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Comparative Study of Occupational Stress among Health Care Professionals in Government and Corporate Hospitals

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ABSTRACT

The occupational stress among the health care professionals is currently a major concern in all over the world. The main aim of the present study has been to investigate the levels of stress among doctors, nurses and supporting staff in corporate and government hospitals in different locations of the psychosocial and organizational characteristics of their job. The cross-sectional survey of health care professionals were (n=1200) chosen at random from government and corporate hospitals from four different places of major and minor cities in India. A self-administered questionnaire was the method used for data collection: this questionnaire contained various items on psychosomatic symptoms, self-perceived health, socio demographic data, job satisfaction, health risk and emotional load. The findings suggest that the government hospital doctors feel high level of stress and it is highly significant ($p < 0.01$) when compared to nurses and supporting staff working in corporate hospitals. Furthermore, based on the location, the health care professionals feel significantly ($p < 0.01$) high level of stress working at government hospitals in Tiruvarur. The results suggest that the doctors working in government hospitals feels more stress when compared to other health care professionals. The occurrence of high stress levels among doctors, leading the author to conclude that social support and the psychosocial work climate should be improved in health care institutions.

KEYWORDS: Stress, Health care professionals, Government and Corporate hospitals.

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INTRODUCTION

Work stress has been a long standing concern of the health care organizations. Work related stress affects a person's life and has implications on the person's mental and physical wellbeing. Several studies indicate that health care workers have higher rates of substances abuse and suicide than other professions and elevated rates of depression and anxiety linked to the job stress. Health care workers are exposed to the number of stressors, ranging from work overload, time pressures, and lack of role clarity to deal with infectious diseases and difficult for ill and helpless patients. Stress as a result of a transaction between person and environment. Zimbardo defined stress as the pattern of specific and non-specific responses an organism makes to stimulus events that disturbs its equilibrium and exceed its ability to cope. In addition to psychological distress of health care professionals, other outcomes of job stress include burnout, absenteeism, employee intent to leave, reduced patient satisfaction, and diagnosis and treatment errors. The focus of the present study is to understand stress in health care professional's life in related to corporate and government sector hospitals in major and minor cities in India.^{1,2,3}

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recently there is an increasing interest in research studies on stress among health care professionals in world wide. A number of studies have been undertaken in other countries as well as in India investigating the problem of stress among health care workers. These studies have indicated that job of health care workers is highly stressful.

In western countries there is a greater awareness and sensitivity to the problems which are faced by health care professionals. Several studies have been conducted on stress among general practitioners in UK. Medical practitioners experience appreciable stress, comparatively high suicide rates. The main sources of stress have been identified as: problems with practice administration, interruptions, patient's expectations and demands, emergencies, heavy workload, constant time pressures and work/home conflict.⁴

Swanson & Power conducted a comparative study between perceived stress, satisfaction and conflict for professional male and female doctors in National Health Service in Scotland. The study came with the result that the work of male doctors is more stressful and less satisfying than females. Rees, D. W. and Cooper conducted a comparative study between different occupational groups. The most important part of the study is that the health care professionals, comparing with non-health care employees have gotten significantly higher levels of pressure within their workplace. Work stress is increasingly recognized as one of the most serious occupational health hazards reducing workers satisfaction and productivity, and increasing absenteeism and turnover.⁵

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is descriptive in nature. The data was collected from government and corporate hospitals doctors, nurses and supporting staff in Tiruvarur through a standard questionnaire, known as “Hari, S. Stress Inventory”.

TOOL USED

The stress inventory was developed by Hari, S. is a tool to measure the amount of stress experienced in daily life. It is a 66 – item scale with five alternatives, 5 point scale, ‘fully agree’ ‘agree’, ‘undecided’, ‘disagree’ ‘fully disagree’. This Stress inventory is based on the writing of James, Sutherland and Cooper and Pohorecky.

RELIABILITY OF THE SCALE SAMPLING

Convenient sampling method was used to select the sampled units within the hospitals for the study. Thousand two hundred questionnaires were collected from doctors, Nurses and Supporting staff from eight hospitals and identified the difference between government and corporate hospitals. These eight hospitals were taken from four different cities. Two are from major cities and two are from minor cities respectively.

Statistical data analysis: Data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques viz., frequency tables, cross tables and Chi-square tests.

LIMITATIONS

- The study was carried out on a very small sampling size and therefore does not give clear idea of the actual stress levels among healthcare professionals.
- The reluctance of respondents to fill the questionnaire was felt the major difficulty. As 1500 questionnaires were distributed and 1222 filled questionnaires were received. Most of them were not in a time to complete the questionnaire among them 22 questionnaires didn’t furnish the required information, so they were rejected and rest 1200 questionnaires were considered for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the present study revealed that health care professionals are suffering with stress.

Table No.1: Analysis on the level of stress by using chi-square test compared to government and corporate hospitals.

Type of Hospital	Level of Stress			Total	Chi-square value
	Low	Moderate	High		
Government Hospital	160 26.7%	159 26.5%	281 46.8%	600 100.0%	26.447**
Corporate Hospital	149 24.8%	254 42.3%	197 32.8%	600 100.0%	

** P < 0.01

Chi-square test is conducted to observe whether there is any association between ‘Management’ (Govt and Pvt hospitals) and ‘Level of stress’ among healthcare professionals. The observed p-value < 0.01 for the corresponding chi-square value 26.447 is significant at 1% level Table:1. This means level of stress among health care professionals at government and corporate hospitals is significantly differ from one another. Table 1 shows that 46.8 percent of government professionals have high level of stress whereas this percentage in corporate hospitals is only 39.4 percent. This is because of the less equipment and low staff in the government hospitals. Also, the emergency cases are admitted only in the government hospitals. That is the reason why the government hospitals feel high stress. In corporate hospitals, there will be fully fledged staff and the more equipments are available when needed. These facilities can’t be maintained in the government hospitals.

