



## THE CAUSES OF STRESS AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG NURSES AT RIDGE AND PANTANG HOSPITALS IN GHANA

**Abaa Assibi Rita**

*University of Ghana, Department of Psychology, Legon*

**Samuel Atindanbila**

*University of Ghana, Department of Psychology, Legon*

**Mwini-Nyaledzigbor Prudence Portia**

*University of Ghana, School of Nursing, Legon*

**Philip Abepuoring**

*Pantang Hospital, Legon*

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### ABSTRACT

*This study was aimed at finding out the main causes of stress among Nurses in Ridge and Pantang Hospitals and the level of job satisfaction among them in both Hospitals. 105 Nurses randomly selected from both Hospitals were used for the study using the Expanded Nurses Stress Scale. Statistical tests like t-test; ANOVA and correlation were used to analyze the data. The findings from the study concluded that causes of stress among Nurses in Pantang and Ridge Hospitals are the same except workload which is higher in Ridge Hospital. It also revealed that job satisfaction among Nurses in both Hospitals is the same. Finally, the findings revealed that there was a weak negative correlation between work stress and job satisfaction in the two Hospitals. Based on these findings, recommendations were made for the Ministry of Health and the various Hospitals' management to recruit more Nurses and teach them stress management techniques.*

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**Keywords:** Job satisfaction, Causes of stress, Nurses, Pantang and ridge hospitals.

### INTRODUCTION

Nursing is considered as a stressful occupation (Marshall, 1980; Bailey, 1985; Riding and Wheeler, 1995). Stress has an implication for health and the satisfaction level of the Nurses involved which eventually has an impact on the quality of care for the patients they attend to (Price and Mueller, 1981). Research in Nursing has identified a number of stressors depending on the area of specialty. However, some common stressors in these specialties include poor working relationship between Nurses and other health team members, demanding communication and relationship with patients'

relatives, emergency cases, high workload, understaffed and lack of support or feedback from their seniors (Nichols *et al.*, 1981; McGrath *et al.*, 1989). In U S, it is estimated that work stress costs the nation billions of dollars a year in lost productivity, health care expenses, and stress-related lawsuits (Smith, 2006). Job stress is a timely and important topic for workers, that is the condition in which some factors or combination of factors interferes with the worker to disrupt his or her physical, psychological, or social homeostasis (Lou., 1997).

It has also been noticed that most work on stress and job satisfaction has been done on General Nursing to the neglect of Psychiatric Nursing (Cronin and Brophy, 1985; Wheeler, 1997). It would be better to understand those factors in psychiatric settings that can enhance better quality among the Nurses. This present work, therefore, is aimed at finding the prevailing stressors in both General and Psychiatric Hospitals and other levels of job satisfaction. In addition to this, this study seeks to identify the relationship between stress and job satisfaction among Psychiatric and General Nurses.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Stress in the Nursing profession has been a major worldwide problem for quite some time now. A study among a large sample of Swedish Nurses revealed that more than 80% of the Nurses reported high to very high job strain (Peterson *et al.*, 1995). A study among personnel of a UK health authority reported that Nurses were under the greatest pressure among all health care personnel (Rees and Cooper, 1992). Stress and the negative outcomes of stress have been recognized as financially costly to any health care organization. Negative outcomes of job stress among Nurses include illness, decline in overall quality of care, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, and staff turnover (Schwab, 1996). Stress is associated with impaired individual functioning in the workplace and other negative effects include reduced efficiency, decreased capacity to perform, dampened initiative, reduced interest in working, increased rigidity of thought, a lack of concern for the organization and colleagues, and a loss of responsibility.

Apart from the problems mentioned above, it appears that there might be difference in the levels of stress experienced by Nurses working in the Psychiatry Hospitals and those that are working with the General Hospitals. This study will fill the gap in research that has not been well researched into. Furthermore, the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction will also be taken into consideration.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study has the following objectives:

1. To determine the main causes of stress among Nurses in Pantang and Ridge Hospitals
2. To compare Mental Health Nurses and General Nurses on levels of job satisfaction.
3. To determine the relationship between stress and job satisfaction in both Hospitals.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study will provide information to Nursing administrators, clinicians, and educators related to perceived job stress and job satisfaction, employment of staff to the General Hospitals and the Psychiatry Hospitals in Ghana. Furthermore, understanding the relationship of job stress to job satisfaction will give direction to Nurse Administrators as to the relative importance of reducing stress or increasing other job satisfiers. This is because increased stress and/or decreased job satisfaction increases the likelihood of job injury, absenteeism and staff turnover which is expensive to the Hospital.

