

## Perceived Stress During Covid-19 Pandemic Among Doctors and Staff Nurses in India

Giftlin Elizabeth<sup>1\*</sup>, Kavitha Sebastian<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to determine the level of stress healthcare professionals are going through during the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. The sample of the study included 170 healthcare professionals in India who are working in the COVID hospitals. The data is collected through google forms. The tool used to collect the data was Perceived Stress Scale developed by Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein (1983). The results of the study indicated high levels of stress among healthcare professionals. There was no significant difference between male and female, single and married healthcare professionals in their level of stress. The healthcare professionals who are working in Government hospitals are significantly prone to stress than healthcare professionals in Private Institutes.

**Keywords:** *Stress, Healthcare Professionals, Pandemic, India*

In the fight against the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), medical workers globally have been facing enormous pressure, overwork, frustration, discrimination, isolation, a lack of contact with their families, and exhaustion. This severe situation is paving way for mental health problems such as stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, insomnia, denial, anger, and fear in already vulnerable population (Kang et al, Feb 2020).

Healthcare workers are going through toughest phase of their lives while they are serving the extended society without caring about their own lives. The whole medical fraternity frequently endures a multitude of mental challenges under this high pressure to survive and cure threats during this pandemic (Li et al 2020).

Shecher et al (September 2020) in their article titled “Psychological distress, coping behaviors, and preferences for support among New York healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic” quantified several sources of distress, ranging from fears of COVID-19 transmission, clinical challenges, and perceived lack of control, to concerns about family and home life.

<sup>1</sup>B.Sc. Psychology, Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed College for Women, Chennai, India.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Psychology and Behavioral Research, Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed College for Women, Chennai, India

\*Corresponding Author

Received: July 11, 2021; Revision Received: September 07, 2021; Accepted: September 22, 2021

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Du et al (April 2020) in their article titled “Psychological symptoms among frontline healthcare workers during COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan” suggest frontline HCWs should be closely monitored as a high-risk group for depression and anxiety, and given proper training (e.g., COVID-19 knowledge, stress management, self-care) before deployment; some require psychological interventions. Adams, J. G., & Walls, R. M. (March 2020) in their article “Supporting the Health Care Workforce During the COVID-19 Global Epidemic” say that hospital personnel, including caregivers, support staff, administration, and preparedness teams, all will be stressed by the challenges of a prolonged response to COVID-19, and leadership must emphasize the importance of self-care as the center of the response.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *Aim*

To assess the level of stress among the Doctors and Staff Nurses during outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic in India.

#### *Hypotheses*

In order to investigate the objective of the study and after examining the review of literature, the following hypothesis were formulated.

- There will be no significant difference between male and female healthcare professionals in their level of stress.
- There will be no significant difference between single and married healthcare professionals in their level of stress.
- There will be no significant difference between healthcare professionals who are working in Government and Private Institute in their level of stress.

#### *Tools Used in the Study*

The questionnaire contains two parts of which part one contains demographic, and second part consists of closed set of ten questions with fixed responses corresponding to Perceived Stress Scale for systematic assessment and structured interpretation. The PSS scale has satisfactory psychometric properties.

#### *Study Participants*

In this study, healthcare professionals i.e., Doctors and Staff Nurses within the limits of country from various Covid hospitals have been included. The data is collected through google forms. Any doctor or staff nurse with the form link is invited to fill the form.

#### *Sampling*

The sample size of the study was 170 healthcare professionals more specifically 26 Nursing Officers and 144 Doctors. Out of which there were 12 Junior Nursing Officers, 14 were Senior Nursing Officers, 25 were Undergraduates (M.B.B.S), 105 Postgraduates (MD/MS), 14 Super Specialty (DM/Mch). The sample also consists of 102 Females and 68 Males. Out of the 170 healthcare professionals, 52 of them are married and the other 118 are single. 115 are working in Government Institute and 55 in Private Institute.

#### *Duration of the Study*

The duration of the survey was from 11/09/2020 to 22/09/2020.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

18% of the healthcare professionals have been very often unusually upset in case of patient health care since the pandemic. 52% of them have been fairly often upset. 69% (fairly often and very often) of the healthcare professionals feel nervous and stressed in providing healthcare since the pandemic. 45% (never and almost never) of them did not feel confident in their ability to handle professional challenges since the pandemic. 19% (fairly often and very often) of them are confident in facing these challenges.

66% (never and almost never) of the healthcare professionals feel that routine patient care/interaction was not going their way since the pandemic. 15% (fairly often and very often) of them feel that routine patient interaction indeed are how they want it to be. It is evident that 52% (very often and fairly often) of the healthcare professionals are unable to cope up with providing healthcare since the pandemic. 45% (fairly often and very often) of them are able to control their irritations. 55% (fairly often and very often) of them often feel that they are on top of things in their workplace. 78% (very often and fairly often) of the healthcare professionals are angered due to the restrictions in providing healthcare which reduces their productivity. It is evident that since the pandemic, 74% (very often and fairly often) of them feel that difficulties in patient care was piling up so high that were unable to overcome them.

