

# Job Stress Among Nurses In A Nigerian University Teaching Hospital

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**Abstract—Stress is an inevitable factor in human existence. However, the level of stress differ among various professions and often related to the nature of job, available facilities and workload. Nursing workforce may be in much stress as the health care systems all over the world suffer the shortage of nurses. This study therefore explored the level of job stress among clinical nurses in a Nigerian University Teaching Hospital. Method: cross-sectional descriptive research design was used to assess 226 randomly selected nurses. Completed questionnaire were retrieved and analysed using descriptive statistics. Result: findings showed that all except 9(4%) of nurses experienced varying degrees of job stress. Majority of the nurses, 182(80.5%) were reportedly experiencing moderate job stress, compared to those who reported the job stress to be severe 24(10.62%) and mild 9(4.0%). The major reported causes of job stress among nurses were; workload, work environment, inadequate work equipment and personnel, attitudes of patient, long working hours, lack of incentives and exposure to health hazards. Conclusion: there is stress in clinical nursing practice. Alleviation of stress induced by clinical nursing practice may improve the productivity and quality of nursing care to patients.**

## Introduction

Job stress among nurses is a global problem; and 9.2% to 68% of nurses may be faced with job stress<sup>(5)</sup>. Nurses play a vital role in health institutions and form the largest workforce in health care sectors. The increasing health care demands in the sector has created very tasking responsibilities for nurses especially in clinical settings, and consequently increased the vulnerability of nurses to varying degrees of job stress<sup>(1, a.i.10)</sup>

Reports show that over 1.1 million people die annually due to job stress and job-related diseases<sup>(28)</sup>. Although job stress is common to all professions, however, nurses seem to experience more job stress compared to other healthcare providers<sup>(5)</sup>. Globally, millions of nurses quit the job annually as a result of stress associated with nursing care practice<sup>(7)</sup>. This

number excludes the increasing retirement of professional nurses whose years of service are still far from constitutional limits. Current evidence show that stressed nurses are more likely to leave their job than nurses who are not<sup>(4)</sup>. Stress and burnout have been found to significantly correlate with intention to quit clinical nursing practice<sup>(7)</sup>.

In a European nursing survey, 42% of UK nurses reported to be burnout (the highest of all the 10 European countries surveyed), and compared to the European average of 28%<sup>(7)</sup>. According to the reports, more than 8000 nurses may not willing to take nursing jobs in many countries for stress-related job dissatisfaction. This has no doubt increased the workload on few available nurses who are currently in practice, and has added to the overwhelming shortage of nurses globally, especially in developing countries where health care sector is faced with inadequate facilities to combat emerging diseases in a rapid growing population.

Nevertheless, recent survey of different sectors of the European Union showed that 20–30% of workers believed work-related stress was potentially affecting their health<sup>(16)</sup>. Three-quarters of employees believe the workers experience more job stress than a generation ago. Evidence also suggests that distress is the major cause of poor turnover in organizations; and with continued distress at the workplaces, workers often develop psychological and physiological dysfunctions and decreased motivation in excelling in their position<sup>(3)</sup>. Occupational stress represents the majority of work-related illnesses causing missed work days<sup>(16)</sup>. There is a growing body of evidence, which validates that health care providers particularly nurses experience stress in the course of carrying out their work without exception<sup>(12, 14, 21)</sup>. Various studies have shown that nursing practice is a strenuous job, and work-related stress is prevalent among nurses<sup>(15, 18)</sup>. The prevalence rates of stress among nurses vary according to healthcare institutions; and significantly determined by the available working equipment, personnel, working environments and work content<sup>(24)</sup>. For instance, the prevalence of job stress among Iranian nurses is 69% compared to 87.4% among nurses in India.<sup>(4, 22)</sup>

Nigeria and other developing countries of the world are in gross shortage of nurses, consequent to poor enrolment into the profession and stresses that has compelled active practicing nurses to quit practice before their constitutional retirement ages. For instance, report shows that in most hospitals in Nigeria, the nurses-patients ratio per shift is 1:13, compared to 1:6 and 1:4 recommended by World health organisation (WHO) and Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN) respectively<sup>(26, 19)</sup>. This ratio has no doubt contributed to stresses nurses face and the decline in the quality and efficiency of nursing care. This study therefore, evaluated Job stress among nurses practicing in a Nigerian hospital in order to suggest strategies that would keep nurses in practice and prevent their early voluntary retirements due to job stress.

### Methods

The researcher employed cross sectional descriptive research design. Multistage sampling was used and modified job stress questionnaire (JSQ) were administered on the 226 nurses from seven wards of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital, Nnewi. Completed questionnaire were retrieved and analysed.

**RESULTS** There were 226 participants in the study with the mean age of 37.4. Compared to males 8(3.5%), females were 218 (96.5%) in the study, table 1.

