

**Workplace Factors and School Nurses' Well-Being: A Qualitative Case Study**

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**Quick Poll**

Please raise your hand if you had a school nurse in your elementary, middle or high school?

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**The World Health Organization defines well-being as:**

*“a state of mind in which an individual is able to develop their full potential, work productively and creatively, and is able to cope with the normal stresses of life at work”.*

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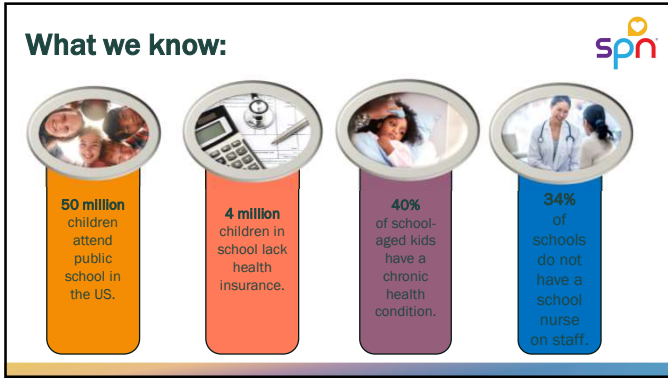
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**What we know:** 



- 50 million** children attend public school in the US.
- 4 million** children in school lack health insurance.
- 40%** of school-aged kids have a chronic health condition.
- 34%** of schools do not have a school nurse on staff.

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**We also know that:** 

-  school nurses practice in isolation, frequently supervised by school administrators.
-  school nurses report higher levels of stress and higher prevalence of mental health issues.
-  school nurses report emotional exhaustion, role strain, and lack of trust and support from administrators.
-  the connection between education and health is crucial to enhancing the support network all students need to attend school and contribute to their communities.

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**The purpose of the study was to:** 



- explore and better understand the workplace of the school nurse, including workplace factors, and to
- explore the impact of workplace factors on the psychological well-being of the school nurse.

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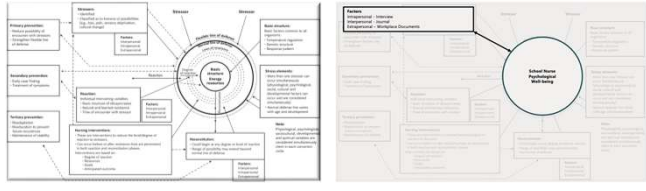
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**Guided by the Neuman Systems Model** 



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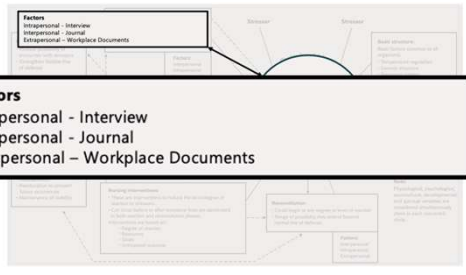
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**Factors**  
 Intrapersonal - Interview  
 Interpersonal - Journal  
 Extrapersonal - Workplace Documents

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**Using a collective case study design:** 

- ❖ School nurses were purposefully recruited across four geographic regions
- ❖ Saturation was achieved with a sample of 26 participants
- ❖ The study sample included those currently working, in a public school, with at least one year of experience
- ❖ Incentives, provided in part by Sigma were provided at three points ~\$75
- ❖ Data was collected through
  - ❖ A sociodemographic questionnaire
  - ❖ A semi-structured, Zoom interview
  - ❖ 5 online journal entries
  - ❖ Job Descriptions and Workplace Hierarchy Charts

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### The Research Questions



1. How do school nurses describe their psychological well-being?
2. How do school nurses describe the intra-, inter-, and extra-personal factors in the school nurse workplace?
3. In what ways do the intra-, inter-, and extra-personal factors promote or impede the psychological well-being of the school nurse?

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### Predict the results.



Based on what you know about school nursing, what factors do you think most influence psychological well-being?



