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**Syeda Noor Ul Ain Ali Jafri**

*AWD Consultant, AJK-WHO*

**Muhammad Asadullah**

*PhD Scholar, IBA Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan*

**Rabia Naqvi**

*Riphah International University, Islamabad*

**Khalid Rehman**

*Senior Lecturer, IBA, Gomal University D.I.Khan*

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### **Abstract**

*The study is planned to examine the moderating role of Islamic Work Ethic in Job Stress and Nurses' Job Performance Relationship at healthcare centers of Muzaffarabad city in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. We employed a cross-sectional design to undertake the study and data were collected from the respondents using a questionnaire. The respondents of the study included 223 female nurses employed at healthcare centers of Muzaffarabad city in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Pearson's Correlation and multiple regression analysis were applied to analyze the data through SPSS Version 23. The results of the study revealed a significant negative relationship between job stress and job performance ( $r = -0.326^{**}$ ) and positive relationship between Islamic Work Ethic and Job Performance ( $r = 0.701^{**}$ ). Further, we found that Islamic Work Ethic weakened the negative relationship between Job Stress and Nurses' Job Performance. The study has limitation of using self-report measures that may result in response bias. Further, we suggest that future researchers may test the moderating effect of other buffers such as*

*spirituality and organizational virtuousness in relationship of job stress and job performance.*

**Key Words:** Islamic Work Ethic, Job Stress, Job Performance, Healthcare Centers

## **Introduction**

During the last three years, extant literature has examined job stress and its impacts on job performance of employees in different organizational contexts. This literature depicts that major focus of research on this domain remained examination of causes and consequences of work-related stress in the organizations. Studies also examined the detrimental effects of work-related stress on job performance as well as general wellbeing of employees<sup>1</sup>. These studies further depict that due to stressors such as work-overload and work-family conflict, employees in general and especially employees working in health sector may experience acute stress that in turn may negatively affect their job performance. This work-related stress in some cases may become acute enough that it results in work-disengagement as well which is predictor of poor job performance of employees. Consequently, employees feel de-motivated and their thrust for personal achievement is reduced and they may exhibit poor performance at workplace. Studies further suggest that this stress for longer period may hurt individuals' efficiency at workplace<sup>2</sup>.

Based on the findings of these studies, organizational development (OD) managers started devising mechanisms to effectively cope with the job-related stress and its individual as well as organizational

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<sup>1</sup> Dar, Laiba, Anum Akmal, Muhammad Akram Naseem, and Kashif Khan. "Impact of Stress on Employees Job Performance in Business Sector of Pakistan" *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 2019: 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> A, E Demerouti Bakkar, and W Werbeke, "Using the Job Demands-Resources Model to Predict Burnout and Performance," *Human Resource Management*, 2016: 83-104.

outcomes. This triggered research on this domain as well and researchers started identifying mechanisms that may help in reducing the negative outcomes of stress. Researchers identified an array of stress coping strategies in the organization to enhance the performance of employees.<sup>3</sup>

However, we found weaker evidence of research on normative factors that may help in curtailing the adverse outcome of job-related stress on employees' work performance.<sup>4</sup> These studies suggest that there are certain normative factors that may buffer the negative outcomes of job-related stress.<sup>5</sup> One of these buffering factors may include knowledge of Islamic Work Ethic. Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) is differentiating right from wrong.<sup>6</sup> However, IWE as a buffer in relationship of work stress and nurses' work performance lacked the attention of the researchers.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Aasia Manzoor, Hadia Awan, and Sabita Mariam, "Investigating the Impact of Work Stress on Job Performance: A Study on Textile Sector of Faisalabad," *Asian Journal of Business and Management Science*, 2012: 20-28.

<sup>4</sup> Stavroula Leka, *Work Organization and Stress: Systematic Problem Approaches for Employers, Managers and Trade Union Representatives* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Qasim, Muhammad Irshad, Mehwish Majeed, and Syed Tahir Hussain Rizvi, "Examining Impact of Islamic Work Ethic on Task Performance: Mediating Effect of Psychological Capital and a Moderating Role of Ethical Leadership," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2021; Mohamed Farah Abdi, Siti Fatimah Dato, Wira Muhamad Nor, and Nor Zuhairatun Md. Radzi, "The Impact of Islamic Work Ethics on Job Performance and Organizational Commitment," *5th Asia-Pacific Business Research Conference*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2014. 1-12 & Khurram Khan, Muhammad Abbas, Asma Gul, and Usman Raja. "Organizational Justice and Job Outcomes: Moderating Role of Islamic Work Ethic," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2013: 1-13.

