

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG NURSES IN TERTIARY CARE HOSPITALS AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

High patient turnover, understaffing, a lack of resources, and little appreciation for their work put Mayo Hospital nurses under tremendous strain. The crucial nurse-to-patient ratio worsens financial and occupational stress, which has a detrimental effect on their performance, job satisfaction, and physical and mental health. This study looked at the effects of financial and work-related stress on female nurses' performance at Mayo Hospital. Structured questionnaires were used to gather data from 250 staff nurses using a descriptive-analytical design. A substantial negative association between job stress and job performance was revealed by Pearson correlation analysis. Reduced motivation and higher inclinations to leave were also significantly influenced by financial uncertainty. The results highlight how urgently evidence-based stress management programs must be implemented by Mayo Hospital administration. These ought to include instruction in financial planning, training in emotional resilience, and fair workload sharing. In Pakistan's public health system, such measures are essential for preserving excellent healthcare, enhancing retention, and safeguarding the well-being of nurses.

Keywords: Occupational stress, Nurses, Tertiary hospitals, Professional skills

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INTRODUCTION

Stress is a globally recognized health issue, affecting nearly 90% of the world's population, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). In the workplace, stress arises when job demands exceed an individual's capacity to manage them effectively, especially in the absence of adequate resources or support systems. While definitions vary, the American Institute of Stress defines it as "the nonspecific response of the body to any

demand for change." This reaction is often mistakenly viewed as a disease; however, the WHO clarifies that it is a psychological and physiological response to external pressures [1, 2].

In healthcare, job stress is a significant occupational hazard, particularly in developing nations. Nurses are especially vulnerable due to their direct involvement in patient care, long hours, understaffing, inadequate compensation, and frequent

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exposure to suffering and death. These stressors negatively impact nurses' physical and emotional well-being, contributing to job dissatisfaction, burnout, absenteeism, and diminished quality of patient care.

The situation in Pakistan is critical, marked by an alarming nurse-to-patient ratio of approximately 1:50. This far exceeds the Pakistan Nursing Council's recommended ratio of 1:10 in intensive care units. This imbalance increases job demands on nursing staff, leading to chronic stress and reduced productivity. Furthermore, societal under-recognition of nurses, professional disrespect, and unsafe working conditions exacerbate these challenges, further deteriorating morale and performance [3-7]. Job stress in nursing typically stems from multiple sources, including heavy workloads, insufficient staffing, lack of managerial support, and the emotional labor involved in caring for terminally ill patients. Nurses are often expected to manage clinical duties while also providing emotional support to patients and their families, creating significant role conflict. Female nurses in critical care units face daily exposure to trauma, grief, and death, increasing their risk of psychological distress. These experiences can manifest physically through symptoms such as insomnia, hypertension, digestive issues, and chronic fatigue, and mentally through anxiety, irritability, and emotional exhaustion [8, 9].

Financial instability further compounds stress, particularly in public sector hospitals where salary scales often do not align with job demands. Inadequate financial compensation contributes to decreased job satisfaction and motivation, resulting in higher turnover rates and reduced service quality. Research shows a strong correlation between financial stress and negative job behaviors such as apathy, withdrawal, and resistance to change.

The current healthcare climate, marked by increasing patient volumes, limited

infrastructure, and rising public expectations, demands urgent attention to nursing staff well-being. Addressing job-related and financial stress is essential not only for improving nurses' work-life balance and performance but also for sustaining effective healthcare delivery in public hospitals across Pakistan [10-12].

Objective is to explore the extent to which job-related and financial stress influence the performance of nursing staff in public hospitals.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory, descriptive-analytical study investigated the impact of job and financial stress on the performance of female nursing staff at Mayo Hospital, Lahore.

A quantitative research approach was employed, using a structured, self-administered questionnaire for data collection. The study exclusively focused on female nursing staff at Mayo Hospital, encompassing staff nurses, head nurses, and midwives across various departments [13-15].

The study's population consisted of approximately 250 female nurses working at Mayo Hospital. A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to ensure proportionate representation across different nursing categories.

