WORLD CSS
World Conference on SOCIAL SCIENCES

4th World Conference on Social Sciences

03 - 05 June 2022 Oxford, United Kingdom

Work-related experiences in the care sector during the COVID-19 pandemic in England

Karen Mkhithika

University of Nottingham

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has claimed over 6 million lives globally and over 160 000 lives in the UK by March 2022. A quarter of these deaths in the UK have been reported to be from care homes. Care homes were identified as the most at risk because of the number of elderly people with underlying conditions. Consequently, the frontline staff working in the care sector have been overstretched, which exacerbated stress and low psychological well-being. This qualitative study, informed by the job demands-resources (JD-R) framework, sought to explore the work-related experiences of adult social care workers in England during the COVID-19 pandemic. Semi-structured, telephonic interviews were conducted with 15 adult social care workers in England who were employed during the pandemic (2020 – 2021) and had not taken any mental health leave of absence within those last three months of being interviewed. Results revealed that fear, isolation, media and social media influence, anxiety, and workload are psychosocial hazards experienced by the care workers during the pandemic. Aspects of emotional intelligence emerged as a personal resource and a coping strategy during the pandemic. Social support and lack thereof, from a management and colleague perspective was highlighted. Personal protective equipment (PPE) was more prevalent as a job demand than a job resource. An emerging theme that was not as common as the already stated but possibly worth further exploration from social care leaders was 'lack of trust in leaders'. This will be further explored in subsequent studies. Overall, the JD-R framework was utilised to identify the demands that emerge from a challenging environment, especially during a pandemic. Personal resources were highlighted as critical coping strategies that would be useful for future preparedness of such climates. This research study adds to additional knowledge and contributes to the JD-R framework.

Keywords: Care workers, emotional intelligence, job demands-resources (JD-R), psychosocial hazards, psychological wellbeing