<sup>6</sup> Wahibur Rokhman, "The Effect of Islamic Work Ethics on Work Outcomes," *Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies*, 2010: 21-26 & S. Nasr, "Islamic Work Ethics," *Hamdard Islamicus*, 7, no. 4 (1984): 25-35.

<sup>7</sup> Qasim, Irshad, Majeed, and Rizvi, "Examining Impact of Islamic Work Ethic on Task Performance".

The evidence clearly suggests that there exists a theoretical and contextual research deficit in this domain.<sup>8</sup> We need clarity on theoretical underpinnings explaining the role of normative guidelines in buffering the adverse impact of job stress on performance of nurses, employed at tertiary healthcare centers. Therefore, we examined the moderating role of IWE in job stress and nurses' work performance relationship to address this theoretical and contextual research deficit.

Based on the assumptions of social learning theory, we argue that employees having knowledge of IWE may believe that nursing profession is a noble work aimed at helping the humanity. This sense of work may help the nurses to effectively cope with work related stress successfully thereby enhancing their job performance.

## **Literature Review and Hypotheses Development**

Job stress has been widely examined in broader domain of individual as well as industrial psychology. Researchers have examined the individual and organizational outcomes of job stress. Among these, job performance remained extensively researched construct.<sup>9</sup> The concept of job-related stress in the profession of medicine and healthcare management was first introduced by Seyle in 1936.<sup>10</sup> Stress is psycho-physical condition that takes place due to the inability of an individual to effectively counter the pressure and demand of situation.<sup>11</sup> Studies suggest that job related stress hinders employees' job performance which in turn may reduce overall

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<sup>8</sup> Jungwe Park, "Work Stress and Job Performance," *Statistics Canada*, 2018: 1-13.

<sup>9</sup> Usman Bashir, and Muhammad Ismail Ramay, "Impact of Stress on Employees Job Performance: A Study on Banking Sector of Pakistan," *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 2010: 122-26.

<sup>10</sup> Hans Seyle, "A Syndrome Produced by Diverse Noxious Agents," *Nature*, 1936: 132-38.

<sup>11</sup> Rubina Kazmi, Shehla Amjad, and Delawar Khan, "Occupational Stress and its Effect on Job Performance: A Case Study of Medical House Officers of District Abbottabad," *Journal of Ayub Medical College Abbottabad*, 2008: 135-39.

organizational productivity.<sup>12</sup> While examining the effect of work stress and work performance of medical professionals, studies<sup>13</sup> reported an inverse relationship between the both. Earlier in 2004, a curvilinear association was found by AbuAlRub<sup>14</sup> among both these variables showing that mild stress initially increases job performance but later increased job stress decreases job performance of nursing staff. Dar reported similar findings in the banking context of Pakistan. They reported a curvilinear association among work stress and employee's work performance. Similarly, findings of a recent study<sup>15</sup> also reported adverse outcomes of job stress among medical professionals. Their findings further suggest that job related stress among medical professionals adversely affected their job performance. Earlier,<sup>16</sup> a study reported similar findings in Pakistani perspective and informed that job performance was negatively predicted by job related stress among employees.

Thus, it is evident that job-related stress is detrimental to the employees' job performance as well as their general wellbeing. Evidence from healthcare sector also support these findings. Hence it can be hypothesized that

H1: There is a significant negative relationship between job stress and nurses' job performance.

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<sup>12</sup> Simona Gilboa, Arie Shirom, Yitzhak Fried, and Cary Cooper, "A Meta-Analysis of Work Demand Stressors and Job Performance: Examining Main and Moderating Effects," *Personnel Psychology*, 2008: 227-71.

<sup>13</sup> Kazmi, Amjad & Khan, "Occupational Stress and its Effect on Job Performance," 135-39.

<sup>14</sup> AbuAlRub & Raeda Fawzi, "Job Stress, Job Performance, and Social Support among Hospital Nurses," *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 2004: 73-78.

