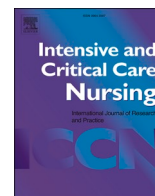




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## Letter to the Editor



## Moral distress, emotional impact and coping in intensive care unit staff during the outbreak of COVID-19

Dear Editor,

We read the recently published article titled "Moral distress, emotional impact and coping in intensive care unit staff during the outbreak of COVID-19" by [Romero-García et al. \(2022\)](#) with great interest. This study provides important insights into how moral distress among ICU staff during the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with avoidance-oriented and passive coping styles, is a significant predictor of anxiety and depression. However, the fact that anxiety and depression are predicted by coping styles warrants further consideration. Herein, we present a discussion on the said consideration.

[Romero-García et al. \(2022\)](#) mentioned that the interaction between moral distress, mental health, and coping is a limitation of their study. However, demographic characteristic differences also affect the prevalence of anxiety and depression, and the choice of coping strategies. Several studies on anxiety and depression among healthcare workers during the early COVID-19 pandemic found that female and single healthcare workers showed a higher prevalence rate than other healthcare workers, and that demographic characteristics, such as gender and marital status, predicted anxiety and depression ([Al Maqbali and Al Khadhuri, 2021](#); [Pappa et al., 2020](#)). [Romero-García et al. \(2022\)](#) found that avoidance-oriented coping styles, such as self-distraction, substance use, and self-blame, predicted anxiety and depression, but the choice of coping style has been associated with demographic characteristics. Some studies examining the coping styles of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic have found that the choice of an avoidance-oriented coping style is associated with age, education, marital status, and years of service as a nurse ([Kowalczyk et al., 2022](#); [Righi et al., 2022](#)). In other words, coping style might mediate the effect of demographic characteristics on anxiety and depression.

Undoubtedly, the study conducted by [Romero-García et al. \(2022\)](#) examining the coping style and mental health of ICU staff during the COVID-19 pandemic provides useful data. However, we believe that examining the relationship between demographic characteristics, coping styles, and mental health will provide insights into predicting which ICU staff are likely to experience mental health problems during a pandemic in the future.

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## Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial

interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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