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## **Nursing Managers' Strategies for Reducing Interpersonal and Inter-professional Conflict in the Covid-19 Pandemic**

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**Abstract.** The COVID-19 pandemic is a challenge for all parties and needs a fast, precise, and integrated response. Nurses, as the frontline, are the people most at risk of contracting this disease. Changes in all aspects require that nurses collaborate with other inter-professional teams and make nurses vulnerable to pressure and stress, leading to conflict. The role of nursing managers in creating a conducive work atmosphere and preventing inter-professional conflicts is needed. This study used literature reviews through the Science Direct online database, SAGE journals, Wiley Online Library, and other sources, aiming to analyze nurse managers' strategy in preventing interprofessional conflicts in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The results show that providing education on the control and prevention of COVID-19 infection, supervision, improving effective communication through information technology, optimizing workflows, improving nursing standards, providing support, and implementing crisis management are strategies that can be used nurse managers. Assertiveness can be used as conflict management to prevent interprofessional conflicts in the pandemic era. Each profession can communicate positively with other interprofessional teams, accept each other, and carry out professional responsibility and making decisions about COVID-19 patients.

**Keyword:** COVID-19, conflict, nurse manager strategies, assertiveness techniques.



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### **INTRODUCTION**

Health is a basic human need, so health problems that arise will affect individuals, families, groups, and communities. A health problem of concern to the world today is Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The World Health Organization (WHO), on March 11th, 2020, declared COVID-19 a pandemic (1). COVID-19 originated from Wuhan and

spread rapidly throughout China and to other countries (2). The spread of COVID-19 is very high, where Indonesia is one of the countries with a fast incident.

Based on scientific evidence, COVID-19 can be transmitted from human to human through close contact from droplets. The people most at risk of contracting this disease have close contact with COVID-19 patients, including health workers (3). The rapid increase in COVID-19 cases in Indonesia is an unprecedented challenge so that it requires fast, precise, and integrated efforts from various parties.

The hospital strives to provide services to Covid-19 patients by implementing Infection Prevention and Control following predetermined standards. Nurses are the largest group of health professionals who are at the forefront of serving patients directly (1), have the most frequent contacts at risk of experiencing physiological and psychological stress. Stress is caused by changes in working methods such as long working hours and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) for a long time (4). The increasing number of patients, uncertainty about management, prone to risk risks, limited resources and PPE (5), no easy to collaborate with medical and other health provider can cause dilemmas in the provision of care. This condition can lead to conflict, both with the nursing team and other health workers. So it takes the role of a nursing manager to provide support to nurses in their duties safely.

In a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, a nursing manager must have a crisis leadership strategy (6). Therefore, they can respond and form good team relationships and organizational culture. Referring to the explanation above, the authors conclude that nursing managers need strategies to support nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **OBJECTIVE**

This literature study aims to analyze nurse managers' strategies in preventing inter-professional conflicts in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **METHODS**

The method used a literature review study with several databases, such as Science Direct, SAGE journals, Wiley Online Library, and other sources to search for relevant articles. We used keywords during the exploration, namely "nurse in COVID-19", "Nurse leader in COVID-19", "inter-professional conflict," and "assertive as nursing conflict management."

The inclusion criteria in selecting articles include 1) the nursing managers' strategy in the COVID-19 era, conflict, and techniques of conflict management, 2) published in English and Indonesian between 2015-2020

## **RESULTS**

### **The nurse is the front liner of the health care provider and Potential conflict in providing patient services.**

In the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses become health workers who are at the forefront of being beside patients 24 hours a day, providing direct care so that the transmission of COVID-19 puts nurses at risk (7). It is causes nurses to tend to have work stress and pressure compared to other professions in the hospital. Changes in work protocols, increased work volume and intensity, isolation rules, inappropriate nurse-patient ratios, and new personnel add pressure to nurses (8). Nurses also have psychological needs, including the need for current existence, community concern, and the condition for knowledge (9).

Nurses also experience a stigma from a society that perceives nurses as a threat to others' safety because "carriers of the disease." Nurses tend to experience moral and ethical conflicts with the potential for stress and moral pressure (8). Moral issues result from working

in situations with limited resources, lack of access to antibody-antigen tests, and discomfort and fatigue from working long shifts using complete personal protective equipment (PPE).

Nurses caring for COVID-19 patients also experience psychosocial consequences and report stress related to separation from family, lack of sleep, and heavy workloads during the pandemic (10-11). However, nurses have such a high sense of professionalism that they continue to provide nursing care to patients during the pandemic, despite the potential risk of infection. However, this professional commitment creates ethical and moral dilemmas for nurses, as they have to decide between the patient and family responsibilities. This personal sacrifice results in social isolation, and the caregiver left from family and friends.

