

The Effect Of Work Stress On Physicians' Performance In A Governmental Public Sector Hospital In Alexandria, Egypt

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Abstract: Stress is one of the main factors that affects most people at the workplace and it arises at different levels. Because of this, it is becoming a growing concern in many organizations with respect to the current state of the economy. Employees in different organizations face such condition as job unsatiety, job insecurity, and lack of autonomy as well as being overworked. Based on literature, there is evidence that indicates workplace stress contributing to detrimental health issues and overall wellbeing of the employees. This in turn impacts on an employee's ability to be productive and beneficial at the workplace. In as much as there are several measures that companies can take in order to alleviate the negative effects of work stress, it is important to first understand the root cause of this issue in order to come up with the right measures specific to a work environment. In the present study, we determine the various job stress variables affecting the performance of physicians at the Raas el Tin General Hospital in Alexandria, Egypt. To determine this, 31 physicians with different technical qualifications serving different departments at the hospital participated in the study. Sampling was purposive and data was collected using survey questionnaires. From the present study, the research findings indicate a strong relationship between job stress and the overall performance of the employees at the workplace. Descriptive statistics and Comparison code results revealed that work overload has a strong correlation to the performance of the employees. What was more interesting was that underutilization of skills and ambiguity in employee's roles had a lower effect on the employee performances. Drawing from the findings from the present study, it is evident that companies need to consider work overload as a factor of employee performance. The best way to address this would be for the Human Resource Department to conduct a proper inventory of the appropriate skills required for a particular job so that each physician is able to handle their jobs well. It is also important that further studies be conducted using a larger sample size, scope and variable in order to make proper inferences for a larger population.

[Mohammad Hammad. **The Effect Of Work Stress On Physicians' Performance In A Governmental Public Sector Hospital In Alexandria, Egypt.** *J Am Sci* 2019;15(5):8-12]. ISSN 1545-1003 (print); ISSN 2375-7264 (online). <http://www.jofamericanscience.org>. 2. doi:[10.7537/marsjas150519.02](https://doi.org/10.7537/marsjas150519.02).

Keywords: Job Stress, Workplace Stress, Physicians, Employee Job Performance, Role of ambiguity, Underutilization of Skills, Overload

1.0 Introduction

According to Aristotle, 'Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work'. This means that, if one enjoys what they are doing, they will put all their heart, expertise and skills into it and hence, attaining success through perfection. However, this is not true today because of the different work-place stress that faces the employees. Today, one of the most common challenge facing the workforce in any company is stress. Stress is said to be an influence on employee performance, efficiency, and effectiveness. (Healy & Tyrrell, 2011) Thus, stress is a burning issue that companies and institutions have to consider and concentrate on, in order to make the employees perform their tasks with efficiency and effectiveness (Beehr, 2014). It has been shown that stress can contribute to life imbalances that may also lead to depression and conflicts such as role conflict, ambiguity (Smith, 2011), and workload (Moustaka & Constantinidis, 2010).

Today, many organizations are striving to find ways to ensure that their businesses achieve their goals, and sustain the profitability. However, the needs and satisfactions of the employees involved in lifting the company are left out (Ajayi & Abimbola, 2013; George & Zakkariya, 2018). What most companies overlook is that when the employees are working under stressful conditions, their performance is undoubtedly affected! For most companies that already have taken the time to appreciate this fact, their growing concern is based on the fact that stress has become a serious threat not only to their workforce, but also to the success of the company as a whole. Coping with stress is becoming an integral part of organizational plans and many of them have set up programs aimed at overcome stressful situations and conditions (Jalagat, 2017).

According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety report of 2000, workplace stress is simply defined as a very harmful response to both the physical and emotional wellbeing

of an employee. Ensuring that the employees experience minimal amounts of stress at the workplace can serve as a strong motivating factor that promises to boost their work productivity (Lim *et al.*, 2010 a, b). However, exposing the employees to extreme work stress and conditions strips them of their passion and zeal to deliver, hence lowering their levels of commitments, motivation and overall productivity. The PE fit theory shares a two basic premise that stress comes from the inability of a person to fit well within their work environment, and the perception that work environments is the main straining factor. The main difference between the two frameworks is the fact that occupational stress is a total process that includes the surrounding source of it and the individual as a source.

