of Kawempe National Referral Hospital and, hence, to the respondents.

Informed consent

Respondents were assured of maximum confidentiality, and only numbers instead of names were used to identify the respondents. The study only commenced after the objectives of the study had been well explained to participants and they had consented to participate in the study.

Results.

Social Demographic Characteristics.

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by age n=30

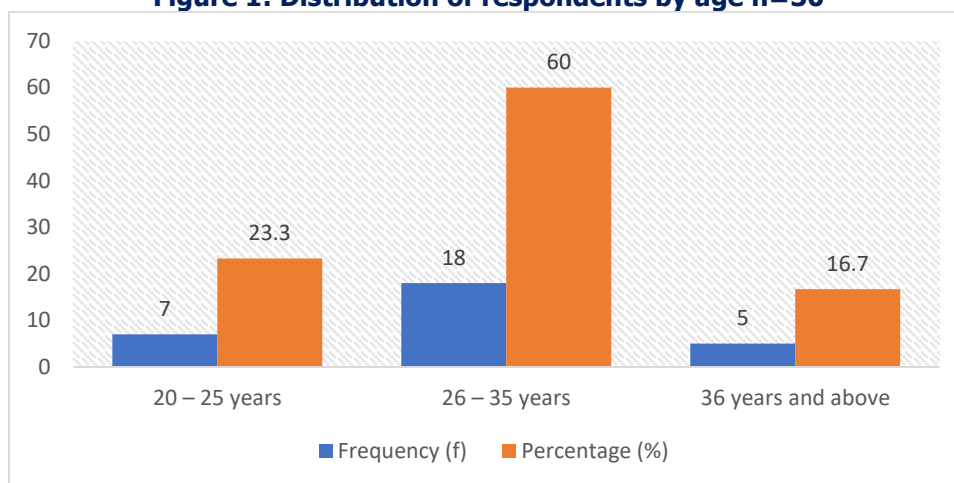


Figure 1: shows that the majority 18 (60%) of the respondents were in the age range of 26 – 35 years, followed by 7 (23.3%) who were 20 – 25 years, while the least, 5 (16.7%) were 36 years and above

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by gender n=30

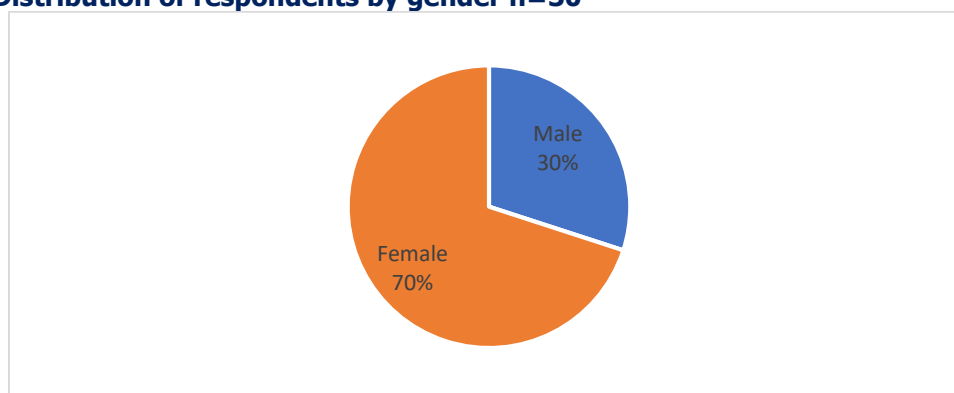


Figure 2: shows that the majority 21 (70%) of the respondents were female while the least, 9 (30%) were male.

Figure 3: Distribution of respondents by cadre n=30.

