Job Stress from Nurses' Working Conditions in Sabah Women and Child Hospital

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Abstract: Both excessive and insufficient workloads can cause stress among employees. It has been established that as tasks take longer to complete, employee happiness tends to decrease, which can significantly impact their overall health and mental well-being. The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between age and working conditions concerning job stress among registered nurses in a government hospital in Sabah. The quantitative survey approach was employed, involving 60 registered nurses with a minimum of 3 years of experience. Purposive sampling was utilized to ensure a sample that would provide comprehensive insights and discoveries into the factors influencing job stress among nurses in this specific setting. The analysis indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between age, working conditions as demographics, and job stress (p = 0.499). The average stress level reported by respondents was 15.7 ± 2.32379 on a scale where higher scores indicate greater stress. This finding suggests that the observed demographic characteristics, including age and specific working conditions, did not correlate with higher or lower levels of job stress among the nurses surveyed. Based on the survey results, it can be concluded that age and the specific working conditions studied do not appear to significantly influence the experience of job stress among registered nurses at the government hospital in Sabah. This implies that other factors not explored in this study may have a more pronounced impact on job stress levels within this population. Future research could explore additional variables or consider different methodologies to further understand the complexities of job stress among healthcare professionals.

Keywords: Gender, Relationship, Stress, nurse, working condition

INTRODUCTION

Moderate levels of stress, characterized by challenging yet attainable goals, have been recognized to have a positive impact on employees, as noted by Rice (2000) and Sutherland & Cooper (2000). Such stress can serve to energize and motivate individuals, prompting increased engagement and productivity within their roles. Understanding the implications of job stress on physical health, psychological well-being, and behavior is crucial in organizational settings, as underscored. Stress, distinct as the body's response to seeming threats or demands, can stem from various sources in the workplace, influencing employees' overall effectiveness and satisfaction. Extensive research supports the direct association between prolonged experience to stressful conditions or a buildup of stressors over time and adverse outcomes such as illness, emotional distress, and engagement in negative behaviors (Nourian et al., 2020). This underscores the importance of managing stress effectively within

organizational contexts to mitigate these harmful effects and foster a healthier, more productive workforce.

The impact of stress is profoundly felt in "caring" careers, often leading to burnout, a prevalent psychological consequence. Reports from Sabah Women and Child Hospital indicate a frequent occurrence of stress among nurses, significantly affecting their performance (Shakir et al., 2016). High workloads and demanding job requirements contribute substantially to burnout, thereby compromising individual achievement. Similar findings in other hospitals across Sabah corroborate this trend of stress among healthcare providers. Nurses experiencing diminished personal accomplishment may struggle to effectively cope with the challenges they face (Sutherland & Cooper, 2000). The persistent high job and job anxieties increase the vulnerability of nurses to burnout. According Mu'taman et al. (2023) nurses encountered overwhelming workloads, burnout, early retirement, and job transfers, particularly exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, The WHO highlighted a notable increase in stress levels among healthcare workers during the pandemic.

Beyond psychological implications, stress also triggers significant physiological changes. Research links stress with conditions such as heart disease, headaches, and increases in blood pressure and heart rate. These health risks are particularly concerning for nurses, as stress poses a serious threat to their overall well-being (Nourian et al., 2020; Rice, 2000). While stress has been identified to potentially motivate nurses towards professional success (Rice, 2000; Sutherland & Cooper, 2000), the predominant focus remains on its negative impacts. The adverse effects of stress disrupt the work environment significantly and present a substantial challenge for nurses.

METHODS

The proposed study employed a quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional research design, utilizing a questionnaire as its primary instrument. Quantitative research is characterized as a methodical, systematic, data-driven, objective, and scientific investigation aimed at deriving numerical solutions or answers to specific inquiries (Polit & Beck, 2017). A questionnaire is a preformulated set of written questions to which respondents provide their answers, typically within defined response options that may introduce biases (Polit & Beck, 2017). In this study, the questionnaire comprised of two sections. Section 1 concentrated on demographic data, including age, gender, highest nursing educational attainment, and years of clinical experience. Section 2 utilized the International Stress Management Association (ISMA) stress scale, which employs a "yes" or "no" Likert scaling format. The ISMA stress scale, described by Sutherland & Cooper (2000), comprises 25 items designed to assess the level of stress experienced by respondents. From the scoring measures used in this study, a high level of job stress is defined by a score exceeding 75%, while a medium level ranges from 40% to 75%, and a low level is indicated by a score of 39% or less.

This methodology enables the researchers to gather quantitative data on the occurrence and intensity of job stress amongst registered nurses in a government hospital setting in Sabah. The cross-sectional approach allows for a snapshot of stress levels at a specific point in time, providing valuable insights into how demographic factors and work-related variables may correlate with perceived stress among healthcare professionals.

Sample size and sampling technique

Purposive sampling was employed in this study to select clinicians from Sabah Women and Child Hospital who were available during the data collection period. The target populace involved of nurses across all levels within the hospital setting. According to Gray et al. (2017), purposive sampling includes selecting participants based on specific criteria to ensure they can provide pertinent understandings into the research topic. In this case, the researchers targeted nurses from various levels within the hospital, aiming to capture a representative sample that could reflect the diversity of experiences and perspectives among nursing staff. It is crucial to note that the consideration of sample