Alternatively, the demand control support model claims that the role of workload on workplace stresses (Leszczyńska & Jeżewska, 2010). The workload in this case is often classified into two main categories; the job control and the job demand. In this case, the job control refers to the perception of the employee on the degree of control they have on performing their job. On the hand, job demand refers to the perception of the employee on the task at hand. These two main constructs are thought to interact with one another in determining the amount of stress the employee's experience. This means that the strongest level of strain is expected to cause the greatest level of stress under conditions of high job demands and low level of job control. According to recent studies, there is evidence that shows an introduction of a third component of social support into the model. It is through social support that strain is thought to be buffered to a certain extent though not eliminated completely (Burton *et al.*, 2012).

Our present study aims at seeking clarification on what the effects of stress are on physicians. It also set out to evaluate the performance of the physicians particularly those under pressures brought about by their job, identify the causes and factors of job stress, with the aim of identifying ways to address and prevent the stress from occurring. The significance of this study is to understand whether stress decreases the ability of physicians in the workplace primarily focusing on the causes of stress in the organization and various ways in which employees at the hospital can be motivated (Limm *et al.*, 2011).

2.0 Materials and Methods

Primary & Secondary data were used in this study. Quantitative Methodology using surveys (electronic questionnaires) was preferred based on the fact that they easily accessible anytime anywhere for the physicians to respond to their digital devices. Descriptive statistics and Comparison code were the

main statistical technique used in the analysis of data collected from 31 physicians in a governmental public sector hospital in Alexandria. On the other hand, the secondary data was collected by investigating peer reviewed papers published recently at international scientific journals & other authorized sources to gain useful.

Information relating to the study.

2.1 Research Design

The study used descriptive research design to determine the (Relationship between Jobs.

Stress and Employees Performance) in Raas El Tin General Hospital in Alexandria, Egypt.

The descriptive design is a purposive process of gathering, analyzing and tabulating data.

Prevailing conditions, practices, beliefs, processes, trends and cause & effect.

Relationship, and making adequate and accurate interpretation about such data.

With the aid of some simple percentile and statistical approaches. Primarily, it utilizes the Quantitative method employing the survey questionnaires.

The survey questionnaire structure was categorized into two sections; Part A and Part B (Supplementary Table 1). Part A aimed at collecting demographic data of the respondents such as; age, gender, technical qualifications, marital status, the nature of job contract, and their monthly income. Part B of the survey questionnaire aimed at gathering opinions of physicians concerning their work environment, social & work interactions, relationship with management, reasons for stress, problems. The questions on this section were in a dichotomous key with a Yes/No answer or a MCQ giving the respondents opinion ranking the answer from the highest impact to the least.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted at the Raas El Tin General Hospital which is one of the well-known hospitals in conveying trust, responsibility, and responsiveness toward patients. The hospital is authorized by the government and is located in Alexandria, Egypt. It offers many distinctive patient care services that few hospitals within the region provide. Such services are linked to various departments that include; CT unit, Thyroid gland laboratory for children, Pathological laboratory, and a burns unit of 19 free beds plus 2 pay beds with operating room and intensive care unit, an effortless cardiogram unit and a department for treatment of swine flu.

The hospital has very talented staff to handle the patients' medical cases. However, it is important to note that there is a chance of mistakes occurring during the work schedule. This is one of the reasons

why it is necessary to provide them a flexible working environment for high level of efficiency and performance.

2.3 Research Population & Sample

This study mainly utilized the purposive sampling method to sample about 31 physicians at the hospital. The 31 respondents were from different departments with different specializations and different work schedules among other factors. The reason why physician were chosen for the study was because of their nature of work characterized by many stressors when dealing with patients, medical staff, governmental hospital’s managerial style, infection control, overload tasks, and confusion of roles among others.

