

**The Impact of Work-Related Stress on Job Performance
Among Hospital Employees in the
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

أثر الضغوط المهنية على الأداء الوظيفي لدى العاملين في المستشفيات في
المملكة العربية السعودية

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Introduction

The problem of work-related stress and its negative impact on productivity has gained global attention in organizations. To obtain a deeper knowledge of job stress and its influence on job performance, a holistic strategy that takes into account several elements such as individual personality traits, organizational factors, and work-family interaction is necessary.

Hans Selye's groundbreaking work in stress research, particularly his 1936 paper in *Nature*, laid the foundation for the field (Breitenbach et al., 2021). His concept of stress as a nonspecific bodily response to various stimuli, and his identification of the adrenal cortex as a key organ in stress reactions, have been pivotal in shaping our understanding of stress (Szabo et al., 2017). Selye's contributions extended beyond stress research, as he made significant discoveries in experimental medicine and endocrinology. His work has had a lasting impact, providing a framework for understanding the physiological responses to stress and the role of stress in various diseases (Jackson, 2014).

Research has consistently highlighted the importance of differentiating between positive and negative stress in the workplace. McGowan et al. (2006) emphasize the need to recognize the positive aspects of stress, known as eustress, which can lead to positive outcomes and improved performance. This is in contrast to distress, which is associated with negative emotions and health issues (Kundaragi, 2015). However, Fevre et al. (2003) challenges the concept of eustress, suggesting that it may lead to inappropriate stress management. Despite this, the general consensus is that understanding and managing both eustress and distress is crucial for promoting employee well-being and productivity.

Stress is a complex phenomenon with both short-term adaptive and long-term harmful effects (Sun et al., 2022). Hadany (2006) suggests that the adverse effects of stress responses may have a selective advantage, and highlights the biochemical changes in fish under stress, which can lead to damaging side effects. Sai and Sriatha (2019) further explores the implications of stress for individual life history strategies, and discusses the protective and damaging effects of stress mediators, emphasizing the concept of allostatic load. These studies collectively underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of stress, considering both its adaptive and detrimental aspects (Srivastava, 2013).

Research has consistently shown that positive situations can be associated with beneficial effects of stress. Albort-Morant et al. (2020) found that individuals exposed to more stressful situations evaluated their experiences as more worthwhile and interesting. This was further supported by Varca (1999), who highlighted the adaptational significance of positive emotions during stress and the restorative function of positive emotions in coping with stress. These findings challenge the traditional view that stress is always harmful and suggest that positive experiences can also result from stressful situations (Ismail et al., 2015).

Job stress is the connection between an individual and their employment and how it affects their overall health and performance. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), one of the pioneers of stress research, job stress develops when a person feels that their social and personal resources are insufficient to handle the demands of their line of work. This suggests that a person's level of stress at work is influenced not just by objective factors like workload, deadlines, or conflicts, but also by their subjective evaluation of their own goals, values, beliefs, and expectations (Bjaalid et al., 2020). An essential element of this evaluation is the person's sense of control over the situation. When someone feels they have little to no control over the events that affect their employment, they are more likely to experience job stress. An individual's performance and enjoyment at work, in addition to their physical and mental health, may all suffer from job stress. Therefore, it's essential to understand the factors influencing workplace stress and acquire suitable coping techniques (Krijgsheld, et al., 2022).

Research problem

Nursing and medical jobs are seen as a stressful job because of the high demands, low authority, high expectations, and complicated and difficult activities involved. The primary stresses have been determined to be these. Studies have revealed that 50.4% of nurses experience moderate to high levels of work-related stress. Additionally, there is a substantial correlation between work-related stress and greater levels of turnover intention as well as worse job satisfaction (Babapour et al., 2022). Because work-related stress can impair a nurse's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacities, it also impairs the quality of care that nurses offer.

Research on the effect of work-related stress on hospital personnel' job performance in Saudi Arabia is, however, lacking, particularly when it comes to the mediating function of coping methods. The mental and physical techniques a person employs to deal with the pressures of a stressful circumstance are known as coping methods. Regarding the results of work-related stress, such as job performance, health, and well-being, various coping mechanisms may have varying consequences.

Based on the above, the current research will attempt to answer the following question:

What is the impact of work related stress on job performance among hospital employees in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

The aims and objectives of the research

The research aims to investigate the impact of work-related stress on job performance among hospital employees in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to identify the factors that influence and moderate this relationship.