**Table 1: Stress level among male and female healthcare professionals:**

Sl. No.	Gender	Perceived Stress Scale Score (in percent)			Total %
		Low stress (0-13)	Moderate stress (14-26)	High stress (27-40)	
1	Female	5.88	43.14	50.98	60
2	Male	4.41	36.76	58.82	40
<b>Total</b>		5.29	40.59	54.12	100

The table shows that out of the 170 healthcare professionals 102 (60%) of them are females and 68 (40%) of them are males. When we see moderate stress, it is higher in females (43.14%) than in males (36.76%). In accordance with high stress, male healthcare professionals (58.82%) tend to be higher than females (50.98%). This indicates that males relatively are in high stress level than females.

**Table 1.1: Mean, SD, and ‘t’ value between male and female healthcare professionals for level of stress.**

Variable	Sample	N	Mean	SD	‘t’ value
Level of stress	Male	68	25.91	5.05	1.46
	Female	102	24.61	5.97	

An independent sample’s t test was computed to investigate if there were any difference among male and female healthcare professionals in level of stress. The results indicated that there is no significant difference among male and female healthcare professionals,  $t(168) = 1.46, p > 0.05$ . The mean scores obtained by male healthcare professional ( $M = 25.91, SD = 5.05$ ) were not significantly higher when compared to the mean scores obtained female healthcare professional ( $M = 24.61, SD = 5.97$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that “There will be no significant difference between male and female healthcare professionals in their level of stress.” was accepted.

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**Table 2: Stress level of single and married healthcare professionals:**

Sl. No.	Marital status	Perceived Stress Scale Score (in percent)			Total %
		Low stress (0-13)	Moderate stress (14-26)	High stress (27-40)	
1	Married	5.77	46.15	48.08	30.59
2	Single	5.08	38.14	56.78	69.41
<b>Total</b>		5.29	40.59	54.12	100

The table shows that out of 170 healthcare professionals 52 (30.59%) of them are married whereas 118 (69.41%) of them are single. The moderate stress level is higher in married people (46.15%) in comparison to the single people (38.14%). The high stress level is higher in single people (56.78%) when compared to the married ones (48.08%). This can be caused due to the lack of social support around them, their place of work maybe far from their parental home and also the precautionary requirement to be quarantined alone.

**Table 2.1: Mean, SD, and ‘t’ value between single and married healthcare professionals for level of stress.**

Variable	Sample	N	Mean	SD	‘t’ value
Level of stress	Single	118	25.32	5.35	0.65
	Married	52	24.71	6.37	

An independent sample’s t test was computed to investigate if there were any difference among single and married healthcare professionals in level of stress. The results indicated that there is no significant difference among single and married healthcare professionals,  $t(168) = 0.65, p > 0.05$ . The mean scores obtained by single healthcare professionals ( $M = 25.32, SD = 5.35$ ) were not significantly higher when compared to the mean scores obtained by married healthcare professionals ( $M = 24.71, SD = 6.37$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that “There will be no significant difference between single and married healthcare professionals in their level of stress.” was accepted.

**Table 3: Stress level of healthcare professionals who are working in Government and Private Institute:**

Sl. No.	Working at	Perceived Stress Scale Score (in percent)			Total %
		Low stress (0-13)	Moderate stress (14-26)	High stress (27-40)	
1	Government Institute	3.48	39.13	57.39	67.65
2	Private Institute	9.09	43.64	47.27	32.35
<b>Total</b>		5.29	40.59	54.12	100

The table shows that, out of the 170 healthcare professionals, 115 (67.65%) of them work in Government Institute whereas 55 (32.35%) of them work in Private Institute. It can be seen that low stress among doctors and nurses who are working in private institute (9.09%) is higher than government institute (3.48%). This indicates that healthcare professionals in