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### Sociodemographic Results



- **4 geographic regions and 13 states**
- **100% female, non-Hispanic or Latino, between 25-65 years of age**
- **92.31% White**, 3.8% Asian, 3.8% Black or African American
- **61.54% earned Bachelor's Degree**, 34.61% earned Master's Degree, 3.85% earned Associate's Degree
- **34.25% 2-5 years in role**, 30.77% 6-10 years in role, 19.23% 11-15 years in role, 7.69% 1-2 years in role, 3.85% 16-10 and greater than 20 years in role

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### Sociodemographic Results



- School nurses are responsible for as few as **250** students (3.8% of the nurses), up to **over 4,000** students (3.8% of the nurses), with the majority reporting that they are responsible for 501-1000 students (30.8%).
- School nurses report to anywhere between 1 school (61.54%) upward to **6 or more schools (11.54%)**.
- A **majority (84.62%) of the school nurses report to the School District**. 11.54% report to the Department of Health and only one (3.85%) reports to a Hospital Organization.
- 42.3% report of salary of greater than \$80,000 per year while **7.7% report a salary of less than \$40,000 per year**.

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### Interview & Journaling Results



- Interrelationships and patterns were revealed from the coding process and **five themes** emerged from the data.
- Emerging themes included factors that promote or impede the psychological well-being of the school nurse, **including role clarity, inequity, team membership, flexibility, and kids as fulfillment**.
- School nurses provided **much data pertaining to the interpersonal and extra-personal factors** in their workplace and the resultant impact on their psychological well-being.
- The **strongest positive or negative effects** were largely connected to support, relationships, and organizational responsibilities.

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- Codes
- Quality improvement
  - Standard of practice
  - Nurse-to-student ratio
  - Uncertainty
  - High
  - Education standard
  - Feeling valued
  - Support
  - Relationships
  - Responsibility
  - Decision-making
  - Leadership
  - Nursing standards
  - Promote well-being
  - Community public health
  - Professional stereotypes
  - Impede well-being
  - Care coordination
  - School nurse schedule
  - Acuity
  - Salary



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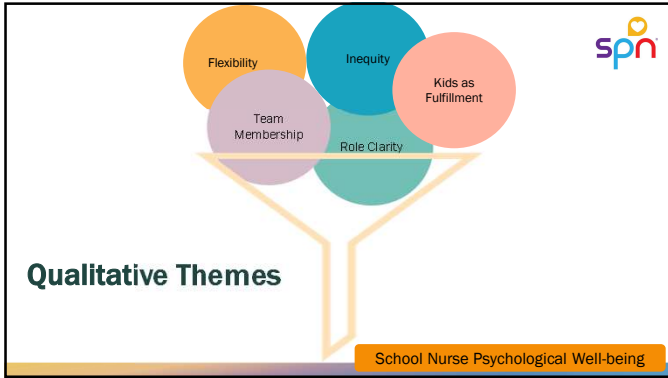
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**Participant Quotes:**

- "95% of the people walk by without saying hello or acknowledging me at my desk" participant14
- "In the context of education, it's just not always clear what my role is" participant6
- "When I found out the schedule and found out my kiddos could come with me, I was like - this is a yes" participant22
- "Interacting with the kids is my favorite" participant1
- "There are often changes in policies and procedures that directly affect the school nurses, but we don't have a voice in the decision-making process" participant2

*Photo: A school nurse interacting with a student.*

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**Job Description and Workplace/Hierarchy Charts Results**

Using content analysis job descriptions were analyzed for alignment to the Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice.

Hierarchy charts were analyzed based on to whom the nurse reports to and number of levels between them and their most senior administrator.