The research objectives

- To review the literature on the definitions, causes, and consequences of work-related stress and job performance in the healthcare sector.
- To design and administer a questionnaire to measure the levels of work-related stress and job performance among a sample of hospital employees in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- To analyze the data using descriptive and inferential statistics to test the hypotheses and examine the correlations between work-related stress and job performance.
- To discuss the findings and implications of the research for theory, practice, and policy in the healthcare sector.
- To provide recommendations and suggestions for future research on the topic.

The importance of the research

Theoretically : The research can add to the body of knowledge already available on the complex and multifaceted concept of work performance in the healthcare industry, which includes task, contextual, adaptive, and counterproductive behaviors¹. It can also look at how work-related stress impacts various aspects of job performance and how different coping mechanisms and organizational interventions might lessen it. Work-related stress is a serious occupational health hazard for healthcare workers.

Practically : The research can offer significant perspectives to Saudi Arabian healthcare administrators and policymakers, who must confront the difficulty of guaranteeing the caliber and availability of healthcare services in a setting that is changing quickly⁵. Enhancing the well-being and contentment of hospital staff is also beneficial, as they play a crucial role in providing effective and efficient treatment.

Research Hypotheses

The research will test the following hypotheses

H1: Work related stress has a negative significant impact on employees' job performance in hospitals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

H2: Gender influences the level of work-related stress among hospital employees the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

H3: Experience influences the level of work-related stress among hospital employees the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

H4: Job description influences the level of work-related stress among hospital employees the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

H5: Age influences the level of work-related stress among hospital employees the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Previous Studies

Work related stress studies

In today's occupations, work-related stress is a major problem as it has an impact on productivity and employee well-being. It is linked to a number of health consequences, from medical illnesses to psychological anguish. Numerous elements have been found in the research on this subject to contribute to work-related stress and its negative health impacts.

- There are differences between the sexes in the relationship between job stress and health outcomes such as depression, migraines, work-related injuries, high blood pressure, psychological distress, and cardiovascular disease (Willkins and Beaudet, 1998).
- Negative health outcomes are linked to workplace strain, job instability, and high physical demands; among males, job strain is linked to migraine and psychological distress, whereas among women, it is linked to work injuries (Ganster and Rosen, 2013).
- Lack of support from coworkers and supervisors increases stress at work; in men, poor coworker support is linked to migraines, whereas in women, it is linked to work injuries and psychological distress (Ganster and Rosen, 2013).
- Stress related to work and nonwork can both have separate effects on one's physical and mental well-being, and placing too much emphasis on one aspect of one's life might exacerbate other health problems (Ganster and Schaubroeck, 1991).
- The structure and demands of a job can contribute to psychological disorders like depression. Stress management interventions should be customized to the needs of different occupational groups, as stress experiences and solutions may vary (Rees, 1995).
- The Allostatic Load model is a crucial framework for understanding how workplace stressors affect health, emphasizing the role of primary and secondary mediators in the stress response (Sara et al., 2018).

- Chronic work-related stressors include temporary employment and a lack of work-family balance, with temporary workers typically experiencing higher levels of stress (Klitzman, 1990).
- Specific health outcomes like musculoskeletal pain, gastrointestinal disorders, and insomnia have been linked to work-related stress risk factors like excessive workload, role ambiguity, hostile work relationships, and lack of managerial support (Nakao, 2010).

The summation of the studies shows that stress at work is a complex problem that has an obvious effect on one's physical and mental well-being. Unfavorable health outcomes are significantly influenced by factors including physical demands, job pressure, insecurity, and a lack of support from coworkers and superiors. Work and non-work stresses each have separate effects on health, making the link between work stress and health complicated. It is necessary to tailor effective stress management strategies to the particular difficulties faced by various occupational groups and organizational configurations.

Job performance studies

Number of studies have examined the connection between work features and performance, and the results have shown that there are intricate relationships that affect employee outcomes. Work performance is a broad term that includes a range of actions and results in the workplace.

- Job resources like autonomy and social support predict extra-role performance through their influence on the disengagement component of burnout, whereas job demands like work pressure and emotional demands are significant predictors of the exhaustion component of burnout, which negatively impacts in-role performance (Viswesvaran et al., 1996)
- Job attitudes, such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction, have a marginal but statistically significant impact on performance later on in the employment, indicating that attitudes are more likely to affect performance than the other way around (Riketta, 2008).

