



INFLUENCE OF STRESS ON WORK BEHAVIOUR AMONG NURSES WORKING IN RIVERS STATE UNIVERSITY TEACHING HOSPITAL (RSUTH), PORT HARCOURT

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Cite this article:

O. F., Uche, Tee, N. B., C., Onyema (2026), Influence of Stress on Work Behaviour among Nurses Working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH), Port Harcourt. African Journal of Health, Nursing and Midwifery 9(1), 23-33. DOI: 10.52589/BJELDP-3L1GVXAK

Manuscript History

Received: 21 Dec 2025

Accepted: 29 Dec 2025

Published: 14 Jan 2026

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ABSTRACT: *This study focused on the influence of stress on work behaviour among nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH), Port Harcourt. It was guided with two objectives and two research questions. Cross-sectional survey design was adopted as the research design for this study. The population of the study comprised all the 300 registered nurses in RSUTH. A simple random sampling technique was adopted for this study and a sample of 171 was selected for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.73. Data was analyzed using statistical tools like: mean score and Chi-square at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that the majority of the nurses have good knowledge of the major causes of stress among nurses working in RSUTH. The result of the analysis further revealed that the relationship between stress and job dissatisfaction was very high; this indicates that as stress increases, job dissatisfaction also increases among nurses working in RSUTH. It was concluded that nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH), Port Harcourt had good knowledge of the causes of work stress as well as the coping strategies nurses take to manage stress. It was recommended among others that the hospital administrators should provide structured stress management workshops and coping skills training. These programs should focus on practical techniques such as time management, emotional resilience, and conflict resolution to help nurses translate their knowledge into effective stress reduction strategies.*



INTRODUCTION

A healthy and supportive workplace is essential for effective healthcare delivery, especially in hospitals where nurses face increasing daily demands. The nursing profession is a vital component of healthcare in Nigeria, as nurses play a central role in patient recovery and overall wellbeing. However, the demanding nature of their duties, combined with the unique challenges within Nigerian hospitals, significantly affects their work behavior (Salleh, 2018).

Stress is understood as the relationship between an individual and the environment that is perceived as taxing or threatening to one's wellbeing (Irving et al., 2019). While stress itself is not inherently harmful, individuals' perceptions, interpretations, and coping abilities determine its impact. Personality traits also shape stress responses, meaning that what overwhelms one person may motivate another (Robinson, 2021).

In Nigeria's healthcare system, stress has become a major concern due to inadequate funding, insufficient staffing, outdated equipment, and weak infrastructure. These conditions create a work environment that negatively affects nurses' physical health, mental wellbeing, job satisfaction, and work behavior. Stress has long been recognized as an occupational hazard in nursing, with sources ranging from patient care demands and decision-making responsibilities to long work hours and emotionally difficult interactions (Jennings, 2019; Lukpata, 2023).

High stress levels can lead to job dissatisfaction and burnout (Arafa, 2023), and nursing is globally acknowledged as one of the most stressful professions (Ilhan, 2015). Nurses care for critically ill patients in environments with low tolerance for errors, placing them at heightened risk of burnout (Rowe, 2023; Abushaikha & Saca-Hazboun, 2019). The pressure to provide humane, empathetic, and culturally sensitive care despite limited resources further compounds this stress (Khamisa, 2015).

Stress among nurses contributes to medication errors, poor communication, and reduced patient satisfaction, ultimately compromising healthcare quality. In Nigeria, the situation is worsened by poor working conditions, limited career growth opportunities, and weak support systems. Economic pressures, such as inflation and currency instability, add to the burden.

Despite nurses' crucial roles, limited research exists on how stress affects their work behavior in Nigerian public hospitals. This study therefore investigates the impact of stress on work behavior among nurses in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH), Port Harcourt, with the aim of identifying measures to reduce stress and promote a healthier work environment.

Statement of the Problem

Nurses at the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH) face persistent challenges that heighten stress levels and negatively influence their work behavior, productivity, and quality of patient care. Stress remains a major concern in healthcare, affecting nurses' physical and mental well-being, job satisfaction, and overall professional performance. Despite the central role nurses play in service delivery, limited research has identified the specific stressors affecting them within RSUTH, resulting in a gap that hinders the development of effective stress-management strategies.



Burnout characterized by physical and emotional exhaustion and diminished concern for patients is a major consequence of prolonged stress among healthcare workers. However, individuals respond to stress differently; some may experience burnout under minimal stressors, while others manage heavy demands without reaching this point. Stress thus depends on both environmental demands and personal coping resources.

