

Relationship among Job Demand-Resources, Job Stress, Organizational Support and Nurses' Job Performance

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Abstract: Job demand resources refers to the degree to which the working environment contains stimuli that require some effort, which suggests that job demands may lead to negative consequences if they require additional effort to achieve work goals and the physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job which are necessary in the achievement of goals. Job stress has been associated with various undesirable effects in terms of physical, psychological, and behaviour disorders and commonly associated with jobs that require a lot of direct interactions with people. Organizational support is based on the observation that when the leadership and management of an organization show concern about the commitment of the employees towards the organization. Job performance refers to how effective employees are in accomplishing their tasks and responsibilities related to direct patient care. Improving the performance of employees has been a topic of great interest to practitioners as well as researchers. The aim of the study is to analysis the relationship among job demand-resources, job stress, organizational support and nurses' job performance. Data for this study were obtained from existing literatures on job performance. The methodology heavily relied on existing previous literatures on the subject being dealt with. The findings of the study turn out to be true; the study will contribute to both theory and practice. Through the present study, the researcher expects the findings to shed light on the research conducted to analysis the relationship on job performance.

Key words: Job demand-resources, Job stress, Organizational support, Job performance

INTRODUCTION

Job Performance:

Improving the performance of employees has been a topic of great interest to practitioners as well as researchers (Madsen *et al.* 2005). But what is job performance and how it is measured so that it reflects the individual's contribution, effort and motivation into the job has been a topic of great debate amongst scholars. Indeed, there is no consensus concerning the definition of the term "job performance" among experts.

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary (2010) defines it as the execution of a task through the doing of action. It is in line with Carson *et al.* (1991) define it as work-related behaviours and the resultant outcomes. Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, and Weick (1970) define job performance as something that is individual in nature. It has also been addressed that job performance refers to the behaviour of employees regardless of the results of that behaviour which is key in differentiating performance from outcomes (Campbell & Campbell, 1988). As behaviour, performance includes both observable actions and unobservable actions such as thought processes and decision making; all of which are under the control of individual employees. This explains that positive performance by an employee does not always lead to a success, because it may be affected by other factors such as the economy and the support of fellow employees (Lawler, 1973).

Task Performance:

Task performance refers to critical activities in the execution of activities that are specified by the job description. It is also known as "a goal oriented assessment practice" (Campbell & Campbell, 1988). It is also referred to as in-role performance, which focuses on activities that contribute to the organization's technical core (Guidice & Mero, 2012), and behaviours that directly serve the goals of the organization (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). This contribution can be both direct (e.g., in the case of production workers), or indirect (e.g., in the case of managers or staff personnel) (Sonntag & Frese, 2002). Murphy (1989) describes task performance as focusing on role-prescribed activities, which means task performance is formally specified and mandated by the job description (Mohamed & Anisa, 2013). In the nursing context, Greenslade and Jimmieson (2007) stated that task performance incorporated behaviors that were core components of being a nurse.

Contextual Performance:

Contextual performance is an aspect of job performance which refers to activities which facilitate the social and psychological growth of the organization (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). It has also been defined as the behaviour which creates an environment necessary for the execution of activities which lead to the accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives (George & Brief, 1992; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). Occasionally, contextual performance is referred to as extra-role performance, defined as employee behaviours that are discretionary believed to directly promote the effectiveness of the organization, without necessarily directly influencing the employee's productivity (Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 1994). In other words, extra-role performance involves actions that go beyond the stated formal job descriptions and that increase organizational effectiveness (Bakker *et al.*, 2004). According to Bakker *et al.* (2004), employees engage in extra-role performance because they believe there are available resources within the organization they desire (Bakker *et al.*, 2004).

Job Demand-Resources:

Developed by Bakker and his associates, the job demand resources can be used as a tool to manage human resources in organizations because it can be applied to a wide range of occupations to improve employee wellbeing and performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In the present study, the negative psychological process or the health impairment process of job stress is the main focus as it lies at the heart of the model (Bakker *et al.*, 2003) and because every occupation may have its own specific risk factors associated with job stress (Bakker *et al.*, 2004). Next, discussion on the characteristics of work environment of job demands and job resources is offered.

Job Demands:

In general, job demands refers to the degree to which the working environment contains stimuli that require some effort (Jones & Fletcher, 1996), which suggests that job demands may lead to negative consequences if they require additional effort to achieve work goals (Peeters *et al.* 2005). It also refers to aspects of the job that require sustained effort, and, as such incur certain costs as a result (Beutell, 2010). Job demands can be physical, psychological, social, or organizational.