The questionnaire, developed from existing literature and validated scales on occupational stress, financial strain, and employee performance, used a five-point Likert scale ranging from "1 for Strongly Disagree" to "5 for Strongly Agree". To ensure reliability, a pilot study was conducted with nurses from a similar healthcare setting, confirming the questionnaire's internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.72.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The collected data were analyzed. The study analyzed data from 250 female nurses in public sector hospitals in Islamabad, identifying multiple stressors categorized as

job-related and financial. The most significant stressors were an unhealthy work environment and patient overload. Financial stress factors, such as inadequate pay and limited promotion opportunities, were also prominent. Additionally, behavioral issues like disrespect from patients and their attendants highlighted the psychosocial challenges nurses face. These stressors collectively contribute to decreased job satisfaction and performance, underscoring the urgent need for institutional reforms and stress management strategies in the healthcare sector.

The study revealed that most nurses experience stress, which negatively impacts their performance. This stress is a multifaceted construct with interrelated factors. The findings also indicated a negative effect of stress on the performance of nurses in government hospitals in Punjab. This research aimed to examine the causes of stress and the relationship between job stress, job performance, and job satisfaction among female nurses in Islamabad's government hospitals. A correlational research design was employed, utilizing questionnaires to gather data on the causes of job stress and its relationship with job performance and job satisfaction. A separate job stress questionnaire was used to

determine the relationship between job stress and job performance among female nurses in government hospitals in Islamabad.

The associations between the variables were evaluated using Pearson correlation analysis. Hospitals in the public sector have been shown to be major stressors. Stress at work frequently has serious, long-lasting effects on both the company and its personnel. Both job stress and job performance and job satisfaction were found to be negatively correlated.

Given the growing prevalence of job stress in today's dynamic organizations, future research is crucial. Giving workers the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to lessen work-related stress is crucial because it has an impact on clients, employees, and the company as a whole. Increased job stress lowers productivity and job satisfaction, which eventually impacts customer service quality. Particularly vulnerable to physical, emotional, and mental stress are female nurses. Employee resistance, a lack of enthusiasm, feelings of overwork, boredom, and burnout are all signs of job stress. Together, these elements affect an employee's sense of control, morale, and perceived fit with the workplace.

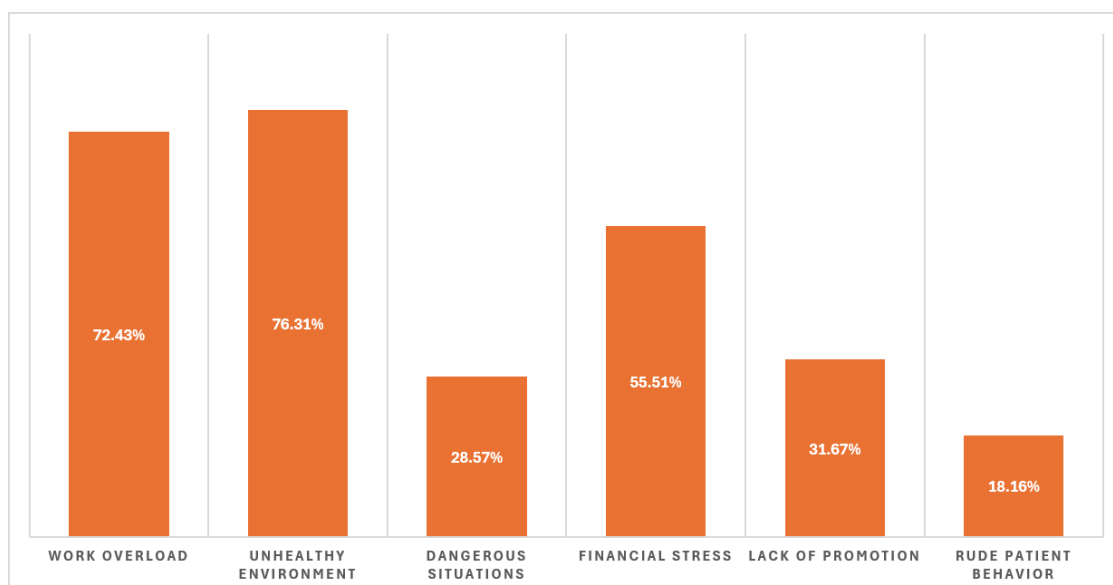


Figure 1: Percentage of working environmental parameters faced by nurses.

