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Occupational Stress and its Impact on Performance: An Empirical Study in Select Healthcare Organisations of Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary healthcare landscape, employees ranging from specialized clinicians to administrative support staff are increasingly confronted with evolving job demands that frequently manifest as significant organizational stressors. This empirical study investigates the prevalence of organizational stress and its subsequent impact on employee performance within two prominent healthcare institutions in Kashmir: Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences and Khyber Medical Institute Multi-Speciality Hospital. Recognizing that excessive stress can compromise productivity, psychological health, and emotional stability, this research aims to identify the specific predictors of workplace tension and evaluate the efficacy of existing mitigation strategies. The study utilizes a descriptive research design, incorporating a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 100 respondents, including doctors, nurses, and pharmacists. Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), employing factor analysis, KMO and Bartlett's tests for sampling adequacy, and correlation matrices to examine the relationships between various stress dimensions—such as demand, control, and role clarity—and job performance. The findings reveal a statistically significant negative correlation ($-.472$) between overall stress levels and job performance, indicating that as stressors increase, professional efficacy inversely declines. While results suggest that current performance levels remain satisfactory, significant pressure points were identified, including long working hours and limited flexibility in work locations. Furthermore, while manager support was positively correlated with performance, the study notes that workplace relationships are often strained by moderate levels of conflict and instances of deviant behaviour, such as bullying. Based on these insights, the research recommends a strategic redesign of job roles to enhance employee autonomy, the implementation of robust anti-harassment policies, and the introduction of institutional performance counselling to sustain a healthy, productive medical workforce.

Keywords: *organizational stress, employee performance, healthcare management, Kashmir, job demand, professional Eustress.*

Occupational stress:
Occupational Stress often characterized by a debilitating sense of helplessness when attempting to resolve complex tasks or meet institutional expectations. It represents a profound reaction that occurs when individuals are faced with demands that exceed their current specialized knowledge or inherent abilities.

Types of Occupational stress
This research recognizes that not all pressure is inherently negative, identifying distinct categories of Occupational stress:
Eustress: This represents a constructive form of tension that serves to prime the mind and body for future challenges, fostering enhanced creativity, energy, and competitive spirit necessary for high performance.
Distress: Conversely, this negative manifestation of Occupational strain occurs when routine operations are disrupted, significantly impacting individual well-being.
Acute Strain: A short-term, intense reaction to sudden changes in work patterns, often resulting in physiological symptoms such as hypertension, headaches, and rapid heartbeat.
Chronic Strain: The most severe form of workplace psychosocial pressure, developing over extended periods from weeks to years often as a result of persistent professional or personal setbacks.

Review of literature
Occupational stress is characterized as a suboptimal psychological reaction individuals experience when subjected to intense pressures or various institutional requirements. Extensive multidisciplinary scholarship identifies several pivotal determinants such as the physical work environment, leadership backing, and total workload that dictate the severity of professional stress and its subsequent consequences for an employee's physiological and psychological well-being. According to Anderson (2002) [3], the friction between professional duties and domestic responsibilities serves as a critical antecedent that fosters institutional pressure within an organization's workforce. Furthermore, job-related stress has been conceptualized as a dysfunctional element for both the entity and its constituent members.
Occupational Stress has also been theorized as an environmental stimulus affecting the individual.

Selye (1956) [2] defined this phenomenon as a person's response to external environmental forces that fundamentally impact their professional output. This Occupational strain can become deeply incapacitating due to the potential risks it poses to domestic stability and individual efficacy. However, Occupational stress is not exclusively detrimental; indeed, the total absence of such stimulation is equated with cessation of life. Selye (1976) [22] described it as the bodies generalized reaction to any demand, whether constructive or adverse. He further noted that the medical sector represents one of the highest-pressure professional domains, emphasizing the vital importance of monitoring Occupational strain levels, as clinical performance typically falters under high-tension circumstances. In the modern era, high-tier productivity is a prerequisite for organizational longevity, making the management of Occupational stress a primary priority for institutional leadership.

Occupational stress can lead to a significant discrepancy between the requirements of a household and a family's capacity to maintain financial stability. While a substantial volume of research explores the intersection of professional and domestic spheres, there is a relatively limited body of work, such as Jacobson (1987), focusing on perceived employment instability—specifically the anxiety surrounding job loss—and its effect on marital and familial harmony. Professional efficacy involves the discernible actions individuals perform within their roles that align with the organization's overarching objectives. This output is of paramount interest to institutions because of the critical need for robust productivity. Murphy (1989) [20] argues that performance benchmarks should emphasize specific behaviours rather than just final results; focusing solely on outcomes might encourage employees to take shortcuts, which ultimately harms the organization as other essential duties are neglected. Jamal (1984) [15] utilized correlation research to demonstrate that elevated Occupational strain among nursing staff is linked to diminished job efficacy.

