

Research Article

Stress and Quality of Life of the Employees of Saint Joseph Institute of Technology in the Post-COVID-19 Situation

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Abstract

This study will explore the degree of perceived stress and the redefined quality of life of Saint Joseph Institute of Technology Employees in the repercussions of the COVID-19 outbreak. The study explores the degree of perceived stress experienced by private employees and the level of their quality of life-based on their working position using standardized tools. The result shows that the office staff perceived a moderate to a high level of stress ($m=20$); the Teaching faculty perceived their stress level as moderate ($m=18.93$); and Deans/Heads of Offices perceived their stress level as moderate ($m=16.00$). Their work-related quality of life is reflected as High ($m=86.50$) for Deans/Heads of Offices and the faculty indicates a High WRQoL (84.57), while office staff shows a lower to high ($m=83.29$) work-related quality of life. The study's findings show a moderate degree of perceived stress and a high work-related quality of life experienced by the employees among the categories of head of offices/Dean and the teaching faculty. At the same time, the office staff show high stress and work-related quality of life. The findings highlight the importance of addressing stress management and promoting a balanced work environment for all employee groups.

Keywords

COVID-19 Outbreak, Perceived Stress, Work-related Quality of Life, Head of Offices/Deans, Teaching Faculty, Office Staff, SJIT Employees

1. Introduction

The pandemic has deeply impacted nearly every aspect of our personal and professional lives, leaving many of us struggling to manage stress healthily and effectively. COVID-19 posed a significant threat to the global community, putting immense pressure on healthcare systems, schools, businesses, international relations, and governments as they worked to address the resulting socioeconomic crisis. In the Philippines alone, there were 4,118,381 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 66,714 deaths reported during the early months of 2020. By March 18, 2023, 189,317,158 vaccine doses had been administered [1].

The global effects of the pandemic drastically changed lives psychologically, physiologically, and economically. Despite the increased health and safety measures in the workplace during the pandemic, the uncertainty in the working environment, career anxiety, excess workload, and increasing stress have led to low perceptions of employees' quality of life and working life [2]. The changes experienced covered the working life and the affected employees. Some of the COVID-19 epidemic changes, like working hours, types, wages, work, and private life balance, and distances, have changed with different dimensions, new measures, and epi-

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Received: 27 January 2025; Accepted: 25 February 2025; Published: 28 August 2025



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demographic-specific measures have quickly entered the working life [3].

According to Michinov et. al, (2022) [4], remote work or flexible working arrangements enable diverse family responsibilities, allowing workers to do home duties and reducing work-related expenses. Employees in a WFH setup discerned that the home environment allows the stresses of work to melt away, which permits workers to enjoy time with family alienated from work pressures and activities. However, altering the home environment into a working space, along with job-related issues, tends to corrupt the sanctity of the home. Demarcated working hours (which begin and end with arriving at and departing from a physical workplace) have disappeared, making it easy to work out of hours and disrupt the home life and Work-life balance.

Furthermore, this study explores the employees' perceived stress and quality of life in redefining their work-life balance of SJIT Employees in the new normal. There were only a few studies related to non-medical workers as it became the interest of our endeavor to amplify the mental health needs of the employees in the academic sectors. Employees' mental health is vital in determining their life and job satisfaction, employing methods based on the result of the study, and understanding different facets that contribute to enriching their mental health needs.

2. Review of Literature and Studies

This section discusses the review of related literature and studies anchored on the following themes.

Employees in the New Normal

Before the pandemic, traditional office environments were the norm, and remote work was often considered a privilege rather than a standard practice. However, the global crisis rapidly changed that, forcing companies to rethink how and where work happens, especially for employees who had little to no experience with remote setups [5]. Employee thriving becomes essential-it reflects a psychological state where individuals feel capable of adapting and growing. Thriving employees are passionate about their work, stay engaged, and contribute meaningfully, acting as a buffer against stress and becoming key drivers of success during times of uncertainty [6].

The workforce's degree of perceived stress.

