








# Relation of Job Stress and Performance in Child Therapists: Case of a Psychological Well-being Company in Trujillo, Peru, 2024

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**Abstract**—This study addresses the impact of occupational stress on the work performance of child therapists, highlighting its link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which promote healthy living and holistic well-being. The research was developed in a private institution in Trujillo in 2024. It was basic, with a quantitative approach and a non-experimental-correlational design, involving 41 child therapists (100% women, mean age:  $25.9 \pm 1.61$  years). Validated questionnaires, such as the ILO-WHO Work Stress Scale and the Work Performance Questionnaire, were used to assess the variables. The results showed that all therapists had an intermediate level of stress ( $n=41$ ; 100%) and low work performance ( $n=41$ ; 100%). Spearman's Rho test found a positive mean correlation between stress and job performance ( $\rho=0.340$ ;  $\text{sig.}=0.030$ ). The technology dimension had the most significant relationship with performance ( $\rho=0.371$ ;  $\text{sig.}=0.017$ ). The research concludes that although occupational stress does not reach extreme levels, it does affect therapists' work performance, which in turn affects the quality of care provided to children. From the perspective of organizational sustainability, it is essential to implement strategies to improve the well-being of child therapists, as the well-being of human capital is essential to ensure quality services and to work in a safe environment, which promotes better performance and productivity, as well as healthy societies, which is in line with SDG 3 and SDG 8.

**Keywords**— Job Stress, Psychological Well-being, Work performance (Source: MeSH-BIREME).

## I. INTRODUCTION

Job stress affects many professionals around the world and child therapists are no exception. These professionals work in a field as sensitive as the psychological well-being of children. In addition, they face challenging situations on a daily basis when dealing with infants and families experiencing emotional and behavioral difficulties. Constant exposure to intense emotions and complex situations can lead to significant psychological burnout, which can affect one's ability to perform effectively at work [1]. The pressure to obtain positive results, the management of severe or prolonged cases, and the lack of adequate resources contribute to increased stress levels in therapists, which can affect the care provided to patients [2].

Stress in child therapists affects not only their emotional and physical state, but also their ability to develop empathic relationships with patients and their families [3]. In a field

where communication is essential to therapeutic success, burnout can impede the development of strong and effective therapeutic relationships [4]. It should be emphasized that working in the health care field, by its very nature, has always been associated with significant stress for professionals due to the high level of responsibility involved. Proper stress management is essential, as a health professional needs to be emotionally stable in order to perform his or her duties optimally. Ensuring their well-being increases the effectiveness of the services provided and contributes to more beneficial care in the area of children's mental health [5]. Emotional stability also facilitates the ability to make sound decisions without stress that interferes with the natural development of their tasks [6].

Occupational stress is a growing problem among health care professionals. It is important to understand the relationship between performance and occupational stress in child therapists, especially in private mental health settings where workloads and demands can be high. Workers with high levels of stress often experience emotional exhaustion, role conflict, job insecurity, and work overload, which affect their overall well-being. In addition, constant exposure to these risk factors can affect their quality of life outside of work and disrupt their non-work environment, which in turn negatively affects their performance and productivity at work [7]. Cerda Aedo, in her study, showed a significant correlation between the occupational stress of tutors and coping strategies ( $p=0.002$ ), suggesting that tutors responsible for infants may contribute to increase the emotional burden of child therapists. This exchange of emotional burdens could be an additional source of occupational stress. [8]. Feeling emotionally overloaded may also lead to decreased motivation and job satisfaction [9].

Therefore, it is important to take care of the health of those who are responsible for the satisfaction of others [10]. Similarly, the affective pressure of interacting with patients has an adverse effect on both the physical and mental health of therapists, exacerbating their decline and reducing their work performance. These effects are exacerbated by the continuous nature of emotional work, which involves managing emotions in highly demanding contexts. Fatigue and loss of identity, characteristic of burnout syndrome, affect work excellence

and patient care [11]. Through a methodological approach that includes surveys and interviews, it is shown that staff who experience high levels of burnout have reduced performance, which can affect the performance of maternal and child care. Similarly, emphasis is placed on the implementation of intervention strategies that promote the well-being of health care workers in order to improve both their emotional balance and the effectiveness of the service provided in this type of center.

In an international context, a study determined the prevalence of burnout syndrome among occupational therapists in Spain, highlighting its close relationship with occupational stress [12]. On the other hand, lack of personal fulfillment, irritability, decreased job satisfaction, and lack of concentration indicate a state of general burnout that may affect the level of care provided to patients. In Gómez Blanco's study, the research results show that a significant proportion of therapists have these symptoms, suggesting a high incidence of burnout in the profession. A study in Venezuela on the health of physiotherapists ( $n = 222$ ) and occupational therapists ( $n = 117$ ) found that the emotional demands of the job had a detrimental effect on the health of these rehabilitation workers [10].