Job demands are usually divided into two: challenge job stressors and hindrance job stressors. The term "hindrance job stressors" refers to "unpleasant, undesirable and excessive" factors in the course of work which get in the way of the ability of an individual to achieve goals associated with the specific job that he or she does such as role conflict, role overload and role ambiguity and are viewed as negative aspects of job demands (Judge *et al.*, 1998). On the other hand, the term "challenge job stressors" refers to stressors which have the potential to promote the employee's personal growth and career growth as well and may include factors like high levels of workload, time pressure and numerous responsibilities and are viewed as positive stressors due to their characteristic potential to reward the employee (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001).

The following discusses four types of job demands that are purportedly able to contribute to job stress and hence job performance. They are quantitative demands, physical demands, emotional demands, and shift work. These job demands are selected as they reflect the job nurses do.

Quantitative Demands:

Quantitative demand refers to the amount of work that individuals perceive is expected of them (Coetzer & Rothmann, 2007) within a little time, and operationalized in terms of (high) work pace (van Emmerik, & Peeters, 2009). A concept associated with quantitative demand is workload. Broadly speaking, workload may refer to work time commitments such as the number of hours devoted to paid work and work-related activities (Jimmieson *et al.*, 2004), but it has also been referred to as time pressure, in which individuals perceive they have too many things to do and not enough time to do them (Fronea *et al.*, 1997). The two main dimensions of quantitative demands at work seem to be intensity (work pace), also referred to as work pressure (Kwakman, 2001), and extensity (number of working hours) (Kristensen *et al.*, 2004).

The quantitative demands could lead to quantitative overloads, which is defined as the amount of work that exceeds what an individual can accomplish in a given period of time (Perrewe & Ganster, 1989). Further, role overload occurs when employees feel they are facing excessive quantitative demands (i.e. there is too much work to do in too little a time), excessive qualitative demands (i.e. they do not have the sufficient skills to do the work at hand), or both (Jex, 1998). Role conflict, defined as having two or more tasks that are incompatible, is also a contributor to workload (Tsutsumi *et al.*, 2008).

2.3 Physical Demands:

The nature of work has changed from agricultural to industrial, and to knowledge-based. In conjunction, physical demands have either decreased or remained the same from highly industrialized work to work that mostly involves offering services (Kacmar *et al.*, 2009). The term physical demand refers to stressors that are

associated with the physical setting such as the humidity, lighting, temperature and noise. It is also referred to as the intensity of the effort that is required physically in the course of working (Nahrgang *et al.*, 2011). It is operationalized to assess the extent to which the job requires strenuous movements like bending, physical strength, lifting, or carrying objects (Demerouti & Geurts, 2004).

2.4 Emotional Demands:

Emotional job demands refers to the affective component of work and the degree to which one has to face emotionally stressful situations because of one's work (van Emmerik, & Peeters, 2009). It is also defined as the frequency one is exposed to emotionally demanding situations (Bakker *et al.*, 2005) and to those aspects of the job that require sustained emotional effort because of (extensive) contacts with others (Vegchel *et al.*, 2004) and clients (De Jonge & Dormann, 2003).

The emotional demands of human service work are associated with consequences such as burnout which is a negative health outcome. It is a result of the interaction with clients in the course of work and is seen as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Karriker & Williams, 2009). Other studies found that emotional demands in nursing can lead to feelings of exhaustion and negative, callous attitudes toward work (Bakker *et al.*, 2005), leading to emotional strain (van der Heijden *et al.*, 2008). As a consequence, nurses have sleepless nights, and do not recover adequately from the demands faced during the workday, which may eventually lead to a state of breakdown or ill health (van der Heijden *et al.*, 2008). Besides, they are generally unable to perform adequately and the quality of their care declines (Le Blanc *et al.*, 2001).

2.5 Shift Work:

In modern society, shift work has become a very common phenomenon. Shift work refers to a work arrangement whereby employees go to work in turns to ensure that the services being provided are available around the clock (Karriker & Williams, 2009). It is also defined as working outside the normal daytime hours (Rosa & Colligan, 1997), in which at least 50% of the work is done after 8:00–16:00 hours (Hedges & Sekscenski, 1979). It also involves part-time work and weekend work (Costa, 2003). Nightshift is a common work schedule in health environments (Smith *et al.*, 2007).

Shift schedules have several characteristics, such as direction of rotation, speed of changeover between various types of shifts, length of single shifts and shift cycles, and positioning of days off, which may influence the fatigue, performance, and well-being of workers (Karlson *et al.*, 2009). On top of that, Garbarino *et al.* (2002) revealed that shift work interferes to a varying extent with the biological circadian rhythms (such as the sleep/wake cycle) and affects brain function and performance (with increased errors and risks) as well as social and family life. In conjunction, it was found that many shift workers reported discomfort or health problems and as a result they often moved to different occupations (Lin & Hsieh, 2002). As an illustration, the practice has been blamed for causing a myriad of health problems such as cluster headaches, fatigue, and stress, loss of concentration, absenteeism and low libido (Fido & Ghali, 2008). Additionally, the exposure to artificial lighting for whole night interfere the production of the hormone melatonin which is in return increases the risk of suffering from breast cancer as the hormone is a tumour suppressor (Karriker & Williams, 2009), especially among females (Garbarino *et al.*, 2002).