Apart from that, Nurses in clinical practice experience the rapid turnover of staff due to stress, lack of satisfaction, or both, reduces the quality of care as new staff must be oriented and group cohesiveness is weakened by constant changes in the group membership on a Nursing unit. Increased understanding of both stress and satisfaction factors will prompt staff Nurses to take personal measures to reduce stress, raise their level of expertise, and become proactively involved in improving the working environment of their organizations. For Nurse Educators, knowledge of the relationship between job stress, job satisfaction, and intent to leave employment could be used in either Basic Nursing education settings or in continuing education. This will enable the Nurse Educators to design and integrate effective stress management techniques during their teaching of Nursing Students and in service education for practicing Nurses in the Hospitals.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature is discussed under the following headings:

#### **Causes of stress in Nurses**

To identify Nurses' perceptions of workplace stress, consider the potential effectiveness of initiatives to reduce distress, and identify directions for future research, a literature search from January 1985 to April 2003 was conducted by Mc Vicar (2003) using the key words Nursing, stress, distress, stress management, job satisfaction, staff turnover and coping to identify research on sources of stress in adult and child care Nursing. United Kingdom Department of Health documents and literature about the views of practitioners was also consulted. His findings revealed that workload, leadership/management style, professional conflict and emotional cost of caring have been the main sources of distress for Nurses for many years, but there is disagreement as to the magnitude of their impact.

[Blair and Littlewood \(1995\)](#) emphasized that work relationships are potential stressors. Two sources of stress in this field are the conflicts with co-workers and the lack of staff support. Another assessment showed that lack of social support from colleagues and superiors and less satisfaction with the head Nurses contributed significantly to the appearance of stress ([Sveinsdottir,](#)

2006), while the Health and Safety Executive identify the negative effect of lack of understanding and support from their managers, on workers' stress.

Clarke and Ruffin (1992) examined perceived sources of stress among 306 student Nurses from three institutions in the USA. Data were collected using two self-reporting questionnaires. The response rate was 72%. The initial questionnaire assessed demographic data and perceived stressors, which were then used to form the basis of the second questionnaire assessing 28 potential stressors. The analysis of the mean results indicated that the major stressors for Nursing students were the 'total amount of work to be completed', 'coping with exams', 'handling emergencies in the clinical area', 'fear of making mistakes', 'coping with the theoretical course work' and 'coping with terminally ill patients'. The factors causing least concern included 'living away from home', 'interaction with fellow students', 'interaction with academic staff', 'handling excreta' and 'interaction with patients'. The area with the highest score for stress was studied. In 2003, Gillespie and Melby conducted a research aimed at determining stressors, effects on patient care, and the impact of stress outside of the clinical setting. This research showed that Nurses in an acute medicine environment had higher levels of stress than those working in accident and emergency environment (Gillespie and Melby, 2003).

### **Job Satisfaction of Nurses**

With regards to Mental Health Nurses, relatively few studies have examined influences on job satisfaction. Most of the studies have sought to describe the negative relationship between stress and job satisfaction rather than identify specific factors which have an impact on it. Landeweerd and Boumans (1988) found out that Nurses who were satisfied when working in Psychiatric Hospitals were more satisfied than when referred to General Hospitals. He attributed this to factors such as lack of support, poor communication with doctors, small space and violent incidents leading to job satisfaction. He also found out that all Psychiatric Nurses in all units were satisfied with their work and those in admission units were most satisfied. This they attributed to the relative quick results from their efforts and their work required interacting with other Nurses. Farrel and Dares (1999) also assessed the level of job satisfaction of Nurses in the General Hospital and discovered that they had low satisfaction due to lack of team work among themselves and other members of the health team as compared to those who work in the Psychiatric unit in Australia.

### **Relationship between Stress and Job Satisfaction among Nurses**

A lot of researches have been done to establish the relationship between stress and job satisfaction among Nurses which have yielded varied results. According to Nolan *et al.* (1995) and Cushway *et al.* (1996) there is a negative relationship between stress and job satisfaction. However, Davis (1974) also found that there has not been any significant relationship between stress and job satisfaction in Psychiatric Nurses. This study is questionable due to the small sample and also from a single Hospital. In the literature, it has been observed that workload is the main stressor among Nurses. In comparing the satisfaction level of Psychiatric and General Nurses, it was found out

that the former were more satisfied. There is no consensus as to the relationship between the stress and job satisfaction among Nurses.

### **Statement of Hypotheses**

For the purpose of the study, the following hypotheses were tested.

1. There will be significance in the causes of stress among the Nurses at Pantang and Ridge Hospitals.
2. The Nurses at Pantang are more likely to be satisfied with their work than those at Ridge.
3. There will be a relationship between stress and job satisfaction among Nurses at the two Hospitals.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Setting**

The research site was the Ridge and Pantang Hospitals. This is where a good representative of the nursing population of Ghana, including the General Nurses and Psychiatric Nurses, can be found. Apart from that these settings are accessible and convenient to the researchers.