At the national level, Peru faces significant challenges related to the issue of occupational stress. A study carried out among workers in the Machu Pichu municipality shows that the state of work stress is directly correlated with the occurrence of burnout syndrome. This phenomenon affects the mental vitality of workers, which is detrimental to the efficiency and productivity of organizations. At the same time, one report emphasizes the importance of mitigating the negative effects of stress and promoting a healthier and more productive work environment [13]. Another study, conducted in the city of Lima (Peru), establishes a link between stress and the emotional well-being of pediatric therapists [14]. In light of the above, it can be concluded that emotional exhaustion and personal disengagement are consequences of chronic stress related to the workload and emotional demands of their role. These factors, together with an unfavorable work environment, significantly increase the incidence of burnout. Finally, the above-mentioned research highlights the urgency of creating a work environment that promotes the well-being of therapists, which would not only benefit their state of life, but also guarantee better patient care. In Ayacucho, research emphasizes that psychologist-therapists face emotional and mental health problems and are particularly vulnerable to stress [15]. Similarly, when addressing occupational stress, it is important to implement techniques that allow workers to identify and modify negative thought patterns [16]. The Ogbat et al. review examines the effectiveness of an occupational health coaching program based on rational emotive therapy. The study shows that this approach has a positive effect on the psychological health and general balance of the participants, showing a decrease in the levels of anxiety and stress variables [17].

Occupational stress, in this case, affects not only the professionals, but also the children receiving treatment, who depend on the ability of their therapists to provide quality care. In this sense, the research problem formulated is: How does occupational stress influence the performance of in-child therapists in a private psychological welfare institution in Trujillo? This question arises from the observation of the possible negative consequences that chronic stress can have on work performance and the adequate care provided by these professionals. The rationale for this research is the urgency to identify the main causes that increase the work-related stress of child therapists and how it affects their performance. By better understanding this relationship, more effective stress management strategies can be implemented, improving both the well-being of therapists and the therapeutic outcomes of the children they serve. In addition, the research contributes to SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), the research seeks to provide recommendations that can be applied in other similar institutions, promoting more sustainable work practices. Likewise, the objective is to analyze the effect of occupational stress on the work performance of infant therapists in a private psychological wellness institution in the city of Trujillo.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Research type and design

This type of research is basic because it generates knowledge by expanding the understanding in specific areas of the field, contributing to the theoretical foundations of the discipline, without directly seeking to solve specific problems [18]. The methodological approach was quantitative, characterized by the collection and analysis of numerical data to verify the relationship between the two variables. However, it allows the collection of objective information that is essential to achieve the research objectives, since it allows a more accurate interpretation of the aspects studied [19]. The design in this research is non-experimental, cross-sectional cohort, correlational, which means that the variables are not manipulated, but observed in their natural context in order to delimit the relationship between them. This type of design seeks to identify relationships between variables [20], noting that correlational analysis makes it possible to evaluate the range of association between two or more variables without directly intervening in the environment in which they develop.

### B. Variable

The variables were considered: occupational stress (independent variable) and job performance (dependent variable) of child therapists in a psychological wellness company. Stress was defined as the emotional and physical response to overwork [21]. On the other hand, performance was understood as the therapists' ability to fulfill their functions, where professional performance is directly related to the effectiveness in carrying out tasks and responsibilities within the work context [22].

### C. Population

The study was carried out in the city of Trujillo, in two locations of a private organization for psychological assistance, with 41 employees. The headquarters are located at the geographical coordinates (814051, -79.051369) and (-8100622, -79.010274). Workers involved in the care of the children were considered as a criterion for inclusion. On the other hand, members of the company who work digitally were excluded, as well as graduates or technicians who are not psychologists or therapists.

### D. Data Collection Technique and Instrument

The technique adopted was the survey, since the information was obtained through questions asked to the entire population studied [23]. Likewise, the instrument used was the questionnaire, which is defined as a set of interrelated items that allow the measurement of one or more variables [24]. In the occupational stress survey, seven dimensions were considered: organizational climate, technology, organizational structure, leader influence, organizational territory, lack of cohesion, and group support. Meanwhile, in the job performance survey, the dimensions included are task performance, context performance, adaptive and proactive performance.

The instrument used to assess job stress is the ILO-WHO Job Stress Scale written by Ivancevich and Matteson (1989). This scale has a good reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.96$ ) [25]. On the other hand, the instrument used to assess job performance is the Job Performance Questionnaire, written by Lopez (2018). This questionnaire was approved by expert judgment and has a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.881 [26]. Both instruments can be applied directly, either at the individual level or at the community level. However, the application of the first instrument covers the working population from the age of majority (18 years). The application of the second instrument focuses on the population of health care workers. The instrument was adapted to a Google Forms format, which was disseminated through the WhatsApp social network.