The study's conclusions are intended to raise workers' knowledge and comprehension of workplace stress. Employers can also assist employees in understanding how stress at work impacts other elements of their surroundings. Including workplace feedback might be a useful strategy to increase awareness of job stress and its negative impacts on productivity and job satisfaction. Effective coping strategies are necessary since female nurses must continually manage stress, crises, and conflict in their workplace. By creating and putting into practice prevention and intervention techniques to assist workers in managing occupational stress, organizations can lessen its overall effects.

Research indicates that coping skills, education, and training can effectively reduce job stress. One suggested approach is to integrate coping skills training with confidence-building, an exploration of approach/avoidance styles, and personal control to measure the effects of job stress among nursing staff.

The effectiveness of this combination in reducing work-related stress and enhancing daily client contacts in the social work sector might be investigated in a study. Assessing participants for other variables like burnout, motivation, problem-solving awareness, and self-efficacy is another direction for future research. These factors have been demonstrated to lessen job stress when paired with control and trust [16-18].

To pinpoint the exact effects of occupational stress, future studies can investigate the cause-and-effect relationship between these variables. This study clearly shows a connection between job performance, job satisfaction, and job stress, even though it evaluated the relationship between the sources of job stress and the previously indicated factors that affect performance and job satisfaction. This study helps raise awareness and understanding of the persistent problems associated with occupational stress. Lastly, it is advised that

this study be broadened to determine whether its conclusions hold true for different industries and geographical areas. In today's enterprises, job stress is a growing concern. In order to create a more productive and fulfilling work environment, it is essential to reduce job stress. By examining the particular connection between job stress, job performance, and job satisfaction, this study aims to improve knowledge of job stress. Self-aware people are more inclined to start constructive change at work.

To mitigate stress caused by patient overload, hospitals should establish new, spacious, and well-equipped wards. Additionally, the recruitment of new nurses is helping to reduce the workload of existing staff, further alleviating stress. A standardized policy should be formulated and strictly enforced, allowing only one attendant per patient and implemented through strict security measures. Unnecessary visitors should be restricted in hospitals to reduce noise pollution, a significant stress factor. Nurses should be offered competitive salary packages to encourage hard work and address financial difficulties, which is crucial for relieving a major source of stress. This also improves the socio-economic well-being of nurses' families, further acting as a stress remedy. In today's dynamic and competitive business environment, stress is often unavoidable. While stress typically has negative effects, employers should implement stress management programs for the well-being of their employees and the long-term survival of their organization. Employers and employees must collectively identify the primary sources of job stress, including the job itself, physical demands, and interpersonal interactions within the organization. It's important to assess whether organizational demands align with workers' coping skills, resources, and appetite for challenges. If there's a good match, the level of job stress may be appropriate for the individual. If not,

employers should strive to reduce existing stress and enhance employees' coping abilities through mutual counseling and employee participation. Employers should also train and instruct employees thoroughly so they understand how to perform their job responsibilities effectively, thereby creating a more comfortable and safer work environment.

Various measures and techniques can significantly help in managing stress, contributing to happier and healthier lives. These include regular exercise, sufficient rest, ample leisure time, and a healthy diet. Research suggests that employers should encourage employees to adopt good habits and initiate beneficial programs to reduce job stress and its serious consequences.

CONCLUSIONS

This research paper identifies significant issues related to occupational stress among nurses in tertiary care hospitals. The study conclusively demonstrates that an overwhelming majority of nurses, regardless of demographic characteristics, experience moderate to severe job stress. This stress negatively impacts their professional skills, interpersonal relationships, and social responsibilities. Therefore, the researcher strongly recommends that both employees and employers address job stress as a serious concern, as increased stress consistently leads to declines in job performance and satisfaction.

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