3.0 Results

Based on the physicians’ demographics, it was interesting to note that there was a balance in gender despite the fact that men were the majority. Additionally, 32% of the physician population at the Raas El Tin General Hospital were between 50-55 with the least being 41-49 years and 26-29 years old with a 13% representation. On the other hand, 74% of the physicians were on a permanent contract and 33% served as consultants with only 19 % serving as specialists. Since most of the physicians were consultants and only 19% are specialists, there is a possible reason that most of the workload falls on the shoulders of the specialists contributing to work stress and poor performances. A balance has to be determined so that the department with the most workload has the right number of competent and skilled specialists to take care of the patients’ diagnosis and treatments.



Figure 1: Demographic data of the respondents include; age, gender, highest level of technical qualifications, and the nature of job contract, and their monthly income (*Supplementary Table 1*)

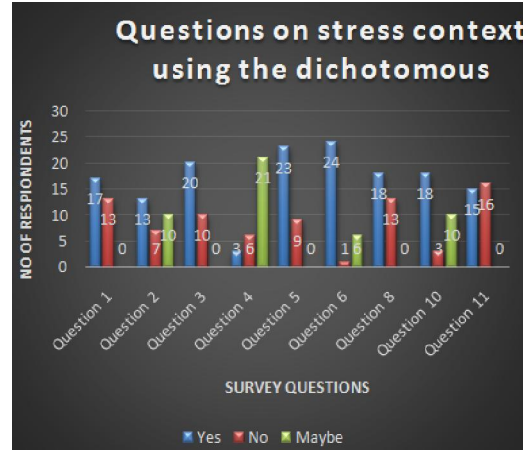


Figure 2: Part B survey questions on the opinions of physicians concerning their work environment, social & work interactions, relationship with management, reasons for stress using a dichotomous key with a Yes/No or Maybe response (*Refer to Supplementary Table 1 for each question on stress context*)

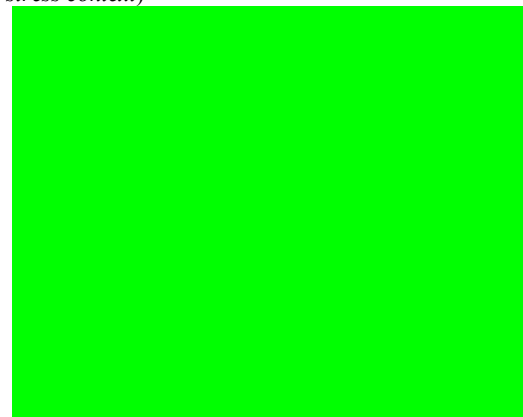


Figure 3: Part B survey questions on the ways in which physicians relate with their co-workers, the problems they face during patient examination as well as best stress relief and prevention methods (*Supplementary Table 1*)



Figure 4: Questions 14 and 15 of the survey questionnaire on the factors affecting the performance of employees at the workplace based on ranks from the one with the highest impact to the lowest impact and the problems that doctors generally face at the hospital, respectively.

4.0 Discussion

The main aim of the present study was to determine the effect of work stress on the performance of physicians at the Raas El Tin General Hospital in Alexandria, Egypt. The main focus was on the work context based on the general demographics of the 31 research respondents used in the study. The male and the female genders were balanced despite the males being 52% of the study population. However, it is important that further studies be conducted to determine whether work stress may have a role in threatening the gender diversity in the hospital setting as reported Sunindijo & Kamardeen (2017) in the construction industry.

Based on the research findings, it is clear that more than 50% of the physicians are happy and satisfied with their job and can balance well between their work and their families. This set of respondents show that they can handle their stresses well and do not require any external powers to help them cope with the stresses at their workplaces. Additionally, this set of respondents feel that they are well appreciated at their places of work and this motivates them to strive towards adding value to their jobs.