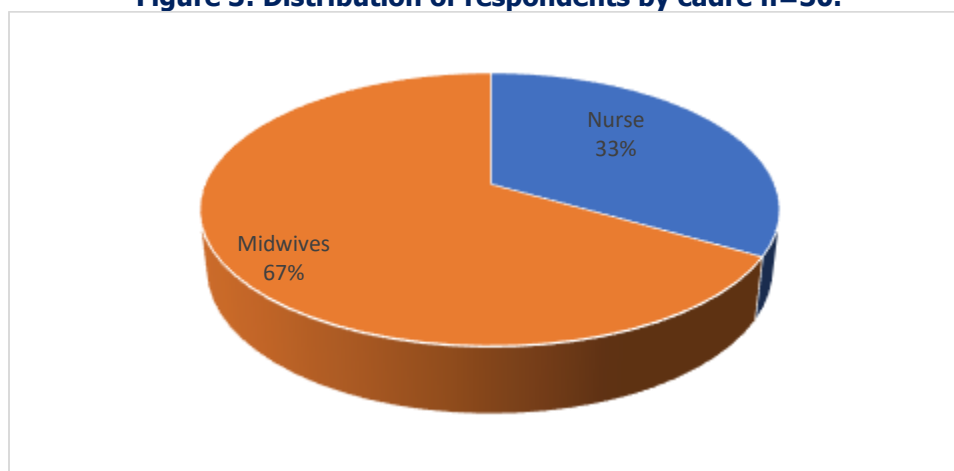


Figure 3 indicates that most 20 (66.7%) of the respondents were Midwives while the least 10 (33.3%) were Nurses.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by years of experience n=30.

Years of experience	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1 – 5 years	12	40
5 years and above	18	60
Total	30	100

Table 1 shows that most 18 (60%) of the respondents had 5 years and above of experience while the least 12 (40%) had 1 – 5 years.

Figure 4: Distribution of respondents by department n=30

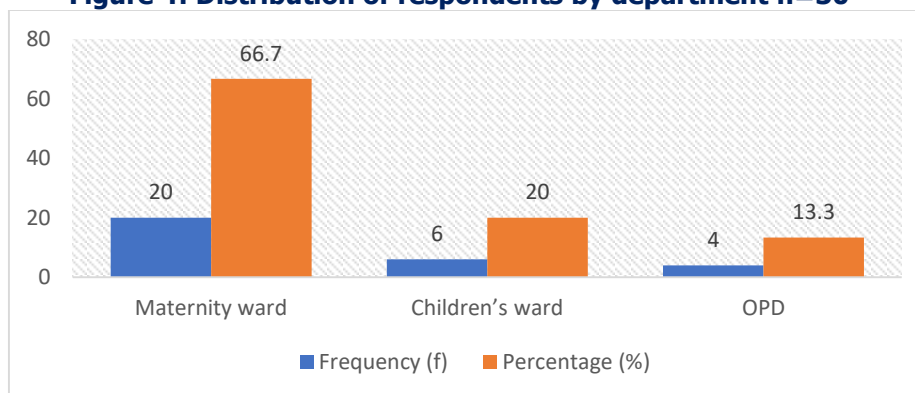


Figure 4 indicates that the majority, 20 (66.7%), of the respondents worked in the maternity ward, followed by 6 (20%) who worked in the children's ward, while the least 4 (13.3%) worked in OPD.

Personal challenges faced by frontline Nurse managers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2: Whether respondents experienced increased levels of stress during the provision of services in the COVID-19 pandemic n=30.

Responses	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Yes	25	83.3
No	5	16.7
Total	30	100

Table 2 shows that the majority, 25 (83.3%), of the respondents reported experiencing increased levels of stress during the provision of services in the COVID-19 pandemic, while the least 5 (16.7%) did not experience increased stress.

Figure 5: Whether respondents experienced increased anxiety and depression during the provision of services n=30.

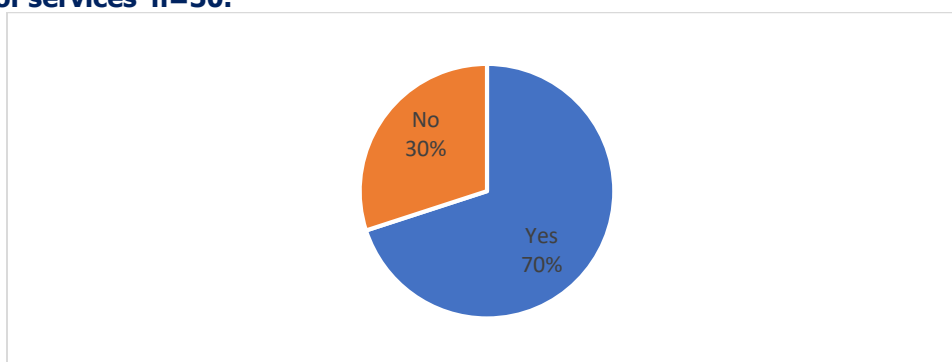


Figure 5: Most 21 (70%) of the respondents reported experiencing increased anxiety and depression during the provision of services while the least 9 (30%) did not.

