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RESEARCH PAPER

Impact of Occupational Stress on Nurses' Well Being

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ABSTRACT

Nurses have always been working as front-line workers in the health care crises and have faced colossal challenges due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of this study was to examine the impact of occupational stress on emotional responses and psychological wellbeing of nursing staff. It also investigated the mediating role of emotional responses between occupational stress and psychological well-being. It examined the role of workplace hazing on occupational stress and emotional responses as a moderator. As front-line healthcare providers, nurses must interact with patients and endure great emotional and psychological strain. PLS-SEM technique was used to analyze the obtained data, Findings revealed that emotional responses mediated the impact of stress on nurses' well-being and the relationship between emotional responses and psychological well-being is significant. However, the role of workplace hazing as a moderator was not supported. It is recommended for researchers to employ methods of qualitative research to investigate nurses' actual experiences with work-related stress and coping strategies.

KEYWORDS COVID-19, Nurses, Psychological Well-Being, Stress

Introduction

COVID-2019 has posed extraordinary and unique questions which had substantial effect on the health specialists. Nurses have always been working as front-line workers in the health care crises and have faced colossal challenges due to the global COVID-19 pandemic (Tsay, Kao, Wang, & Lin, 2020). Owing to the swift proliferation of the COVID-19, its robust contamination element, deadliness in acute situations, and not any treatment, it has posed a massive danger and risk to individual life and wellbeing (Khan et al. 2011). The virus likewise possesses a colossal influence on psychological health, instigating individuals to suffer several levels of emotional difficulties. Nurses' emotional and mental well-being has always been a great fear in the nursing staff. Occupational stress is a general worry in the nursing personnel which has been researched considerably (Khan, Akhter & Bhutta, 2020). Increasing evidence stated that the nurses face normal to elevated levels of stress in nursing workforce (Badu et al., 2020).

In Pakistan, there have been 667,957 cases of COVID-19, of which the majority has recovered from the fatal illness; nonetheless, 14,434 people have lost their lives because of the illness (MNHSRC, 2021). The COVID-19 virus is continuing causing an increase of cases even with the nation under lockdown (Nisar et al., 2021). With 265,443, Sindh has had the most instances. Punjab (220,392), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (87,055), Islamabad (57,833), Balochistan (19,557), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (12,663), and Gilgit Baltistan (5,024) have the next-highest numbers. There have reportedly been 3197 COVID-19 critical cases in Pakistan as of late (MNHSRC, 2021).

The operative atmosphere for the nursing professionals has been radically influenced and providing health care facilities has been fervently tough for them because of

the ambiguity, anxiety and disapproval (Ramaci et al., 2020; Saqlain et al. 2020). Recent studies emphasize those healthcare employees especially nurses tend to develop trauma in the wake of situations such as epidemics including the COVID-19 pandemic (Khattak et al. 2020; Lillie et al., 2020; Khan, Akhter & Bhutta, 2020). Around 10,300 practitioners in the healthcare have been infected by the disease in Pakistan out of which 2,534 were from Punjab (MNHSRC, 2021).

Keeping in view the prevailing pandemic crisis in the world, there is dearth of literature on the impact of global pandemic on employee well-being. Therefore, it's critical to assess how the epidemic has affected the psychological state of medical professionals. Research on how workplace hazing affects stress at work and workers' reactions to their wellness is equally crucial (Khan et al. 2021).

Literature Review

Theoretical background

This research study employs the Conservation of Resources theory as a foundation. The key principle of this theory implies that individuals are determined to defend and guard the existing resources and get hold of new ones (Halbesleben et al. 2014). This theory has become one of the prominent philosophies of anxiety and distress (Khan, Bashir & Amir, 2023). This theory explains that psychosomatic worries and assets influences individuals and how keeping a balance can boost the well-being of individuals. According to Hofboll (2001), the COR theory is a theory of motivation and puts forward that individuals have a need to gain, retain, preserve and increase their psychological resources (Davidson et al. 2010). The research model based on the theoretical framework is as follows:

