ABSTRACT

This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the workload experienced by nurses in the Emergency Department (ED) of RSU Muhammadiyah Darul Istiqomah Kendal, the factors influencing it, and its relationship with the level of work stress they experience. This research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-exploratory, phenomenological design. All 17 ED nurses were selected as informants through total sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and a demographic questionnaire, then analyzed using thematic analysis.

The results show that ED nurses experience a high workload, reflected in large patient volumes, 8 – 12 hour shifts, complex emergency cases, and a significant administrative burden from simultaneously completing electronic and manual medical records, which forms a hidden workload. Workload is shaped by internal factors (physical and psychological condition, motivation, tenure) and external factors (patient volume and acuity, staffing levels, facilities, and shift-scheduling systems). High workload without adequate control and organizational support was found to increase the risk of work stress, consistent with Karasek's Job Demand-Control model, potentially leading to burnout that affects care quality and patient safety. Nurses have independently developed coping strategies — recovery-oriented, preventive, and spiritual — to manage this pressure.

The study recommends systemic intervention from hospital management, including revised shift-scheduling systems, dedicated administrative staff, improved facilities, a review of the compensation system, and stronger mental health and psychosocial support for ED nurses.

Keywords: *workload, work stress, nurses, emergency department, phenomenology*