

## Association of Working Experience and Salary with Occupational Stress among Nurses

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To determine the association of working experience and salary with occupational stress among nurses at tertiary care public sector hospitals in Karachi.

**Methods:** This analytical cross sectional study was carried out at Civil Hospital and Dow University Hospital, Karachi from January 2015 to November 2015. Study participants were 265 registered nurses. Convenience sampling method was used to access the subjects for data collection. Data were gathered through pretested and semi structured occupational stress questionnaire. Chi-square test was used to determine the association of salary and working experience with occupational stress.

**Results:** Nearly half participants with 6-10 years of experience had severe stress. Working experience (p value < 0.001) and salary (p value 0.011) has significant association with occupational stress. Furthermore, 47.5% nurses with income 25,000-34,000 PKR had severe stress.

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that salary and working experience has impact with occupational stress among nurses.

**Key words:** Nurses, Occupational stress, Working experience, Salary.

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### INTRODUCTION

The human life in modern time has been overwhelmed with stress that disturbs the harmony of life. Extreme and constant exposure to stress may interrupt the mental and physical health.<sup>1</sup>

Unmanaged stress leads to high level of employee dissatisfaction, illness, absenteeism, high turnover and decreased productivity that compromise provision of quality service to patient.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, work-related stress reactions also contribute to incomplete and delay in nursing care<sup>3</sup> which can lead to impaired patient safety.<sup>4</sup> Nursing, by virtue of its nature, is a profession subjected to a high degree of stress.<sup>5</sup>

Occupational stress exists in all professions, but the nursing profession appears to experience more stress at work compared to other health-care workers.<sup>6, 7</sup> Motivation in governmental and non-governmental organizations is vital and needed because it could change and improve the performance of workers in an affirmative manner.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, a recent research revealed that low salary is responsible for causing job related stress among nurses.<sup>9</sup> It is evident by another recent research that sound salary has a stronger effect on overall retention than personal growth.<sup>10</sup>

More experienced nurses provide higher-quality care and lower medication errors.<sup>11</sup> Newly appointed nurses required higher cognitive skills that are necessary competencies for the nurses joining the technologically and increasingly complex health care environment to provide safe and effective nursing care. Critical creative thinking and clinical judgment are core skills for every health professional.<sup>12</sup> However, new qualified nurses lack the clinical judgment skills.<sup>13</sup> Newly joined nurses face lack of supervisor support, lack of interpersonal skills, lack of confidence, lack of social support from peers, and psychological distress in the first year of practice.<sup>14</sup>

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The main objective of this study was to determine the association of working experience and salary with occupational stress among nurses at tertiary care hospitals in Pakistan.

## METHODS

This hospital based analytical cross-sectional study was accomplished at Dow University Hospital and Civil Hospital Karachi from January to November 2015. Registered nurses of both genders having valid Pakistan Nursing Council license and one year clinical working experience were included for the study. Information was collected through pretested and semi structured occupational stress questionnaire by using convenience sampling method.

Calculated sample size was 265 of male and female nurses. It was calculated by Open Epi version 3.0 by considering 87% of prevalence of occupational stress<sup>15</sup> with 95% confidence interval and 5% level of significance.

The study protocol was approved by Institutional Review Board of Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi. Furthermore, written permission was obtained by Medical Superintendents of both tertiary care public sector hospitals for data collection. The purpose of the study was explained to all the subjects. The written informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. Subjects participated voluntarily.

Data were collected by using semi-structured and pre-tested occupational stress questionnaire. Pilot testing of questionnaire was carried out on 5% of total sample size. The questionnaire composed of 11 items that included questions on occupational stress and socio-demographic characteristics. All the data analysis was accomplished through SPSS version 21.0. Categorical variables including designation, job load, shift duty and nature of job were presented in percentages and frequencies, and continuous variables including age, distance from work place, salary and work experience were reported in Mean  $\pm$  SD. Chi-square test was used for comparison of the difference between working experience and salary with the outcome variable (occupational stress level). Results were determined statistically significant at p-value < 0.05.

All procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional and national) and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2008.

## RESULTS

Out of the total 265 nurses who participated in the study, majority of nurses (47.2%) were between 25 to 30 years of age group. Majority of study participants (60.4%) were females. As far as marital status concerned, approximately 148 (55.8%) subjects were married. With respect to 265, majority of nurses (75.8%) held nursing diploma.

