PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC AMONG FRONTLINE NURSES

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Introduction/ Background:

The COVID-19 outbreak was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020 (Domenico Cucinotta and Maurizio Vanelli, 2020). In addition to the community members, health care providers are also at risk of higher psychological distress due to longer working hours and high risk of exposure to the virus (Sonja et al. 2020). This may also lead to stress, anxiety, burnout, depressive symptoms, and the need for sick days or stress leave. The nature of their work have put them on the frontline of vulnerability to COVID-19, which would harm the capacity of the health system to provide services during this crisis. Such vulnerability can lead to stress and uncertainty. Understanding the psychological impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on nurses is important for health authorities to develop preventive strategies and effective treatment modalities to alleviate its negative outcome (Sonja et al. 2020).

Aims and objectives:

o to assess the level of perceived stress and potential correlates among the frontline nurses during the COVID -19 pandemic using perceived stress scale.
o to assess the level of fatigue among frontline nurses using compassion fatigue assessment scale.
o to establish a focused intervention programme
o determining the efficacy of targeted intervention program among frontline nurses.

Methodology:

This was a single arm intervention study, carried out at Kasturba Hospital, Manipal among 147 Frontline nurses working in COVID-19 ICU's were selected using convenience sampling. KMC and KH Institutional Ethics committee approval (850/2020) was obtained before conducting the study. We used the self-rated Perceived Stress Scale (PSS, Cohen et al. 1988) to measure the current levels of stress experienced. We used the Compassion Fatigue Assessment Tool (CFAT) developed by Nursing Executive Center, to determine the risk of emotional burnout among the frontline nursing staff. Targeted interventions were developed and interventions were provided by the clinical psychologist as deemed appropriate. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analyses.

Discussion/ findings:

Training and support for health professionals at 'high exposure risk' were given to identify and manage emotional reactions, that may hinder their clinical work in frontline health delivery, that included managing anxiety, fear of contagion, episodes of acute stress or promoting self-care/reducing burnout (Chen et al.2020).

Results:

Pre and post test scores of Percieved level of stress

Pre and post test scores of Compassion fatigue assessment

Conclusion:

The prevalence of COVID 19 is high and nurses are highly affected psychologically during the pandemic which suggests psychological health interventions like psychological counseling and group meeting sessions (Mekonen et al. 2021). It is better to create awareness for the community, avail a guideline, train nurses, to minimize the psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on nurses and protect their mental health (Sovold et al. 2021).
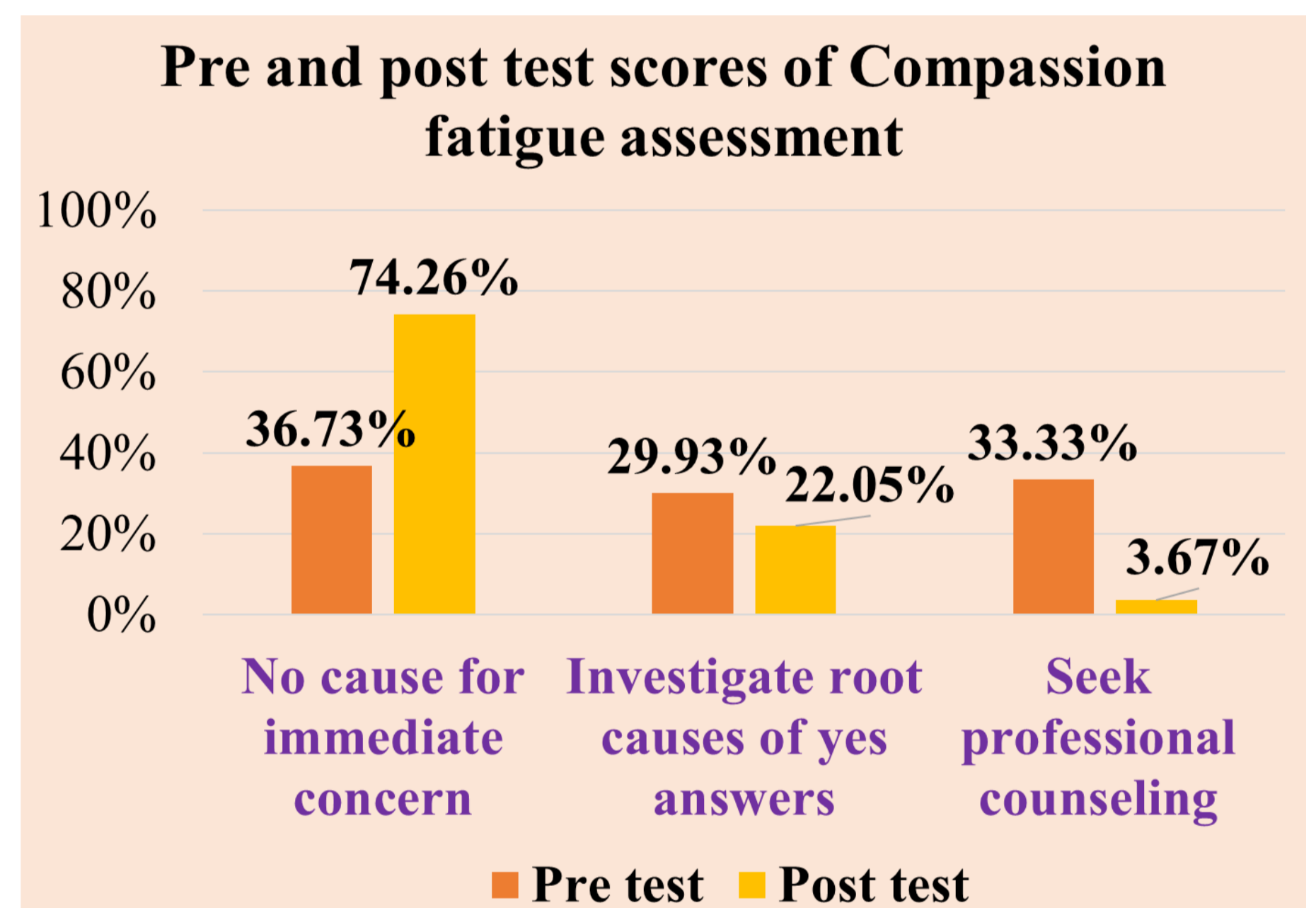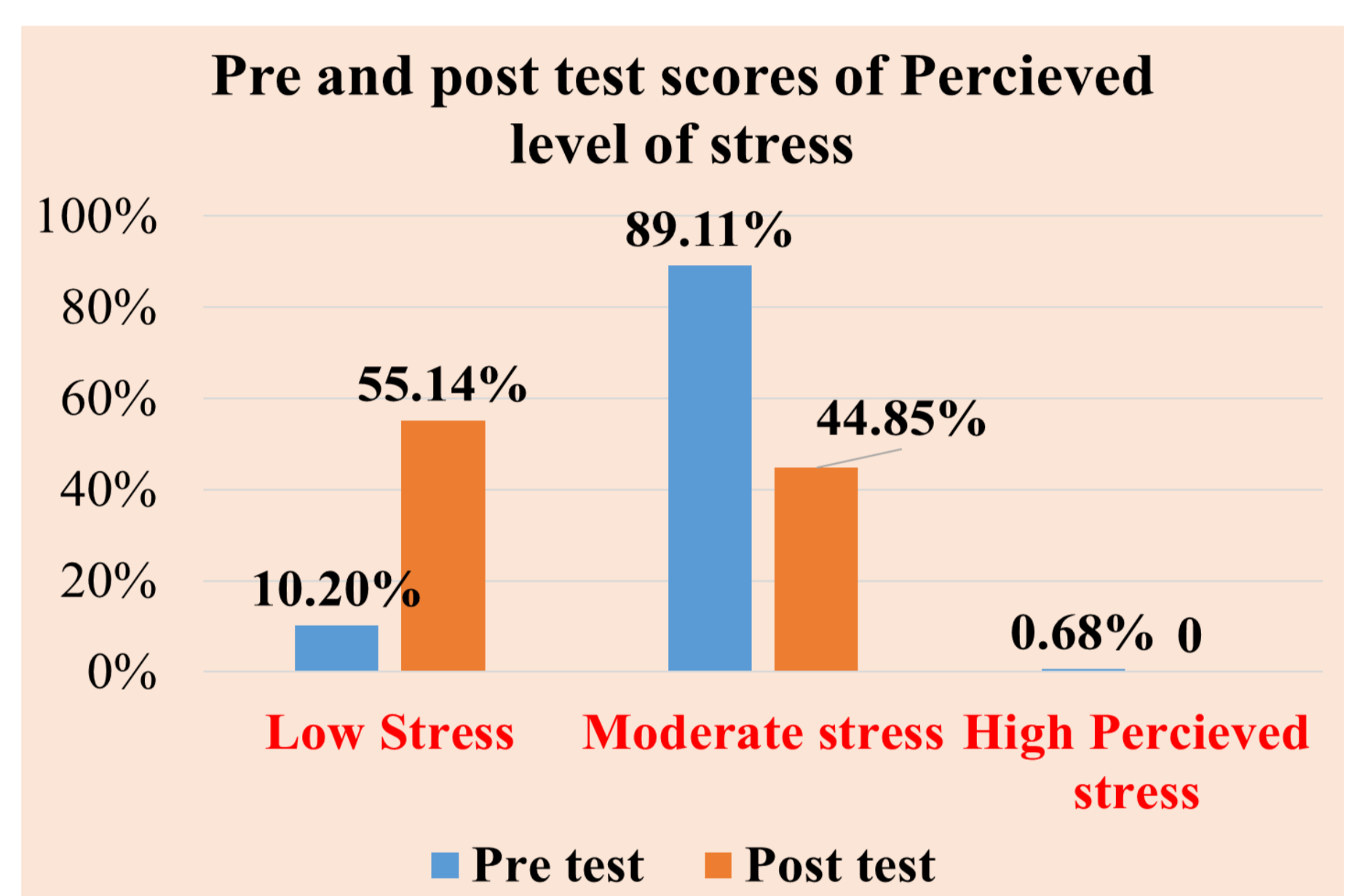
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