2.6 Skill Variety:

Skills variety, as the name suggests, refers to the incorporation of various skills and talents in the course of undertaking work which is thought to create motivation and establish meaningfulness by eliminating boredom among the employees (Mehta & Shah, 2005). Hackman and Oldham (1980) define skill variety as the level to which the job needs different activities to fulfil it and it needs a person with a number of various skills and talents. Skill variety is considered as the idea that a work possesses and can use different kinds of skills in doing job (Graham, 2009). Owing to nursing profession as a job that requires a variety of skills that nurses must have at work, this study defines skill variety as the different skills and talents that all nurses must obtain in order to perform their tasks and duties successfully.

2.7 Task Significance:

Task significance is another aspect of meaningful work in the Hackman and Oldham's job characteristic model which promotes motivation among employees. Also, it is one of the components in the Job Diagnostic Survey at the task level of job resources (Bono & Judge, 2003). It is referred to as the extent to which a job is important to people in the community as well as people in the organization (Mehta & Shah, 2005). In other words, task significance refers to the extent the job has an influence on the lives of other people, whether they are in the immediate organization or living in the world at large (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Fullagar and Kelloway (2009), agreed that when employees feel that their jobs are insignificant, this can negatively influence their performance. Task significance involves both internal significance (i.e. how important the task is to the organization) and external significance (i.e. how proud employees are to tell their relatives, friends, and

neighbours what they do and where they work) (Garg & Rastogi, 2006). Lin and Hsieh (2002) found that if the employees feel that the task they are doing is significant, they will perform at their full efforts.

2.8 Task Identity:

Task identity is similar to task significance in a way that it refers to broader perspectives of work and whether the job has an impact on other people's lives and the extent to what the job entails. Performance has always been linked to individual activities in specific, isolated activities that do not have to have an impact on anyone besides the doer of the task. In the end, employees will perform flawless tasks when the tasks are first identified to them (Fullagar & Kelloway, 2009).

Task identity is one of the characteristics of the job characteristic model that is associated with personal growth and development among employees besides enabling them to achieve their goals and objectives while at work (Erez & Judge, 2001). Provision of employees with opportunities to maximize the use of their talents and abilities in the course of working towards achieving clear goals and objectives, they are more likely to perceive the job as being critical in the fulfilment of their personal goals as well. However, research has shown that there is a relationship between task identity and burnout (Griep *et al.*, 2009). In Taiwan, Lin and Hsieh (2002) found that the employees' age is a factor that influences the relationship between task identity and organizational commitment. Meanwhile, in Nigeria, it was found that task identity and job identity have a significant relationship with doctors' experience of burnout (Adebayo & Ezeanya, 2011).

2.9 Feedback:

Feedback is a part of Hackman and Oldham job characteristics model (Goldenhar *et al.*, 2001). It enables employees to have knowledge of the outcomes of the work that they have undertaken or how successful that they have been in converting their efforts into performance. Feedback is defined as the process where the output part of the system is returned back to the input for more effective output. It refers to objective information about progress and performance brought about from the job itself, from supervisors or from any other information system (Garg & Rastogi, 2006). In other words, job feedback is defined as the direct communication that an employee receives about the task after it is completed (Graham, 2009).

Job feedback can be received from the customer, co-workers or managers and whether it is positive or negative, it needs to be communicated to the performer of the task at a suitable time (Graham, 2009). In performance feedback, jobs differ in the amount and quality of feedback about performance (Bakker *et al.*, 2010). Generally, job feedback directs employees to the big picture so that they can perform tasks better (Bowen & Lawer, 1992). Further, it aids the employees in developing a sense of meaning and purpose of working (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). It is one of the many windows of opportunities for employees to develop and grow their career growth (Mikkelsen *et al.*, 2000), and prevent work problems (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). As an intrinsic resource (Bakker *et al.*, 2003), performance feedback is very important, which is a part of job resources (Demerouti *et al.*, 2000).

2.10 Job Security:

Job insecurity has been recognized as a chronic condition affecting the general workforce in this digital age (Ito & Brotheridge, 2007). According to Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984), and Ito and Brotheridge (2007), job insecurity concerns not only with the potential loss of employment but also with the uncertainty regarding job and career issues including one's level of responsibility and promotional opportunities. Besides, globalization and continuous international pressure on organizations to perform better with fewer resources are reflected in the changing psychological contracts between employers and employees (Rothmann & Joubert, 2007). Particularly, employees are expected to give more in terms of time, effort, skills and flexibility, whilst job security, career opportunities, and lifetime employment are diminishing (Rothmann & Joubert, 2007).