Table 1 reveals the job characteristics of study participants. Out of the total 265 nurses, 26 (9.8%) were working as head nurses while 239 (90%) as staff nurse. 168 (63.4%) nurses were providing their services in morning shift and 32 (12.1%) were doing double job. Majority (82.3%) worked on regular basis. Out of total, most of the nurses (41.5%) lived 10 to 20 km far from their workplace. The majority (41.1%) nurses had worked from 1 to 5 years at the time of study. Approximately one third (32.5%) nurses had earned above 44,000 PKR.

Table 1: Job characteristics of study participants

Characteristics	n	(%)
<b>Designation</b>		
Staff nurse	239	90.2
Head nurse	26	9.8
<b>Shifts</b>		
Morning	168	63.4
Evening	71	26.8
Night	26	9.8
<b>Job load</b>		
Job only	174	65.7
Double job	32	12.1
Job with study	59	22.3
<b>Nature of job</b>		
Regular	218	82.3
Contract	47	17.7
<b>Distance from workplace (Km)</b>		
Up to 10	95	35.8
11-20	110	41.5
21-30	44	16.6
More than 31	16	6.0
<b>Work experience (year)</b>		
1 – 5	109	41.1
6 – 10	66	24.9
11 – 15	30	11.3
16 – 20	24	9.1
> 20	36	13.6
<b>Income (PKR)</b>		
14,000 – 24,000	44	16.6
25,000 – 34,000	59	22.3
35,000 – 44,000	76	28.7
above 44,000	86	32.5

Table 2: Association of Job Characteristics and Stress

Characteristics	Mild Stress	Moderate Stress	Severe Stress	Pearson Chi-Square	P-value
	n(%)	n(%)	n(%)		
Work Experience (year)					
1 - 5	22 (20.2)	40 (36.7)	47 (43.1)	21.585	<0.001
6 - 10	10 (15.2)	25 (37.9)	31 (47.0)		
11 - 15	8 (26.7)	16 (53.3)	6 (20.0)		
16 - 20	12 (50.0)	10 (41.7)	2 (8.3)		
> 20	15 (41.7)	14 (38.9)	7 (19.4)		
Income (PKR)					
14,000 - 24,000	10 (22.7)	16 (36.4)	18 (40.9)	11.096	0.011
25,000 - 34,000	7 (11.9)	24 (40.7)	28 (47.5)		
35,000 - 44,000	22 (28.9)	26 (34.2)	28 (36.8)		
above 44,000	28 (32.6)	39 (45.3)	19 (22.1)		

Pearson Chi-Square test p-value was calculated after combining the mild and moderate stress due to cell counts is less than 5.

Table 2 describes the association of job characteristics with stress among nurses. Study participants having 1-5 years of experience demonstrated greater stress levels, and while 47% participants with 6-10 years of experience showed severe stress. Working experience has statistically significant association with job related stress (p value <0.001). Data showed that income has statistically significant (p value > 0.011) impact on job related stress.

## DISCUSSION

The present study investigated association of working experience and salary with occupational stress among nurses at tertiary care hospitals. As it is known that nurses play pivotal role in patients care, it is very important that nurses should be present on the duty with peace of mind.

It is documented by recent researches that poor supervision, undefined job, work load, low salary, and overtime are the factors which disrupt the peace of mind of human being.<sup>16-18</sup> Furthermore, stressed nurse is unable to provide quality patient care.<sup>19</sup>

Whereas another study identified factors including work experience; the study conducted in India proved that more experienced nurses have more stress when compared to less experienced nurses.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, as in this study 47% participant with 6-10 years of experience had severe stress. This could be due to the age distribution of this study participant. In the present study 66% participants are younger.

Other factor which also contributed to stress among nurses is job satisfaction. Various mechanisms of job satisfaction have been identified in different studies such as satisfaction with pay, autonomy, institutional

promotion policy and their individual satisfaction with co-workers, and available ongoing education opportunities.<sup>21-23</sup>

In present study, it was found that staff with 25,000-34,000 salary, had severe stress. These findings also support the study in selected hospitals in England; the study reported that the most important extrinsic factor that caused job dissatisfaction among nurses was their salary.<sup>24</sup> If the salaries between private hospitals and the Government hospitals are observed; these varied considerably. Salaries even within a hospital are also not uniform. Therefore, nurses have high turnover rate in different hospitals which can lead to shortage of staff and contribute to more stress on working staff.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides comprehensive analysis on determining the factors which are related to occupational stress. The study concludes that salary and working experience are associated with occupational stress among nurses which deters patient quality care.

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