Interestingly, Anderson (1976) [2] discovered that perceived Occupational stress maintains an "Inverted U-shaped" relationship with performance among business owners. This suggests that individuals experiencing a moderate degree of professional pressure actually outperform those with either very low or extremely high levels of strain. This "Inverted U" dynamic has also been substantiated in various laboratory investigations of the pressure-performance nexus. The current global environment is characterized by rapid shifts that heighten the demand for maximum workforce output and competitive advantage. Achieving higher performance levels requires employees to manage multifaceted tasks while remaining current with emerging technologies. The cumulative effect of this environment is a primary driver of Occupational stress in the modern workplace. Research from the UK indicates that many employees are dissatisfied with contemporary work cultures that necessitate excessive hours and heavy workloads to meet strict targets.

Role ambiguity is another significant contributor to Occupational Stress. According to [6;12[15-19], this ambiguity arises when an employee lacks specific details regarding their role's requirements, how to fulfil them, or the criteria used for evaluation. Studies by [14] and [16] have found that role ambiguity results in adverse psychological states, including diminished self-assurance, helplessness, anxiety, and depression. The management style within an institution is a fundamental factor influencing Occupational stress among the staff.

Personnel may experience institutional pressure through role stress imposed by leadership and [16-17] define role stress as any organizational function that generates negative consequences for the individual. This is closely tied to how individuals interpret the expectations others have of them, encompassing both role ambiguity and role conflict. Existing research highlights an urgent need to further investigate the correlation between Occupational stress and its impact on performance of employees in healthcare organizations of Kashmir, as this region remains under-researched. The current infrastructure in this sector is often insufficient for supporting staff, especially those in junior-level positions. These employees encounter a variety of systemic hurdles; consequently, this study has been launched to gain a comprehensive understanding of Occupational stress and its impact on job performance in this context.

Scope of the study

The primary purpose of this study is to assess the level of stress faced by the employees of Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences and Khyber Medical Institute Multi-Speciality Hospital. The study would recommend what should be done to improve the level of performance of employees at workplace by decreasing the effect of various factors that lead to stress.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are as under:

1. To examine the stress as well as the performance level of the employees working in healthcare organisations.
2. To examine the relationship between the job stress and the performance of the employees.
3. To suggest various measures to overcome stress for improving the performance level of employees.

Research Design

The Study is descriptive in nature. The study includes survey conducted through a questionnaire. The study was carried out among employees of Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences and Khyber Medical Institute Multi-Speciality Hospital. The study extends to the employees comprising of Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists and junior level employees.

Data Source

Two types of data were used:

Primary data: This study involves collection of primary data from the employees of Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences and Khyber Medical Institute Multi-Speciality Hospital. The Survey method was used considering the size of the organization as well as the time factor. The data was collected through structured questionnaire.

Secondary data: The data was collected through various records, journals, research papers, library, internet and books.

Sample Size

A questionnaire was administered to all the targeted employees comprising the sample for the study. Out of the total strength of employees 150 employees were selected from both the organizations understudy on random basis. The researcher tried to seek responses from all the 150 employees each from both the organizations, however, some employees expressed their inability to respond as they were awfully busy with their work. However the researcher was successful to collect the data from 100 respondent's i.e., 50 from each organization.

The samples taken for the research was on Systematic/Interval sampling basis to reduce the element of bias in a research. A 5 point scale was used to measure the stress and performance level of the employees of Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences and Khyber Medical Institute Multi-Speciality Hospital.

ools of Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) programming was utilized for dissecting the information. The first section comprises of Factor Analysis which includes KMO and Bartlett's test and Rotated Component Matrix which gives the description of sampling adequacy and various cross loading items to be taken into account in order to formulate constructs to measure performance and stress. The correlation among the various dimensions was calculated to study the various factors that are highly correlated and those factors which are moderately correlated. The correlation matrix also presented the dominating and highly correlated and negative correlations as well.