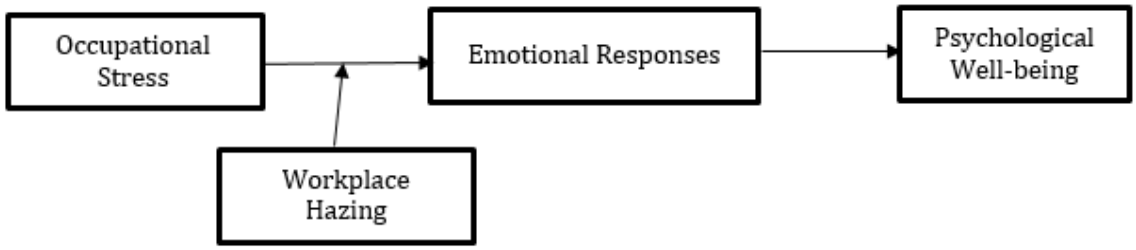

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

Occupational Stress

Occupational stress tends to be damaging in terms of instinctive and emotive display which takes place when the requirements of work do not meet the resource person's abilities, needs and meets (Yu et al. 2021). Extant literature suggests that many employees must undergo a lot of stress and several other employees find it tough to stay focused and determined because of the higher stress levels (Karatepe et al., 2018). According to Bunk and Magley (2013), stress is an individual's adverse input and is the catalyst for complex sentimental, behavioral, and private issues. Anxiety among workers may have an immediate adverse effect on the business. Kim et al. (2015) suggests in their study that stress has a damaging effect on behaviors of people at the workplace. Work stress negatively impinges on the well-being of employees. Likewise, workplace stress is considered to have a damaging adverse aspect that triggers not only mental and physical impairment in employees (Khan, Hussain& Akash, 2023).Research on stress in healthcare is expanding, and there are certain overarching signs that the profession is demanding. Compared to typical basis, the number of suicides among female nurses seemed considerably greater. Health care personnel who treat COVID-19 patients were more likely to witness painful incidents, including individual pain and passing away (Pappa et al., 2020), that could exacerbate their worry and concerns. Elevated levels of anxiety have been linked with poor ways to cope with anxiety and despair,

impaired physical functioning, and elevated thoughts of committing suicide (Lee et al., 2020).

H1: Occupational stress leads to emotional responses in nurses.

Emotional Responses

Because of the proliferation of COVID-19 and its intense contagion influence, deadliness in stern cases and no treatment or drugs, it tends to have a colossal chance of risk to the health and life of people. The outburst of COVID-19 is likely to instigate mass panic, for instance terror, dread, worry and concern which can lead towards various psychological and emotional disorders. Studies reveal that psychological distress can be more terrible than the ailment. Though such contagious diseases have several emotive responses, different people would have different kinds of emotional reactions. Nurses are at the front during pandemics such as COVID-19. They endanger their own lives in the call of duty. Since nurses are in direct contact with patients, they are more likely to catch and spread the virus among family, friends and coworkers. Several health workers have been infected with the virus and lost their lives. This has affected their mental wellbeing and has added to their stress and anxiety. Studies have also discovered that such pandemics bring about a lot of pain and stress for the medical staff (Wong et al. 2005). It is particularly because of their work responsibilities since it is vital for them to be regularly in touch with their patients. Hence, there is a need to study the emotive issues of nurses (Huang et al. 2020).

H2: Emotional responses have a significant impact on well-being of nurses.

