

## Evaluation of work stress in health care receptionists: A cross sectional study

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### ABSTRACT

**Back ground:** Receptionists' work is complex, demanding and intense, involving a high level of commitment to patients, colleagues, and the practice. **Aims and objectives:** This study was aimed at an evaluation of stress levels in female health care receptionists to facilitate development of effective strategies of stress management in the hospitals. **Materials and Methods:** In this cross-sectional study, a total of 30 female receptionists working in various departments of our hospital. Perceived stress scale was used to analyze stress levels. **Results:** Stress scores were high in married women when compared with unmarried. However, it was not statistically significant. Higher stress scores were observed in age group 28-50 years. However, it was not statistically significant. Work experience and annual income does not affect the stress scores as we have observed similar stress scores in all work experience groups and annual income groups. Stress scores were higher in participants who qualified matriculation to plus two. However, it was not statistically significant. **Conclusion:** We conclude that moderate stress levels were observed in female receptionists. We recommend that conducting stress survey every year to understand stress levels of reception staff and to implement effective stress management methods.

**Key words:** Work stress, Health care receptionists, Receptionists.

### Introduction

Excessive stress has negative impact on the physical and mental health as well as the productivity of both the organization and the employee, which is a growing concern of organizations.[1] Stress refers to the situation at which a person's skills and ability do not match with the work demands and requirements, and/or when the employees' needs are not fulfilled by the job environment.[2]

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Baron defined stress as psychological and physiological discomfort that is experienced when work environment demands exceed a person's coping strategies.[3] Prolonged work stress results in decreased performance, absenteeism, difficulties in concentration and communication, more turnover rates.[4]

Receptionists' work is complex, demanding and intense, involving a high level of commitment to patients, colleagues, and the practice.[5] It was reported that in most of the hospitals, older married women are working as receptionists. These women were untrained and problems of receptionists can be solved by offering adequate training to them.[6,7,8] Although literature exists on stress levels of medical doctors and nurses, there has been little research on other medical professions, such as physician assistants, medical technicians and administrative staff, who work together as a team in hospitals.[9] This study was

aimed at an evaluation of stress levels in female health care receptionists to facilitate development of effective strategies of stress management in the hospitals.

## Materials and methods

### Participants

The present cross-sectional study was conducted at Department of physiology, Little Flower Medical research Centre, Angamaly, after obtaining ethical clearance. In this cross-sectional study, a total of 30 female receptionists working in various departments of our hospital, were selected based on purposively sampling (deliberate, non-random sampling of the target population). After the study was explained to participants, all subjects provided written informed consent.

### Methods

**Perceived stress scale (PSS):** It is a 10-item self-report questionnaire that measures the person's stress levels in the past month. The perceived stress scale is the only empirically established index of general stress

appraisal. The range of the scores in PSS is 0 to 40. Scores ranging from 0-13 are considered as low stress group, scores ranging from 14-26 are moderate stress group and scores ranging from 27-40 are high stress group.<sup>[10,11]</sup>

**Data analysis:** Data was analyzed by SPSS 20.0. The values are expressed as mean and standard deviation. Unpaired t test was used and P value <0.05 was considered as significant.

**Results:** Results were presented in table no 1 to table no 4. Stress scores were high in married women when compared with unmarried. However, it was not statistically significant. Higher stress scores were observed in age group 28-50 years. However, it was not statistically significant. Work experience and annual income does not affect the stress scores as we have observed similar stress scores in all work experience groups and annual income groups. Stress scores were higher in participants who qualified matriculation to plus two. However, it was not statistically significant.

**Table no: 1 Marital status wise stress scores in the participants**

S.no	Marital status	Number of respondents	Stress score	P value
1	Single	13	23.769 ± 5.76	0.766393
2	Married	17	24.353±5.04	

(n=30) (\*P<0.05 is significant)

**Table no: 2 Age wise stress scores in the participants**

S.no	Age ( years)	Number of respondents	Stress score	P value
1	18-27	13	23.538± 6.15	0.620982
2	28-50	17	24.529 ± 4.65	

(n=30) (\*P<0.05 is significant)

**Table no: 3 Work experience wise stress scores in the participants**

S.no	Work experience ( years)	Number of respondents	Stress score	P value
1	≤1 to 3	18	24.056 ±5.87	0.952582
2	3 to ≥6	12	24.167 ±4.49	

(n=30) (\*P<0.05 is significant)

Table no: 4 Education wise stress scores in the participants

S.no	Educational status	Number of respondents	Stress score	P value
1	Matriculation to Plus 2	6	26.167±4.67	0.289358
2	Graduation to Post graduation	24	23.583±5.38	

(n=30) (\*P&lt;0.05 is significant)

Table no: 4 Annual income wise stress scores in the participants

S.no	Annual Income in INR	Number of respondents	Stress score	P value
1	1-2 lakhs	18	24.056±5.87	0.952582
2	2-3 lakhs	12	24.167±4.49	

(n=30) (\*P&lt;0.05 is significant)

## Discussion

Healthcare workers suffer increased oxidative stress after prolonged work hours, especially while still on duty. Possible mechanisms for this include increased workload and, perhaps, psychological stress as well.[12] Receptionists are face of the department as they are the staff to whom the patients and relatives approach and interact once they enter the hospital. The reception staff may be more stressful as they have to deal with enquiries, complaints and other issues of patients and their relatives. Moderate stress levels were observed in all participants.[13]

It was reported that stress levels are higher in women than men and married women report higher levels of stress than single women.[143] Our results are in accordance with these reports as we have observed higher stress scores in married women. It was reported that that money and the economy are sources of stress for women. [14] In the present study we have not observed difference in stress scores in different annual income groups. It was reported that the biggest stress is felt among women of 25-55 years of age.[15] We agree with these reports as we have observed high stress levels in age group of 28-50 years.

## Limitations

The major limitation of our study was low sample size.

## Conclusion

We conclude that moderate stress levels were observed in female receptionists. We recommend that conducting stress survey every year to understand stress levels of reception staff and to implement effective stress management methods.

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