Perceived stress is considered a significant risk factor for psychopathology associated with low quality of life among nurses. Resilience has been shown to prevent the development of psychopathology [8]. The pandemic has affected White-collar workers, who have experienced significant changes in working practices. WFH arrangements have been widespread, with various repercussions regarding productivity, locality, working hours, and the traditional separation of work and home environments [7].

The degree of perceived stress varies depending on the amount of workload. Faculty members tended to adopt more defensive coping mechanisms and attributed their lower stress levels to greater achievements and/or acknowledgment. On the other hand, administrative personnel experienced a decrease in stress which they linked to an enhancement in staffing levels and/or organizational processes [8]. These insights underscore the importance of understanding how various roles within an organization respond to stress and the unique factors that bolster their resilience. By cultivating a supportive culture that promotes adaptive coping strategies, provides mental health resources, and encourages work-life balance, employers can help their teams not only manage stress but also thrive in today's constantly changing work environment.

Work-Related Quality of Life

The work-from-home trend contributes to the rise of mental health issues and quality of life during the pandemic. People who experience isolation due to COVID-19 infection tend to experience anxiety, worriedness, and dread [9]. Similarly, employees in the WFH setup tend to have similar experiences with the latter, according to Panchal et. Al. (2021) [10], WFH has become a trend to counter the growth of COVID-19 and relieve the economy. However, due to the lockdown, mental health issues arise, accompanied by high rates of mental health issues and substance abuse. Improved quality of life at work is associated with increased motivation in one's job, higher levels of job satisfaction, deeper involvement in work, greater overall life contentment, more happiness, and a reduction in self-perceived anxiety [11].

This study's results describe the different degrees of perceived stress experienced by the employees and their work-related quality of life in the new standard setting. This study will amplify the primary mental health needs of the employees, especially in the academic sectors.

3. Framework

The variables of this study are categorized into three categories: Head of offices, Teaching Faculty, and Office Staff. This study will assess the level of perceived stress experienced and their level of work-related quality of life. The following theories support the variables of the study, Maslow's Quality of Life theory and Stress appraisal theory.

In Maslow's Quality of Life theory, he described this approach as an existentialistic psychology of self-actualization based on personal growth. By taking responsibility for our lives, we take more good qualities and become more accessible, powerful, happy, and healthy. This study assesses the degree of perceived stress experienced using the employees' primary and secondary appraisal of SA theory and how they redefined their work-related quality of life in the post-COVID-19 situation.

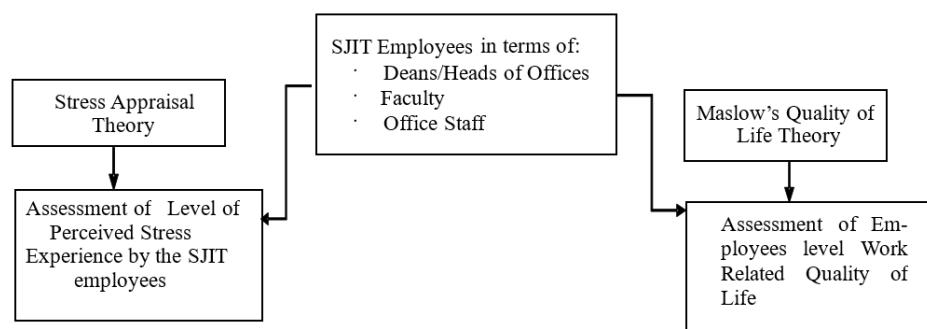


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of the Study.

Objectives of the Study

This study focuses on how the SJIT employees perceived their stress experiences and how they defined their quality of life anchored on the following:

- 1) Assess employees' perceived stress in the new standard based on their position.
- 2) Evaluate the SJIT employee's level of work-related quality of life in the new normal.