Various factors influence job security include the economy whereby there is more job security in times of economic expansion and very little in times of recessions; laws regulating employment and personal factors such as education, work experience, and the work industry (Ilhan *et al.*, 2008). Generally, employees of the government particularly in the education, law enforcement, and healthcare sectors are considered more secured in comparison to jobs in the private sector (Siegrist *et al.*, 2009). In relation, nursing is considered one of the most secured jobs all over the world and in spite of the fact that a nurse may leave the place of employment for one reason or another, finding another job is usually not problematic (Wu *et al.*, 2007). However, different nurses have different levels of security as far as their employment is concerned; licensed practical nurses have high levels of job security in comparison to other nurses as well as the general employed population. On a contrary, nurses who work in non-hospital settings have relatively less job security in comparison to their colleagues that are employed in hospitals and in particular, government hospitals (Sperlich *et al.*, 2009).

2.11 Job Stress:

Beehr (1995) defined job stress as a situation in which some characteristics of the work situation are thought to cause poor psychological or physical health, or to cause risk factors making poor health more likely. Janssen *et al.*, (1999) argued that stress occurs when (1) resources are threatened by 'demands' (e.g. work overload or role stress), (2) resources are lost, and (3) levels of return do not match one's investments of resources. Further, Le Blanc *et al.* (2001) believe that the reactions (or strains) can be expressed in different ways including physically, behaviourally, and psychologically. In addition, stress-reactions can differ in their intensity. In comparison, McGuire and McLaren (2009) have shown that high demands are more stressful than low demands.

Cooper and Payne (1988), have identified a number of variables related to work stress that are classified as external or internal in nature. Particularly, external variables concern with factors that are outside a particular worker and include job, organization, and environment. Meanwhile, internal variables concern with factors related to the workers themselves and is usually described as individual-level influences (Hsieh, 2004).

Some scholars believe that the extent of an employee's stress at the workplace is dependent on the perceptions of his/her abilities and confidence in the process of engaging with challenges he/she may face in the daily life in the organizations where the employee works (Judge *et al.*, 2001). Similarly, the transactional model of stress proposed by Byrne and Hochwarter (2008) asserts that stress may be considered a result of an imbalance between demands and resources or resulting from situations where the pressure being exerted on an individual is more than the individual's ability. The model considers stress to be the result of the interaction between an individual and their environment whereby it may result in stress if the factors in their environment are viewed negatively as threats but may not result in job stress if they are viewed as challenges (Settoon *et al.*, 1996). Thus the existence of stress according to this model is dependent on the perceptions of the individual employee and therefore employees may be trained on the ways to handle situations that have the potential to result in stress. The theory also recommends that the best technique in the process of stress management is the assessment and appraisal of the stressful event or events and how an employee does this determines the amount of stress that he or she experiences (Wayne *et al.*, 2002).

2.12 Organizational Support:

Organizational support theory is based on the observation that when the leadership and management of an organization show concern about the commitment of the employees towards the organization, the employees reciprocate by showing commitment towards the organization (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1990). The employees view the organization as a source of social and emotional resources such as respect and care; if the organization regards its employees highly, it enables them to meet their emotional needs such as the need for approval, esteem, and association (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001).

Organizational support theory postulates that the extent to which employees think that their organization values their contribution and is interested in their overall wellbeing is known as perceived organizational support (POS) (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to the organization's contribution to positive reciprocity dynamic with employees as they tend to perform better in a bid to pay back POS (Erdogan & Enders, 2007). It reflects the quality of the social exchange that takes place between an employee and the employer (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The development of perceived organizational support (POS) among employees is facilitated by the tendency of employees to assign human like characteristics to the organization and that the actions of the organization's representatives are perceived to portray the mind of the organization itself rather than the personal motives of those representatives (Hekman *et al.*, 2009). This is further facilitated by the legal, moral and financial responsibilities of the organization as far its representatives are concerned.

Theoretical Framework:

In the studies on the relationship between job demands and job resources, and job stress, job demands factors such as quantitative demands, physical demands, emotional demands, and shift work (Tourigny *et al.*, 2010) have been shown to influence job stress. In addition, job resources factors such as skill variety, task significance, task identity, feedback, and job security (Ayyagari *et al.*, 2011) have all been found to influence job stress.

In another group of studies, the literature also reveals that organizational support influences job stress (Dawley *et al.*, 2010; Karatepe, 2011). Studies also revealed that organizational support influences job performance (Dawley *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, job stress was also found to influence job performance (Jamal, 2011). Given that job stress is one of employee responses to the stimuli in the environment (the stimuli here refers to job demands and job resources), it is therefore possible to theoretically link the work conditions with job performance.