**Table 1:** Socio-Demographic characteristic of Respondents

Variable	Frequency (N=226)	Percentage (%)
<b>Age (Years)</b>		
26-30	29	12.8
31-35	33	14.6
36-40	62	27.4
41-45	46	20.4
46-50	34	15.1
51 and above	22	9.7
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	218	96.5
Male	8	3.5
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	61	27.0
Married	158	69.9
Widowed	7	3.1
<b>Religion</b>		
Christian	225	99.6
Muslim	1	0.4
<b>Highest educational level in nursing</b>		
RN, RM	130	57.5
BNSc	91	40.3
MSc	5	2.2
<b>Years of work experience</b>		
1-5	46	20.4
6-10	67	29.6
11-15	57	25.2
16-20	29	12.8
21 years and above	27	11.9

Majority of the respondents 62 (27.4%) were within the age of 36-40years, and most were married 158(69.9%). Only 46 (20.4%) were within their 1-5years of working experience compared to 79.6% who reported to have had more than 5years of working experiences (table 1).

**Table 2:** Degrees of job stress among nurses

Age (years)	No stress	Mild stress	Moderate stress	Severe stress
Female	7(3.10%)	9(3.98%)	179(79.20%)	23(10.18%)
Male	2(0.88%)	2(0.88%)	3(1.33%)	1(0.44%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>9 (3.98%)</b>	<b>11(4.87%)</b>	<b>182(80.53%)</b>	<b>24(10.62%)</b>

All except 9(4%) of nurses experienced varying degrees of job stress. Majority of the nurses 182(80.5%) reportedly experiencing moderate job stress, compared to those who reported the job stress to be severe 24(10.62%) and mild 9(4.0%), table 2.

**Table 3:** Sources of job stress among clinical nurses (N=226)

Sources	D	SD	A	SA	$\bar{X}$
Working with inadequate and obsolete equipment	6	37	67	116	3.3
Too much workload	13	36	60	117	3.2
Long hours of work	11	45	64	106	2.8
Having to deal with abusive patients	68	96	117	36	3.2
Violent patients	21	42	79	84	3.0
Poor interpersonal/inter-professional relationship	63	59	53	51	2.4
Lack of incentives	8	27	56	135	3.4
Work place conflict	34	56	61	75	2.8
Managerial bullying	22	65	85	54	2.8
Lack of support by nursing administrators	27	47	78	74	2.9
Exposure to health and safety hazards	15	24	79	118	3.3

The major reported causes of job stress among nurses were; workload, work environment, inadequate work equipment and personnel, attitudes of patient, long working hours, lack of incentives and exposure to health hazards (table 3).

### Discussions

The result showed that nurses experience varying level of job stress arising from various factors, including poor employers' support and relationship, inadequate personnel and resultant work overload, inadequate and obsolete working equipment, and long hours of work among others (table 3).

The working conditions of nurses had been adjudged strenuous due to the global shortage of competent and skilled nurses when compared to the increasing nursing care demands<sup>(2)</sup> According to reports, globally, millions of nurses quit their jobs annually as a result of stress associated with nursing care practice; including work overload, working environment and inadequate personnel and equipment<sup>(7)</sup>. This number excludes the increasing retirement of professional nurses whose years of service are still far from constitutional limits.

Work overload among nurses, especially with inadequate and obsolete equipment in their workplaces may increase nurses' feeling of exhaustion. This is because, more efforts and energy are required to complete the same task. Nevertheless, reports has shown that many nurses had been exposed to hazards on trying to manipulate obsolete equipment for use in their work places <sup>(21)</sup>. This not only contributes to nurses' mental stress, but also may result to their physical ill-health and decreased efficiency.

Furthermore, stress is a subjective feeling with the capacity of influencing employees' productivity. Different individuals subjected to the same stress tend to respond differently due to varying physiological stress thresholds <sup>(27)</sup>. This therefore supports that different nurses may experience varying degrees of stress as found in this study.

Nevertheless, this study found that all except 9(4%) of nurses experienced varying degrees of job stress. Although, the number of nurses who reported not experiencing some degrees of stress is low, however, the responsibilities of nurses may depend on their units or area of practice. On the other hands, the duties of nurses are the same all over the world, however, at all times, they are determined by patients' health conditions and partly by institutional factors <sup>(25)</sup>. Some wards or units tend to be more strenuous than others. For instance, nurses who work as counsellors in HIV clinic may not experience the same stress as nurses who work in a busy accident and emergency units. Therefore, it may not be out of place for nurses working in busy and strenuous units to report being stressed contrarily to those who work in outpatient clinics.

#### Conclusion

The increasing health care demands, in addition to certain institutional factors put nurses on varying degrees of job stress. Therefore, individuals should be encouraged to enrol into nursing training in order to boost the nursing workforce. Health care institutions need urgent harmonization to best global standards of practice.

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