Psychological Well-being

A condition in which one's physical, mental, and social well-being are completely realized is referred to as employee well-being. Put another way, physical and psychological health are interdependent rather than distinct from one another. Fear, unease and despair have been registered in around 262 million individuals all over the world and embody the major source of psychological and emotional wellbeing. Employees working in the frontline, especially hospital staff have regular contact with customers and patients and as a result, they may be subjected to psychological stress like irritation, grief or anxiety (Yu et al., 2021). The well-being of employees is a significant collective dilemma. Numerous issues can adversely influence psychological and emotional health in the workplace. Cases include improper methods, habits and systems, communication, not enough welfare and insensitive wellbeing and security strategies. Circumstances which destructively influence psychological wellbeing can be ascribed to a reduction in worker efficiency such as turnover, passive behavior, decreased desire for job), and additionally, it also leads to a decline in business productivity and heightened budgets (Dimoff & Kelloway, 2019). Inadequate wellbeing strategies are crucial matters that can demonstrate mental and physical health issues in employees. Consequently, psychological and emotional health difficulties can appear to be a huge liability on corporations and so, findings supporting to overcome and conquer such challenges are instantly needed (Han & Hyun, 2018).

H3: Psychological well-being is influenced by occupational stress.

Workplace Hazing

Workplace hazing is socialization at the workplace within groups. Workplace hazing would affect frequent socialization-related consequences. Existing studies indicate that socialization is regularly performed to assist adjustment of new employees by giving them relevant knowledge and decreasing the general insecurity related with joining a new workplace (Thomas and Meglich, 2019). Nevertheless, workplace hazing characterizes social practices such as verbal abuse and embarrassment which could impede recruit

adjustment. Hence, Mawritz et al. (2020) advise that workplace hazing leads to harmful influence on adjustment of employees such as mistreatment, exclusion, abandonment, social approval and person to job fit (Akash, Khan & Shear, 2023). Precisely, employees who get mistreated or hazed may ignore their job activities to deal with their demeaning and disrespectful circumstances (Tangney et al., 2014). Also, the disgraceful and shocking nature of this abuse and mistreatment can make the concerned employees feel as if they excluded by their group members and thus, they do not feel comfortable with performing their assigned tasks (Mawritz et al. 2020).

H4: Workplace Hazing acts a moderator between workplace stress and emotional responses in nurses.

Materials and Methods

This research study used a positivist or quantitative method of examination. The survey questionnaire had been used to gather data from nurses that used in order to assess their occupational stress on their well-being including the mediating role of emotional responses and workplace hazing as a moderator. The unit of analysis for this study was hospitals in Lahore and the nurses who were front-line workers in this worldwide epidemic provided the sample. As front-line healthcare providers, nurses must interact with patients and endure great emotional and psychological strain. Web-based questionnaires and self-administered surveys were used to gather the data.

The questionnaire comprised of scales which were adapted from the existing literature. The scales for Occupational Stress were adapted from Parker (2001). Workplace hazing scale was adapted from Mawritz et al. (2020). Employee Well-being scale was adapted from Joseph et al. 2012 and emotional responses scale was adapted from Huang et al. (2020). Proper SOPs were followed while obtaining the desired data. A total of 64,846 nurses from Punjab are registered with the Pakistan Nursing Council. According to Lwanga (1991) and Morgan (1970), the sample size determined was 382. However, only 205 questionnaires were returned, and were usable for study. The response rate of this study was 53.6%. The participants of the study were assured that their data would be kept anonymous and confidential. This was done to regulate the common bias method issues (Akash, Khan & Shear, 2023). It was not possible for the respondents of the study to be able to distinguish between the dependent and the independent variables (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). This research study urges that the common method variance is considered with collinearity test in the perspective of structural equation modeling technique. Keeping up on the study done by Kock (2015), the current study applied this pragmatic methodology to discover the common method bias issues with the support of variance inflation factors produced by attest of collinearity. The values of variance inflation factors (VIF) which are higher than the value of 3.3 suggest that the model under study might not be appropriate by the common method bias (CMB) (Ahmed, Khan & Cheema, 2022). Therefore, if the VIFs values are lower than 3.3, then the model could have been regarded as free of any common method bias. The outcomes of this research study uncovered that the values of VIFs for the constructs under study were lower than 3.3 which meant that there is no impurity of common method bias in the study. Hence, it could be noted that common method bias does not pose to be an issue for this study.

