

**STRATEGIES TO ASSIST COMMUNITY NURSES WHO ARE  
PSYCHOLOGICALLY ABUSED IN INTERACTION WITH  
OTHERS IN THE WORKPLACE SETTING**

by

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## ABSTRACT

Community health nursing is the synthesis of nursing practice and public health practice. The primary concern of nurses who take on the various roles of the community health nurse is to improve the health of the community. Community health nurses use all of the principles and skills of nursing practice as well as those of public health practice, to aid the community.

Nursing is by its very nature a stressful job. In addition, low wages, inadequacy of equipment and materials, too long working hours and excessive number of patients to care for, have a negative effect on working conditions and the physical/psychological health of nurses. Although emotional abuse is a widespread form of violence, it is rarely recognized as such by its victims. Many are convinced that they are at fault and thus do not perceive themselves as abused.

The explanation of the term “emotional abuse” includes aspects such as non-physical abuse, indirect abuse, emotional abuse, *psychological abuse*, psychological aggression, psychological maltreatment and mental or psychological torture. Lack of positive or other constructive feedback from senior staff has been cited as a problem in a number of studies and there is much anecdotal evidence in the nursing press on feedback, which is either negative or absent.

The paradigmatic framework of reference of the Theory of Health Promotion in Nursing in the Department of Nursing of the University of Johannesburg was used as a guideline in conducting this research. The researcher followed a functional approach according to the Botes model for nursing research (University of Johannesburg, 2006:8-13).

The design used in this research is qualitative, phenomenological, exploratory, descriptive and contextual in nature (Burns & Grove, 2001:223-225). In-depth, semi-structured, phenomenological interviews were conducted with participants who met the criteria for inclusion. Some of the nurses were asked to write naïve sketches. Purposive sampling was used. A pilot study was conducted. To ensure trustworthiness the researcher made use of Guba & Lincoln’s (in Holloway & Wheeler, 1996:163) four alternatives. The researcher used Tesch’s approach (Poggenpoel in De Vos, 2003:343) to transcribe the recorded interviews and essays and to analyse the data gathered from the interviews. A literature control was conducted to re-contextualise the results within the literature.

The researcher came to the conclusion that even though not much exists in literature with regard to psychological abuse in nursing, this research found it to be a stark reality. Three main categories came to the fore: (1) disempowering working conditions; (2) disrespectful practices; and, (3) nurses’ negative response to psychological abuse.

Strategies were developed in order to address the problem of psychological abuse. Conclusions were drawn, and recommendations were made for the field of nursing.

## OPSOMMING

Gemeenskapsverpleegkunde is 'n sintese tussen die verpleegpraktyk en openbare gesondheidspraktyk. Die primêre fokus van die gemeenskapsverpleegkundige is om die gesondheid van die gemeenskap te bevorder. Gemeenskapsverpleegkundiges gebruik al die beginsels en tegnieke van die verpleegpraktyk, asook daardie beginsels gefundeer in gemeenskapsgesondheid.

Verpleging is inherent 'n stresvolle beroep. Lae salarisse, 'n gebrek aan hulpmiddels en toerusting, te lang werksure en groot hoeveelhede pasiënte wat versorg moet word het 'n negatiewe effek op die werksomstandighede en fisiese/psigiese gesondheid van verpleegkundiges.

Alhoewel emosionele mishandeling gesien word as 'n vorm van geweld, word dit dikwels nie so gesien of ervaar deur die slagoffers daarvan nie. Vele slagoffers is daarvan oortuig dat hulle verantwoordelik is vir die mishandeling en Daarom sien dan hulleself nie as slagoffers nie.

Die verduideliking van die term emosionele mishandeling sluit onder andere aspekte in soos nie-fisiese mishandeling, indirekte mishandeling, emosionele mishandeling, psigiese mishandeling, psigiese aggressie, psigiese mishandeling en psigiese marteling. Die afwesigheid van positiewe of konstruktiewe terugvoer van senior personeel word geïdentifiseer as 'n probleem in 'n aantal studies en daar is bewyse dat terugvoer negatief of geheel en al afwesig is.

Die paradigmatiese uitgangspunte van die Departement Verpleegkunde van die Universiteit van Johannesburg (2006:2-6), soos vervat in die Teorie vir Gesondheidsbevordering in Verpleging rig hierdie studie. 'n Funksionele benadering volgens Botes se model (Universiteit van Johannesburg, 2006:8-13) is gevolg.

'n Verkennende, beskrywende, kontekstuele, fenomenologiese en kwalitatiewe ontwerp is gevolg om die belewenisse van gemeenskapsverpleegkundiges se belewenis van psigologiese mishandeling te ondersoek (Burns & Grove, 2001:223-225). In diepte, semi-gestruktureerde fenomenologiese onderhoude is gevoer met deelnemers wat aan die insluitingskriteria voldoen het.

Van die verpleegkundiges wat aan die kriteria voldoen het is gevra om opstelle te skryf. Doelbewuste steekproeftrekking en 'n loodsondersoek is uitgevoer. Om vertrouenswaardigheid te verseker is Guba & Lincoln (in Holloway & Wheeler, 1996:163) se vier alternatiewe gebruik. Transkripsie van die onderhoude en opstelle en analise van die data het volgens Tesch se metode plaasgevind (Poggenpoel in De Vos, 2000:343). Nadat die data geanaliseer is, is 'n literatuur kontrole uitgevoer om die resultate met ander navorsing te vergelyk.

Die navorser het tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat al is daar nie veel literatuur beskikbaar met betrekking tot psigologiese mishandeling in verpleging nie, het die navorsing aangedui dit 'n daaglikse werklikheid is. Drie hoofkategoriee is geïdentifiseer, naamlik (1) negatiewe werksomstandighede; (2) disrespekvolle praktyke; (3) verpleegkundiges se negatiewe reaksie op psigologiese aftakeling.

Riglyne is ontwikkel ten einde die probleem van psigologiese mishandeling aan te spreek. Gevolgtrekkings en aanbevelings is gemaak vir die verpleegpraktyk.



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“There is sacredness in tears. They are not the marks of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition and of unspeakable love.”

JC Washington Irving