<sup>15</sup> C. Mimura, and Griffiths, "Effectiveness of Current Approaches to Workplace Stress Management in the Nursing Profession: An Evidence Based Literature Review," *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 2017: 10-15.

<sup>16</sup> Manzoor, Awan, & Mariam, "Investigating the Impact of Work Stress on Job Performance," 20-28.

## **Moderating Role of IWE in Work Stress and Nurses' Work Performance Relationship**

Extant literature has examined the direct impact of work-related stress on employees' work performance in different organizational contexts that included higher education, banking and services industry. However, there is a scarcity of research on buffering mechanisms for job stress and job performance relationships. Further, studies on healthcare sector examining these variables are demanding more and more empirical evidences. Hence, there is dire need to bridge this research gap in general and especially in healthcare management. Proceeding section offers insight into relationships understudy.

Although there are multiple mechanisms that may buffer the negative impacts of job stress on medical professionals' job performance, normative approach may work effectively in this regard.<sup>17</sup> One of the normative mechanisms to curtail negative outcomes of work stress may include work ethics.<sup>18</sup> In a Muslim organization, Islamic Work Ethic may prove effective tool in this regard<sup>19</sup> that may moderate the negative outcomes of work stress on job performance.

Studies suggest that adding ethical contents in HRD programs of an organization will help in reducing the adverse effects of job related stressors which in turn will result in better work outcomes for the individuals and the organization itself. IWE has orientations from teaching of Quran and Sunnah and may help an individual differentiating right from wrong. Further, it offers concept of work as

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<sup>17</sup> Ruhi Mehnaz, Muhammad Asadullah, Bashir Hussain and Shams Ur Rehman, "Impact of Islamic Work Ethics on Teachers' Job Performance at Elementary School Level in Punjab," *The Discourse*, 2020: 131-39.

<sup>18</sup> Novia Zahra. *The Relationship Between Islamic Work Ethics and Religiosity on Job Performance: The Mediating Effect of Work Engagement* (Utara : Universiti Utara Malaysia, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Khan, Abbas, Gul, & Raja, "Organizational Justice and Job Outcomes," 1-13.

noble task aimed at serving the humanity with a selfless passion.<sup>20</sup> Hence, we may argue that knowledge of IWE may foster the sense of selfless service to humanity among the nurses which in turn may result in improved performance of employees irrespective of the presence of work-related stress.<sup>21</sup>

Based on the assumptions of social learning theory, we believe that employees especially nursing professionals having knowledge of IWE may perceive nursing work as noble profession and help to humanity at large. Hence this may reduce the adverse impacts of job stress on performance of the nurses. We may propose

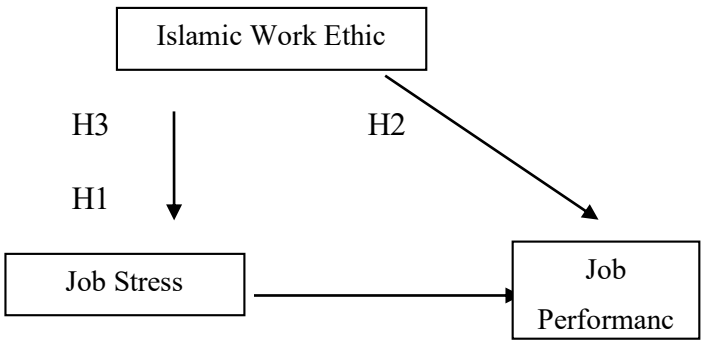


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

<sup>20</sup> Wahibur Rokhman, “The Effect of Islamic Work Ethics on Work Outcomes,” *Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies*, 2010: 21-26.  
<sup>21</sup> Aprianita, and Mafizatul Nurhayati, “The Effect of Job Insecurity on Job Performance with Islamic Work Ethics and Employee Engagement as Mediation Variables (Study at Bank Muamalat West Jakarta Region),” *European Journal of Business and Management Research*, 2021: 20-25 & Muhammad Tufail, Sajjad Hussain, Khurram Shahzad, & Anum, “Combined Effect of Job Insecurity and Islamic Work Ethic on Job Satisfaction and Job Performance,” *Journal of Business & Economics*, 2018: 1-24.



H2: Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) positively affects nurses' job performance.

H3: Islamic Work Ethic moderates job stress and nurses' job performance relationship.

