



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Management

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS IS A THREAT TO EMPLOYEE'S EFFICIENCY: A STUDY ON NURSES WORKING IN PRIVATE HOSPITALS

KEY WORDS: Job Stress, Occupational Stress, Job Stressor, Service Quality of Hospitals.

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ABSTRACT

The current study is focusing on impact of occupational stress/job stress on employee's efficiency. Job stress is found as the multi-dimensional threat not only to operational efficiency of an employee but also leads to various types disturbances in personal as well as social life. The present study is an empirical attempt to test occupational stress's impact on employees' efficiency through questioning male & female nurses working in private hospitals with the help of structured questionnaire. The study will also explore the potential job stressors present in private hospitals that have significant adverse effect on nurses performance.

1 Introduction

1.1 Conceptual Background

Job stress is a very common term and is found in majority of people in different meanings, explanations, causes and intensity. Different researchers, specialists and academicians have defined it in variety of ways. Stress means differently to different persons and arise from various sources. The diversity in job stress origin is the main cause of variety of definition. According to the 'National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (2004) *work stress is defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occurs when job requirements do not match the worker's capabilities, resources, and needs.* Therefore, it is considered as the biggest challenge to the individual (physical, emotional, psychological etc.) for performing as per standards (expected) and a significant threat to the organization which has direct impact on organizational performance (ILO, 1986). Various researchers including 'Health and Safety Executive' explained job stress in very practical manner. Author in his book named 'Working Together to Reduce Stress at Work: A guide for employee' gives detailed description of stress as: Stress is often a symptom of poor employment relations and can seriously affect productivity. Organizations that talk regularly with their employees and have sound systems and procedures in place, for dealing with issues like absence and discipline are much more likely to avoid work-related stress and to be able to deal with potentially stressful situations when they arise. Narayan et al. (1999& 2009) bifurcate the stress into two categories 'Qualitative & Quantitative work stress'. The author further explains qualitative job stress as the workers' low level of self-esteem": they believe that they do not have the necessary skills or capacities to perform the required tasks, whereas quantitative job stress refers to the amount of work that should be done under the pressure of time.

Job stress has become a common phenomenon in today's commercial world. Corporate workplace has converted into a race course where employees are pressurized to run fast and win the race. In the race of business excellence and optimizing profit, corporate houses forget the stress that arises out of their overwhelmed expectations. Overestimation of business goals in short term is the major cause of stress among employees. Researchers have given various definitions for job stress which unfold various fronts of occupational stress, workplace stress and job stress. Stress is defined as the "body's uncertain response to the demand made on it." On one hand stress provides the outlet to express our talent, energizes and helps us to pursue happiness, while on the other hand, it causes illness and mellows down our strength. When something unpleasant happens around us, it puts us in a state of strain called stress. Various empirical studies acknowledged that workplace stress is found more common in private employees (private nursing staff) due to various reasons. Workplace stress refers to psychological imbalance between expected and actual. In other words it is defined as the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when there is a poor match between job demands and the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker (S. P. Karuppasamy Pandian, 2013).

1.2 Occupational Stress

Sodoma and Else (2009) explained in their study that sharp increase in role, responsibilities and job profile of employees in recent years has made jobs more stressful. Authors described with an example: teachers' workload has increased as a result of a number of factors, including the mainstreaming of pupils with special educational needs, greater ethnic diversity in classrooms and the increase in class sizes resulting from recent expenditure cuts (Zyga S, Mitrousi S, Alikari V, Sachlas A, Stathoulis J, Fradelos E, Panoutsopoulos G, Maria L., 2016). This may also increase work related stress or occupational stress. Researchers have identified that ever increasing expectations have made jobs more stressful and employee boss relation made workplace more stress full. A study conducted upon American employees revealed that stress related workers' compensation is being increased every year, whereas organizations are experiencing on-site accidents happening due to stress related distraction or sleepiness. The article also advocated the benefits of stress but suggested that it should be in right degree and quantity. When stress increases beyond acceptable range it produces job strain.

Stress among employees is becoming another potential cost incurring factor in developed nations. Due to stress, various unavoidable losses incur which can't be overlooked. Organizations have experienced that due to job stress, employees start missing work, leading to low productivity which costs a considerable amount to the company. On the other hand, stress also leads to absenteeism. Millions of workers reported that due to lack of full attention at work (called work absenteeism) they are losing actual scale of performance. In an article named 'Stress in the workplace: Meeting the challenge', discussed that job stress causes health hazards which increases company's healthcare costs. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), around 60 to 90 percent of doctor's visits are attributed to stress-related illnesses and symptoms.

