

Patient-related factors associated with workplace stress among health workers at Mityana hospital, Mityana District. A cross-sectional study.

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Abstract

Background:

Workplace stress among health workers remains a significant global challenge affecting service delivery and staff wellbeing. This study assesses the Patients-related factors associated with workplace stress among health workers at Mityana Hospital, Mityana District.

Methodology:

A descriptive cross-sectional study design using quantitative methods was employed at Mityana Hospital. A total of 36 health workers were selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected using a pretested semi-structured questionnaire over six days. Analysis was done manually and presented using tables and figures.

Results:

The majority resided in urban areas (83%), while 17% were from rural areas. Regarding marital status, 61% were single, 22% married, and 17% divorced. Patient-related factors revealed that 61% of health workers reported exposure to abusive patients. Additionally, 53% indicated that patients rarely kept appointments, 22% always kept appointments, and 25% never kept appointments. Furthermore, 67% of respondents reported that patients had poor attitudes towards health workers. These conditions were commonly associated with increased workplace stress among staff.

Conclusion:

Patient-related factors significantly contribute to workplace stress among health workers at Mityana Hospital, particularly abusive patients, poor attitudes, and irregular appointment adherence.

Recommendation:

Strengthen patient education on respectful interactions, improve appointment systems, and enhance staff support mechanisms to reduce stress among health workers.

Keywords: Workplace stress, patient-related factors, abusive patients, missed appointments, patient attitudes, Mityana Hospital.

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Background.

Workplace stress among health workers remains a major public health concern worldwide, as it affects the well-being of health personnel, the quality of patient care, and overall health system performance. Several studies have shown that patient-related factors play a significant role in increasing stress levels among health workers. One of the commonly reported causes of stress is abusive behavior from patients. In the USA, 62% of health workers experiencing workplace stress associated it with abusive patients (Adeolu et al., 2020). Similar findings were reported in Ethiopia, where 63% of stressed health workers linked their stress to abusive patients (Anand et al., 2020). Related studies in Italy and Uganda also found that 53% and 69% of stressed health workers, respectively, experienced stress due to abusive patient behavior (Di et al., 2020; Rose et al., 2021). These findings indicate that hostile patient interactions are a common challenge faced by health workers across different settings. Another patient-related factor associated with workplace stress is missed appointments, which often create

anxiety among health workers regarding delayed treatment outcomes and poor prognosis of patients' conditions. In Ethiopia, 59% of stressed health workers reported worry about patients' prognosis following missed appointments (Salilih et al., 2023). Similarly, another study in Ethiopia found that 63% of health workers experiencing stress had similar concerns (Gebeyehu et al., 2021). This suggests that irregular patient attendance may increase the emotional and professional burden on health workers. Poor patient attitudes towards health workers have also been widely reported as a source of workplace stress. In Ethiopia, 57% of stressed health workers cited persistent negative attitudes from patients as a cause of stress (Salilih et al., 2023). Comparable findings were reported in Peru, where 64% of respondents linked stress to poor patient attitudes (Quispe et al., 2020). Such attitudes may undermine effective communication, reduce job satisfaction, and create tension in the healthcare environment. In addition to direct patient behaviors, inadequate health facility requirements when attending to patients have also been associated with

workplace stress. In Sudan, 53% of stressed health workers reported that the lack of necessary requirements at health facilities contributed to their stress (WHO, 2022). Similar findings were reported in Congo, Ethiopia, and New Zealand, where 66%, 51%, and 56% of stressed health workers, respectively, cited inadequate resources as a key stressor (Joseph, 2021; Anand et al., 2020; Dowell et al., 2020). Limited supplies and equipment may hinder timely service delivery and increase frustration among health workers. Overall, evidence from different countries demonstrates that abusive patients, missed appointments, poor patient attitudes, and inadequate facility requirements are important factors contributing to workplace stress among health workers. This study assessed the Patients-related factors associated with workplace stress among health workers at Mityana Hospital, Mityana District.

Methodology

Study design.

The study was centered on a descriptive and analytical survey, and in-depth interviews were conducted, which involved quantitative research approaches. Data was collected from various respondents, and the ineffective collection used a triangular approach; hence, the design was the most appropriate. Moreover, the design enabled the collection of all the data necessary at one point in time to be completed within a limited amount of time available for doing so.