## **Design and Procedure**

We employed a cross-sectional design to undertake the study. First the questionnaires were personally administered to the respondents (female nurses) of the study. The data collected from the useable questionnaires were entered in SPSS and descriptive and inferential analyses were made. Later, results were reported to make inferences and draw conclusions.

## **Respondents**

Respondents of the study included all the 587 female nurses employed at all the healthcare centers of Muzaffarabad city in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Initially, we administered 250 questionnaires to the randomly selected nurses in the city. However, 230 respondents returned the questionnaires. Further, 7 incomplete questionnaires were excluded leaving behind 223 workable questionnaires. The ages of the nurses ranged from 21 years to 48 years. Similarly, 137 nurses were employed at public sector hospitals while 86 of them were employed at private sector hospitals. As far as geographical location of the respondents is concerned, 144 respondents were employed at urban area hospitals while 79 of them were employed at urban area hospitals.

## **Measures**

We used self-report measures to seek the responses of the participants. Responses were anchored on a five-point Likert scale that ranged from Strongly Disagree=1 to Strongly Agree=5.

## **Job Stress**

We measured Job Stress through an 8-items scale developed by Ali, et al. (2022).<sup>22</sup> The reliability of this scale was 0.91 showing a high internal consistency. Sample items include (i) I have adequate control or input over my work duties.

## **Islamic Work Ethic**

We measured IWE through a 17-items scale developed by Ali (1988)<sup>23</sup>. The reliability of this scale was 0.88 showing a high internal consistency. Sample items include (i) Life has no meaning without Work, and (ii) Work enables man to control nature.

## **Job Performance**

We measured job performance of nurses through an 18-items scale developed by Koopmans et al. (2015).<sup>24</sup> The reliability of this scale was 0.93 showing a high internal consistency. Sample items include (i) I took on extra responsibilities, and (ii) I made problems at work bigger than they were.

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<sup>22</sup> A. M. Ali, H. Hori, Y. Kim & H. Kunugi, "The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 8-Items Expresses Robust Psychometric Properties as an Ideal Shorter Version of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 21 Among Healthy Respondents From Three Continents," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2022.

<sup>23</sup> A. Ali, "Scaling an Islamic Work Ethic," *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 1988: 575-83.

<sup>24</sup> L. Koopmans, C.M. Bernaards, V.H. Hildebrandt, Buuren, S. Van, Beek, A.J. Van Der, Vet, H.C.W. de. "Improving the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire Using Rasch Analysis," *Journal of Applied Measurement*: 2014, 160-75.

## Results

**Table 1: Reliability and Variance**

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Job Stress	8	0.91	0.97	0.86
Islamic Work Ethic	17	0.88	0.78	0.94
Job Performance	18	0.93	0.73	0.85

The above table shows that Composite Reliability (CR) and (ii) Cronbach's Alpha Reliability for these constructs exceeded from 0.7 showing a high internal consistency. Further, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) also exceeded from defined value of 0.60 which depicts that all the items converge on their indicators demonstrating good convergent validity.

**Table 2: Descriptive and Correlation Analysis**

Variables	Mean	SD	Job Stress	Islamic Work Ethic	Job Performance
Job Stress	3.54	0.551	1		
Islamic Work Ethic	4.51	0.380	-.310*	1	
Job Performance	3.29	0.354	-.326**	0.701**	1

Table 1 above presents the correlations between all the under study variables. It is evident that work stress adversely affects job performance ( $r = -.326^{**}$ ) suggesting that greater job stress results in lower job performance among the nurses. However, the table shows that IWE and Job Performance were positively correlated ( $r = 0.701^{**}$ )

suggesting that Islamic Work Ethic enhances the Job Performance of employees. This confirms our first and second hypotheses.

**Table 3: Regression Analysis**

	Job Performance		
	B	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>
Step 1			
Gender		0.243	
Step 2			
Job Stress (A)	-0.17*		
Islamic Work Ethic (B)	0.119**	0.741	0.399***
Step 3			
A×B	0.189**	0.844	0.103**

Results of a stepwise regression analysis are presented in table 3 to test the second hypothesis of the study. We controlled demographic variables at first step of the analysis while second step involved entering Job Stress and IWE. We entered the interaction among work stress and IWE at third step. The interaction term A×B was found statistically significant, demonstrating that Islamic Work Ethic weakened the negative association of work stress and nurses’ work Performance.