size in relation to statistical techniques and population representation, as highlighted by Polit & Beck (2017). They emphasize that choosing an adequate number of participants ensures the sample is sufficiently large to apply statistical analyses effectively and to draw meaningful conclusions about the broader population. In this study, the sample size was determined using Cohen's table for sampling, which recommended a sample size of 44 given the total population of 60. Creswell (2015) suggests that when the population size is less than 100, sampling the entire population might be more feasible and advantageous to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the study variables. Respondents must be registered nurses with at least 3 years of working experience in the Sabah Women and Child Hospital. Nursing students and nurses who have not worked for less than a year excluded from the study.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms will be assigned to all respondents in accordance with established practices (Polit & Beck, 2017). This approach safeguards the privacy of individuals involved in the study, allowing for open and honest participation without concerns about personal information being disclosed. Throughout the study period, strict confidentiality measures will be maintained to protect the privacy of participants. All information gathered, including data collected through surveys or interviews, will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. This commitment extends to all aspects of the study, including the final report and any subsequent communications or publications (de Kerguenec Y, 2017). Data analysis will be conducted with the assurance that no identifying information will be included in any published or disseminated materials. This ensures that the findings can be shared without compromising the anonymity of the participants.

RESULTS

Table: 1. Characteristics Respondents

Characteristics Respondents	Demographics	n	%
Age	19-21	4	6.7
	22-25	42	70.0
	>26	14	23.3
	Total	60	
			100.0
Working conditions leading to job stress	Bedside	44	73.5
	Office	11	18.3
	Environmental	5	8.3
	Total	60	100.0

Among the 60 respondents surveyed, the distribution across age groups was as follows: 4 respondents (6.7%) were aged 19-21 years, 42 (70%) were aged 22-25 years, and 14 (23.3%) were older than 26 years. This age breakdown provides insight into how different age groups perceive and experience work-related stress in the nursing profession.

According to Salilih & Abajobir (2014), younger nurses, particularly those aged 19-25 years, generally exhibit greater tolerance for work-related stress compared to their older counterparts. This may be attributed to factors such as resilience, adaptability, and possibly less exposure to long-term stressors inherent in the profession.

Conversely, older nurses, as noted in the study by Salilih & Abajobir (2014), acknowledge having experienced work-related stress more frequently. This suggests that accumulated experience and prolonged exposure to the demands of nursing practice may contribute to higher stress levels among older healthcare professionals.

Moreover, younger nurses, due to their relative lack of experience and potentially fewer coping skills developed over time, may appear more vulnerable to stress in the workplace. This vulnerability could manifest in various forms, including emotional strain and difficulties in managing workload

pressures effectively.

Table 2 Correlation Test Analysis Relationship

Correlation Test Analysis Relationship			Overall	Age in years
Speaman's rho	Overall Stress	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.088
		Sig.(2tailed)	-	.503
		N	60	60
		Correlation Coefficient	.088	1.000
	Age in years	Sig.(2tailed)	.503	-
		N	60	60

According to table 2, the analysis is shown to identify the relationship between age working conditions to job stress. Confirming the ANOVA with Spearman rho, specifically for the age, and working condition demographics, there is no relationship to job stress when the *p-value* didn't show a significant value $p > .0.05$.

DISCUSSION

The strength of this research lies in its robust design, particularly its use of correlation statistics, which not only describe the relationships between variables but also infer these relationships (Gray et al., 2016). This approach enhances the applicability of the findings to real-world settings, making them potentially useful for informing practical decisions in managing job stress among nurses. The maturity of respondents' behavior in answering survey questions, influenced by their working conditions, is another critical aspect discussed (Heale & Shorten, 2017). This highlights the importance of carefully selecting and framing survey variables to accurately capture the nuances of job stress experiences among nurses. The distribution of respondents across different age brackets is noteworthy: a majority falling between 20-40 years old (n=33) compared to those aged 41-50 (n=23). Younger respondents generally exhibit higher tolerance for work-related stress, potentially influencing their perceptions and responses compared to older nurses who may have accumulated more stress over their careers (Salilih & Abajobir, 2014). This demographic trend underscores the varying impacts of age and experience on job stress perceptions within the nursing workforce. Furthermore, the duration of clinical experience among respondents also affects their stress levels. For instance, nurses with fewer than 5 years of experience report experiencing less work-related stress, whereas those with over 15 years of service tend to have encountered more stressors (Salilih & Abajobir, 2014). Additionally, differences in stress experiences among racial groups are observed, with Chinese respondents reporting less work-related stress compared to their Indian and Malay counterparts. Despite these demographic insights, the study finds no significant relationship between age, working conditions, and job stress (sig=0.499). The overall reported stress level among respondents was moderate, indicating a nuanced understanding of stress factors that impact nurses in the workplace (15.7 ± 2.32379). The study also highpoints the complicated nature of job stress and its potential health implications, including insomnia, anxiety, depression, and physical ailments such as heart disease and digestive problems (Nourian et al., 2020). Stress at work can spill over into personal life, affecting relationships and emotional well-being, thereby underscoring the broader impact beyond the workplace.

CONCLUSION

There is the relationship between working conditions to job stres. Organizations educate themselves on effectively managing this inevitable challenge, using it constructively to safeguard

workers' health. Understanding the causes of work-related stress is paramount, highlight the role of deadlines in maintaining productivity and focus within work environments. In today's dynamic and demanding world, stress has become ubiquitous, affecting almost everyone on a daily basis. While stress is commonly viewed as detrimental, it can also serve as a catalyst for enhancing performance under pressure. This perspective aligns with the notion that moderate stress levels can stimulate individuals to perform more effectively and draw out their best efforts. To optimize outcomes and mitigate negative impacts, organizations must adopt strategies to manage stress effectively. This involves promoting a supportive work atmosphere, providing resources for stress management, and encouraging work-life balance. By embracing stress as a potential motivator rather than solely a source of detriment, organizations can harness its energy to foster resilience and enhance overall productivity.

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