Study setting.

The study was conducted at Mityana Hospital, which is a government-owned health facility under the management of the Ministry of Health (MoH). Mityana Hospital, also Mityana General Hospital or Mityana District Hospital, is a hospital in the town of Mityana, Mityana District in the Central Region of Uganda. Mityana Hospital is located in the central business district of the town of Mityana, about 85 kilometres (53 mi) east of Mubende Regional Referral Hospital. This is approximately 69 kilometres (43 mi) west of Mulago National Referral Hospital, the largest hospital in the country. It offers both curative and preventive services like Outpatient, Inpatient, Maternal and Child health care, including immunization, ANC- Health education, including a daily run clinic of ART. The main occupation in the district is farming.

Study population.

The study involved a total of 36 health workers at Mityana Hospital, Mityana District. A small number was selected for easy data collection. However, this number was slightly above the recommended sample size as per the research guideline provided by the Uganda Nurses and Midwives Examinations Board, 2009.

Sample size determination.

The study involved a total of 36 health workers at Mityana Hospital, Mityana District. A small number was selected for easy data collection. However, this number was slightly above the recommended sample size as per the research guideline provided by the Uganda Nurses and Midwives Examinations Board, 2009.

Sampling procedure.

A simple random type of sampling procedure was used to select the respondents for the study. Selected health workers of Mityana hospital, according to the Human Resource Registers, were selected at random, from which at least one participant from each was given a chance to participate in the study. This was achieved by getting pieces of paper on which the words “inclusion”, meaning included in the study, and “exclusion”, meaning excluded from the study, were written for the respondents to pick. Whoever picked the “inclusion” paper was given a questionnaire to fill out, whereas those who picked the “exclusion” paper were exempted from the study.

Inclusion criteria.

The study included all health workers with workplace stress at Mityana hospital, Mityana District, who had voluntarily consented to participate in the study.

Study variables.

The dependent variable was workplace stress.

The independent variable was patient-related factors.

Research instruments

Data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire, which consisted of open and closed-ended questions. The questionnaires had questions with options where the respondents chose what best suited them. The instrument was pretested at Kikandwa Health Center III among 5 health workers. The questionnaire was used because it enabled the respondents to respond efficiently to the questions that were asked.

Data collection procedure.

Before administering the questionnaires, the researcher first explained the questions to the respondents. For those unable to read and write, questions were translated to them, and their responses were recorded in data. The procedure took 6 days, during which the researcher collected data from 6 respondents per day in order to obtain the required number of 36 respondents.

Data management.

The filled questionnaires were collected, checked for completeness, and counted after every data collection day to ensure that they were all returned, coded, and kept in a safe place as a backup. A flash disk was also used to store data.

Data analysis and presentation

Data were manually analyzed and entered into a computer using Microsoft Word 2021. Then it was presented using tables and figures.

conduct the study. Once permission was granted, the Chairman of Research introduced the researcher to the respondents. Respondents were assured of maximum confidentiality for all the information that was given. The study only commenced after the study objectives had been clearly explained. Participants were asked to voluntarily consent to the study and were told about free entry and free exit when the need arose. Questionnaires were then administered to participants, who filled them out, and then later were returned and kept in the file.

Ethical Considerations.

An introductory letter was obtained from the Principal of Kampala University introducing the researcher to the Research Committee of Mityana Hospital to be allowed to

Results.

Socio-demographic characteristics

Table 1: Shows the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics (n=36)

