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Covid-19 related fears among Mzuzu University's nursing students during clinical practice**Ferestas Mpasa, Masumbuko Baluwa, Florence Lungu, Mep Coretta Chipeta, Getrude Munthali, Lucky Mhango, Ettah Chimbe, Alice Konyani**
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Statement of the Problem: In Malawi, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared a national disaster on 20th March 2020. Thereafter, Mzuzu University officially closed operations on 23rd March 2020 to prevent the spread of the virus. All students were sent to their homes. All nursing students are thoroughly oriented to the clinical objectives before going to clinical placement. However, during the occurrence of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic pre-clinical orientation for the new disease COVID-19, was not conducted. After the ban was lifted, nursing students were informed to report back to the clinical setting without coming back to campus. Nevertheless, it was not well known by then what fears these nursing students would have, regarding resuming clinical practice amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aimed at exploring their regarding the resumption of clinical practice in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this study was to explore fears of Mzuzu University's nursing students regarding resumption of clinical practice amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology: A qualitative approach, descriptive phenomenological design was used. Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee approved the study, MZUNIREC/DOR/20/06. Four focus group discussions were used to collect data. Forty purposefully selected nursing students who had completed clinical practice during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic consented to the study. Data analysis was done manually using content analysis. First, transcription of the interviews then data coding and categorization was done out of which themes and subthemes were established from participants' significant statements.

Findings: Four major themes emerged: equipment and supplies; increased perceived risk for acquiring and transmitting COVID-19; stigma and discrimination and perceived fear of not having adequate learning.

Conclusion and significance: Clinical practice during the COVID-19 pandemic brings fear among nursing students.

Recommendation: training institutions should prioritize ascertaining student's skill, emotional wellbeing and provide adequate resources before deploying them to clinical areas.

Biography

Ferestas Mpasa has her expertise in critical care nursing with and passion in evidence synthesis. She focuses on issues that emerge in critical care and nursing in general that influence nursing care delivery. Being a nurse lecturer in a resource constraint country and as an upcoming researcher, she envisages forging ahead and fostering improved care of the critically ill by evaluating existing evidence that can help her achieve this. Building evidence that can benefit the context of resource constraint health care environment is her goal.