### **Population**

The target population was 500 Nurses from Ridge and Pantang Hospitals. This population consisted of both males and females between the ages of 20 and 68 years. These Nurses work in different wards of the Hospital. They are of different levels of education and also work in day and night shifts.

### **Sample and Sample Size**

The sample used was 105 Nurses who were randomly selected from both Hospitals to participate in the study. This consisted of 45 Nurses from Ridge and 60 from Pantang Hospital.

### **Sampling Technique**

The sampling technique used in the study was the stratified sampling technique. The Nurses were stratified according to the Hospitals and the various wards. This method is to ensure that all the categories of Nurses from both Hospitals are represented in the study.

### **Design**

The research design used in this study was a cross-sectional survey. This was considered as the most appropriate design since their views and opinions were sought on the perceived causes of stress and the job satisfaction of the participants.

## Instrument

The instrument used in the study was a standardized questionnaire which has three parts. The first is the demographic data of participants. This enquires concerning their age, ward, qualification, gender, number of working hours, etc. The second part of the questionnaire is the Expanded Nursing Stress Scale (ENSS) which was used to measure the stress level of the participants. The scale was designed to measure Nurses' stress levels categorized as: death and dying, conflict with physicians, inadequate preparation, problems with peers, problems with supervisors, workload, uncertainty concerning treatment, patients and their families, and discrimination). The ENSS consists of 57 items with response options in a Likert-like format (1= never stressful, 2 = occasionally stressful, 3 = frequently stressful, 4 = extremely stressful, 5 = does not apply). The cronbach alpha level ranges between 0.92 and 0.94. The third part is that which measured Job Satisfaction levels of participants. This had seven items in all.

## RESULTS

The study was done under the guidance of the main objective which was aimed at determining the main causes of stress among Nurses and its relationship with job satisfaction. Out of this objective, three hypotheses formulated and tested below:

### There Will Be a Significant Difference in the Causes of Stress among Nurses in Pantang and Ridge Hospitals

The above hypothesis seeks to find out whether the causes of stress will vary among the Nurses at Pantang and Ridge Hospitals. This was tested by using a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to compare the mean score of the Nurses in the various Hospitals. The mean score, standard deviation, ANOVA and post hoc test are shown in the tables below.

**Table-1.** Summary of causes of Stress among Nurses at Pantang and Ridge Hospitals

Source of Stress	Pantang	Ridge	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
ADE	3.1	3.2	1,104	.525	.470
ACONF	2.8	3.0		1.278	.261
AIEP	2.7	3.6		.288	.593
APWP	2.5	2.6		.072	.789
APWS	3.1	3.2		.286	.594
AUCT	3.1	3.2		.339	.562
WORKL	2.7	3.1		8.639	.004
APAF	2.9	3.1		2.914	.091
ADISCRI	3.3	3.5		1.190	.278

The table above is the computed F ratios of the all the stressors measured. The table revealed that, among all nine stressors that have being measured, levels of workload (M= 2.70, SD = 3.31) was found to be having a significant difference between Pantang and Ridge at 0.05 level of significant  $F(1,104) = 8.639, p = 0.004$ . This suggests that workload causes more stress at the Ridge Hospital than Pantang Hospital. All the other eight causes are the same among the Nurses in both Hospitals.

### The Nurses at Pantang are more likely to Be Satisfied with Their Work than Those at Ridge

This is the second hypothesis which is aimed at comparing the level of satisfaction of the Nurses at both Hospitals. In view of this, the most appropriate statistical test is the *t* test since the mean scores of their levels of satisfactions are measured. The results are shown below:

**Table-2.** The Level of Satisfaction of Nurses at Pantang and Ridge Hospitals

Hospitals	N	Mean	SD	df	<i>t</i>	Sig
Pantang	60	17.20	1.88	103	-1.465	.146
Ridge	45	17.87	2.78			

The table above shows computed Independent *t* test of the job satisfaction of Nurses from Pantang (M= 17.20, SD = 1.88) and Ridge (M =17.78, SD =2.78). At a .05 level of significance, the satisfaction with Nurses shows  $t(103) = -1.465$ ,  $p = .146$ , one tailed). Since the  $p$  value  $0.146 > .05$ , no significant difference exist between Pantang and Ridge on Job satisfaction. This means that the satisfaction levels of the Nurses at both Hospitals is the same.

### There Will Be a Correlation between Stress and Job Satisfaction among Nurses at Both Hospitals

The aim of the third hypothesis is to determine the relationship between stress and job satisfaction among Nurses at Pantang and Ridge Hospitals. This was done by using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson *r*) to find the relationship. This was computed at 0.01 level of significance. The result is displayed in the table below.

