

Insights from Healthcare Worker Parents on Parenting Stress during the Covid 19 Pandemic: A Qualitative Perspective

School of Nursing

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Michelle Clausen¹, Annalyn Velasquez¹, Min Jeong Jeon¹, Sherrie Flynt Wallington¹

¹The George Washington University, School of Nursing, Washington, DC

This study was approved by the George Washington University Institutional Review Board (IRB# NCR2020655).



Background

The impact of COVID-19 on frontline healthcare workers (HCWs) who are also parents (HCWs-Ps) is multifaceted. Stay-at-home orders were enacted throughout the country and parents of children, infants to age 18, found themselves facing a demanding work schedule with little to no childcare or supervision during standard school hours (Prime et al., 2020). HCWs-Ps face the unique challenge of having to care for children at home during work hours. They also face daily fears of exposing themselves and their family to the virus while having to serve on the frontlines of the pandemic (Varner, 2020). As the pandemic has intensified, recent limited evidence suggests that both parents and children worldwide face exceptional circumstances, such as parenting stress, disrupted work-balance, and challenged overall family well-being, due to COVID-19. Disruptions of family life because of imposed social distancing rules may have long-term consequences on parents and children.

To our knowledge, no previous studies have investigated stressors among HCWs-Ps during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Chung et al., 2020).

Objectives

- 1) To examine the lived experiences of HCW-Ps working during COVID-19.
- 2) To identify common perceived work and parenting stressors among HCW-Ps during COVID-19.

Methods

This qualitative case study explored experiences of HCWs-Ps on the parenting and work stressors encountered during COVID-19 in the U.S. A collective case study design which employed semi-structured interviews was used to collect cases' study data. Utilizing cross-case analysis, we compared and reported on the distinctive stressors among eleven HCWs-Ps through case descriptions. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All participants were nurses and 90% identified as female.

This pilot study utilized purposive sampling. Eligible participants were recruited via and through an Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved flyer posted on two nursing-related Facebook groups. All 11 interviews took place between July through December 2020.

References

- Chung, G., Lanier, P., & Ju, P. W. Y. (2020b). Mediating Effects of Parental Stress on Harsh Parenting And Parent-child Relationship During Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Singapore. *OSF Preprints*. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/vn4f4>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Prime, H., Wade, M., & Browne, D. (2020). Risk and resilience in family well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *The American Psychologist*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000660>
- Varner, C. (2020). Parents on the front line of COVID-19 face tough choices. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 192 (17); E467-E468. <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.1095864>

Results

The themes and codes derived from our analysis included feelings, situations, and stressors from real-life events as reported by HCWs-Ps. Such themes included parenting and work stressors as described in the semi structured interview guide.