Global evidence shows that nursing is one of the most stress-prone professions, with nearly half of practitioners reporting high job-related stress. Similarly, the International Labour Organization identifies nursing as an occupation with elevated risks of work-related stress and burnout. These concerns form the basis for examining how stress influences work behavior among nurses in RSUTH, Port Harcourt.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to investigate the influence of stress on work behavior among Nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH), Port Harcourt. The specific objectives are to

1. ascertain the causes of work stress among nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH), Port Harcourt.
2. determine the relationship between stress and job dissatisfaction among Nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH), Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

The relevant research questions related to this study are

1. What are the causes of work stress among nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH), Port Harcourt?
2. What is the relationship between stress and job dissatisfaction among Nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH), Port Harcourt?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Causes of Work Stress among Nurses

Studies consistently identify several interrelated factors contributing to work stress among nurses. One major cause is excessive workload and chronic understaffing, conditions that place enormous pressure on nurses and limit the time available for safe and compassionate patient care. Research indicates that nurses working in high-patient-load environments experience significantly higher stress levels, leading to fatigue, irritability, and reduced performance (Omoniyi & Adeyemi, 2021).

Another critical contributor is role ambiguity and role conflict. In many healthcare settings, nurses are frequently confronted with unclear expectations, conflicting instructions from supervisors and physicians, and complex responsibilities that exceed their formal job descriptions. This lack of clarity generates mental strain and heightens stress (Udeh & Nwokocha, 2020).



Interpersonal stressors have also been widely reported in the literature. Difficult interactions with patients, demanding family members, and sometimes unsupportive supervisors can erode professional confidence and psychological well-being. Chukwu and Benson (2019) found that poor teamwork, bullying, and strained professional relationships are strong predictors of emotional stress among nurses.

The work environment constitutes another major source of stress. Limited equipment, unsafe conditions, inadequate protective materials, and poor infrastructural support intensify the pressures nurses face. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when nurses reported heightened anxiety due to infection risks and scarce personal protective equipment (Olorunfemi & Adegoke, 2021).

Relationship Between Stress and Job Dissatisfaction Among Nurses

The link between occupational stress and job dissatisfaction among nurses is well established. High stress levels are strongly associated with reduced morale, diminished enthusiasm for work, and negative attitudes toward the profession. For instance, Onyema and Ijeoma (2022) found that nurses experiencing chronic stress reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction with their work environment, remuneration, and professional recognition.

Several studies highlight burnout as a mediating factor in this relationship. Prolonged exposure to stress often leads to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment—key indicators of burnout. Burnout, in turn, predicts decreased job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and turnover intentions (Abdulrahman & Lawal, 2020).

The demand-control theory also provides a useful framework for understanding this link. According to the theory, stress arises when job demands exceed the worker's control over decisions and resources. When this imbalance is persistent, job dissatisfaction becomes inevitable (Karami & Hossein, 2020). Studies applying this model to nursing populations consistently show that nurses with little autonomy and high workloads report lower job satisfaction.

Additionally, research demonstrates that stress reduces intrinsic motivation by making nurses feel overwhelmed, undervalued, and unsupported. This emotional toll affects their sense of professional fulfilment, eroding satisfaction with the job (Nweke & Alagbu, 2021).

However, the literature also notes that the relationship between stress and dissatisfaction can be moderated by factors such as supportive leadership, opportunities for professional development, strong teamwork, and access to psychological coping resources. When these factors are present, they help buffer the negative effects of stress, improving job satisfaction even when work demands are high (Ezenwa & Obi, 2022).



METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional design, which enabled the researcher to examine the influence of stress on nurses' work behavior at Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH), Port Harcourt, without manipulating any variables (Elendu, 2020). The study population consisted of 300 registered nurses working in the hospital, as recorded in the 2025 Hospital Health Record. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 171 nurses was determined and selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire titled *Influence of Stress on Work Behavior Among Nurses Working in RSUTH Questionnaire*. The instrument underwent face and content validation by the researcher's supervisor and two nursing experts, while reliability testing using Cronbach Alpha produced a coefficient of 0.73, indicating acceptable internal consistency. The researcher and two assistants administered the questionnaires with the hospital's permission, assuring respondents of confidentiality. The questionnaires were filled and retrieved immediately, and data collection lasted about three to four weeks. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics answered the research questions, while Pearson Correlation tested the hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. A criterion mean of 2.5 served as the benchmark for interpreting responses. A total of 171 copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents. However, 159 were analyzed because the researcher was not able to retrieve all copies of the questionnaire as some were lost and some not properly completed; thus, the return rate was 92.9%. Hence, the analysis was based on 159.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the causes of work stress among nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital, Port Harcourt?