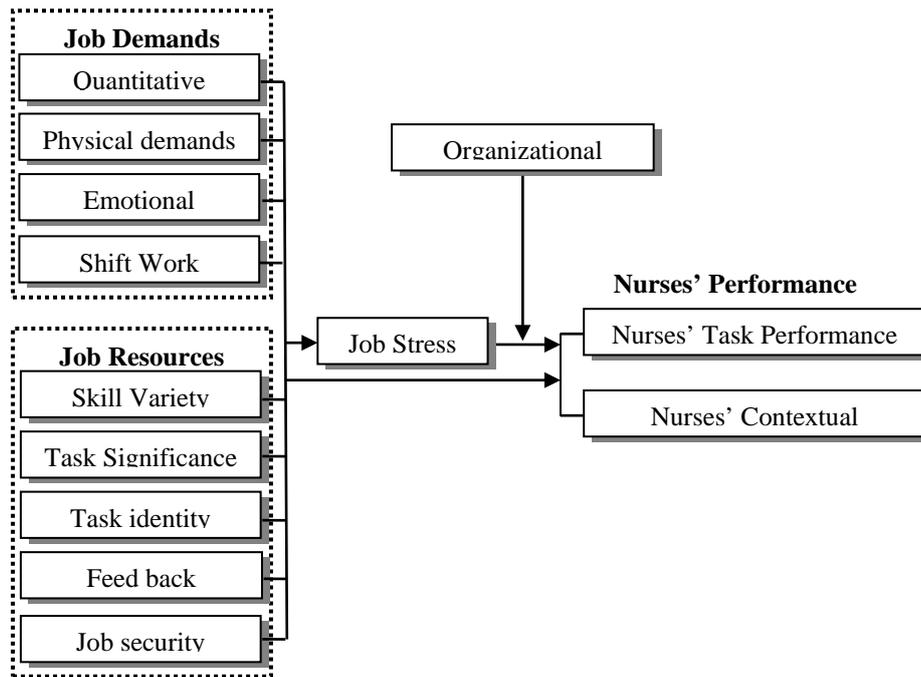


Fig. 1: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical relationship between job demands and resources, job stress, organizational support and job performance can be schematically diagrammed as shown in Figure 1. The first independent variable in the present study is job demands which comprise four factors namely quantitative demands, physical demands, emotional demands, and shift work. The second independent variable is job resources comprising five factors namely skill variety, task significance, task identity, feedback, and job security. The dependent variable is nurses' performance. Job stress was hypothesized to mediate the relationship between variables of job demands, job resources, and nurses' performance, while organizational support is hypothesized to moderate the relationship between job stress and nurses' performance.

In brief, as shown in Figure 1, job demands and job resources are expected to produce a response from employees at work such that job demands will make employees feel stressful but job resources will decrease job stress. For instance, the more demanding their job is, the more likely they will be experiencing work stress. However, when employees perceive that their job is interesting and challenging, the less stress they will experience. Regardless of the sources of job stress, employee job performance will tend to be affected. It is hypothesized that the higher the stress level, the poorer the job performance will be. However, organizational support at work is expected to mitigate the stressful condition at work and hence enhance job performance.

Relationship Between Job Demand-Resources, Job Stress, Organizational Support And Nurses' Job Performance:

Relationship between Job Demand-Resources and Job Stress:

This section looks at the empirical studies on the relationship between job demands, job resources, and job stress. Job demands are usually associated with causing job stress in employees whereas job resources are credited with reducing the impact of job demands in the causation of job stress besides other negative effects (Fernandez-Lopez *et al.*, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model is used to explain the effect of job demands and resources on job stress. At the heart of this model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) lays the assumption that every occupation may have its own specific risk factors associated with job stress. Job demands are usually associated with causing job stress in employees (Fernandez-Lopez *et al.*, 2006). For instance, high levels of quantitative and emotional work demands were found to correlate with high levels of stress (Mintz-Binder & Sanders, 2012). Parry-Jones *et al.* (1998) indicated that increased workload of nurses were the main sources of stress. In addition, both role overload and shift work had a significant positive effect on job stress (Tourigny *et al.*, 2010). Rotating shift work is positively correlated with job stress. Shift work disruption is positively correlated with job stress (Tourigny *et al.*, 2010). Similarly, Leonard *et al.* (2000) found that 25% of employees' workload among other management issues as the cause for stress at the workplace.

Many studies have investigated the relationship between job characteristics and job stress variables (Fogarty & Kalbers, 2000). To summarize the literature on job design and stress, previous research has focused

on a linear, negative relationship between job scope (characteristics) and stress (Jackson & Schuler, 1985). In other words, low job characteristics are often associated with stressful contextual factors (Fogarty & Kalbers, 2000). For instance, insufficient communication and lack of performance feedback about job performance are significant contributors to stress (Collins & Killough, 1989). When an employee does not receive acknowledgement, his/her job is depreciated (Olofsson *et al.*, 2003).

Relationship between Job Stress and Job Performance:

Many studies have investigated the relationship between job stress and job performance. Some of these found that high job stress led to low job performance (Welker-Hood, 2006). However, a few other findings have reported an inverted U-shaped curve (Cohen, 1980), and a positive relationship (Keijsers *et al.*, 1995).

