

Research Article

Job Stress in Administrative Employees of Public Medical Institutes in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract: Background: Job stress arises when job demands exceed an individual's coping capacity, leading to physical and psychological strain. Factors include excessive workload, tight deadlines, and lack of support.

Objective: To measure the job-related stress in the administrative employees in public medical institutes of Punjab.

Materials and Methods: This descriptive cross-sectional study took place at three public medical institutes in Punjab from Nov 2022 to July 2023, after the approval of the ethical review board. The data was collected through an interview-administered questionnaire. A well-structured questionnaire was devised using the Likert scale to collect the required data, with a score of 1 denoting no stress and 5 denoting extreme stress. A sample of 150 subjects was taken by purposive sampling technique. The collected data was entered and analyzed on SPSS software version 20.

Result: The mean age was 31.03±8.90. The overall mean job stress score reported in the present study was 3.35±0.59. The mean stress score regarding the nature of the task was 3.56±0.68, for the boss behavior was 3.30±0.36; regarding the organizational environment, it was 3.10±0.67; and for job-related tension, the mean stress score was 3.69±0.68, indicating that the participants were experiencing moderately to higher stress levels. Factors like workload, irritating noisy environment, lack of appreciation, and critical boss significantly contributed to higher stress levels.

Conclusion: The study indicated that most employees had moderate to high levels of job stress during work owing to several factors such as working overtime, unfamiliar duty, excessive criticism, heavy workload, and lack of authority.

Keywords: Job stress, Likert scale, Working overtime, Heavy workload, Boss behavior, Organizational environment.

INTRODUCTION

Over time, stress has become a common phenomenon of our routine life and a necessary consequence of how society has changed due to the impact of science and technology, globalization of the economy, industrial growth, urbanization, modernization, growing diversity in the workplace, and increased mental workload [1, 2].

Continuous job stress in an organization result in problems during organizational operations like proper decision-making, low productivity, decreased creativity, lost motivation, increased turnover, and higher vandalism [3]. In Pakistan, employees experience stress because of high workload, long working hours, technological problems, insufficient salary, inadequate time for family, and worrying about a job at home [4, 5].

The effects of job-related stress physiologically, cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally among the staff, inflexible working hours, work burden, risky jobs, and poor colleague relations are the main factors of job stress that create frustration among the employees [5]. Many causes give rise to stress in employees, and these causes are job timings, lower pay allowance, lack of bonuses, workload, and attitude of the department head [6]. High workload, technical problems, salaries and compensation, decision outcomes, peer support behavior, management, and extended duty hours are the major reasons for occupational stress [7].

A study in Pakistan, identified that recruitment and selection, training and development, salary, and job clarity significantly influence employee performance. However, the complaint resolution method did not show a significant impact [8]. Factors such as pay, promotion, job safety and security, working conditions, job autonomy, and relationships with coworkers, and supervisors significantly affect job satisfaction and performance among administrative staff in autonomous medical institutions [9].

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A study found that house officers, postgraduate trainees, and other medical staff in tertiary care hospitals face significant stress due to factors like justice/fairness, tasks and roles, and management issues. Public hospital employees in Pakistan reported higher stress levels compared to those in private hospital [10].

The study is vital for all managerial employees and supporting staff who are valuable assets to an organization. The employees of organizations are no doubt the backbone of an economy. An increase in satisfaction and productivity of education sector employees is the core of economic stability, among other factors. This study will help us to measure job stress and resolve most job-related stress problems and may also help in improving levels of productivity, reducing stress, and increasing job satisfaction and loyalty of the workers.

The objectives of this study were to measure the job stress in the administrative employees of a public medical college in Lahore, Pakistan, and to determine the causes and assess the effects of job stress at the institute.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current study has a descriptive cross-sectional study design and was conducted in three public medical colleges of Lahore for six months after the approval of IRB from November 2022 to July 2023 (IRB No. UCD/ERCA/22/12i). The sample size was estimated to be 150 using 90% power of the study and a 5% level of significance with an expected prevalence of 0.89 [11]. A convenience sampling technique was utilized to include all the administrative staff categories.

