

# Life Stress as a Predictor of Job Satisfaction, Physical Health and Mental Health

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**Abstract:** This study examined the influence of life stress on job satisfaction, physical health and mental health. 100 respondents (72 males and 28 females) in sales and manufacturing organizations with age range of 31-57 years participated in the study. The respondents were asked to complete the measures of Standard Stress Scale, Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire and SF-36v2 Health Survey. Regression analysis was performed on two dependent variables- job satisfaction and health. The findings of the study indicated that life stress significantly and negatively predicted job satisfaction. Further, life stress significantly and negatively predicted physical and mental health. The result was discussed in the light of available research findings. Implications of the study and avenues for future research were also discussed.

**Keywords:** life stress, job satisfaction, physical health, mental health, organization.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization has defined health in terms of not just the lack of disease but as a condition of absolute physical, social and mental well-being [24]. Physical health is a state of well-being which helps us in day to day activities and tasks. It is very crucial as well as a visible aspect of an individual's well-being. The World Health Organization defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stressors in life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" [25] (p.1). The presence of mental health ensures overall optimum functioning. The importance of a good health cannot be overstated in a person's life. Several mental health issues like anxiety and depression as well as physical health issues like asthma, chronic pain, arthritis, stroke, cardiovascular diseases and cancer are related to stress [20].

People whose life stress was accompanied by low level of physical or psychological strain were healthier as compared to the group of people with high level of physical and psychological strain who became ill under stress [8]. Stress negatively correlated with physical health and mental health [4]. Physical health was significantly associated with stress [19]. A study reported that lifetime stress shared a positive relationship with mental and physical symptoms [21]. Regression analysis showed that mental health symptoms and physical health symptoms were predicted by exposure to stress throughout the life. Chronic stress can have negative consequences on our health especially if an individual is old and unhealthy as compared to acute stress that generally activates adaptive responses in an individual [17].

Another important aspect of our life is our workplace. A person spends a significant amount of time at his workplace. This makes it important for us to have a healthy environment present not only in our bodies but also at our places of work. We can all agree that the general state of our health and work assume a great deal of importance in our lives. It is important for both these domains to be functioning well and in sync with all others. Issues with either one of them can have long-term and often irreparable consequences for us. Stress is one such factor that has the power to significantly affect both our health and job satisfaction. Stress is defined as the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change [18]. Presence of stress in our lives has widespread effects spanning over both the individual as well as the organization he or she works in. Although, a certain level of stress is a necessary prerequisite for optimal performance, it

however creates havoc when exceeding safe limits. Our body does not respond well and cannot cope successfully with high levels of stress. Stress can also adversely affect the work environment thereby reducing job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is defined as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” [10]. Job satisfaction involves evaluation of the characteristics of the job and having a positive feeling about it. Positive feelings indicated high level of job satisfaction whereas negative feelings indicated low level of job satisfaction [15]. The congruence between a person’s expectation about his/her job and the actual outcomes is what determines job satisfaction [3]. When this factor is derived from within the individual that satisfies a drive, the factor is known as intrinsic satisfaction [9]. External factors are those originating outside of the individual.

A substantial amount of studies have illustrated that employees’ work and personal life is related to job satisfaction [12], [1], [5]. A study explored how worker’s personal life and work life is related to job satisfaction. It was found that negative changes in worker’s personal life decreased job satisfaction among them. Whereas work changes that were positive were related to high job satisfaction and negative work changes were related to low job satisfaction [16]. Another study found significant relationship between life stress and job satisfaction [26]. A study reported significant association between job satisfaction and psychological strain. People whose strain levels were high also reported being in unsatisfied environment, poor relation with employees, troubled marital lives and lower levels of overall job satisfaction level [13].

The present research studied stress in relation to health and job satisfaction. Health was studied in terms of its dimensions- physical and mental health, whereas job satisfaction was studied in terms of dimension- intrinsic, extrinsic as well as the total score of job satisfaction. By studying stress as a predictor of health and job satisfaction, we can uncover the specific influences stress has on these variables. Results can help identify the most affected areas by stress, so future researches can focus on alleviating the problems and help relieve people. We hypothesize that stress will significantly and negatively predict health as well as job satisfaction.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### Participants:

The study conveniently sampled 100 participants from private organizations in Delhi NCR. The age range of participants was 31-57 years. Their education qualification ranged from Graduation to Doctorate of Philosophy. They belonged to lower middle to upper middle socio-economic backgrounds. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study before obtaining consent and completion of the questionnaire.

### Tools:

#### 1. *Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ):*

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, short form of 20 items, was used to assess the satisfaction of the employees with their respective jobs. This measure assesses 3 dimensions-intrinsic, extrinsic and overall job satisfaction. Overall reliability of job satisfaction ranged from 0.87 to 0.92 [23].

#### 2. *SF-36v2 Health Survey:*

SF-36v2 is a self-report health survey comprising of 36 questions. The survey assesses 8 factors categorized under 2 summary measures- physical component summary (PCS) and mental component summary (MCS) [22]. Reliability ranged between 0.65 to 0.94 [11].

#### 3. *Standard Stress Scale (SSS):*

Standard Stress Scale was used to assess life stress [6]. The scale is the short version comprising of 11 items. The Cronbach’s alpha ranged between 0.58 to 0.66 for ‘others’ category and school students respectively. Overall alpha was found to be 0.62 [7].

### Analysis:

The collected data were analyzed for Pearson’s Bivariate Correlations and Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for two dependent variables- job satisfaction and health with the help of SPSS.



potential which may reduce job satisfaction. We may also misunderstand the problem at play and instead blame characteristics of the job itself, which explains the specific affect on intrinsic satisfaction. Life stress correlated negatively with both, physical health and mental health and significantly and negatively predicted physical health and mental health. These findings are corroborated by other studies. The studies have found high stress leading to poor mental and physical health. A cross-sectional study that sampled middle age and old age adults found stress to be negatively correlating with physical health and mental health. As the level of stress increased, the physical and mental health deteriorated [4]. Another study reported that quality of life is negatively affected by stress. High level of stress increases poor mental and physical health [14]. Stress is known to cause various ailments in the body including and not limited to cardiovascular diseases, depletion of white blood cell count, hormonal imbalance and reduced immunity. Excessive and continuous amounts of stress are toxic for our mind and body as it keeps us from taking our experiences positively and enjoying the world around us. Life stress also significantly and negatively predicted mental health. This means that stress causes an excessive strain on both our mind and body which deteriorates our health and leads to long-lasting complications. Social functioning which is a dimension of mental health was however, interestingly positively correlated with stress. This would mean that in times of stress or due to stress people may turn their attention outwards, toward other people in attempts to forget their woes. This socializing results in an increased frequency of their visits to loved ones or friends which may boost their social life. It is no secret that in time of need, we turn to our close companions for support and guidance. Sharing our problems also makes our heart, soul and mind lighter which makes us feel better. We seek the comfort of others. The results of the study give specific directions for future research in alleviating distress. A possible shortcoming was exclusion of social and spiritual health from the overall dimension of health. Future researches can take a holistic approach towards health for deeper insight. In conclusion, stress affects a wide variety of domains in our life negatively and does not just limit itself to physical or mental health. It affects our workplace as well.

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