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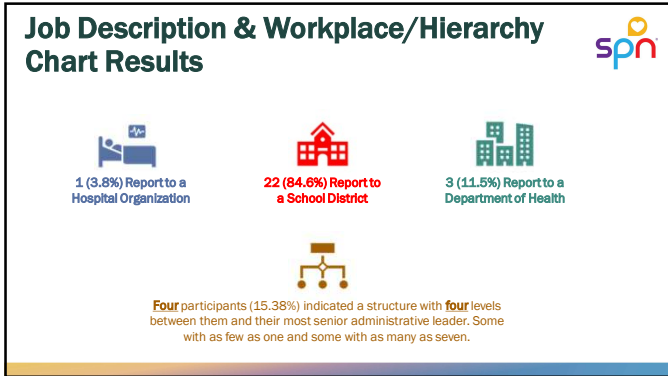
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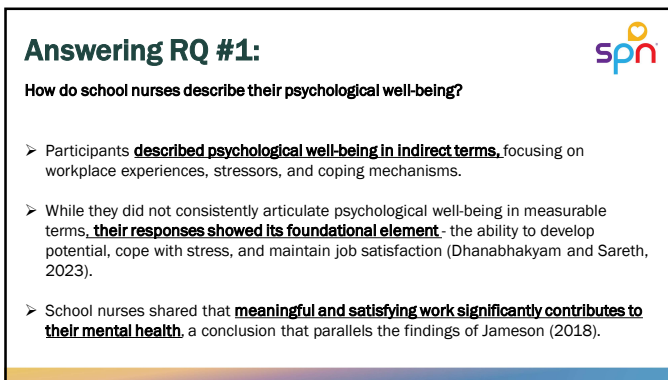
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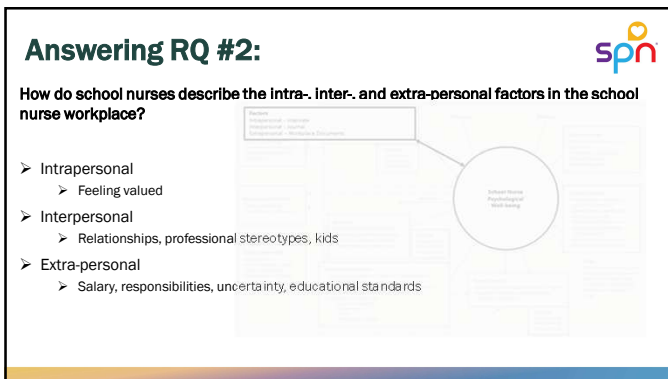
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### Answering RQ #3:



In what ways do the intra-, inter-, and extra-personal factors promote or impede the psychological well-being of the school nurse?

- The **strongest positive or negative effects** were largely connected to support, relationships and organizational responsibilities.
- Organizational policies and resources **significantly influenced** participants' well-being.
- Job descriptions and workplace/hierarchy charts revealed **differences in structure and support** to include support staff and delegation to unlicensed assistive personnel.

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### Think-Pair-Share



What supports do you think school nurses need the most?




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### Nurse Practice Implications



Increasing public understanding of the school nurse and their extensive responsibilities can:

- foster greater respect,**
- drive policy reform, and**
- secure additional resources.**

Creating a **more supportive, respected, and adequately resourced work environment** that will enhance the well-being of school nurses and elevate the quality of care they deliver to both students and staff.

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### Nurse Practice Implications



*A school nurse should report to a healthcare organization.*

In a National Association of School Nurse position statement, it is their recommendation that **supervision and evaluation** by a registered nurse will offer the support school nurses need to provide quality standards of care that are necessary to advance the care of students safely and equitably.

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### Nursing Policy Implications:



#### *One Nurse in Every School*

**Enforcement of this policy would require:**

- mandated staffing,
- clearly defined school nurse responsibilities,
- consideration of nurse-to-student ratios, and
- adequate funding.

**This recommendation is supported by evidence that school nurses:**

- reduce absenteeism,
- improve student performance,
- play a critical role in the well-being of children and adolescents.

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### Nursing Policy Implications:



*A school nurse certification requirement may provide the clinical foundation and well-defined role that the profession so desperately needs.*

Specialty certification in school nursing would:

- endorse school nurses in their field,
- instill a sense of confidence in school nurses,
- inform standardized job descriptions that could align better with what they do.

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