- There is a positive correlation between several aspects of work performance, including task performance, contextual performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors. This suggests that there is a common component influencing these diverse aspects (Mol et al., 2005).
- Job performance ratings exhibit varying degrees of dependability. Generally, supervisory ratings exhibit greater levels of interrater reliability in comparison to peer ratings, whereas interrater reliability is lower than interrater reliability (Hunter and Hunter, 1984).
- Age and job performance have a complex relationship; it is stronger for some dimensions, like organizational citizenship behaviors and counterproductive work behaviors, and has a curvilinear relationship with core task performance (Ng and Feldman, 2008).
- When raters evaluate overall job performance, they assign different weights to task performance, citizenship, and counterproductive performance components. These weights can differ significantly among raters (Judge et al., 2001).
- A mean true correlation of .30 is predicted to exist between work performance and job happiness, suggesting a moderate link. Work sample tests are marginally better at predicting performance based on current job performance (Bakker et al., 2004).
- Personality qualities including extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, together with cultural sensitivity and proficiency in the local language, are predictive of expatriate work performance (Rotundo, 2002).
- Ability is a strong predictor of job performance for entry-level jobs, with a mean validity of .53. Personality traits like extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, as well as cultural sensitivity and local language ability, are predictive of expatriate job performance. When compared to particular work satisfaction metrics, overall job satisfaction exhibits stronger and more stable connections with performance (Petty et al., 1984).

In conclusion, a range of elements, such as the demands and resources of the work, employee attitudes, age, and personality features, all have an impact on job performance. The diverse weights assigned to the various performance components and the modest association

between work satisfaction and performance both reflect the intricacy of these interactions. The creation of efficient performance evaluation systems and human resource management procedures can both benefit from an understanding of these dynamics.

The impact of work related stress on job performance studies

The effect of stress at work on job performance has received a lot of attention lately, especially from hospital personnel in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Studies show that stress may have a detrimental impact on workers' mental health as well as the standard of patient care, which is why workplace stress is particularly common among healthcare professionals.

The majority of participants in a cross-sectional survey among healthcare workers in the Eastern Region of Saudi Arabia indicated moderate to high levels of stress, with an overall prevalence of occupational stress of 66.2%. Over 50 hours worked a week, night shifts, and a shortage of employees were all strongly linked to greater stress levels. Remarkably, work satisfaction did not suffer in spite of high stress levels, indicating that the system of rewards and benefits in place could contribute to job satisfaction (Aldaiji et al., 2022)

Examining the connection between medication mistakes and work-related stress, it was found that certain stressors—such as pressure to meet deadlines and interfere with family life—were substantially linked to higher rates of medication errors. This emphasizes how important it is to implement treatments to successfully manage stresses in order to protect patient safety (Salam et al, 2019).

In addition, a research conducted among Ain Shams University Hospitals staff members who do not provide direct patient care revealed a significant degree of work-related stress, with around one-fifth experiencing serious mental illness. Unpleasant or dangerous work environments and a lack of control over job responsibilities were the leading causes of occupational stress (Ibrahim et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 epidemic has worsened work-life balance, position uncertainty, and workplace stress, which has raised frontline healthcare professionals' aspirations to leave Saudi Arabia. The relationship between these stresses and the intention to leave was shown to be

mediated by burnout, highlighting the necessity of retention tactics for healthcare professionals in times of crisis (Ablihed & Alzghaibi, 2022).

Job stress was shown to be adversely correlated with all aspects of job satisfaction in Greek hospitals, with the main stressors being conflict, a severe workload, and a lack of workplace autonomy (Trivellas et al., 2013). Similarly, job-related stress was common among nurses in Dammam, Eastern Saudi Arabia, where it was found to be 45.5%. Significant predictors of stress included younger age, Saudi nationality, and work shifts (Salam, 2014).

Studies conducted in South Africa have demonstrated a strong correlation between work-related stress and burnout and nurses' overall health and job happiness, which has an impact on output and patient care quality (Khamisa et al., 2015). It has been discovered that occupational stress has a detrimental effect on pharmacists' work satisfaction in Saudi Arabia, with hospital pharmacists reporting lower levels of satisfaction (Aldaiji, 2022).