Table 3: Whether respondents experienced moral distress due to being unable to provide patients with the care they need n=30.

Responses	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	100
No	0	0
Total	30	100

Table 3 shows that all 30 (100%) of the respondents reported experiencing moral distress due to being unable to provide patients with the care they needed.

Figure 6: Whether respondents faced limited communication with patients, their families, and other health care professionals due to infection control measures n=30

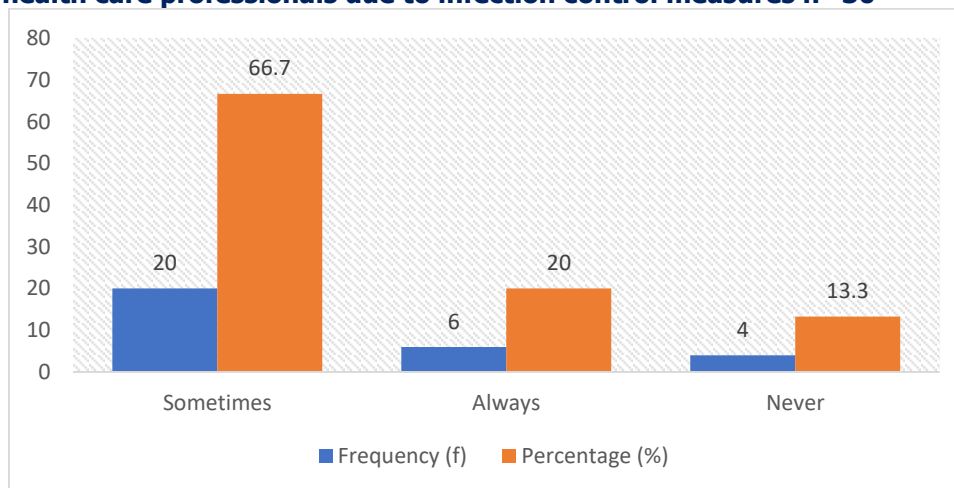


Figure 6: indicates that, most 20 (66.7%) of the respondents reported that they sometimes faced limited communication with patients, their families, and other health care professionals due to infection control measures, followed by 6 (20%) who always faced while the least 4 (13.3%) never faced them.

Figure 7: Whether respondents at any time failed to provide appropriate and adequate support to patients n=30

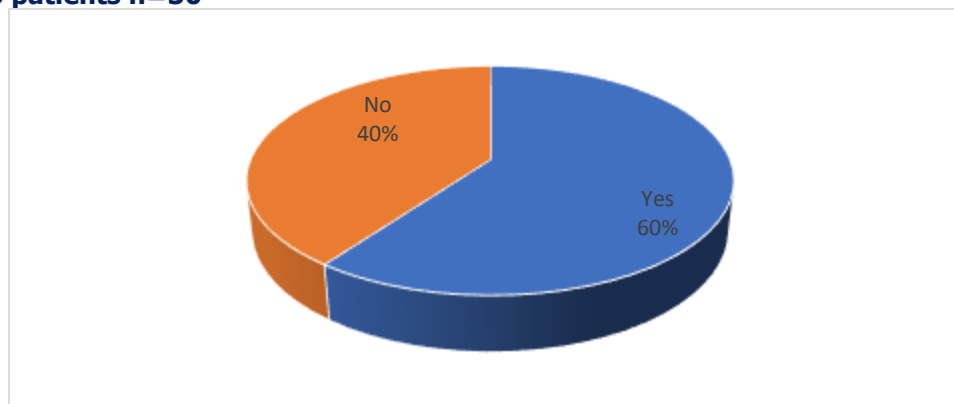


Figure 7 shows that the majority, 18 (60%), of the respondents reported that they had at one time failed to provide appropriate and adequate support to patients while the least 12 (40%) had not failed.