Table No.2: Analysis on level of stress among health care professionals based on location by using chi-square test.

Location	Level of Stress			Total	Chi-square value
	Low	Moderate	High		
Bangalore	114	134	52	300	168.39**
	38.0%	44.7%	17.3%	100.0%	
Hyderabad	44	138	118	300	
	14.7%	46.0%	39.3%	100.0%	
Tirupati	25	166	109	300	
	8.3%	55.3%	36.3%	100.0%	
Nellore	126	140	34	300	
	42.0%	46.7%	11.3%	100.0%	

** P< 0.01

Chi-square is conducted to observe whether there is any association between ‘Locations’ (Trichy, Thanjavur, Tiruvarur& Nagapattinam) and’ Level of stress’ among Healthcare professionals. The observed p-value <0.01 for the corresponding Chi-square value 168.39 is significant at 1% level Table:2. This means level of stress among healthcare professionals at various locations differ significantly from one another in which Thanjavur is facing high level of stress. Table 2 reveals that 39.3 percent and Tiruvaruris having 36.3 percent of stress whereas the level of stress is low at Trichy and Nagapattinam. Trichy and Thanjavurcomes under major Town and Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam comes under minor Town. Among Trichy and Thanjavur, Thanjavur feels more stress when compared to Trichy. This, is a provision of Aarogyasri scheme. Due to that scheme, the persons who have white cards apply for Aarogyasri and do their treatment in major hospitals. Here, all level of people comes together for treatment. The patients may not be in a position to understand the professionals and the professionals feel more stress in satisfying the patients. This is one of the reasons for more stress in Thanjavur. And also, Thanjavur is a developing area and it is starting as club for medical treatment. Now, they have to prove themselves. Also, the traffic system is not good in Thanjavur. By this, there is a chance of Accident cases. The emergency

cases are more in Thanjavur. So, the stress is more for healthcare professionals in Thanjavur. When compared to Trichy, there is no such type of schemes and also it is a well developed Town in all the aspects. Here, the traffic system is very good and there is a less chance of accident cases. Trichy is mainly famous for Research Oriented Hospitals and the Medical colleges are more. By this, there is a chance of more qualified professionals in the hospitals. By this, the stress is less in Trichy. And also, Trichy is mainly famous for neurosciences. Also, Tiruvarur is famous for hospitals in minor Town. Nagapattinam is a developing Town and the hospitals are very less. Hence, the professionals working at government hospital in Tiruvarur feels high stress when compared with the professionals working at Nagapattinam government hospitals.

Table No.3: Analysis on level of stress among health care professionals in related to nature of the job by using chi-square test.

Nature of Job	Level of Stress			Total	Chi-square value
	Low	Moderate	High		
Doctors	106	157	137	400	40.145**
	26.5%	39.3%	34.3%	100.0%	
Nurses	107	189	104	400	
	26.8%	47.3%	26.0%	100.0%	
Supporting Staff	65	232	103	400	
	16.3%	58.0%	25.8%	100.0%	

** P < 0.01

Chi-square test is conducted to observe whether there is any association between nature of the job, Doctors, Nurses & Supporting staff and level of stress among healthcare professionals. The observed p-value <0.01 for the corresponding chi-square value 40.145 is significant at 1% level Table 3. This means level of stress among the healthcare professionals depending upon nature of the job, Doctors, Nurses and Supporting Staff differ significantly from one another. Table 3 reveals that 34.3 percent of Doctors feel high stress when compared to Nurses and Supporting staff and among Nurses it is 26 percent and it is only 25.8 percent in Supporting staff. The mental pressure among Doctors is more than physical strain. The physical pressure will be only sometime at the time of work. When the duty is completed they will be relaxed from the pressure. But mental pressure will be for most of the time. Hence, among all the health care professionals, Doctors feel more stress.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis carried out during the study and the results obtained, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1. By using the chi-square test, the overall respondents among the healthcare professionals agreed that there is a significant difference between the government and corporate hospitals at 1%

level of significance with the chi-square value 26.447 in which 46.8 percent of healthcare professionals who are working in the government hospitals feel high stress.

2. The overall respondents among the healthcare professionals agreed that there is a significant difference based on the location at 1% level of significance by using chi-square test with the value 168.39 in which the healthcare professionals working in Thanjavur and Tiruvaur feels more stress.

3. Among the Doctors, Nurses and Supporting staff, these healthcare professionals agreed that there is significant differences at 1% level of significance with the chi-square value 40.145 in which 34.3 percent of Doctors feel more stress.

The healthcare professionals among the government hospitals feel high stress when compared to corporate hospitals. The professionals working in Thanjavur and Tiruvarur feel high stress. Among the various healthcare professionals like doctors, nurses and supporting staff, the doctors face high stress when compared to other professionals. In government hospitals, the professionals working in Thanjavur and Tiruvarur, especially doctors face high stress when compared to other health care professionals.

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