Most of the studies that have focused on the relationship between job stress and job performance have leaned towards the negative effects of stress on job performance and have ignored the fact that not all stress is negative and that some amount of stress is necessary for the performance of individuals in all aspects of their lives. There is a substantial amount of research that has focused on positive stress as well as its effects on the performance of employees (Organ & Konovsky, 1989). Yerkes and Dodson (1908) revealed the inverted U-shaped relationship between stress and performance in a laboratory experiment that was carried out using rats in three trials whereby low, moderate and high levels of stimulus were used. Studies have supported the existence of the inverted U relationship between job stress and job performance among employees in the industrial context such as Selye (1977) and McGrath (1976). Also, Scott (1966) demonstrated that individual performance increased with an increase in the amount of stress up to a specific point and then performance starts to decrease (Organ & Lingl, 1995).

In general, the studies discussed in the previous paragraph argue that stress enhances performance as long as the stress levels are moderate but is detrimental to job performance while at high or moderate levels (Organ & Konovsky, 1989). However, the inverted U theory of the relationship between job stress and job performance is not universally accepted and hence the proposition of a negative linear relationship between job stress and job performance and a linear positive relationship between the same variables (Salami *et al.*, 2010).

In short, the relationship between job stress and job performance can be divided into four kinds, namely a positive relationship, a negative relationship, no relationship and an inverted u-shaped relationship. The next section deals with each group of research findings.

Negative Relationship:

A negative relationship between job stress and performance was proposed by those who consider job stress as being primarily negative for the organizations and its employees (Westman & Eden, 1996). Advocates for this proposition found constant job stress to be extremely aversive to employees as they have to spend most of their time and energy dealing with stresses which negatively impact their performance (Jamal, 2011).

Jamal (1984) assessed the relationship between job stress and job performance besides withdrawal behaviour among 440 nurses in two hospitals in Canada. The stressors investigated were role ambiguity, role overload, role conflict, and resource inadequacy. Nurses' performance was operationalized by job performance, motivation and patient care skills. Withdrawal behaviour was measured by absenteeism, tardiness, and anticipated turnover. Data were analysed in multiple regression analyses, curvilinear co-relational coefficients, and canonical relationships. The findings supported a negative relationship between job stress and job performance. In a different study, Ida *et al.* (2009) investigated the relationship between job stress and performance among nurses that were members of a Japanese nursing association. Results revealed that the job performance of the nurses, both contextual and task, performance was affected by the stressors which included medical risks and sickness-absences leading to a reduction in their performance.

Positive Relationship:

According to Jamal (2011), the advocates of a linear positive relationship between job stress and job performance usually associate job stress with "challenge" (Hatton *et al.*, 1995). In addition, they view any problems as occasions for positive actions and enhanced job performance. Moreover, linear positive relationship indicates that if the level of job stress is low, employees do not feel any challenge and hence do not necessarily perform better. When the level of job stress is intermediate, the employees will be moderately aroused and challenged and hence will perform in a moderate manner. When job stress is high, the employees are best challenged and perform their best (Jamal, 2011). Such theory has received empirical validation (Muse *et al.*, 2003).

Knoop (1994) believes that the more importance a person gives to a value and the more desirable it appears to be, the more psychological and physical effort the person will spend. This phenomenon may be called positive stress. In a different context, Singh and Singh (2010) studied 210 front level managers to examine the role of stress on organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). They found that stress was positively correlated with organizational citizenship behaviour directed toward individuals (altruistic and courtesy). This result

suggests that role stress does not hinder the organizational citizenship behaviour. In addition, under small levels of job stress, challenge is absent and job performance is poor (Meglino, 1977).

Curvilinear U-Shaped relationship:

AbuAlRub (2004) investigated the effects of job-related stress on job performance among 263 American nurses and non-American nurses. She revealed a curvilinear relationship (U-shaped) between job stress and job performance as illustrated in Figure 1. Nurses who had moderate levels of job stress did not perform their jobs as good as those nurses who reported low or high levels of stress.

When nurses have low levels of stress, the negative effects of job stress do not affect them both mentally and physically, so that they perform better and with more productivity. In contrast, when nurses experience high level of stress, they are expected to be more activated. They will challenge working conditions and emerge more powerful once they do their tasks properly. These nurses are characterized by being super-humans who are proud of themselves. In other words, high stress is positive since it creates a sense, cooperation and active competition among nurses