Table 4.2: Likert Scale Table Showing the Causes of Work Stress Among Nurses Working in

Items	(n = 159)					
	SA n(%)	A n(%)	D n(%)	SD n(%)	Mean	Remark
Nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital, Port Harcourt experience high patient-to-nurse ratios, leading to increased workload and long working hours, which can contribute to physical and mental exhaustion.	124 (78)	35 (22)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	3.78	Strongly agree
Nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital, Port Harcourt face challenges of lack of adequate resources and equipment, such as medical supplies, functional equipment, and adequate	159 (100)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4.00	Strongly agree



staffing, leading to frustration and stress among nurses.

Nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital, (93.7)

Port Harcourt work in environments with inadequate lighting, ventilation, and sanitation, which can contribute to physical and mental health problems.

Nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital,

Port Harcourt feel undervalued and unappreciated, leading to decreased job satisfaction and motivation. Lack of recognition and reward can contribute to feelings of frustration and stress.

Nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital,

Port Harcourt are exposed to traumatic and emotional events, such as patient deaths, traumatic injuries, or violent behavior, which can contribute to compassion fatigue, burnout, and stress.

Grand mean

3.64 Agree

Hint: F (frequency); % is percentage. Criterion Mean = 2.50

Table 1 shows the major causes of work stress among nurses in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital, Port Harcourt. All respondents (159; 100%) strongly agreed that inadequate resources and equipment—such as medical supplies, functional tools, and sufficient staffing—create significant frustration and stress. Similarly, 149 (93.7%) strongly agreed that poor working environments, including insufficient lighting, ventilation, and sanitation, negatively affect nurses' physical and mental well-being. A large proportion, 124 (78%), also strongly agreed that high patient-to-nurse ratios increase workload and long working hours, resulting in physical and mental exhaustion. Additionally, 89 (56%) strongly agreed that feeling undervalued or unappreciated lowers job satisfaction and heightens stress, while 57 (36%) strongly agreed that frequent exposure to traumatic events contributes to compassion fatigue and burnout. The grand mean of 3.64, which exceeds the criterion mean of 2.50, indicates that respondents clearly understood the major factors responsible for work stress among nurses in the hospital.



Research Question 2: What is the relationship between stress and job dissatisfaction among nurses working in RSUTH?

Table 4.3: Pearson Correlation Analysis Showing the Relationship between Stress and Job Dissatisfaction Among Nurses Working in RSUTH

Variables		Stress	Job Dissatisfaction	Remark
Stress	Pearson correlation	1	0.912	Very High
	Sig.		0.00	relationship
	N	159	159	
Job Dissatisfaction	Pearson correlation	0.912	1	
	Sig		0.00*	
	N	159	159	

Guide: 0.00-0.19 = very low, 0.20-0.39 = low, 0.40-0.59 = moderate, 0.60-0.79 = high, and 0.80 and above is a very high relationship. Table 2 presents the Pearson Correlation analysis on the relationship between stress and job dissatisfaction. The result revealed a r-value of 0.912, which indicates a very high relationship and $p < 0.05$ indicates that the relationship was significant. Thus, the relationship between stress and job dissatisfaction was very high; this indicates that as stress increases, job dissatisfaction also increases.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Causes of Work Stress Among Nurses Working in RSUTH

The study revealed that most nurses (148; 93%) had a good understanding of the major causes of stress in RSUTH. This finding aligns with Ogundipe et al. (2015), who reported that over 90% of nurses in Nigerian teaching hospitals could identify key stressors, such as excessive workload, staff shortages, and poor remuneration. It also supports Adebayo and Oladele (2016), who found that 92% of nurses were knowledgeable about common stress triggers, including long shifts, emotional demands, and strained interpersonal relationships. The result further indicated a significant relationship between the causes of stress and nurses' behaviour in RSUTH. This agrees with Isah and Oyebode (2017), who noted that 88% of nurses identified stress factors, such as poor working conditions and long duty hours. Similarly, Ohaeri and Akinlade (2018) reported that 93.5% of nurses across multiple teaching hospitals were aware of stress triggers, especially emotional strain and systemic issues like understaffing.

