




A qualitative study of the impact of sleep loss on the daily lives of working mothers

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A qualitative study on the
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Introduction and rationale for the study

The population of working mothers juggling a job, raising children and managing the home in Ireland at present is significant (Central Statistics Office, 2014).

Women are more likely to take on a domestic role and look after the home and family compared to men (Central Statistics Office, 2014)

Associations between maternal employment, long hours, and non-standard schedules, and reduced sleep (Bianchi, 2000; Kalil et al., 2014; Perrucci et al., 2007).



Introduction and rationale for study

Wisconsin Sleep Cohort Study, it was found that parents with children aged under 6 years old experienced the highest level of disruption to sleep (Hagen et al., 2012).

Venn et al, (2008) Couples with children (n=18 children at home). 26 couples, sleep diaries and interviews, women more likely to sacrifice sleep, the 'fourth shift'.

Retrospective accounts from older parents.



Introduction and rationale for study

- Research indicates that disturbed sleep is often associated with:
 - poor cognitive performance (Polimeni et al., 2007),
 - depression (Meltzer and Mindell, 2007),
 - anxiety (Gelman and King, 2001),
 - high levels of stress (Meltzer and Mindell, 2007)
 - poor wellbeing (Gelman and King, 2001) in adults.



Introduction and rationale for study

Sleep issues have been linked to occupational performance and engagement issues (O'Donoghue et al., 2012).

There is disagreement as to whether sleep is an occupation itself, (Watson et al., 2014) or an occupational component.

Correlation between sleep issues and lowered self-perception of occupational performance nonetheless. Not studied in working women with children specifically (O'Donoghue et al., 2012).



Research question

- Research question: What impact does a self-perceived lack or loss of sleep among working mothers with children under six have on their occupational performance and engagement?



Methodology

- Qualitative research project: Descriptive phenomenological design
- Design is used to illuminate an under-researched area (Patton, 2002).
- Used to provide rich, detailed, narrative data of the individual lived experience (Sandelowski, 2000).
- Participant selection: purposive- those who have experience of phenomenon (Fossey et al., 2002).

Methodology: data collection tool

Building a picture of the participant, their day to day life, their child/children and their sleep patterns

- So tell me a bit about your family/home life/children..
- Describe an average day at home/at work..
- Tell me about your sleep patterns..

Occupational performance incl. routines and habits, occupational profile

- Describe a typical weekday for me..
- Are weekends different..
- Tell me about a day at work..
- What are your hobbies/leisure pursuits...

Impact of sleep on this occupational performance and occupations that occur in their daily lives

- How does tiredness affect you, for example in work/at home/ with family and friends?
- Does it impact any other areas?
- If you slept for a longer duration or your sleep was of better quality, what do you think would change?



Methodology: Data Collection

- Sample size- aim for six participants (Dworkin, 2012)
- Following ethical approval
- Recruitment: posters in crèches (NUIG crèche).
- Interviews began with an informal discussion (Moustakas, 1994)



Methodology: Data analysis

- Interviews were transcribed verbatim (5 interviews carried out)
- Qualitative data analysis will be carried out using NVivo software
- Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was employed.



Results

- Main areas affected: relationships, hobbies and leisure activities, impact on mood and the profound impact of sleep loss on work performance.
- Participants felt they were less efficient, not able to follow in meetings
- Impact on cognitive skills: memory, making mistakes, reading.



Results

- Impact on the ability to progress at work- staying on extra hours, applying for a promotion
- Ability to socialise at work impacted



Discussion

- Adds to the literature on the topic of how sleep deprivation impacts individuals
- It also looks at this from an occupational perspective, in terms of how sleep loss, sleep disturbance or sleep deprivation impact working mothers in their occupation of paid employment
- Work was profoundly impacted for all of the women who took part in the study.



Implications

- Health promotion in the workplace should take into account sleep deprivation and its impact for women who are particularly affected
- More manageable, less time consuming health promotion initiatives easy to integrate into daily life e.g. mindfulness
- An area that needs further study

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