### E. Statistical Analysis

Data were sorted in Microsoft Excel and processed in IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. Descriptive (frequencies and percentages) and inferential statistics were used for data analysis [27]. The Shapiro-Wilk statistical test ( $n \leq 50$ ) was used to analyze the normality of the data. This test determined that the p-value did not conform to the normal distribution in at least one variable, indicating the need to use nonparametric statistical methods such as Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient.

### F. Ethical aspects

This research complies with the Code of Ethics of the Universidad Cesar Vallejo (Peru), which has Rectoral Resolution No. 760-2007/UCV [28]. Article 3°, which establishes the principles of scientific activity, has been

complied with. The integrity and autonomy of the individual have been given priority over any scientific interest. Similarly, Article 4°, which regulates research involving human subjects, has been respected. The rights of collaborators have been guaranteed by respecting their physical and mental integrity and by maintaining the strictest confidentiality of their personal data provided through the surveys. Finally, Article 11 on copyright has been scrupulously respected. There is no evidence of plagiarism, and the research was conducted in full compliance with all ethical and legal requirements.

## III. RESULTS

This study focuses on analyzing the relationship between stress and job performance of child therapists in a private company for psychological wellness in the city of Trujillo. Table 1 shows the demographic data of the 41 child therapists who made up the sample. The mean age of the participants was  $25.9 \pm 1.61$  years which indicates that they were mostly young people. All participants, i.e., 100%, were women. Regarding the academic level, 48.78% are in the internship stage, which indicates that they are still in training, while 26.83% have already completed their studies and are graduates in psychology.

TABLE I  
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLNESS  
COMPANY CHILDREN'S THERAPISTS.

Features	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Mean Years	$25.9 \pm 1.61$ years	
Generous		
Female	41	100.00
Male	0	0.00
Academic Level		
Graduates	11	26.83
Bachelors	10	24.39
Psychology Internship	20	48.78
Total	41	100.00

Table 2 shows that 100% of the general occupational stress level child therapists present an intermediate level of occupational stress.

TABLE II  
STRESS LEVEL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLNESS COMPANY  
CHILDREN'S THERAPISTS.

Levels	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	0	0.00
Medium	41	100.00
Stress	0	0.00
High	0	0.00
Total	41	100.00

Table 3 shows that 100% of the overall job performance level of the surveyed child therapists is at a low level of job performance.

TABLE III  
LEVEL OF OVERALL JOB PERFORMANCE OF  
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLNESS COMPANY CHILDREN'S  
THERAPISTS.

Levels	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	41	100.00
Medium	0	0.00
Stress	0	0.00
Total	41	100.00

Table 4 presents the correlation analysis between job stress as an independent variable and job performance as a dependent variable. A correlation coefficient of 0.340 and a significance level of 0.030 were obtained, indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

TABLE IV  
STRESS LEVEL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLNESS COMPANY  
CHILDREN'S THERAPISTS.

	Correlation coefficient	Sig. (bilateral)	N
Independent variable: Stress and Dependent variable: Performance	0.340*	0.030	41

Table 5 shows that only the technology dimension has a statistically significant correlation with job performance ( $p = 0.017$ ). The technology dimension also has the highest correlation coefficient, with an rho value of 0.371, indicating a positive relationship of moderate intensity with job performance.

TABLE V  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERFORMANCE AND THE  
DIMENSIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE (STRESS).

Stress	Performance		
	Correlation coefficient	Sig. (p-value)	N
Dimension 1: Organizational climate	0.135	0.402	41
Dimension 2: Organizational structure	0.177	0.268	41
Dimension 3: Organizational territory	0.134	0.403	41
Dimension 4: Technology	0.371	0.017	41
Dimension 5: Influence of the leader	0.011	0.944	41
Dimension 6: Lack of cohesion	0.170	0.287	41
Dimension 7: Group support	0.223	0.16	41

## IV. DISCUSSION

The research related to occupational stress and its influence on the work performance of child therapists working in a private company for psychological wellness in the city of Trujillo.

Table 1 shows that the sample consists of 41 child therapists, all women, with a mean age of  $25.9 \pm 1.61$  years, which indicates that young professionals predominate. This aspect is relevant because previous research suggests that young people tend to experience higher levels of occupational stress due to their limited experience in managing complex work situations [29]. In addition, 48.78% of the participants are still in the training phase (internship), which could contribute to a higher perception of stress, given the balance they have to maintain between academic and work responsibilities [30].