**Table-3.** A summary table demonstrating the relationship between Job Satisfaction and Stress

Variable	N	Mean	SD	<i>R</i>	Sig
Astress	105	2.98	.52	-.225	.021
Ajob	105	17.49	2.32		

The table shows the computed Pearson *r* (correlation) between Job satisfaction and Stress. The mean scores were: Job Satisfaction (M=17.49, SD= 2.32) and stress (M=2.98, SD= .52). At a 0.01 level of significance, the result shows that  $r_{(103)} = -.255$ ,  $p = 0.004$ , two-tailed). Since the computed value of *r* (.255) is significant at .004 and this value is less than .01 (.004<.01), the result reveals a weak negative correlation between job satisfaction and stress among Nurses in both Hospitals.

## DISCUSSION

The study was driven by a main objective of determining causes of stress among Nurses and also to find the relationship between stress and job satisfaction. Three hypotheses were derived from the main objective and tested. The first objective was to find out the causes of stress among Nurses at Pantang and Ridge Hospitals. It was found out that all the stressors (death and dying, conflict with physician, inadequate emotional preparation, problem with peers, problem with supervisors, level of workload, uncertainty concerning treatment, patient and family and the level of discrimination)

were the same in both Hospitals. However, workload was found to be higher at Ridge Hospital. These findings agree with United Kingdom Department of Health documents and also literature about the views of practitioners was consulted. These findings revealed that workload, leadership/management styles, professional conflict and emotional cost of caring have been the main sources of distress for Nurses for many years, but there is a disagreement as to the magnitude of their impact. The findings reflect the true picture because Ridge Hospital has a higher patient load as compared to Pantang Hospital. Apart from that the incidence of mental illness is lower in the general population which partly accounts for low work load in the Mental Hospital. The second objective which was to compare Mental Health Nurses and General Nurses on levels of job satisfaction also found out that the Nurses at both Hospitals have equal levels of job satisfaction which means their satisfaction levels are the same. However a research by Landeweerd and Boumans (1988) revealed that Nurses were more satisfied working in Psychiatric Hospital and that they were more satisfied than when referred to General Hospitals. He attributed this to factors such as lack of support, poor communication with doctors, small space and violent incidence leading to job satisfaction. He also found out that all Psychiatric Nurses in all units were satisfied with their work and those in admission unit were most satisfied and this they attributed to the relative quick results from their effort and their work required interacting with other Nurses. The third objective was to determine the relationship between stress and job satisfaction in both Hospitals. This research revealed that there is a weak negative correlation between stress and job satisfaction among the Nurses in Pantang and Ridge Hospitals. This means as stress increases job satisfaction decreases and this finding is consistent with the work of Cushway *et al.* (1996) that there is a negative relationship between these two variables. Nolan *et al.* (1995) also found out that there was no relationship between job stress and job satisfaction. This finding is, however, questionable since the sample size was small and was drawn from only one Hospital.

### **Limitations**

The study has the following limitations. In the first place, the sample size was small as compared to the total number of 500 Nurses in the two Hospitals. Apart from that, the sample was not very representative because the various ranks in the profession were not stratified since there are likely to be differences in the level of job satisfaction and stressors among these ranks. Lastly, the study was cross-sectional and might not be able to reveal the differences in the variables under study as compared to a longitudinal study.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The major finding was that the causes of stress among Nurses in the Mental and General Hospitals were the same except workload which was higher in the General Hospital than the Mental Hospital. This might be due to the greater number of people who attend the General Hospital with different kinds of illnesses as compared to the Psychiatric Hospital. In view of this, the following recommendations should be made to the Ministry of Health and the Hospital Authorities:



1. More Nurses should be recruited in the General Hospitals to reduce the workload.
2. Nursing staff should also be taught some coping strategies to enable them manage their stress levels.
3. Furthermore, management should collaborate with the Nurses in the General Hospitals to provide them with the needed support which will help reduce the workload in them.

The study also revealed that job satisfaction among Nurses in both Hospitals was the same which means they had equal satisfaction levels. Therefore it is recommended that management should try and put in motivators that will maintain their level of satisfaction. It was also found out that there was a weak negative correlation between stressors in Nurses and job satisfaction. This means when their stress levels increase their satisfaction levels decrease. Recommendations are therefore made that management should take a closer study of these stressors since they affect Nurses' performance at work.

## CONCLUSION

This study is aimed at finding out the main causes of stress among Nurses in Ridge and Pantang Hospitals and the level of job satisfaction among these Nurses in both Hospitals. The sample used was 105 Nurses randomly selected from both Hospitals. Three hypotheses were formulated to test the variables. The findings from the study concluded that causes of stress among Nurses in Pantang and Ridge Hospitals are the same except workload which is higher in Ridge Hospital. It also revealed that job satisfaction among Nurses in both Hospitals is the same. Finally, the findings revealed that there was a weak negative correlation between work stress and job satisfaction in the two Hospitals. Based on these findings, recommendations were made for the Ministry of Health and the various Hospitals' management to recruit more Nurses and teach them stress management techniques.

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