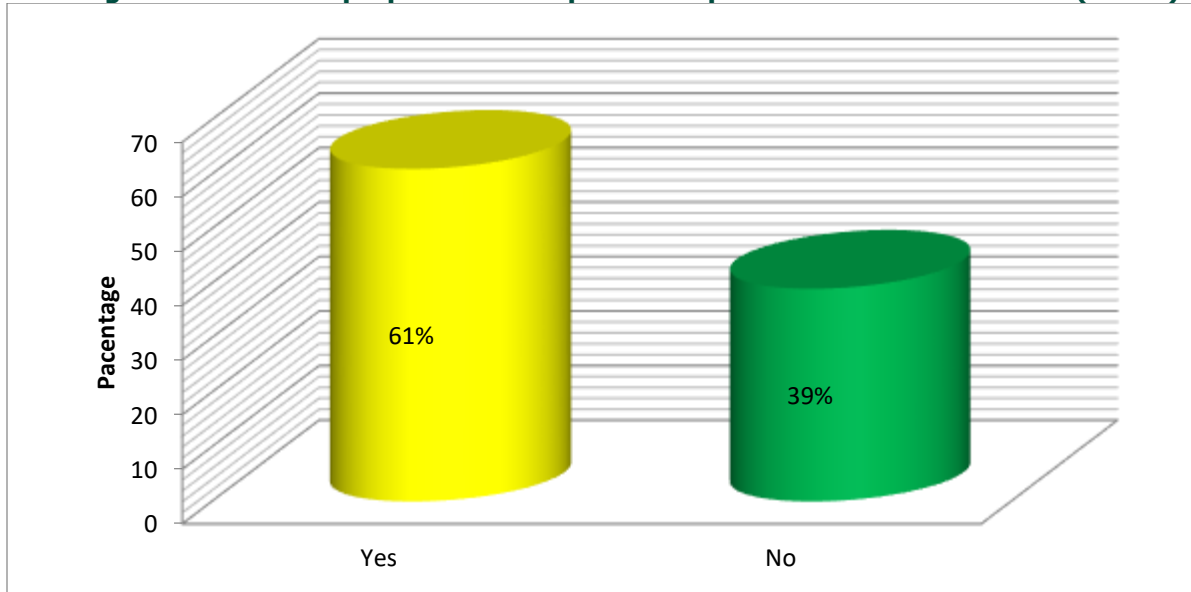
Responses	Attributes	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Shows the respondent's age.	20 - 30 years	24	67
	31- 45 years	07	19
	46 and above	05	14
	Total	36	100
Demonstrates the respondent's residence.	Urban	30	83
	Rural	06	17
	Total	36	100
Illustrates the respondent's marital status.	Married	08	22
	Single	22	61
	Divorced	06	17
	Total	36	100

Source: Primary data, 2024.

Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents 24 (67%) were aged 20-30 years whereas the minority of the respondents 5 (14%) were aged 46 years and above; furthermore, the vast of the respondents 30 (83%) lived in urban areas whereas the pocket-sized of the respondents 6 (17%) lived rural areas; in addition, the enormous of the respondents 22 (61%) were single whereas the diminutive of the respondents 6 (17%) were divorced.

Patient-related factors contributing to the prevalence of workplace stress among health workers of Mityana hospital, Mityana district.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of respondents' patients who were abusive (n =36)



Source: Primary data, 2024.

Figure 1 reveals that a majority of the respondents' patients, 22 (61%), were abusive, while a minority, 14 (39%), were not abusive.

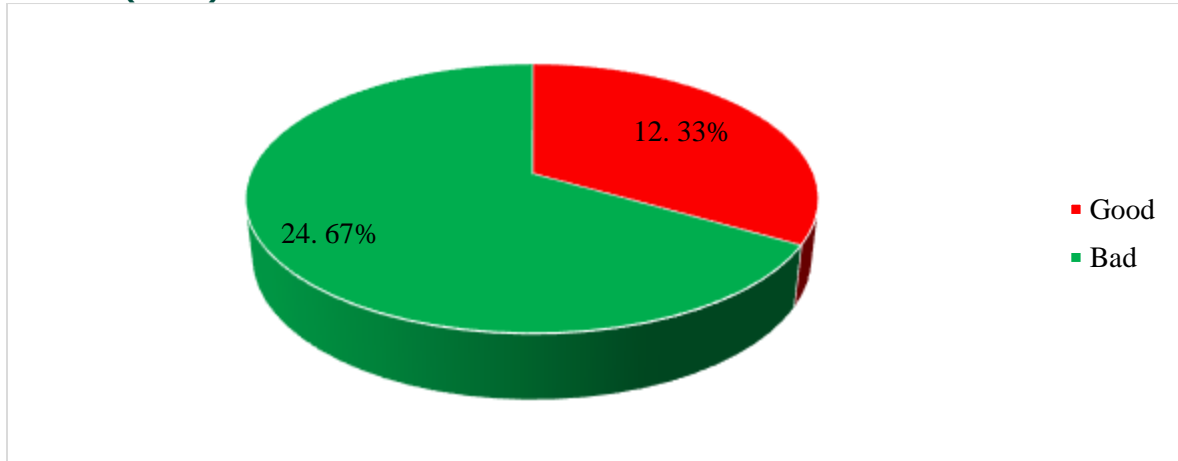
Table 2: Indicates the frequency with which respondents kept their patients' appointments (n=36)

Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Rarely	19	53
Always	08	22
Never	09	25
Total	36	100

Source: Primary data, 2024.