Table 4: Whether respondents at any time failed to make patient-centered decisions during the provision of care n=30

Responses	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Yes	18	60
No	12	40
Total	30	100

Table 4 indicates that the majority, 18 (60%), of the respondents reported that they had at one time failed to make patient-centered decisions during the provision of care, while the least 12 (40%) had not failed.

Table 5: Whether respondents suffered from burnout n=30

Responses	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	100
No	0	0
Total	30	100

Table 5 shows that all 30 (100%) of the respondents reported suffering from burnout.

Table 6: Whether respondents faced difficulties in treating patients because of unusual restrictions in place n=30

Responses	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	100
No	0	0
Total	30	100

Table 6 indicates that all 30 (100%) respondents reported facing difficulties in treating patients because of unusual restrictions in place.

Table 7: Respondents' rating of moral and motivation for work n=30

Responses	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
High	10	33.3
Low	20	66.7
Total	30	100

Table 7 shows that the majority, 20 (66.7%), of the respondents had low morale and motivation for work while the least 10 (33.3%) had high motivation for work.

Figure 8: Whether respondents faced any discrimination against healthcare workers due to widespread fear of COVID-19 n=30.

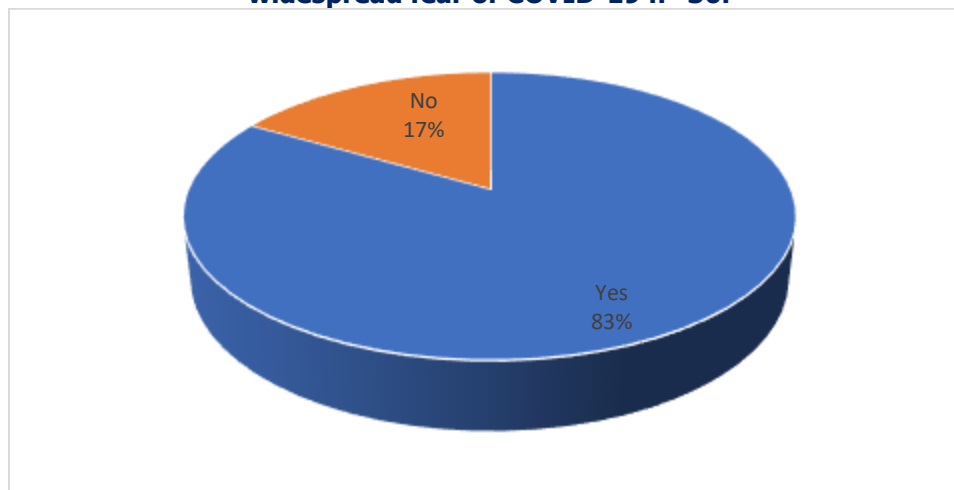


Figure 8 shows that the majority, 25 (83%) of the respondents reported facing discrimination against them due to widespread fear of COVID-19, while the least 5 (17%) did not.

Discussion of results.

Personal challenges faced by frontline Nurse managers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The majority 25 (83.3%) of the respondents reported experiencing increased levels of stress during the provision of services during the covid 19 pandemic which was in agreement with Hoernke et al, (2021) whose study about frontline healthcare workers' experiences with personal protective equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK: a rapid qualitative appraisal revealed that personal challenges faced by frontline nurse managers during covid 19 pandemic included increased levels of stress.

Most 21 (70%) of the respondents reported experiencing increased anxiety and depression during the provision of services which was in agreement with Pappa et al, (2020) whose study about the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and insomnia among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and meta-analysis reported that personal challenges faced by frontline nurse managers during covid 19 pandemic included increased

levels of anxiety and depression and a higher prevalence of these disorders in nurses than doctors.