**Discussion**

The findings of our study offer insight into the relationship of work stress, work performance and IWE based on the assumptions of social learning theory. Consistent with the existing literature.<sup>25</sup> We found

<sup>25</sup> Laiba Dar, Anum Akmal, Muhammad Akram Naseem & Kashif Khan, “Impact of Stress on Employees Job Performance in Business Sector of Pakistan,” *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 2019: 1-5; A, E. Bakkar,

that work stress adversely affected work performance of nursing professionals. We found that higher level of job stress among the nurses may result in reduced job performance among them. Earlier, Dar reported that employees experiencing job related stress have been reported to exhibited reduced job performance and in some cases, they have been exhibiting counterproductive work performance harming the wellbeing of organization. This suggests that job stress is toxic for the health of organization at broader level. Specifically, our findings are similar to the results of existing studies.<sup>26</sup> They reported that job stress adversely affects the performance of health professionals. This confirms our first hypothesis that work stress was adversely the work performance of nursing professional.

Participnats of the study reported that knowledge of Islamic Work Ethic positively affect their job performance. our results are similar to the results of recents studies.<sup>27</sup> Studies reported that IWE is instrumental in coping with work related stress and may increase the job performance such that hgher knowledge of IWE predicts increased job performance among nursing professional. This supports the second hypothesis of this study that Islamic Work Ethic positively affect nurses' job performance.

Finally, this study suggests that IWE buffers the adverse effect of work related stress on work performance of nursing professionals. Previous studies on this domain also suggest that knowledge of IWE

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Demeroutic & W. Werbeke, "Using the Job Demands-Resources Model to Predict Burnout and Performance," *Human Resource Management*, 2016: 83-104 & Jungwe Park, "Work Stress and Job Performance," *Statistics Canada*, 2018: 1-13.

<sup>26</sup> Kazmi, Amjad & Khan, "Occupational Stress and its Effect on Job Performance," 135-39 & AbuAlRub & Fawzi, "Job Stress, Job Performance, and Social Support among Hospital Nurses," 73-78.

<sup>27</sup> Mehnaz, Asadullah, Hussain & Rehman, "Impact of Islamic Work Ethics on Teachers' Job Performance at Elementary School Level in Punjab," 131-39.

curtains the adverse individual and work outcomes of job stress<sup>2829</sup> such that increased IWE decreases negatively impact of work stress on work performance. This confirms our third hypothesis that IWE moderates the negative association work stress and nurses' work performance.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, we may argue that job stress is detrimental to employees' job performance in general and especially the job performance of nursing professionals. Healthcare professional's especially nurses may experience acute stress which may prove detrimental to their work performance and may result in work-disengagement in some cases. Consequently, they feel demotivated and their thrust for personal achievement and workplace performance is reduced. Studies suggest that prolonged stress may hurt individuals' efficiency at workplace. However, it has been established by this study that IWE is instrumental to the work performance of nursing professionals. Based on the stepwise regression analysis, we also argue that IWE buffers the negative effect of work-related stress on nursing professionals' work performance.

## **Implications and Future Research**

This study has also certain limitations like other studies. We used self-report measures to examine the impact of job stress on job performance that may have limitation of response bias. To deal with this issue, future studies may employ performance measures to report the job stress of nurses. Further, the sample was limited to female nursing professionals of Muzaffarabad city of AJK. Hence, it is hardly possible to generalize the findings to other health professionals

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<sup>28</sup> Khan, Abbas, Gul, & Raja, "Organizational Justice and Job Outcomes," 1-13.

<sup>29</sup> Zahra, *The Relationship Between Islamic Work Ethics and Religiosity on Job Performance.*"

working in the entire AJK. Future studies may include male nursing professional pooled from the entire AJK to have more reliable and generalizeable results. Our study examined job stress as unidimensional construct as predictor of job performance. Studies may examine different job related such as work-family conflict or job insecurity as predictor of employee job performance. Further, studies may also examine certain other factors that may buffers association of work stress wirth work performance. In an instance, sprituality and organizational virtuousness may develop a climate of cooperation, integrity and compassion that may curtail adverse impact of work related stress on employees' work performance.