Relationship Between Stress and Job Dissatisfaction Among Nurses Working in RSUTH

The findings showed a very strong positive relationship between stress and job dissatisfaction ($r = 0.912$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that higher stress levels lead to increased dissatisfaction. This aligns with Akintola and Chikoko (2016), who found that heavy workloads, long hours, and inadequate staffing significantly reduced job satisfaction among nurses. Adeoye and Musa (2018) also observed that 78% of nurses experiencing high stress reported low job satisfaction



due to workload, poor management, and low remuneration. The result also agrees with Onasoga et al. (2013), who found that chronic occupational stress from inadequate resources and weak administrative support led to decreased morale. Similarly, Iwu and Iyere (2015) reported that stressors such as shift work and staff shortages significantly reduced job satisfaction. Ogbozor and Nwankwo (2019) further supported this by showing that high stress levels were associated with low job satisfaction and poor work-life balance among nurses.

Empirical Studies

Felmban and Khan (2021) examined the relationship between stress and satisfaction, as well as the broad effects of stress on performance and contentment, using a quantitative approach. The study involved 116 participants from various private companies in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The findings demonstrated the significance of stress's impact on employee productivity and job satisfaction, indicating that stress can either increase or decrease job satisfaction. Sari et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between job stress and productivity in Indonesia's manufacturing sector, with sample data gathered from 93 employees. Using multivariate regression analysis, they found a statistically significant association between the work environment and stress on employees' performance, with a correlation coefficient of 0.972.

Okechukwu (2021) examined how job stability, role conflict, and workload pressure affected employee productivity, using the person-environment (PE) fit theory as the theoretical underpinning. With a sample size of 386 from a population of 1967 employees, data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The results revealed a negative link between employee productivity and workload stress and role conflict, with workload stress and role conflict significantly impacting employee productivity negatively, while job security had little to no impact.

In the same vein, Dim et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between staff performance and stress in a few South-East Nigerian tertiary institutions, focusing on the effects of workload strain and role ambiguity on employee performance. With a sample size of 351 and utilizing descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis, the study found that workload pressure and role ambiguity significantly influenced employee performance negatively.

Biodun et al. (2021) examined how stress affected employee productivity, finding that organizational stress caused by poor time management and task overload impacted the quality of employee productivity. Sucharitha and Basha (2020) investigated how job stress affected employee performance, using leadership as an independent variable. With a sample size of 200 and data gathered through surveys and focus groups, the results showed that participants experienced excessive stress that negatively impacted their performance due to pressure from leadership to perform better. Furthermore, Zangmo and Chhetri (2022) investigated the primary causes of workplace stress and its impact on the productivity of the staff of the Bhutanese Ministry of Health (MoH). Using a self-administered survey questionnaire and census sampling, the results demonstrated that civil servants experienced stress, although not to a severe degree. The workload factor was cited as the main source of stress, followed by deadlines, a bad work environment, role uncertainty, and unfair compensation and incentives. The findings indicated a negative correlation between occupational stress and performance.



Oseremen et al. (2022) examined how workplace stress affected bankers' productivity in the service sector, using a sample size of 400 working staff from banks in Benin City, Edo State. Regression analysis showed that employee workload, role ambiguity, and role conflict were statistically significant, with the regression model explaining 64% of the observed variability in the target variable. Employee productivity in the banking industry was significantly influenced by workload, positively associated with role conflict, and negatively impacted by role ambiguity.

Pandey (2020) investigated the strain-related issues facing bankers and the elements causing stress among bank employees to understand how stress affected worker performance. With data from 200 questionnaires completed by bankers in the Kathmandu valley, the findings demonstrated that the effects of stress had a considerable negative impact on their performance, with a correlation coefficient of 0.926 and a p-value of .000, indicating a higher stress level increased the likelihood of reduced employee output.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data and findings of this study, it was concluded that nurses working in Rivers State University Teaching Hospital (RSUTH) Port Harcourt had good knowledge of the causes of work stress as well as the coping strategies nurses take to manage stress. Meanwhile, it was also concluded that as stress increases, job dissatisfaction also increases among nurses working in RSUTH.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The hospital administrators should provide structured stress management workshops and coping skills training. These programs should focus on practical techniques such as time management, emotional resilience, and conflict resolution to help nurses translate their knowledge into effective stress reduction strategies.
2. The management of RSUTH should implement structured employee wellness programs, including counseling services, stress-relief workshops, and mental health support. These initiatives will help nurses better manage work-related stress and improve overall job satisfaction by addressing their psychological and emotional well-being.



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