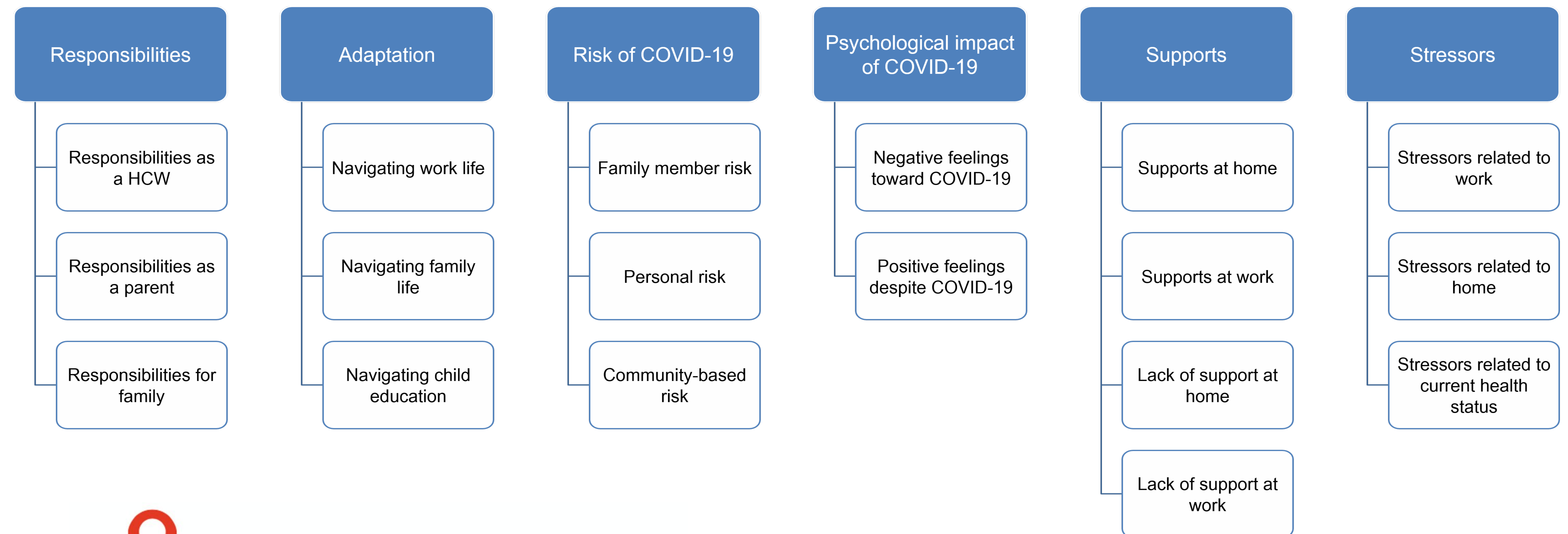


Figure 1. Geographical location of HCW-Ps

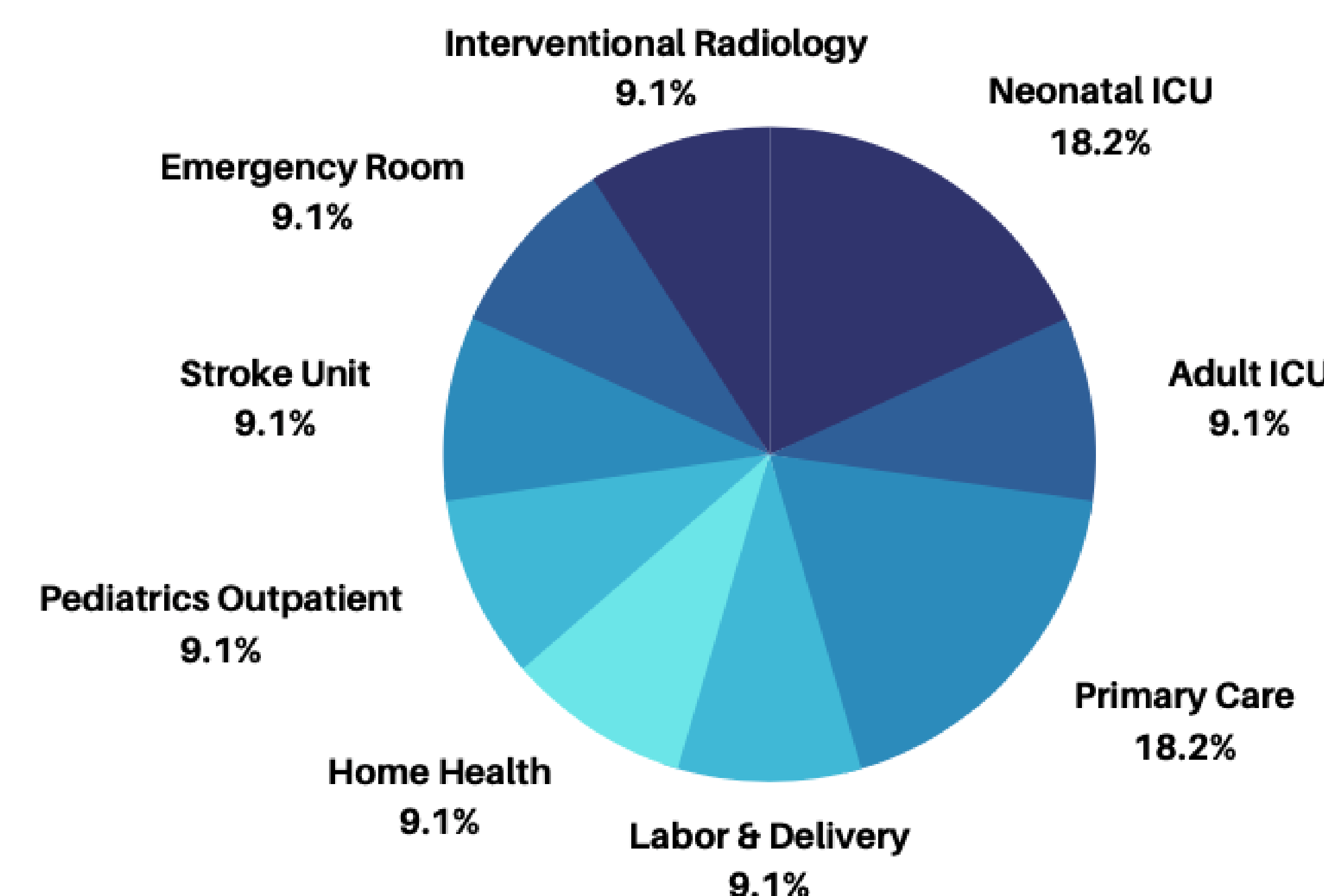


Figure 2. Nursing Units

“My mother who is 64 lives with me, and she’s got hypertension ... Had a conversation with her, like, hey, living with me puts you at greater risk, because I don’t know if I could be an asymptomatic carrier.”

“...Just overwhelmed with the number of procedures of emergency cases that we weren’t really expecting. And of course, not knowing their COVID status sometimes makes it even worse.”

“And then that’s going to affect my job because I’m going to have to go part-time so that I can homeschool.”

Conclusions

Study results will inform future studies and provide insights to management leaders in healthcare organizations and to law and policymakers on how their policies and decisions impact frontline workers. It will also potentially identify the dynamic needs of HCWs-Ps and their families should other public health emergencies arise that require social distancing.