

**JOB STRESS, WORK CHARACTERISTICS AND SOCIAL
SUPPORT AMONG NURSES AT PORT MORESBY GENERAL
HOSPITAL, PAPUA NEW GUINEA**



**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF PRIMARY HEALTH CARE MANAGEMENT
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
2009**

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PRISCILLA NAD 5137904 ADPM/M

M.P.H.M. (PRIMARY HEALTH CARE MANAGEMENT)

THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: PANTYP RAMASOOTA, Dr. P.H., JIRAPORN CHOMPIKUL, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among Papua New Guinean nurses at Port Moresby General Hospital in the National Capital District of Papua New Guinea. The aim was to describe the patterns of job stress (acute & chronic) and their levels of severity as well as detail work characteristics and social support. A total of 161 self-administered questionnaires was obtained from nurses during the month of January, 2009.

Descriptive statistics were employed to describe the independent variables and the outcome under study. Most of nurses were married and had three to five children, earned between 69 to 274 US dollars per 2 weeks and lived in places easily accessible by hospital transport services. Half of them experienced acute and chronic stress at moderate levels. A study of the social support rendered by three sources (the nursing supervisor, family and colleagues) revealed that a moderate level of support for the nurses was provided by family, spouses and friends.

The family, relatives and friends made work life easier for the nurses and they were the easiest support people to talk to. The nursing supervisors were the ones who could be relied upon when the job got tough but family members were always available to listen to the nurse's personal problems.

When considering work characteristics, there were more registered nursing officers as compared to practical nurses. The mean number of years worked was 17 and ranged from 1 to 40. Most of them were permanent staff on government payroll and they worked an 8-hour shift. In a week, working hours for the nurses ranged from 40 to 59 hours. Job satisfaction and conflict at work were at moderate levels.

Policymakers and hospital managers must consider stress reduction programs and facilitate their introduction into nursing colleges to prepare nurses to work in a complex and demanding work environment where job stress is imminent.

KEY WORDS: JOB STRESS / WORK CHARACTERISTIC / SOCIAL SUPPORT / OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH / NURSES

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