Furthermore, PLS-SEM has been used for analyzing the data by utilizing Smart-PLS v3 This research study has endeavored to calculate and describe the constructs of the study with the assistance of the COR which was the underpinning theory for this study. PLS-SEM is considered to be a helpful process for analysis when they maintain of using structural equation modeling technique is the justification and the projection of constructs in terms of estimation (Hair *et al.*, 2016). Likewise, it is also believed to be a adaptable method for building of research model (Ringle *et al.*, 2005). Additionally, the hypothetical paradigm for this research study was complicated and PLS is an appropriate and pertinent tool for analyzing intricate structural prototypes with numerous constructs. Another explanation

for opting for PLS-SEM is that there is no requirement of distribution of data (Hair *et al.*, 2016). Hence, this research study utilized this method to prevent any issues of normality of data.

Validity reliability ethical consideration

Validity, dependability, and ethical issues are critical in quantitative research investigations utilizing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Validity pertains to the precision and suitability of the measuring instruments and constructs employed in the research, guaranteeing their ability to accurately represent the desired notions. To ensure reliable findings, reliability refers to the coherence and stability of these measures throughout time and in various circumstances. Ensuring informed consent, safeguarding respondent rights, upholding anonymity, and reducing possible damage or judgements throughout the study process are among ethical issues. Together, these guidelines preserve the integrity and rigor of the study findings, enabling reasonable inferences and moral behavior in research with PLS-SEM techniques. This research study has also undertaken all measures to ensure that the criteria of validity, reliability and ethical considerations are met as discussed.

Results and Discussion

PLS-SEM was utilized in this work to analyze the data. The loadings, path coefficients, and corresponding significant levels were ascertained using the PLS method and the bootstrapping approach. The structural model evaluation was examined after the measurement model assessment. Convergent validity of the data was evaluated by measurement model assessment. Factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extraction were used to achieve this. When using a reflective measurement model, the convergent and discriminant validities were used to verify overall validity and the total reliability was used to evaluate the data's dependability. The items were examined for internal consistency using CFA, or confirmatory factor analysis, based on the overall reliability scores. This ensures that measurement results are reliable before the structural model evaluation. The findings of the measurement model assessment are shown in the following table (Amir, Bilal, & Khan, 2023). The findings demonstrate that every construct, including workplace hazing, emotional reactions, occupational stress, and employee mental well-being, was a legitimate item for the associated construct based on statistical implications and parameter estimations (Chow & Chan, 2008). Items with factor loadings below 0.50 were eliminated. The general model constructions therefore have sufficient validity as convergent models.

Table 1
Convergent Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
EPW	0.938	0.976	0.943	0.581
ER	0.78	0.787	0.856	0.598
WH	0.813	0.819	0.864	0.516
WS	0.919	0.975	0.926	0.585

Table 2
Outer Loadings

Items	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
EPW10	0.843			
EPW11	0.84			
EPW12	0.676			
EPW15	0.737			
EPW17	0.747			
EPW2	0.788			
EPW3	0.771			

EPW4	0.733			
EPW5	0.588			
EPW6	0.868			
EPW7	0.812			
EPW9	0.697			
ER1		0.789		
ER2		0.821		
ER3		0.769		
ER4		0.71		
WH11			0.77	
WH12			0.647	
WH13			0.705	
WH14			0.691	
WH15			0.783	
WH2			0.707	
WS12				0.881
WS13				0.788
WS2				0.554
WS4				0.759
WS5				0.837
WS7				0.752
WS8				0.857
WS9				0.699
WS1				0.7

A novel and sophisticated method for evaluating the variables' discriminant validity is the Heterotrait monotrait ratio i.e. (HTMT). The HTMT rate statistics for Pakistani healthcare professionals working in the health industry are displayed in the following table. Given that every construct's level is below 0.90 (Gold, Malothra, and Segars, 2001), the frameworks' discriminant validity has been proven verified. This is additionally frequently referred to as the relational coefficient connecting the variables at hand.