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents, 19 (53%), rarely kept their patients' appointments, whereas a smaller group, 8 (22%), always kept their appointments.

Figure 3: showing the respondents' perceptions of their patients' attitudes towards health workers (n=36)



Source: Primary data, 2024.

Figure 3 indicates that a large number of respondents, 24 (67%), reported that their patients' attitudes towards health workers were poor, while a smaller number, 12 (33%), reported that the attitudes were good.

Discussion of results.

Patient-related factors contributing to the prevalence of workplace stress among health workers of Mityana hospital, Mityana district.

Patients' Abusive Behavior: study findings reveal that a majority of the respondents' patients, 22 (61%), were abusive, while a minority, 14 (39%), were not abusive. This finding suggests that the majority of health workers at Mityana Hospital are exposed to abusive patient behavior, which can be a significant source of workplace stress. Abusive behavior from patients can undermine the well-being and job satisfaction of health workers, potentially leading to burnout and a deterioration of the overall healthcare environment. This finding is consistent with the study by Adeolu et. al. (2020) in the USA, which revealed that abusive patients contributed to workplace stress among health workers.

Patients' Appointment Keeping: Most of the respondents, 19 (53%), rarely kept their patients' appointments, whereas a smaller group, 8 (22%), always kept their appointments. This finding indicates that the majority of patients at Mityana Hospital do not adhere to their scheduled appointments, which can disrupt the workflow and increase the workload for health workers. The lack of patient commitment to appointments can contribute to the overall stress experienced by the health workers, as they may have to manage a more unpredictable and demanding work environment. This finding is in line with the study by Salilih et. al. (2023) in Ethiopia, which revealed that patients

missing appointments contributed to workplace stress among health workers.

Patients' Attitudes towards Health Workers: results indicate that a large number of respondents, 24 (67%), reported that their patients' attitudes towards health workers were poor, while a smaller number, 12 (33%), reported that the attitudes were good. This finding suggests that the majority of patients at Mityana Hospital have a negative perception of the health workers, which can create tensions and conflicts in the healthcare setting. Poor patient attitudes can undermine the trust and rapport between patients and health workers, exacerbating the stress experienced by the health professionals. This finding aligns with the study by Salilih et. al. (2023) in Ethiopia, which revealed that poor attitudes of patients towards health workers contributed to workplace stress among health workers.

Conclusion.

Stress among health workers is also significantly influenced by patient behaviors. This includes frequent encounters with abusive patients, poor adherence to scheduled appointments, and negative attitudes towards health personnel, all of which exacerbate the stress experienced by these workers.

Recommendation.

Optimize Workload Distribution: Conduct a workload analysis to identify areas for improvement. This could involve exploring staffing adjustments or implementing strategies to streamline workflows and improve efficiency.

Promote Positive Work Culture: Foster a culture of open communication, appreciation, and teamwork within the hospital. This can involve leadership development programs and employee recognition initiatives.

Improved Patient Education: Partner with public health agencies to develop educational campaigns that promote respectful behavior towards healthcare workers.

List of Abbreviations

ANC – Antenatal Care
MoH – Ministry of Health
WHO – World Health Organization
USA – United States of America
UK – United Kingdom
HR – Human Resource
MS Word – Microsoft Word

Informed Consent:

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before their inclusion in the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, procedures involved, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Source of funding.

The study was not funded.

Conflict of interest.

There is no conflict of interest.

Availability of data.

Data used in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

Authors contribution.

RK designed the study, conducted data collection, cleaned and analyzed data, and drafted the manuscript. JUK supervised all stages of the study from conceptualization of the topic to manuscript writing and submission.

Author's biography.

Rashidah Kasumba is a student of diploma nursing extension at Kampala University School of Nursing and Health Sciences.

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