However, what was interesting was the fact that the other half of the sample size feel that they cannot cope well with work stress and may need both internal and external forces to help them deal with stress issues. The opinions given by the physicians during the study is congruent with the stress perversion method. The results indicate that work overload is one of the major internal sources of work stress and it affects the physician's performances by 45%. On the hand, ambiguity of roles and underutilization of skills affects physician performances by 39% and 42% respectively. It is quite alarming to note that the roles of physicians in the hospital are either ambiguous or their skills are underutilized. This means that, the physicians are charged with performing duties and responsibilities outside their competence. This may in turn cause them to lack confidence in their abilities and hence generating a form of stress that affects their performances. The underutilization of skills could explain that the physician responsibilities are not well factored in during the hiring process and they end up not performing well because their competences are not appropriately used to determine where best they can fit at the workplace (Swaminathan & Rajkumar, 2013; Wani, 2013). All these factors seem to have a synergistic relationship that all work against the performances of the physicians.

Just like Vagg *et al.*, (2002) the workers at lower levels experienced less stress compared to those at higher ranks in the hospital. This could be attributed to them charged with the responsibility of making tough decisions critical to patient care and dealing

with crisis. The findings demonstrate that all physicians suffer different kinds of stressors that could either be within the hospital environment or outside due to personal issues. These stressors have the ability of either motivating the employee or demoralizing them, either way affecting their performances either positively or negatively.

5.0 Recommendations

The Human Resource department at the Raas El Tin General Hospital should consider carrying out a proper inventory of the skills their physicians have and using that to allocate them duties that best complements their competence ((Hsieh & Wang, 2012). It is clear that their skills are being underutilized and it shows a gap that the top management can tap into to not only bring out the potential of its workforce but also improve the overall performance of the hospital in carrying out its mandate. Additionally, it is important that the human resource management work together with the hospital's top management to ensure that the employees are well appreciated and those that deserve promotions be promoted to boost their morale. Continuous medical education and mentorship are some of the ways in which the senior physicians can use to nurture the skills of upcoming generations and knowledge, skills and competence transfer at the workplace. This ensures that when the time comes for the senior workforce to retire, the junior staff are able to assume their responsibilities and perform equally as good or better.

On the other hand, it is important that each physician is assigned duties that they can reasonably manage within a typical work schedule. This ensures that they are not only flexible at work, but they get to put all their effort, skills and expertise on what they do best to minimize stress. Employees should also have day offs or work in shifts to give them time to unwind and come back to work fresh and energized, reducing stress while boosting overall performance (Hartfiel *et al.*, 2011, Wolever, 2012). Despite the fact that there was a limitation in the number of respondents, a constraint in the scope of study and variables investigated, it is recommended that larger study samples be used in future studies and the area of coverage expanded to widen scope in order to draw more concrete conclusions that is representative of a larger population.

Appendix Additional Information

Supplementary Table 1

SV	Question	Items	Factors
1	Gender		
2	Age		
3	Highest level of technical qualifications		
4	Monthly income category		
5	Years of job contract		Part A: Personal data
Question1	Are you satisfied with your current job?		
Question2	What can you say about your working environment and conditions?		
Question3	Do you enjoy what you do at your job?		
Question4	Does your job stress your family?		
Question5	Does your positively influence your job?		
Question6	Do you think you can handle job stress without the help of an outside line?		
Question7	What is the best stress management that you have ever working in your organization?		
Question8	Do you consider training a source of stress?		
Question9	How is your relationship with your co-workers?		
Question10	Do you think your role is appreciated in your organization?		
Question11	Do you have any health problems related to the pressure or stress at work?		
Question12	Which is the best stress prevention method that you would recommend?		
Question13	What are the problems faced by doctors while examining or dealing with the patient that lead to		
Question14	What are the problems faced by doctors "generally" in the hospital?		
Question15	Rank the factors affecting the performance of employees at the workplace according to the		
	importance of their performance starting from the one with the highest impact to the least		Part B: Stress content

Acknowledgements:

The authors express their gratitude to the Human Resource department at the Raas El Tin General Hospital for helping facilitate the conducting of research in their institution and their participation in the project.

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