**Nurses’ experiences of the social stigma caused by the COVID-19 pandemic: A qualitative study**

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**Abstract**

**Background**

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak an international health crisis in January 2020. The patient’s fear of social reactions, disease stigma, and being a transmitter of the disease is among the psychological and social implications of developing some diseases, particularly infectious diseases in any society. One of the mental and psychological illnesses that health personnel face when treating COVID-19 patients is the societal stigma. This issue has not been addressed due to the disease’s devastating impact on numerous sectors of society.

**Research Aim**

 This study aimed to learn more about how nurses deal with social stigma during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Research Design**

Inductive qualitative content analysis was used to conduct this qualitative research.

**Participants and Research Context**

COVID ward nurses who had been subjected to social stigma were chosen as study samples. Graham and Landman’s inductive qualitative content analysis method was used to collect data through semi-structured and individual interviews simultaneously and continuously (2004).

**Ethical Considerations**

The researcher started the interviews after confirming the Ethics Committee of the Azad University of Babol with Ir.iau.babol.rec.1400.150.

**Results**

There are three main classes and six subclasses of social stigma experienced by nurses: 1) dual emotions (psychological stress and a positive attitude), 2) abandonment (**isolation** and total expulsion), and 3) adaptation coping strategies (self-awareness and the influential role of the media).

**Conclusions**

 The findings of this study can help improve the quality of care by enhancing understanding of the psychological needs arising from social stigma. Based on these findings, designing psychosocial interventions related to stigma can promote the mental health of this group and their families.

**Keywords**

Social Stigma; COVID-19; Nurse