4. Methodology

In obtaining comprehensible data, the researcher utilized a standardized tool, namely: the Cohen Perceived Stress Scale and the Work-Related Quality of Life Questionnaire. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) will measure the perception of stress, and the extent to which situations in a person's life rate as stressful. WHOQOL is a quality-of-life assessment developed by WRQoL by Simon Easton & Darren Van Laa and used to gauge the perceived quality of life of employees as measured through six psychosocial sub-factors. The respondents of this study are SJIT employees divided into three clusters: head of offices, teaching staff, and office staff, which were selected through cluster sampling. All the data gathered has undergone statistical treatment and is protected by Republic Act No. 10173: Data Privacy Act of 2012.

5. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Participants Designated Position.

Position	Frequency	Percentage
Deans/Heads of Offices	6	16.2%
Faculty	12	32. 4%
Office Staff	19	51.4%
Total	37	100%

Table 1 shows that the largest group is the office staff, with

19 respondents, accounting for 51.4%. Followed by the teaching faculty with 12, which constitutes 32.4% of the workforce. Six individuals in these roles come from Head of Offices and Deans from the different colleges, which comprise 16.2% of the total.

Table 2. Perceived Stress of the SJIT Employees.

Designated Position	Perceived Stress Scale	Interpretation
Deans/Heads of Offices	16.00	Moderate
Faculty	18.93	Moderate
Office Staff	20.00	Moderate to high

The office staff suggests a perceived moderate to high stress with a mean of 20.00. Followed by Teaching faculty experiencing slightly higher moderate stress, and heads of offices/Dean experiencing moderate stress levels. These suggest that the degree of perceived stress varies on the amount of workload. Faculty members tended to adopt more defensive coping mechanisms and attributed their lower stress levels to greater achievements and/or acknowledgment. On the other hand, administrative personnel experienced a decrease in stress which they linked to an enhancement in staffing levels and/or organizational processes [9].

Table 3. Work-Related Quality of Life of SJIT Employees.

Position	Work-Related Quality of Life	Interpretation
Deans/Heads of Offices	86.50	High WRQoL
Faculty	84.57	High WRQoL
Office Staff	83.29	Lower to High WRQoL

The shows Deans/Heads of Offices have a high work-related quality of Life with a mean score of 86.50, followed by the teaching faculty with a WRQoL mean score of 84.57. Lastly, the Office Staff shows a mean score of 83. 29. The overall mean score falls in the lower to high work-related quality of life category. The result suggests that the Improved quality of life at work is associated with increased motivation in one's job, higher levels of job satisfaction, deeper involvement in work, greater overall life contentment, more happiness, and a reduction in self-perceived anxiety [12].

6. Conclusions

Based on the result of the study, Deans/Heads of offices experienced a normal range of stress. Despite the stressors, they managed to work effectively. On the other hand, faculty encountered moderate stressors such as workload, administrative responsibilities, and student management. The Office staff experienced stressful tasks that stemmed from their specific work responsibilities and administrative roles.

Deans/Heads of offices perceived a high level of satisfaction and well-being in their work life. While the Faculty experiences a positive work environment which contributes to their quality of work life. Lastly, the Office Staff, despite their stressful work tasks, find satisfaction in their work life.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were developed:

SIIT Administration. Developing a stress management program that encompasses physical, mental, and social engagement in the employees. This initiative will help the employees temporarily exercise and rest themselves from work as team-building activities and a reward system can help strengthen the relationship between the institution and the employees. This strategy can mean encouragement and appreciation for the employee's work contribution. In this way, both the latter can make a strategic improvement of the management system and revamp the work-life balance among the employees.

Future Researchers. Further study of the perceived stress level and level of work-related quality of life using correlational analysis of the respondent's demographics. An in-depth analysis will give a robust understanding of the employees' stress levels and quality of life, particularly in work settings.

Abbreviations

COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 19
SIIT	Saint Joseph Institute of Technology
WFH	Work from Home
WRQoL	Work-Related Quality of Life

Acknowledgments

The researcher would like to extend her warmest appreciation to her friends, family, and mentors who contribute to her research endeavor.

Author Contributions

Fabe Alyzza is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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