Table 3
HTMT Ratio

	EPW	ER	WH	WS
EPW				
ER	0.318			
WH	0.598	0.591		
WS	0.816	0.253	0.497	

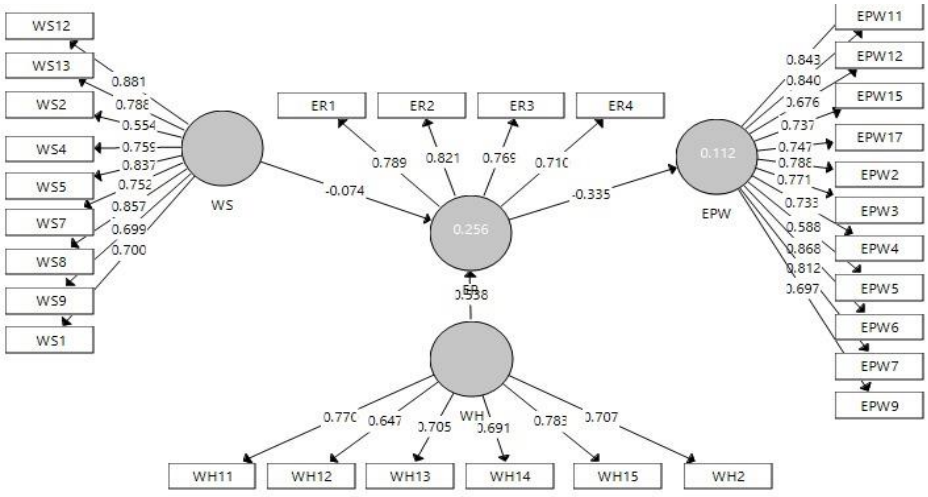

Figure 2 Measurement Model Assessment

Testing the assertions came next, once the measurement technique suitability was determined. The structural model was evaluated using the PLS-SEM methodology and bootstrapping methods in SMART PLS 3 (Chin, 2010). Initially the amount and significance

of the path coefficients were ascertained (Hair, Hult et al., 2016), and the structural algorithm's capacity for analysis was assessed using the intrinsic construct's coefficient of determination or (R-2 values) (Chin, 2010). The framework had loadings of factors smaller than 0.50 that were removed.

