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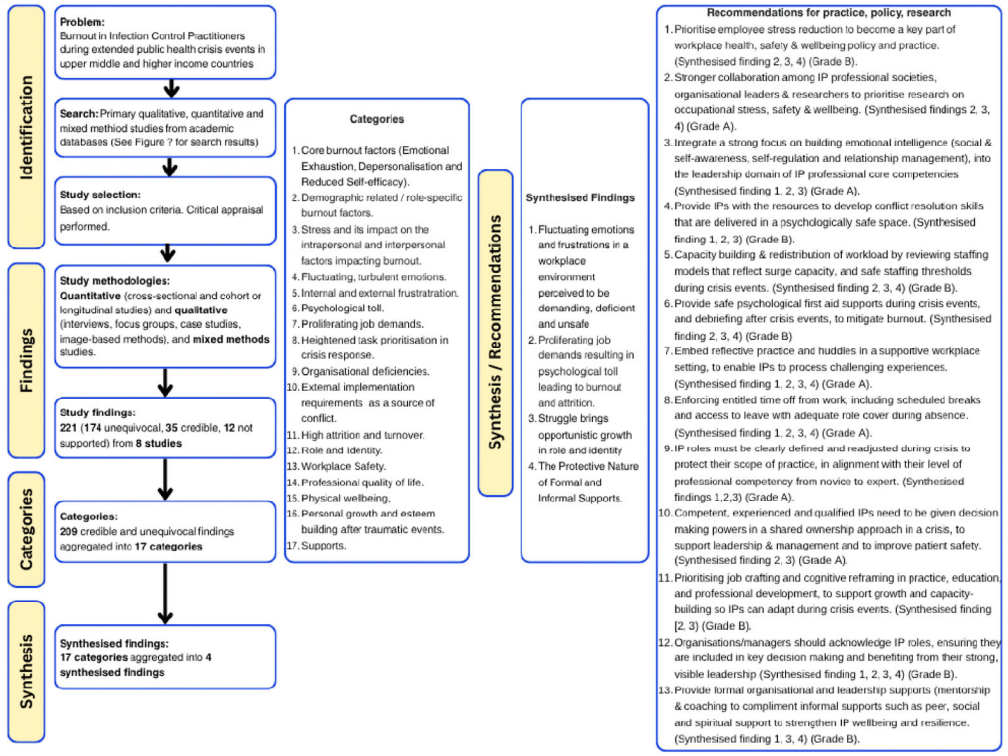
Aim & Background

Infection prevention and control roles are complex and have long been associated with pandemics and extended public health crises. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the rapid expansion of infection control practitioners' (ICPs) responsibilities intensified emotional demands, contributing to anxiety, moral distress, role strain, and increased risk of burnout[1]. Burnout, characterised by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy, arises from prolonged exposure to emotionally demanding work[2] . Hospitals with higher levels of nurse burnout report increased mortality rates and effects on the efficacy of infection prevention and control interventions[3,4]. This systematic review examines burnout and its associated organisational and individual factors among infection control practitioners during extended public health crisis events, such as epidemics and pandemics, in upper middle, and high income countries.

Methods

This mixed-methods systematic review examines burnout in infection control practitioners working in acute and non-acute healthcare settings during public health crises. Studies from upper-middle and high-income countries, as defined by the World Bank, were included. The review follows the Joanna Briggs Institute methodology using a convergent integrated approach[5]. Databases were searched from November 2002 to August 2024. Methodological quality was appraised using JBI tools, and quantitative data were transformed into qualitised data and integrated with qualitative findings during synthesis. Results were mapped to the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) Framework This study contributes to cumulative theory-building and supports the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) Framework as a valid explanatory model for burnout.[6]. The protocol is published on HRB Open[7].

Schematic Results and Recommendations



Conclusion

This review demonstrates that ICPs experience significant emotional and organisational pressures during public health crises, increasing their burnout risk. While professional growth & role expansion were observed, it was also found that sustained organisational and leadership support is essential to balance escalating job demands. Organisations and policymakers must act to protect & sustain ICPs during crisis by providing clear role structures, giving additional decision-making power to make critical decisions, provide adequate staffing and supportive leadership, in addition to embedding wellbeing supports, which are critical to sustaining this workforce during future crises. Findings further highlight Maslach's burnout theory[2] & the critical interplay between job demands and resources[6].

Results

Eight studies were included: three qualitative, one mixed methods & five analytical cross-sectional from South Korea, the US, and Thailand. Four synthesised findings emerged: fluctuating emotions & frustration within workplaces perceived as demanding, deficient, and unsafe; proliferating job demands resulting in psychological burden, burnout & attrition; role strain accompanied by opportunistic growth in professional role & identity; & the protective role of formal & informal supports in mitigating burnout. Overall findings highlight emotional & organisational challenges

JD-R Mapping

