



A study on occupational stress and job satisfaction among staff nurses working in tertiary care hospitals

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Abstract

Occupational stress is a pervasive issue in the nursing profession due to high workload, emotional labor, long working hours, and responsibility for patient outcomes. Persistent exposure to stressful work environments can negatively influence nurses' job satisfaction, mental well-being, and quality of patient care. This study examines the relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction among staff nurses working in tertiary care hospitals. A quantitative descriptive correlational research design was employed, and data were collected from 220 staff nurses using standardized occupational stress and job satisfaction scales. Statistical analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between occupational stress and job satisfaction. Factors such as workload, shift duties, inadequate staffing, and lack of managerial support emerged as major stressors. The findings highlight the urgent need for organizational interventions to reduce stress and enhance job satisfaction among nurses. Improving work conditions and providing psychological support can contribute to nurse retention, improved performance, and better patient outcomes.

Keywords: Occupational stress, job satisfaction, staff nurses, tertiary hospitals, nursing workforce

Introduction

Nursing is universally recognized as one of the most demanding and stressful professions within the healthcare system. Nurses serve as the backbone of hospital care, providing continuous patient monitoring, administering treatments, and offering emotional support to patients and their families. While the profession is rewarding, it is also associated with significant occupational stress due to physical, emotional, and psychological demands.

In tertiary care hospitals, the intensity of work is particularly high. Nurses often manage critically ill patients, operate advanced medical equipment, and work under time pressure while adhering to strict protocols. Shift work, night duties, staff shortages, and high patient expectations further exacerbate stress levels. Prolonged occupational stress can lead to burnout, absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, and attrition from the profession.

Job satisfaction refers to the extent to which individuals feel positively or negatively about their jobs. In nursing, job satisfaction is closely linked to work environment, professional autonomy, recognition, remuneration, and interpersonal relationships. Satisfied nurses are more likely to provide high-quality patient care, demonstrate commitment to their organization, and remain in the profession.

Despite growing awareness, occupational stress among nurses remains inadequately addressed, especially in developing healthcare systems. Understanding the relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction is crucial for designing effective strategies to improve nurses' well-being and healthcare quality. This study aims to explore this relationship among staff nurses working in tertiary care hospitals.

Literature Review

Occupational Stress in Nursing

Occupational stress is defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job requirements do

not match the worker's capabilities, resources, or needs. Nursing stressors include heavy workload, emotional involvement with patients, role ambiguity, inadequate staffing, and exposure to suffering and death.

Research indicates that nurses experience higher stress levels compared to many other healthcare professionals. Chronic stress can result in fatigue, anxiety, depression, and reduced job performance.

Job Satisfaction among Nurses

Job satisfaction in nursing is influenced by intrinsic factors such as professional growth, recognition, and meaningful work, as well as extrinsic factors including salary, work conditions, and management support. High job satisfaction is associated with improved morale, better teamwork, and enhanced patient satisfaction.

Low job satisfaction, on the other hand, contributes to high turnover rates, decreased productivity, and compromised patient safety.

Relationship between Stress and Job Satisfaction

Multiple studies have established an inverse relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction among nurses. High stress levels are consistently associated with reduced job satisfaction, burnout, and intention to leave the profession.

A growing body of literature emphasizes the role of supportive leadership, adequate staffing, and stress management programs in mitigating occupational stress and improving job satisfaction.

Research Gaps

- Limited empirical studies in tertiary care hospital settings
- Inadequate focus on organizational stressors
- Lack of region-specific data in developing healthcare systems

The present study addresses these gaps by examining occupational stress and job satisfaction among staff nurses in tertiary hospitals.

Research Question and Hypothesis

Research Question

What is the relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction among staff nurses working in tertiary care hospitals?

Hypotheses

H₁: There is a significant negative relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction among staff nurses.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction among staff nurses.

Research Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative descriptive correlational research design was adopted.

Setting of the Study

The study was conducted in selected tertiary care hospitals, including medical, surgical, ICU, and emergency departments.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of registered staff nurses. A sample of 220 nurses was selected using convenience sampling.

Inclusion Criteria

- Registered nurses with at least one year of experience
- Nurses willing to participate
- Nurses working in clinical units

Exclusion Criteria

- Nursing supervisors and administrators
- Nurses on long-term leave

Data Collection Tools

- Demographic data sheet
- Occupational Stress Scale for Nurses
- Job Satisfaction Scale

The tools demonstrated acceptable reliability with Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected after obtaining institutional permission and informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis.

Data Analysis and Results

Demographic Characteristics of Nurses

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	62	28%
Female	158	72%
Age < 30 years	98	45%
Age 30–45 years	94	43%
Above 45 years	28	12%

Mean Scores of Occupational Stress and Job Satisfaction

Variable	Mean	SD
Occupational Stress	3.89	0.67
Job Satisfaction	3.21	0.59

Correlation between Occupational Stress and Job Satisfaction

Variables	r-value	p-value
Stress & Job Satisfaction	-0.72	<0.001

The analysis indicates a strong negative correlation between occupational stress and job satisfaction, supporting the research hypothesis.

Discussion

The findings reveal that staff nurses experience moderate to high levels of occupational stress, which significantly reduces their job satisfaction. High workload, shift duties, and inadequate staffing were identified as primary stressors. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted in hospital settings.

The strong inverse relationship suggests that stress management is essential for improving nurses' job satisfaction. Organizational support, effective leadership, and healthy work environments play a critical role in mitigating stress.

From a theoretical perspective, the results align with occupational stress models that emphasize the balance between job demands and available resources.

Implications for Nursing Practice and Administration

- Implementation of stress management programs
- Adequate nurse staffing and fair workload distribution
- Supportive leadership and participative management
- Regular assessment of nurses' mental well-being

Future Research Directions

- Longitudinal studies on stress and burnout
- Intervention-based research on stress reduction strategies
- Comparative studies across healthcare sectors
- Qualitative research exploring nurses' lived experiences

Conclusion

This study highlights occupational stress as a significant factor affecting job satisfaction among staff nurses in tertiary care hospitals. The strong negative correlation between stress and satisfaction underscores the need for organizational and administrative interventions to improve nurses' work environments.

By addressing occupational stress, healthcare institutions can enhance job satisfaction, reduce turnover, and ultimately improve patient care quality. The study contributes valuable empirical evidence to nursing literature and emphasizes the importance of prioritizing nurses' well-being as a cornerstone of effective healthcare delivery.

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