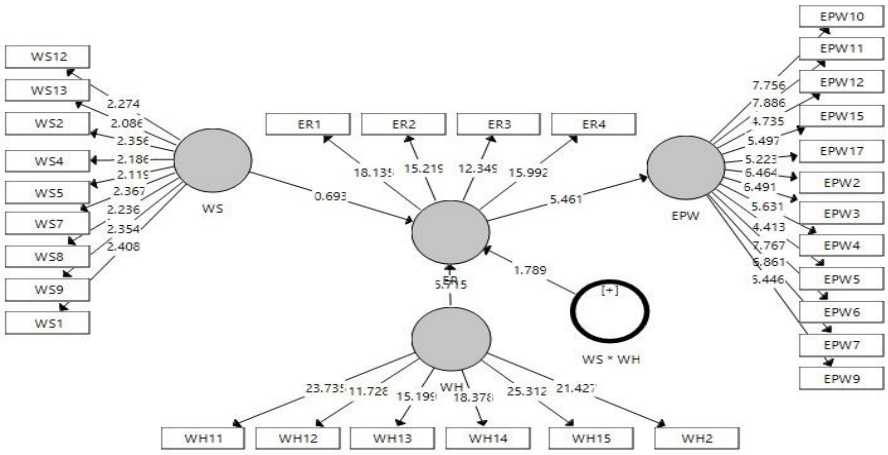

Figure 3 Structural Model Assessment

The purpose of the structural model assessment was to evaluate the research study's assumptions. This was accomplished via bootstrapping using the PLS-SEM technique (Chin, 2010). It was determined what the path coefficient's relevance level, the value of t, and the standard error were. Once the proposed theories were validated, the technique of bootstrapping in Smart-PLS 3 was used to examine both the immediate and subsequent impacts (Ringle *et al.*, 2005). Relying on the crucial ratio (t>1.645; P<0.05), the proposed results were accepted. As the measurement simulation was evaluated, the model for structural stability was also evaluated. For this reason, path parameters, t scores, and standard deviations are used to evaluate the model's relevance. The Smart-PLS 3 bootstrapping approach was utilized to evaluate the theories about their indirect as well as direct impacts (Ringle *et al.*, 2005). Empirical tests were conducted on either direct or indirect along with the moderating connections. On the assumption of the crucial ratio (t is greater than1.645; P is lower than 0.05), the hypotheses were verified. It was seen by examining the measured outcomes that certain hypotheses had backing while others were not validated.

Table 4
Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	B	SD	T-Statistics	P Values	Decision
WS -> ER	0.039	0.094	0.693	0.04	Not Supported
ER->EPW	0.36	0.061	5.461	0.00	Supported
WH*WS	0.093	0.058	1.749	0.08	Not Supported
WS->ER->EPW	0.153	0.044	3.249	0.00	Supported

Discussion

Using the theory of 'Conservation of Resources', which was designed in the year1989, this study will add to the expanding body of scholarship by evaluating the influence of stressful work environments on the mental health of nurses. This study aims to advance our fundamental knowledge of how nurses cope with work-related stress in terms of their mental well-being during the COVID-19 epidemic. The study's results imply that sentimental responses acted as a mediating factor in the relationship between the overall health of nurses and professional stress. But there isn't any conclusive evidence linking stress to wellbeing or using workplace hazing as an intermediary.

Similar to other research endeavors, this one has certain potential limitations that provide us with direction for doing further research investigations. First, from the perspective of methodology, the present investigation uses a design known as cross-sectional, in which data were gathered from just one source of data at a specific period which is insufficient for measuring connecting interactions. As a result, future research studies may use a longitudinal approach of data collection, in which data are gathered at various intervals and variables are analyzed and their implications are examined. After then, the flaw is connected to the study's findings study's design. Although other researchers may choose to use a qualitative way of research exploration in the future, this study employs a constructive or quantitative evaluation methodology. The extent to which the results and conclusions of this study may be applied to other different cultures and/or nations often relates to further recommendations for additional studies. In addition to nursing, other professions can also use or imitate this type of study paradigm. Public as well as privately owned hospitals provided data for the present study. Future research may potentially include other medical professionals including physicians, chemists, and others. Additional research projects may gather data from other areas, including the financial sector, higher education, tourism, and other sectors. Instead of being examined as a factor that moderates, workplace hazing can also be examined as a variable that is autonomous.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that there is typically no correlation between a nurse's wellness and their degree of work stress. Behavioral responses do, however, have a stabilizing effect on Pakistani nurses' job stress and well-being. However, as the information collected was limited to the Lahore area, it is not possible to extrapolate the findings to nurses employed in Pakistan's additional towns or provinces. Stress and nurses' well-being have not been found to be directly correlated, however emotional expressions by nurses are strongly correlated with workers' psychological well-being. It was additionally demonstrated that nurses' reactions to emotions were a result of occupational stress.

Recommendations

It is recommended to conduct longitudinal research to find out how long-term professional stress affects nurses' mental health. This can help to clarify the long-term effects of stress and guide preventative measures. It is also recommended for researchers to employ methods of qualitative research, such as focus groups and conversations, to investigate nurses' actual experiences with work-related stress and coping strategies. The policy makers and scholars must analyze the impact of several treatments like peer support groups and meditation training on lowering work-related stress and enhancing mental health among nursing staff. It is also recommended to conduct cross-cultural research to find out how diverse systems of healthcare, social circumstances, and socioeconomic circumstances affect occupational stress and mental health outcomes. Culturally sensitive initiatives can benefit from this. It is also recommended to examine how current organizational procedures and healthcare policies affect the emotional wellness of nursing staff. Policymakers and researchers can help create a more positive and healthy work environment for nurses by putting these ideas into practice, which will eventually improve patient care and outcomes.

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