1.3 Sources of Occupational stress

Job stress arises in different forms and affects individual's mind and body in different ways. Small things or happenings can trouble and make someone feel restless or stressed. Major stress comes from having too much or not enough work or doing work that doesn't satisfy one. Conflicts with one's boss, coworkers, or customers are other major causes of stress.

Common causes of stress are highlighted as under:

Cause	Description
Uncertainty about work role	Being unsure about your duties, how your job might be changing, or the goals of your department or company can lead to stress. If you report to more than one boss, juggling the demands of different managers can also be stressful.

<i>Increased Responsibility</i>	Assigning extra duties, too much work expectations, assigning work other than job profile etc.
<i>Lack of Control</i>	Lack of control over job or work is the biggest cause of job stress. People who feel like they have no control at work are most likely to get stress-related illnesses.
<i>Poor Communication</i>	Tension on the job often comes from poor communication. Being unable to talk about your needs, concerns, and frustrations can create stress.
<i>Lack of Support</i>	Lack of support from boss & coworkers makes it harder to solve other problems at work that are causing stress.
<i>Lack of Support</i>	Lack of support from boss & coworkers makes it harder to solve other problems at work that are causing stress.
<i>Poor Working Conditions</i>	Unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions, such as crowding, noise, or ergonomic problems, can cause stress.
<i>Job Satisfaction and Performance</i>	Do you take pride in your job? If your job isn't meaningful, you may find it stressful. Are you worried about doing well at work? Feeling insecure about job performance is a major source of stress for many people.
<i>Job Security</i>	Uncertain job security, fear of skill redundancy, job at contract basis are the main cause of stress.
<i>Work Life Balance</i>	Long working hours, over-demanding work, inflexible work schedule, unsocial hours, excessive travelling and work interfering with home/personal life causes stress in employees.
<i>Lack of Resource Availability</i>	Communication gap, no information about what is going on at workplace, no feedback on performance, lack of equipment/resources to perform task, inadequate training to do the job etc.

2 Literature Review

Stress among professionals is very common and an unavoidable feature of today's modern life. Healthcare profession is called a unique and most responsible profession in today's modern society. The alarming spike in the incidence of reported stress among hospital employees in recent years and its impact on the client has made the management of stress an urgent business strategy for health institutions (Mojoyinola, 2008). Healthcare employees have been continuously coping with environmental, societal and job profile changes. Today's dynamic world brought so many unwanted events among professionals which can be considered as the potential source of occupational stress. Uncertain environment characterized by restructuring, reengineering, layoff and downsizing which threatened employees' personal security of employment (Huber, 1996). Generally, stress is always thought of in negative terms. That is, stress is perceived as something bad, annoying, threatening and not wanted event (Etim, John John, Bassey, Philip E. & Ndep, Antor O, 2015).

The researchers with long experiments on occupational stress in and on the basis of literatures on related fields could able to develop a model which studies job stress. Selye in his model called 'General Adaptation Syndrome' also called GAS model, explained various stages of job stress and its effects on employee. The model consist 3 stages: **alarm, resistance and exhaustion**. GAS model also brings out a distinction between short and long term effects of stress on the body Nabiry, R. C. (2010). Apart from the physiologically oriented approach of GAS model to job stress, there is still a great dimension to study on modern stress and stress management. Researchers have given sincere attention to psychological aspect of stress viz. mood changes, negative emotions, feeling of helplessness, etc. and the behavioral aspect viz. directly confronting the stressors, obtaining information about the stressors, etc. (Richter, L., 2011). All three dimensions (physiological, psychological, and behavioral) are important to the

understanding of job stress and coping mechanism in modern organizations.

Job stress in today's dynamic professional world is an inherent feature of private jobs including healthcare sector. There are growing evidences suggesting that these events are increasing in severity. Occupational stress has been structured as a significant stressor in private hospitals and leading to increasing job dissatisfaction, rapid turnover, and high attrition rates among nurses (Schultz, D.P. and Schultz, S.E., 1994). Researchers also revealed that stress level varies among nurses on department level. Cole et al. (2001) reported that emergency ward (ICU) is recognized as most stressful department in comparison to other departments. ICU is identified as the most prominent department of stress for both patients and nursing staff. Other departments like NICU, patient ward, labor room and operation theatre are sequencing after ICU. The level of stress differs on department basis, studies found that labor room and operation theatre are the second highest stress areas in private hospitals. Tyson, P. D., & Pongruengphant, R. (2004) in their study revealed that nurses in private hospitals and that too in labor room & OT are experiencing high level job stress. These departments are filled with excessive job responsibilities and over workload at nominal salaries. Results discussed that nurses working in these departments are highly stressed and couldn't cope with highly demanding job profile. The potential stressors in these departments are hard working relationship with doctors (as doctors are more depend on nurses and keep high expectation of work), communication (these departments need alertness and real time communication with doctors) and psychological relationship with patients and relatives to calm down them and make them feel relaxed and stress less.