Stress at work was common among nurses working in basic healthcare institutions in Arar, Saudi Arabia; about one-third of the participants experienced it. Stress was shown to be higher among those with higher education levels, suggesting the need for stress management instruction (Alanazi et al., 2019).

Last but not least, a study conducted on Iranian hospital staff members discovered a negative correlation between workplace stress and QWL, with job stress positively correlated with desire to leave the company. According to this, lowering occupational stress is essential for raising QWL and lowering turnover (Mosadeghrad et al., 2011).

To sum up, stress at work is a major problem for hospital staff in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and it has a big impact on worker wellbeing, patient safety, and job performance. Improving the work environment for healthcare workers requires addressing the causes of stress and putting in place efficient stress management programs.

Research Methodology

Research design

This research will use a descriptive method, using quantitative approach, which is one of the most appropriate methods for this study. The purpose of this method is to collect and analyze data and facts about the study problem and its implications. This method will help answer the study questions, test the hypotheses, and achieve the objectives. The steps of this method are as follows:

- ✓ First, the research problem is defined and then the research title is chosen.
- ✓ Review previous literature and studies.
- ✓ Determine the research objectives, questions and hypotheses
- ✓ Design of research tools. Here the tools are a questionnaire to measure creativity and a questionnaire to measure metacognitive awareness.
- ✓ Determine the research population and choose the research sample. Here the sample will be a systematic random one.
- ✓ Apply research tools and collect data from the sample.
- ✓ Analyze data and use appropriate statistical tests.
- ✓ Obtaining results, interpreting them, and making suggestions.

Research community and sample

The research community consists of all hospital workers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A simple random sample consisting of a large number of health workers will be selected because the study is a quantitative survey.

Research data collection tools

A special questionnaire will be designed to collect data that will help answer the research questions and test its hypotheses. By asking respondents a sequence of questions designed to elicit certain information from them, questionnaires are a useful tool for data collection. There are several ways to deliver questionnaires: online, via mail, over the phone, or in person. Depending on the type of questions asked, a questionnaire might produce descriptive or numerical data. Numerical data is often generated by questions that have

predetermined responses; descriptive data is generated by questions that allow respondents to provide their own replies.

The questionnaire will consist of three main sections as follows:

- The first section: It will collect bibliographic data about the sample members, such as gender, age, job title, and experience.
- The second section: will collect data on job stress.
- The third section: It will collect data about employees' performance.

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire will be verified before using it.

Statistical processing methods

Excel2007 and SPSS22 will be used to draw charts, conduct tests, and extract results.

The following tests were applied:

- Descriptive statistics (percentages - frequencies)
- Pearson correlation to examine the association between variables.
- Simple regression to examine the impact of work related stress on job performance.
- Independent sample t-test to investigate the differences in the sample answers according to independent variables such as gender.
- ANOVA to investigate the differences in the sample answers according to independent variables such marital status.

Research limits:

Objective Limits: The study was limited to investigating the impact of work related stress on job performance among hospital employees in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, the research with investigate the influence of some independent variables on work related stress such as gender, age, job description, experience.

Human Limits: The study sample consisted of a group of workers at hospitals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Place Limits: Hospitals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Time Limits: Academic year 2023-2024.

Research Structure

Chapter 1: Introduction

- Background and context of the study
- Statement of the problem
- Aim and objectives of the study
- Research questions and hypotheses
- Significance and scope of the study
- Structure of the dissertation

- Chapter 2: Literature review and previous studies

- Definition and conceptualization of work-related stress
- Causes and consequences of work-related stress
- Definition and measurement of job performance
- Dimensions and determinants of job performance
- Theoretical framework and models of the relationship between work-related stress and job performance
- Moderating and mediating variables in the relationship
- Research gaps and areas for further investigation

- Chapter 3: Methodology

- Research methodology
- Data collection methods and instruments
- Reliability and validity of the instruments
- Sampling technique and sample size
- Data analysis methods and techniques

- Ethical considerations and limitations

- Chapter 4: Data analysis and results

- Descriptive statistics of the sample
- Testing of the hypotheses using inferential statistics
- Presentation and interpretation of the results

- Chapter 5: Discussion and conclusion

- Summary and discussion of the main findings
- Comparison and contrast of the findings with the literature review
- Implications and recommendations for practice and policy
- Suggestions and directions for future research

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