All 30 (100%) of the respondents reported experiencing moral distress due to being unable to provide patients with the care they needed which was in line with Vindrola-Padros et al, (2020) whose study about the perceptions and experiences of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK reported that personal challenges faced by frontline nurse managers during covid 19 pandemic included moral distress due to not being unable to provide patients with the care they need.

Most 20 (66.7%) of the respondents reported that they sometimes faced limited communication with patients, their families, and other healthcare professionals due to infection control measures which was in line with Kisely et al, (2020) whose study about the occurrence, prevention, and management of the psychological effects of emerging virus outbreaks on healthcare workers: rapid review and meta-analysis revealed that personal challenges faced by frontline nurse managers during covid 19 pandemic included limited communication with patients, their families, and other health care professionals due to infection control measures. The majority 18 (60%) of the respondents reported that they had at one time failed to provide appropriate and adequate support to patients which were not different from Setiawan et al, (2021) whose study about the challenges for healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients in Indonesia: A qualitative study reported that personal challenges faced by



frontline nurse managers during covid 19 pandemic included failure to provide appropriate and adequate support to patients.

The majority 18 (60%) of the respondents reported that they had at one time failed to make patient-centered decisions during the provision of care which was in line with Tabah et al, (2020) whose study about personal protective equipment and intensive care unit health care worker safety in the COVID-19 era (PPE-SAFE): An international survey which reported that personal challenges faced by frontline nurse managers during covid 19 pandemic included failure to make patient-centered decisions.

All 30 (100%) of the respondents reported suffering from burnout, and 30 (100%) respondents reported facing difficulties in treating patients because of unusual restrictions in place which were supported by Ahorsu et al, (2020) whose study about the fear of COVID-19 scale: development and initial validation revealed that personal challenges faced by frontline nurse managers during covid 19 pandemic included difficulties in treating patients because there were unusual restrictions in place as well as burnout among others.

The majority 20 (66.7%) of the respondents had low morale and motivation for work which was in line with Sorbello, El-Boghdady, and Di Giacinto (2020) whose study about the Italian coronavirus disease 2019 outbreak: recommendations from clinical practice reported that personal challenges faced by frontline nurse managers during covid 19 pandemic included low morale and motivation, burnout and depression among others.

The majority 25 (83.3%) of the respondents reported facing discrimination against them due to widespread fear of covid 19 which was in agreement with Taylor et al, (2020) whose study about fear and avoidance of healthcare workers: An important, under-recognized form of stigmatization during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that personal challenges faced by frontline nurse managers during covid 19 pandemic included social discrimination against health care workers due to the widespread fear of Covid 19.

Conclusion.

The study results revealed that respondents faced various personal challenges faced frontline Nurse managers during the COVID-19 pandemic including increased levels of stress, increased anxiety and depression, moral distress due to being unable to provide patients with the care they needed, failure to provide appropriate and adequate support

to patients, failure to make patient-centered decisions during provision of care and burnout.

Limitations of the study

There was difficulty in getting the required information from the respondents due to the sensitive nature of the study as some respondents may fear to open up and give the required information.

Recommendations.

The Ministry of Health should endeavor to support all government health facilities with adequate staffing to reduce workload.

There is a need to employ adequate numbers of staff to reduce workload and ensure that respondents can provide patient-centered care and effective service provision.

List of abbreviations.

HCWs:	Health Care Workers
ICU:	Intensive Care Unit
MoH:	Ministry of Health
PPE:	Personal Protective Equipment
SARS-CoV-2:	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
WHO:	World Health Organization

Source of funding.

There is no source of funding.

Conflict of interest.

No conflict of interest was declared.

Availability of data.

Data used in this study is available upon request from the corresponding author.

Authors contribution

ELO designed the study, conducted data collection, cleaned and analyzed data, and drafted the manuscript, and EB supervised all stages of the study from the conceptualization of the topic to manuscript writing.



Authors biography.

Emily Likico OPU is a student with a diploma in health leadership and management at the Uganda Institute of Allied Health and Management Sciences, Mulago.

Dr. Elisha Birungi is a research supervisor at the Uganda Institute of Allied Health and Management Sciences, Mulago.

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