3 Methodology

The study is empirical in nature based on primary data targeting nurses working in private hospitals to check the level of occupational stress among them. The data has been collected through structured questionnaire (the validity of questionnaire has been checked through 'Chronbach's Alpha, the alpha value of the questionnaire is found 0.859) scaled on five point likert scale. The research covered 300 samples (Male- 150 & Female- 150) for analysis from top 15 multi-specialty hospitals which have national brand image. Through this attempt, the study would analyze is there any difference in the level of occupational stress due to gender. To find out how and why gender differs in their perception towards occupational stress and what factors have significant impact on them. The data set is tested using 'independent t-test' to study the mean difference (if any) between two independent data sets (male & female).

4 Research Objective & Hypotheses

Objective: To Study the perception of male & female nurses towards occupational stress in private hospitals

Null Hypothesis

H₀: *There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female nurses for occupational stress working in private hospitals.*

Alternative Hypothesis

H₁: *There is significant difference in the perception of male and female nurses for occupational stress working in private hospitals.*

5 Result Analysis & Interpretation

5.1 Test of reliability is done with the help of 'Chronbach's Alpha, the below table 1 represents the test statistics of Alpha test.

Table 1
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.859	32

5.2 Independent t-test is carried out to understand the mean difference between male nurses and female nurses for their perception towards occupational stress at workplace. The below test statistics represents the test analysis.

Table 2 Group Statistics

	Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Perception	male	150	3.7227	.41255	.03368
	female	150	4.1381	.37472	.03060

Table 3 Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Perception	Equal variances assumed	.971	.325	-9.129	298	.000	-.41542	.04551	-.50497	-.32586
	Equal variances not assumed			-9.129	295.285	.000	-.41542	.04551	-.50497	-.32586

Null Hypothesis H01 Stands Rejected

The null hypothesis H₀1 stands rejected as the sig. value is found 0.00 < 0.05.

The test is found significant at 5% level of significance; **t(298)= 9.129; p= 0.00.**

It is evident from the above table 3 that significant difference is found between the mean perception of 'male nurse' (**M= 3.7227, SD= .4125**) & 'female nurse' (**M= 4.1381, SD= .3747**) with respect to job stress in private hospitals. The test also revealed that there is a significant difference between both male & female nurse as the mean of both the group differ significantly. There is a considerable difference in the mean score of male and female which supports the level of difference in both the groups.

The summary of the result comprises with significant difference between male & female nurses for their perception towards job stress at work place (private hospitals). Gender difference creates significant difference in the perception of nurses for job stress. The result reveals that male & female nurses significantly differ in their perception for stress. According to the result female nurses experience more stress than male nurses. The types of stressors are also unique to them and create different level of stress than male nurses. Hence, as a conclusion of the summary the study reveals that there is a significant perceptual difference between both the groups (male & female) with respect to job stress in private hospitals.

5.3 Top five stressors for male and female in private hospitals.

Table 4

Male Nurses	S No.	Female Nurses
Lack of Emotional Support at Workplace	1	Work Load
Pay & Packages	2	Conflict at Work Place
Dealing with Death & Dying Situation	3	Organizational Decisions
Infrastructure	4	Infrastructure
Uncertain Regarding Patient's Treatment	5	Uncertain Regarding Patient's Treatment

The above table 4 discuss about the top five stressors mostly prevailing in private hospitals. According to the gender the rank for these stressors vary, as gender brings significant difference in attitude, behavior, perception, personality and so on.

6 Conclusion

With reference to the results, testing and literature studies the current research reached at the conclusion that private hospitals are very much prone to occupational stress & hazard that have

direct impact on employees' (nurses) efficiency and performance. With the help of the study it is also estimated that these stressors significantly affects overall performance of the hospitals and hampers growth. It has causal relationship with efficiency loss, absenteeism, employees' burnout and low belongingness towards the organization. The study also found that, male & female nurses significantly differing in their perception towards occupational stress at workplace. Hospitals must formulate efficient stress coping strategies differently for both the gender and try to reduce events that may encounter stress among nurses at workplace

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