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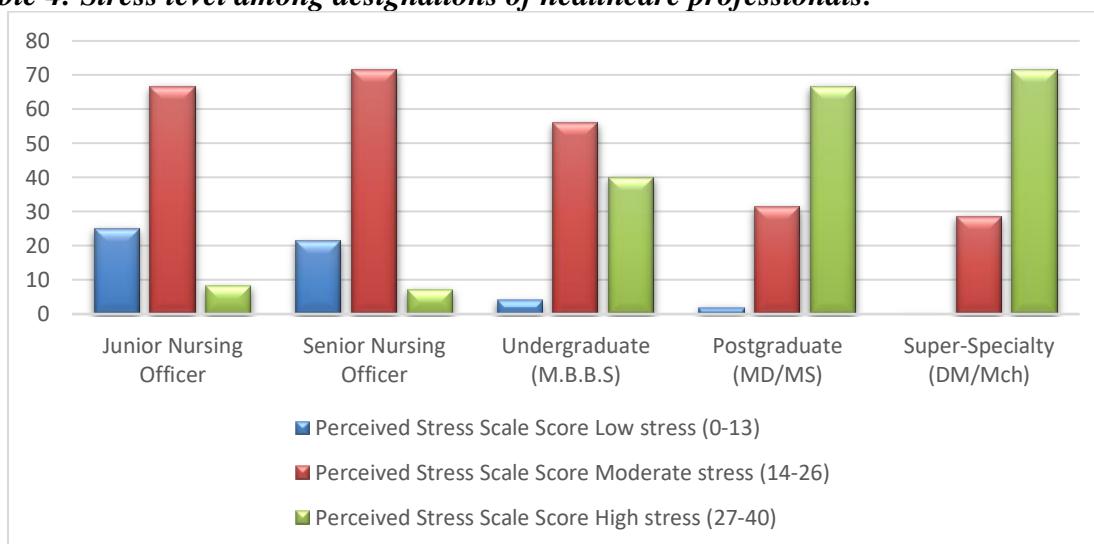
private institute are relatively low in stress. The high stress level is higher among healthcare professionals who are working in government institute (57.39%) than private institute (47.27%). This may be due to the higher workload and patient count in the government hospitals which can cause them relatively high levels of stress.

**Table 3.1: Mean, SD and ‘t’ value between healthcare professionals who are working in Government and Private Institute for their level of stress.**

Variable	Sample	N	Mean	SD	‘t’ value
Level of stress	Government Institute	115	25.81	5.42	2.29
	Private Institute	55	23.71	5.97	

An independent sample’s t test was computed to investigate if there were any difference among healthcare professionals who are working in Government and Private Institute in level of stress. The results indicated that there is a significant difference among healthcare professionals who are working in the Government and Private Institutes,  $t(168) = 2.29$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . The mean scores obtained by healthcare professionals in Government Institute ( $M = 25.81$ ,  $SD = 5.42$ ) were significantly higher when compared to the mean scores obtained by healthcare professionals in Private Institute ( $M = 23.71$ ,  $SD = 5.97$ ). The healthcare professionals who are working in Government hospitals are significantly prone to stress than healthcare professionals in Private Institutes. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that “There will be no significant difference between healthcare professionals who are working in Government and Private Institute in their level of stress” was not accepted.

**Table 4: Stress level among designations of healthcare professionals:**



Among the 170 healthcare professionals, 12 (7.06%) of them are Junior Nursing Officers, 14 (8.24%) of them are Senior Nursing Officers, 25 (14.71%) of them are Undergraduates (M.B.B.S), 105 (61.76%) of them are Postgraduates (MD/MS) and 14 (8.24%) of them are Super-Specialty (DM/ Mch). Among Nursing Officers, it can be seen that moderate stress is the highest as indicated by the bar diagram. Among Doctors especially Undergraduates, moderate stress (56%) is high followed by high stress of 40%. In accordance with Postgraduates and Super-Specialty, their high stress is clearly evident. This can be due to the relatively higher responsibility they are carrying during this pandemic.

## CONCLUSION

Among the 170 respondents, 9 of them have low perceived stress, 69 of them have moderate perceived stress, 92 of them have high perceived stress. More than 45 per cent have less confidence in their professional ability because of the uncertainty of the situation. 78 per cent of healthcare professionals are often angered due to the restrictions in providing in healthcare. 74 per cent of them feel that their work keeps piling up. This study clearly shows the high levels of stress that our healthcare professionals go through during this pandemic. Therefore, they should be given psychological assessment and help from time to time. Virtual psychological help must be made available for them such as support groups and online counselling.

The study examined the level of stress among healthcare professionals. The following were the conclusion of the study.

- There was no significant difference between male and female healthcare professionals in their level of stress.
- There was no significant difference between single and married healthcare professionals in their level of stress.
- There was a significant difference between healthcare professionals who are working in Government and Private Institute in their level of stress.

### Limitations

- The study included only doctors and staff nurses from COVID hospitals. It does not include other health care workers in various groups who are also subjected to equal amount of stress due to pandemic.
- The study focused on broad range of participants rather than focusing on specific hospital or hospitals within a region. This would have given data regarding the issues within the locality.
- The study emphasized on perceived stress among the healthcare professionals and not on the factors amounting to stress.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- A larger sample can be studied.
- The study can focus on a particular hospital or hospitals within specific region.
- Other staff who work in COVID hospitals can be included.
- The level of stress among healthcare professionals in the subsequent waves can be studied.

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### **Acknowledgement**

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Elizabeth G. & Sebastian K. (2021). Perceived Stress During Covid-19 Pandemic Among Doctors and Staff Nurses in India. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(3), 1626-1632. DIP:18.01.150.20210903, DOI:10.25215/0903.150