The inclusion criteria were administrative employees of public medical institutes including hospital administrators, technicians, human resources professionals, and finance officers/managers. The exclusion criteria were non-administrative employees and those who refused to give the consent.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data was collected using an interview-administered questionnaire. A well-designed and structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was used to gather the data. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section dealt with demographics, and the second section had items targeting job stress and was further subdivided into three sub-sections having questions about the nature of tasks, boss behavior, organizational environment, and job-related tension. The respondents willing to participate in the study were interviewed after obtaining their written consent. After the interview, the response forms were checked for completion and were fed to the Excel sheets and later to the SPSS software on a computer. The mean scores for each sub-section were calculated with a score of 1, denoting no stress, and 5, representing extreme stress. In the analysis, frequency distribution and percentages were calculated and interpreted.

RESULT

A total of 150 participants responded. The mean age was 31.03±8.90. The demographical data of the participants is expressed in Table 1. The overall mean job stress score reported in the present study was 3.35±0.59, indicating that the majority of the respondents were moderately stressed regarding their jobs.

A mean stress score of 3.56±0.68 was reported regarding the nature of the task, indicating that the participants were moderately stressed regarding the nature of the task, with a higher stress score when asked to work overtime or when tasked with unfamiliar duty (Table 2).

The mean stress score for the boss’s behavior was 3.30±0.36, showing that the participants were moderately stressed by the behavior of their boss and showed higher stress when the boss is critical or makes frequent interruptions during a task (Table 3).

The mean stress score regarding the organizational environment was 3.10±0.67, with a higher stress score when the work environment was noisy or when coworkers were unpleasant and uncooperative (Table 4).

A mean stress score of 3.69±0.68 for job-related tension was reported, indicating that respondents were moderately stressed regarding their jobs, especially when there was a lack of authority and a heavy workload (Table 5).

Table 1. Demographic Details of the Respondents.

Variables	Category	Number of Respondents (n=150)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	73	48.6
	Female	77	51.3
Education Level	Master	60	40.0
	Graduates	90	60.0
Age	<30	120	80.0
	> 45	30	20.0
Working Experience	11-20 years	23	15.3
	1-10 years	127	84.6
Marital Status	Unmarried	443	28.6
	Married	107	71.3

Table 2. Mean Stress Scores regarding the Nature of the Task of the Respondents.

Nature of the Task	Mean	SD
Early meeting deadlines make me worry to a great extent	2.74	1.06
Excessive paperwork looks like a burden to me	2.68	1.46

Continue

Continue

Often, my task demands me to work over-time, which produces tiredness.	4.14	1.16
Dealing with crises creates high-level stress for me	3.22	1.79
Often, the duties that are disagreed upon by others are assigned to me, which is horrible.	3.88	1.59
Due to the excessive leaves of other co-employees, I have to work extra hours, which is a big stressor for me.	3.88	1.43
Off and on, I have been assigned to an unfamiliar duty, which is very uncomfortable and full of stress.	4.40	1.16
Overall Mean Score regarding the Nature of the task	3.56	0.68

Table 3. Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for Boss Behavior of the Respondents.

Boss Behavior	Mean	SD
My boss is very critical of assigned duties.	3.76	0.18
Indicate support by the supervisor creates stress.	2.86	0.18
My boss never recognizes/appreciates the work, which does not motivate me.	3.38	0.21
I feel nervous and lack confidence due to frequent interruptions by my supervisor.	3.66	0.19
Irritation is produced due to the humiliations made by my boss on petty matters.	3.04	0.16
In conflict, the lack of support from the supervisor makes me depressed.	3.14	0.17
Overall Mean Score Regarding the Boss's Behavior	3.30	0.36

Table 4. Mean Scores for the Organizational Environment of the Respondents.

Organizational Environment	Mean	SD
The noisy work area makes me irritable.	4.22	0.41
Unpleasant co-employees' attitudes create frustration.	3.56	1.14
When I see the poor motivation of other coworkers, I think to withdraw from my responsibility.	2.42	1.10
An unfriendly attitude of co-employees makes me less enthusiastic about my job.	2.98	1.51
I feel emotionally depleted and ill due to the job environment	3.40	1.30
I feel a sensation of dissatisfaction while working.	2.82	1.36

I feel difficulty concentrating on my job due to the physical environment of the working area.	2.32	1.44
Overall Mean of the Organizational Environment	3.10	0.67

Table 5. Mean Stress Score for Job-Related Tension of the Respondents.