The objective is to analyze the effect of occupational stress on the work performance of child therapists in a private mental health center in Trujillo. 100% of the child therapists interviewed have an intermediate level of occupational stress (Table 2), which indicates that although they are not at an extreme level of stress, they also do not experience a low level of work pressure. This is in line with previous studies suggesting that an intermediate level of stress can act as a driver of productivity in demanding environments, as long as it is not too prolonged, as this could lead to fatigue and emotional exhaustion [31].

In one study, similar results were found regarding the average level of stress with 33.3% of the workers evaluated, which is described as a risk factor that affects both the physical and mental well-being of workers and their performance [32]. Additionally, another study showed that 58% of workers reported a medium level of stress, highlighting the importance of monitoring these dynamics to prevent stress from significantly affecting job performance [33]. On the other hand, another study revealed that 55.1% of health collaborators are also at a medium level of stress, which shows that it can lead to decreased levels of motivation and performance, affecting their well-being at work and their performance in daily tasks [34].

Similarly, in Table 3, it shows that 100% of the surveyed child therapists present a low level of job performance. This finding suggests that all evaluated professionals are experiencing significant difficulties in fulfilling their job responsibilities, which could be related to factors such as unfavorable work environment [35]. In a research, it was relieved that workers with the low job performance, have emotional exhaustion which is associated with considerable negative impact. This suggests that intermediate or high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion lead to a decrease in the quality of work [11].

In addition, occupational stress can be exacerbated by constant exposure to emotionally draining situations, such as patient suffering, which can affect both the well-being and performance of health care professionals [36]. In fact, one

article mentions that pediatric occupational therapists who report stress levels affect their professional performance and the quality of service they provide to children and their families [37]. Thus, according to the study conducted, it can be concluded that the absence of cases in the "regular" and "high" performance levels increases the need to review the working conditions and training programs for these professionals.

Similarly, one of the main objectives was to determine the relationship between job stress and job performance of child therapists. This analysis used Spearman's rho correlation coefficient, which revealed a statistically significant positive relationship ( $\rho = 0.340$ ;  $p = 0.030$ ) between the two variables, as shown in Table 4. The rho value indicates a moderate correlation, suggesting that as job stress increases, job performance tends to increase. This suggests that as job stress increases, job performance tends to improve slightly. Likewise, this relationship can be interpreted as "positive stress," in which moderate levels of pressure may serve as motivation for therapists to improve their performance. It is important to note, however, that while stress can temporarily increase productivity, prolonged or excessive stress can have detrimental effects on both performance and overall well-being. These findings highlight the nuanced role of stress in workplace dynamics and underscore the need for organizations to carefully monitor and manage stress levels to maximize positive outcomes while mitigating risks [38]. In a thesis work, a significant positive correlation was found between stress and job performance of workers in a business group. This finding indicates that, under certain conditions, a level of stress can motivate employees to accomplish their tasks and improve their output and ultimately performance, as presented in the data found in this study [39].

The last specific objective examines the overall job performance level of the therapists in relation to the stress levels of each of the dimensions. Thus, in Table 5, where the dimensions of the independent variable are correlated against the dependent variable, it was found that only the dimension related to technology is correlated to job performance ( $\rho = 0.371$ ;  $p = 0.017$ ), these results are validated by Ramirez in his research, which presents a positive correlation between both variables ( $\rho = 0.727$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). While the other dimensions do not correlate with the dependent variable, because they are not determinant or influential [40].

The findings of this study allow understanding how job performance is influenced by the level of stress. In addition, this type of studies are currently increasing and focusing from the point of view of sustainable employability, where companies seek to promote this type of sustainability among their workers in order to improve performance, productivity, among other aspects that allow them to achieve important work objectives [41, 42]. On the other hand, the importance also lies in the fact that companies should start working aligned to the sustainable development goals, such as SDG 3 and SDG 8, since stress also affects the mental and physical health of workers, affecting performance as shown in the

research. In this way, it is possible to promote healthier societies [43, 44].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate the presence of occupational stress in the child therapists of the psychological wellness company in the city of Trujillo, with direct implications for their work performance. The analysis indicates that 100% of the therapists surveyed present intermediate levels of occupational stress, reflecting a state of work pressure that, although not extreme, is not considered low either. Furthermore, a positive correlation was identified between occupational stress levels and professional performance, suggesting a scenario of "positive stress" that enhances performance ( $\rho = 0.340$ ;  $p = 0.030$ ). It is noteworthy that the technological dimension was the sole variable that exhibited a substantial correlation with job performance ( $\rho = 0.371$ ;  $p = 0.017$ ).

These findings underscore the importance of addressing occupational stress from an organizational sustainability perspective, contributing to the fulfillment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 and 8. The promotion of safe work environments has been demonstrated to improve occupational health and strengthen the foundations for healthier and more productive societies.

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