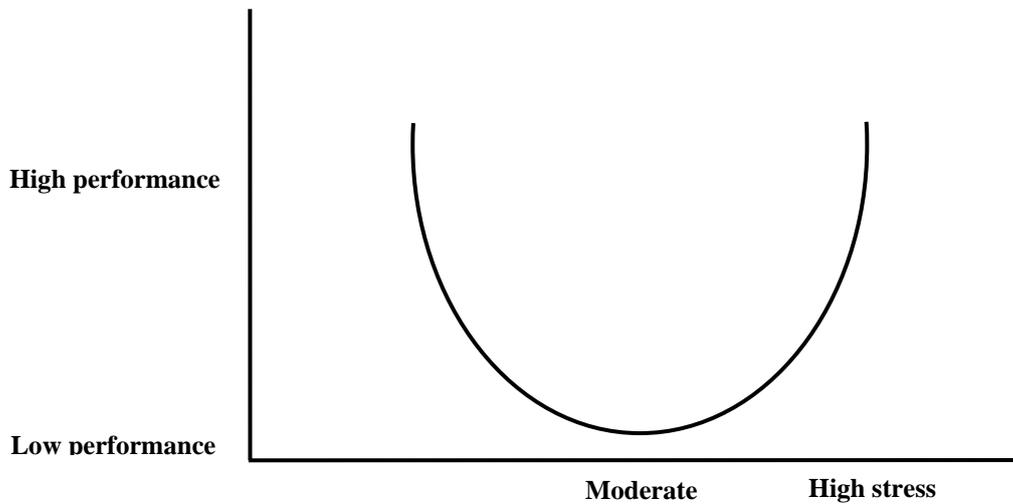


Fig. 1: U-Shaped Relationship between Stress and Performance
Source: AbuAlRub (2003)

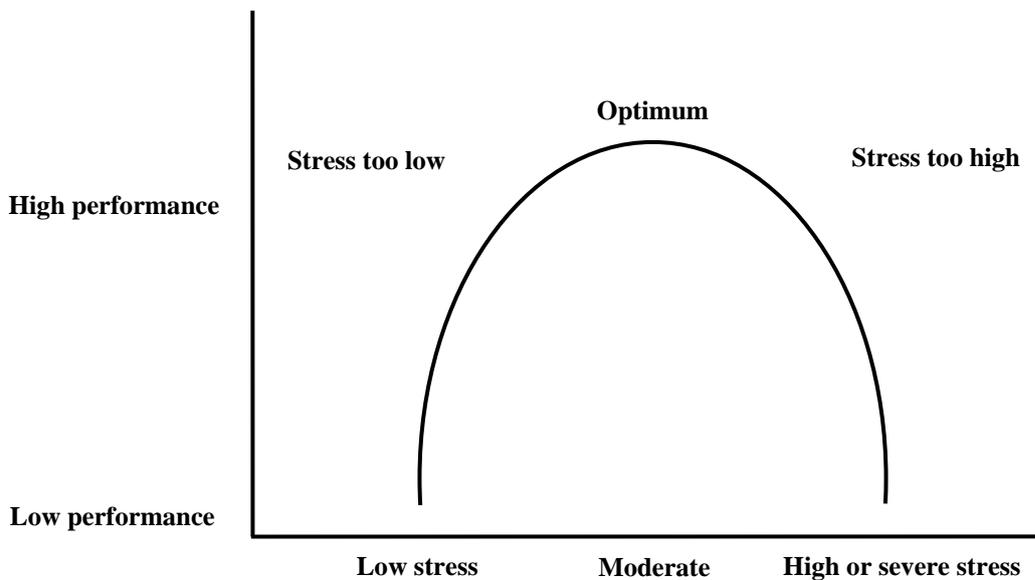


Fig. 2: Inverted U-Shaped Relationship between Stress and Performance
Source: Umstot (1988)

On the contrary, it is possible for nurses experiencing moderate level of stress to have some of the negative effects on their mental and physical health. As a result, they will lack motivation and thus become threatened. This unfortunately, may contribute to low level of performance (AbuAIRub, 2003). Similar to his previous suggestion, AbuAIRub (2004) opted for a support group to be set up for the nurses to help them deal with stress.

In contrast, the inverted-U theory of the job stress-job performance relationship appears to be a combination of the negative linear relationship in which stress is bad, and the positive linear relationship in which stress is good by suggesting that increasing stress is good to a point, beyond which it becomes bad. In other words, the inverted-U suggests that much stress is necessary to motivate optimal job performance (McGrath, 1976). Figure 2 illustrates curvilinear relationship inverted (U-shaped) between job stress and job performance.

In another study, Hunter and Thatcher (2007) surveyed banking employees in American national bank and found a relationship between job stress and performance. They pointed from their observation that a moderate level of stress is considered challenging owing to long working hours and repetitive work reduces work commitment and performance. Besides, Keijsers *et al.* (1995) indicated that stress is productive up to a certain extent and increases performance.

Relationship between Organizational Support:

In this section, the role of organizational support in buffering the effect of jobs stress will be considered, as one of the objectives of the present research. To recap, organizational support is generally defined as the concern shown by leadership and management of an organization (Murphy *et al.*, 2002).