Limitations

1. The time for this study was limited
2. Respondents were limited in terms of size and composition and might not represent the majority.
3. Possibility of biased response
4. Data collection is restricted to Sher-I-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences and Khyber Medical Institute Multi-Speciality Hospital only, which may fail to represent the actual scenario.
5. Due to confidentiality issues, the management of aforementioned organizations may have held back vital data and would not have provided exhaustive information

Results and Discussions

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.672
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1029.920
	Df	378
	Sig.	.000

As is clear from above table1 that KMO is much higher than acceptable level of 0.5, this indicates the sample adequacy for performing the exploratory factor analysis.KMO value above the acceptable level indicates that the sample available for EFA is adequate .The approximate Chi Square is 1826.96 with 741 degrees of freedom which is significant at the .000 level ($p<0.05$). Therefore the exploratory factor analysis may be considered as an appropriate technique for analyzing and formulating of the constructs/ factors under which the individual items of the stress scale and performance scale measuring the same phenomena can be clubbed together.

Table 2: Correlation between dimensions of Stress and Job Performance

		Quality of work	Use of Resources	Skills And Capabilities	Self reliance	JOB PERFORMANCE
DEMAND	Pearson Correlation	-.408**	-.400**	-.249*	-.276**	-.464**
	N	100	100	100	100	100
CONTROL	Pearson Correlation	-.141	-.062	-.280**	-.063	-.160
	N	100	100	100	100	100
MANAGERS_ SUPPORT	Pearson Correlation	.217*	.196	.045	.181	.233*
	N	100	100	100	100	100
PEER_SUPPORT	Pearson Correlation	.046	.005	-.116	.060	.018
	N	100	100	100	100	100
RELATIONSHIP	Pearson Correlation	-.224*	-.158	-.127	-.287**	-.258**
	N	100	100	100	100	100
ROLE	Pearson Correlation	-.075	-.030	-.137	.034	-.068
	N	100	100	100	100	100
STRESS	Pearson Correlation	-.146	-.107	-.229*	-.072	-.472
	N	100	100	100	100	100

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

From the above observations, we conclude that:

1. There exists a strong negative correlation between Employee demands (workload, pace of work, working hours) hence more employee demands, poor will be the employee performance.

2. There exists a slight negative correlation between Control (levels of autonomy over working methods, as well as pacing and timing etc) hence more employee demands, poor will be the employee performance.

3. There exists a positive correlation between managers support (reflects supportive behaviours from line managers and the organization itself, such as availability of feedback and encouragement) and employee performance, hence more managers support, better will be the employee performance.

4. There exists a slight positive correlation between peer support (encompasses the degree of help and respect received from colleagues) and employee performance, hence peer support has negligible impact on the employee performance.

5. There exists a negative correlation between Relationship (workload, pace of work, working hours) hence more Relationship, poor will be the employee performance.

6. There exists a slight negative correlation between Role (examines levels of role clarity and the extent to which employees believe that their work fits into the overall aims of the organization) and employee performance, hence Role has negligible impact on the employee performance.

As can be observed from the table 2, there exists strong correlation (-.472) between stress and job performance of the employees. The negative correlation indicates an inverse relationship between the two variables. Greater the stress on employees, lower will be the job performance.

Conclusions

In light of the results of the study it can be concluded the employees are subjected to long working hours, which results in stress of the employees. Further the employees feel less flexibility in work location.

Also employees experience a moderate level of autonomy over working methods and the same results in increase in stress of the employees. With regard to supervisors support that reflects supportive behaviours from line manager's and the organisation itself, such as availability of feedback and encouragement, the employees of the organisation under study receive encouragement from their superiors. On the other hand the level of relationships, levels of conflict within the workplace including bullying behaviour and harassment are moderate. The results indicate that the relationships between employees and managers are somewhat strained and Skills and capabilities and quality of work show that performance is just below average. The average mean score of Self-Reliance indicates that the performance is just below average. Overall job performance scale indicates a moderate level of job performance. On the dimension of Use of Resources, it is clear that the performance is just below average. The analysis also indicates a negative correlation between Use of resources and Demand, Control, Relationship, Role and overall stress. It can be inferred from the results of the study, that the employees believe that their work fits into the overall aims of the organisation. The employees have high role clarity and believe that their work is significant for the organisation. There exists a strong correlation between stress and job performance of the employees. The negative correlation indicates an inverse relationship between the two variables. Greater the stress on employees, lower will be the job performance.

Recommendations

The working hours of the employees have a strong negative correlation with stress, therefore, the working hours should be reduced and employees should be given frequent breaks from work In accordance with the findings of the study, the jobs should be re-designed in ways that promote greater autonomy as this will lead to lower levels of stress. Since bullying and harassment at the workplace is present, it is suggested that the organization frame policies which deter and punish such deviant workplace behaviour. Quality of workplace should be improved. Facilities like canteen, recreational facilities, comfortable work environment, etc. must be enhanced. In consonance with the findings of the study, performance management and counselling should be initiated.

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