Job-Related Tension	Mean	SD
Uncertain about supervisor's remarks and evaluation of performance.	2.54	1.48
A feeling of heavy workload.	4.12	0.87
Feeling that amount of work may hinder work productivity.	3.72	1.26
Sense of lack of authority for carrying out tasks assigned.	4.66	0.79
Having to make decisions that may affect the lives of other individuals.	2.98	1.39
Helplessness over not being able to satisfy the conflicting demands of many individuals over you.	3.24	1.54
Feeling you have to work in such a way that is against your best judgment.	3.88	1.15
Feeling that you are unable to get sufficient information for carrying out a job.	3.50	1.07
Feeling that your occupation hinders social relationships.	3.66	1.17
Unclear about tasks and responsibilities of the job.	3.16	1.16
Feeling that you cannot influence the supervisor's decisions and actions that may affect you.	3.58	0.94
Uninformed about chances of promotion or endorsement.	3.58	0.90
Don't know what people that you work with have expectations of you.	2.86	1.12
Feeling that you are not fully entitled to undertake your job.	2.76	1.18
Feeling that you may not be liked and accepted by the people you work with.	2.68	1.23
Overall Mean of the Job-Related Tension	3.69	0.58

DISCUSSION

Stress in workplaces, especially medical institutions, has received significant attention due to its implications on employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational outcomes. In Punjab, a populous region of Pakistan, understanding stress levels among medical professionals is crucial, given the region's healthcare challenges [12, 13].

According to an estimate from the UK, around 0.4 million people describe having work-related anxiety and stress, which results in illness, and about 10 million working days are lost as a result [14]. The same study showed public sector workplaces to be more notorious for job-related stress. These are stats from a developed country, while in developing countries like Pakistan, where fixed duty hours, timely income, work safety, job security, and insurance are lacking, one can imagine the percentages to be on the higher side [15, 16].

In developing countries like Pakistan, where defined duty hours, timely pay, work safety, job security, and insurance are lacking, stress may be greater [17]. In the current study, most participants were moderately stressed regarding their jobs in public medical institutes. Moreover, the authors observed reluctance to give honest answers to the questions mentioned in the questionnaire, maybe due to personal or professional constraints.

Study in Bangladesh reported that increased patient load in public medical institutes' results in increased work hours and decreased personal time, leading to stress [17]. A study found that bureaucracy, lack of decision-making autonomy, and limited resources in public institutions contributed to job stress [18]. One study showed lack of praise, reward, and adequate salary is a stressor in the workplace, leading to the preoccupation of the mind of the worker and constantly seeking a second job to make good savings [19]. A study linked job stress to burnout syndrome, characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal accomplishment [20]. Another study argued that high stress among healthcare professionals can lead to reduced patient satisfaction and compromised care quality [21]. Prolonged stress has been linked with physical health issues, including hypertension and sleep disturbances [22]. In the current study, the most common stress-contributing factors that showed higher stress scores were working overtime, when the boss does not recognize or appreciate, noisy, irritable environment, higher workload, and lack of authority.

In the past, work-related stress and health concerns were non-existent, and employers exhibited minimal regard for their employees' rights. However, circumstances are beginning to improve with the enactment of legislation safeguarding the health and safety of workers and the growing awareness of these matters [12, 14, 23]. In the present study, participants were more stressed regarding job-related tensions, with a stress score between moderate to higher stress levels indicating an urgent need to manage these issues to improve their employees' well-being and the quality of care provided to patients.

Moderate to high-stress levels in the current study, an alarming issue, require immediate attention and, if ignored, may lead to emotional disturbances, ultimately leading to physical implications [24, 25]. One of the limitations of the study is that stress is a subjective experience; therefore, relying on self-reported measures might lead to biases, as employees might underreport or exaggerate their stress levels due to social desirability or other preferences. The study is limited to public medical institutes

in Punjab, and thus, the findings might not be generalizable to employees in other regions, countries, or non-medical sectors.

CONCLUSION

Job stress among employees in public medical institutes in Punjab is alarmingly high. The stress scores were in the range of moderate to higher stress levels. Factors like workload, irritating noisy environment, lack of appreciation, and critical boss significantly contribute to this phenomenon. Public medical institutions must invest in stress reduction programs, provide adequate resources, and ensure a conducive and productive work environment.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

- **Ahmad Rashid:** Conception and design, Article drafting, Data interpretation, Statistical analysis.
- **Muhammad Maaz Arif:** Data collection, Article drafting, Data interpretation.
- **Nauman Mazhar:** Article drafting, Critical revision.
- **Hammad Hassan:** Data collection, Article drafting, Statistical analysis.
- **Saira Khalid:** Data interpretation, Data collection, Article drafting.
- **Noreen Maqbool Bukhari:** Critical revision, Data collection, Article drafting.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Declared none.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Declared none.

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