Perceived organizational support (POS) are an important resource (Hobfoll, 1989) that could bolster employees' confidence in their ability to cope with role demands (Lazarus, 1991). Models of stress (Hobfoll, 1989; Lazarus, 1991) and research suggest that POS could directly reduce role stress as well as cushion the negative effects of role stress (Jawahar *et al.*, 2007). This is because organizations that care about their employees' well-being tend to reduce unnecessary work complications and distractions for their workers and tend to specify and clarify job expectations and norms for their employees in order to better prepare them for work assignments (Jawahar *et al.*, 2007) or help them meet the needs for emotional support (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001). Indeed, in a study conducted with sales personnel, Stamper and Johlke (2003) reported POS to be negatively related to role stressors.

Job stress and organizational support have also been studied in their role as antecedents of organizational citizenship behaviour which is loosely related to contextual performance as far as job performance is concerned (Judge *et al.*, 2001). Singh and Singh (2010) indicated a positive correlation between job stress, perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behaviour among employees. Meanwhile, Wang and Shu (2008) sought to establish the relationship between techno-stress, role stress, and organizational support. Techno-stress in this case refers to the negative psychological link between people and the introduction of new technologies. The study indicated that techno-stress experienced by employees was positively related to role stress and that perceived organizational support moderated the relationship between techno-stress and role stress in a way that the relationship is negative when the perceived organizational support is higher.

Jawahar *et al.* (2007) focused on social support as a means of reducing the harmful effects of stressors. In general, when people feel that they have social support from others, they report less psychological distress or strain. Besides, Carlson and Perrewe (1999) argued that social support reduces the negative effects of role stressors by helping employees cope with stress.

Relationship between Organizational Support and Job Performance:

In general, job performance is considered to be linked to organizational support (Hung & Wong, 2007). If an organization treats an employee well enough, he/she can be expected to devote greater effort towards helping the organization achieve its goals (Debrah & Ofori, 2001). Hung and Wong (2007) believe that when workers are given positive feedback about their performance, they respond by improving their job performance.

Most studies that have focused on the relationship between POS, job satisfaction and job performance have been carried out in the Western countries and very few have been carried out in the Middle East and Asian countries and specifically among health care employees, particularly among nurses working in government hospitals (Miao & Kim, 2010). Results of Miao and Kim's (2010) study in the Asian context (i.e. Chinese) supported the existing result in the Western literature about the positive effect of perceived organizational support and job satisfaction on OCBs and work performance. The researchers argued that since the Chinese respond in a manner similar to Westerners, there is no difference on the effects of these variables on performance between them. But is still debatable whether the findings of the Western studies can be generalized to other situations in other parts of the world especially to the health care sector and particularly nursing in government hospitals in the Middle East and other Asian countries (Miao & Kim, 2010).

The relationship between perceived organizational support (POS), organizational citizenship behaviour (a variant of contextual performance), and task performance was carried out in India by Singh and Singh (2010). The specific objectives of this study were to explore if there was a positive association between organization

support and aspects of organizational citizenship behaviour (organization and individual) such as altruistic behaviour and courtesy. They hypothesized that perceived organizational support (POS) associated positively with organizational citizenship behaviour (organization and individual). Results of this study established that POS was a good predictor of organizational citizenship behaviour (organization and individual). Moreover, the results indicated that perceived organizational support (POS) was more strongly positively associated with organizational citizenship behaviour-organization than organizational citizenship behaviour-individual.

Conclusion:

This research has investigated the factors influencing nurses' job performance among the Ministry of Health hospitals in Saudi Arabia using job demands and resources model based on conservation of resources theory (COR), social exchange theory, and negative linear theory that may help nurses' managers to realize nurses' performance behavior. The study showed the level of nurses' job performance among hospitals nurses in Saudi Arabia to be moderate. Also the study found direct significant relationships among the tested job demands and resources variables with nurses' job performance. Moreover, the study showed partial support for the role of job stress as a mediator in a relationship between job demands and resources (JD-R) and nurses' job performance. Job stress mediated the relationship between job demands and resources variables (except job security) and two dimensions of job contextual performance (compliance and volunteering for additional duties).

In addition, the study showed partial support for the role of organizational support as a moderator in a relationship between job stress and nurses' job performance. Organizational support moderated the relationship between job stress and all four dimensions of nurses' job task performance (i.e. provision of information, coordination, provision of support and technical of care), and organizational support moderated the relationship between job stress and two dimensions of nurses' job contextual performance (i.e. interpersonal support and volunteering for additional duties).

In sum, despite the mixed results, in general, the present study managed to find support for the JD-R model and conservation of resources theory in that job demands and resources are able to produce a psychological reaction, which subsequently affect job performance. In this study, the psychological reaction was stress, which was considered an important and reasonable reaction to the stimuli in the work environment. The study also confirmed, albeit partially, the significance of organizational support in mitigating the effect of stress on job performance of nurses at work.

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