In the COVID-19 era, nurses have a high risk than other health workers, which influences nurses to keep working or leave their jobs (11). Good relationships between inter-professional during a pandemic are needed to support quality services (12). Nurses recognize the importance of caring for and sharing the burden with teams and working together to protect each other (13).

Lack of staff, working with new nurses, and adapting to the COVID-19 situation puts nurses in suboptimal conditions prone to triggering conflicts. During a pandemic, Inter-collaboration can occur when all interprofessional teams can work together effectively, have mutual trust and respect (7).

### **Nurse manager strategies**

Nursing managers create a strategy for a conducive work environment by controlling and preventing COVID-19 infection, supervision, enhancement of effective communication, and (ensure staff qualifications (7,14,15). Managers provide personnel placement and scheduling and coordinate horizontally with various departments, ensuring professional inter-collaboration (4). Evaluation and workflow staff carried out according to nursing standards (15), and managers also provide psychological support and implement crisis leadership strategies (6, 8).

In the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a high collaboration between nurses and an interprofessional team. To prevent interprofessional conflicts from occurring, nursing managers can use assertiveness techniques. The results showed that many nurses were still passive and aggressive in overcoming conflict conflicts while carrying out inter-collaborative roles (16).

Some conditions that often lead to conflict are unclear roles and responsibilities. This condition will disrupt services, especially when the COVID-19 pandemic requires a high interprofessional collaborative relationship. Collaboration between health care teams is essential that health care professionals need to have the skills to continue working with other professions (17). Conflict is an inherent result of an interprofessional team that can harm patient care. So that preventing conflict with assertive situations is better done to overcome conflicts that have already occurred.

## **DISCUSSION**

Nurses are the largest group of health professionals on the front line in the pandemic era (1). Stress and conflict in nurses are caused by changes in their work, such as long working hours and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) for a long time (4). Psychological stress is also caused by an increase in the number of patients, uncertainty about management, vulnerability to the risk of infection, and limited resources and PPE (5). Interpersonal conflicts also often arise accompanied by ethical and moral dilemmas because they have to decide to prefer family or work professionally as a nurse and avoid family. The stigma of society that considers nurses to be "carriers of disease" also can cause ethical and moral conflicts.

Carrying out nursing services in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic requires collaboration with other health teams that must be supported by a conducive and safe work atmosphere. Workload and changing situations can harm staff performance, job satisfaction, and health. It can lead to a weakening of social relations in the workplace, thereby increasing the risk of conflict (18).

An important strategy that nursing managers can do in preventing conflict is by creating a conducive work situation, minimizing the pressure that will create stress on nurses. In the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, providing knowledge about the spread of COVID-19 infection can reduce the anxiety felt by nurses. Deliver videos on PPE's use, the news information on prevention and control measures for COVID-19 in the form of live interactive or webinars (19). Providing psychological support will help reduce stress. Providing accommodation, a comfortable quarantine place, and providing adequate communication tools can also reduce stress (6).

Improved communication through information technology can help keep the communication going even if isolation conditions are applied, or it is impossible to meet in person. Direct meetings were eliminated, pre-conferences replaced by conferences via video, We-chat, and so on. Meanwhile, the treatment room's television is used to disseminate COVID-19 prevention measures (19). Communication between nurse and patient continues, and patients can send their complaints, questions to the chat number.

Obedient to the nursing standards as a strategy to improve the quality of nursing in the COVID-19 era. Nursing managers coordinate with other professions to formulate guidelines ranging from patient admission methods, patient round, patient transfer procedures, disinfection, complete PPE, diagnosis and treatment protocols, and care standards (15). These strategies can prevent interpersonal conflicts as long as nurses provide nursing services, such as a sin of not doing much direct care. Preventing conflicts from occurring is better than resolving them.

To prevent inter-professional conflicts from occurring, nursing managers can use assertiveness techniques. Optimizing conflict management with assertiveness techniques can be done using brainstorming (related to COVID-19), forming a champion team, compiling guidelines, and a pocketbook (16). In the pandemic era, handbooks can convert into digital information via cell phones. Assertiveness is a type of communication that can build good relationships with group members and build effective team relationships (20). Nurses who use assertiveness techniques can show feelings, respect others, say "no," listen to others without interruption, and communicate with good eye contact. Being assertive will help nurses work with the interprofessional team to solve existing tasks and problems to reach a solution (18).

## **CONCLUSION**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caught the attention of all sectors, especially the health service sector. Nurses on the frontline have to work in extreme situations and tend to be vulnerable to stress and stress. Stress will harm staff performance, job satisfaction that it can lead to conflict at work. An important strategy that nursing managers can do in preventing conflict is by creating a conducive work situation, minimizing the pressure that will create stress on nurses.

Conflict management, which nurses can use to prevent interpersonal and interprofessional conflicts. Assertive is conflict management and uses by interprofessional teams. Every profession can communicate positively with other interprofessional, accept each other, and carry out professional responsibility in determining priorities and making decisions about COVID-19 patients.

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