Medical Science

To Cite:
Alrasheedi MA, Ali DA, Hassan HC. Exploring the relationship between job autonomy and stress among staff nurses: A systematic review. *Medical Science* 2026; 30: e7ms3742
doi: https://doi.org/10.54905/disssi.v30i167.e7ms3742

Authors' Affiliation:
[1]PhD Candidate in Nursing, Lincoln University College, Malaysia
[2]Associate Professor, Lincoln University College, Malaysia
[3]Associate Professor (B.Sc., M.Ed., Ph.D.), Lincoln University College, Malaysia

***Corresponding author:**
Mohammed Abdullah Alrasheedi, PhD Candidate in Nursing, Lincoln University College, Wisma Lincoln, No. 12-18, Jalan SS 6/12, 47301 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia. Phone: (+966556388455), E-mail: mohd56562@gmail.com

Peer-Review History
Received: 07 August 2025
Reviewed & Revised: 25/August/2025 to 29/December/2025
Accepted: 07 January 2026
Published: 16 January 2026

Peer-review Method
External peer-review was done through double-blind method.

Medical Science
pISSN 2321–7359; eISSN 2321–7367

© The Author(s) 2026. Open Access. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (CC BY 4.0)., which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

Exploring the relationship between job autonomy and stress among staff nurses: A systematic review

Mohammed Abdullah Alrasheedi[1]*, Dhakir Abbas Ali[2], Hafizah Che Hassan[3]

ABSTRACT

Autonomy will allow nurses to control their workload, make meaningful choices, and alter their timeframes, which will contribute to job satisfaction and reduce burnout. The healthcare institutions need to implement policies that promote autonomy through a flexible working system, participative decision-making, and career advancement. The research was conducted to investigate how job autonomy and stress were related to nurses. The design of the study was based on the synthesis of reputable papers and systematic review. Three databases were searched and 3 papers that were found in English since January 2015 to July 2025 were searched. The studies included in the study based on the eligibility criteria included articles that were related to all nursing cadres in healthcare settings, articles that found a relationship between job autonomy and stress among nurses, articles that identified the various levels of job autonomy and their impact to stress and job satisfaction, articles that determined the effects of job stress, burnout, job fulfillment, work performance, and nurse retention, and articles published in English and in less than 10 years. After a thematic analysis, several themes were identified. The issues discussed included the effects of job autonomy on the stress levels of the staff nurses, the key factors that affect job autonomy in the nursing field, and the effects of low job autonomy on the nurses; job satisfaction, job performance, and health. Limited autonomy regularly results in elevated stress levels, higher rates of resignation and burnout, and low quality of healthcare services.

Keywords: Job Autonomy; Stress; Nurses; Job Satisfaction; Job Fulfillment

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Nie et al., (2023), job autonomy refers to staff working within a particular organization having some level of control over how to get work completed, comprising of how they accomplish tasks, established timeframes, and when or where they work. Nurses, among other healthcare practitioners, deal with multiple challenging scenarios daily. Nurses encounter numerous organizational, environmental, and psychological risks in stress and lack of content in their work. Therefore, healthcare professionals' autonomy and quality of life can impact the

quality of care provided to patients. One of the principles of practitioner autonomy is decision-making, which also results in the growth of professional knowledge (Hasanfard et al., 2024). Health practitioners, especially nurses with poor job autonomy, experience detrimental professional and personal feelings that negatively impact their professional performance. Lack of job autonomy among nurses has various consequences: work overload, depression, absence, and fatigue.

In the present day, the development and success of organizations are highly dependent on the maximum utilization of human resources. According to Asl et al., (2022), autonomy is critical in the healthcare profession, particularly nursing. It has been demonstrated that nurses' employment autonomy improves treatment quality, reduces patient mortality, and reduces stress. Professional autonomy is the main tool used by professional nurses to make the best decisions (Rouhi-Balasi et al., 2020). When given professional autonomy, nurses can make decisions concerning their patients, which influences their choices (Georgiou et al., 2017). Professional autonomy helps nurses stay in their careers, improves the quality of treatment, ensures job satisfaction, and develops and maintains patient safety through appropriate decision-making.

Furthermore, nurses working under low professional autonomy and limited decision-making authority will likely experience unpleasant professional and personal feelings comprising dissatisfaction, anhedonia, stress in the working surroundings, turnover intention, and poor patient outcomes. According to Hasanfard et al., (2024), autonomy is critical in attaining professional recognition and status. It is called freedom of action without supervision, clinical decision-making rights, and making the right clinical judgments that benefit the patient. As a central pillar of professional healthcare, autonomy adds to job fulfillment, critical thinking, and safe, quality care.

Nurses who experience higher levels of stress are more likely to suffer from medical and mental illnesses, perform worse and be less productive, and want to quit or change workplaces. Additionally, it might harm the nurse-patient bond (Alipour, 2018). Additionally, it decreases innovation, leads to inaccuracy and untimely decision-making, lacks professional fulfillment, and results in poor nursing care and lack of satisfaction among patients. Huston (2022) asserts that in order to ensure organizational growth and promote performance and productivity, a company must provide its employees with professional autonomy. Task management abilities improve nursing performance and care quality. According to Rouhi-Balasi et al., (2020), nurses who exhibit job autonomy are more self-assured, make more educated choices, have higher self-esteem, are given their place in the system, and are more motivated to take accountability and be dependable for an organization.

Bavier (2018) explains that nursing practitioners play a key role in maintaining the health and employment autonomy of the population, and job stress is particularly staffing in the nursing field. When it comes to their duties, it is important to remember that nurses are obligated to behave in a manner that fosters the health of the patients and fulfil their needs, which will ensure high standards of health care, safety, and satisfaction. The productivity, efficiency, and success of any organization are all dependent on the work performance of its employees. Nurses' job performance is influenced by a variety of elements, but one of the most crucial is organizational commitment.

It has been demonstrated that nurses perform better on the job when they have more professional autonomy (Alruwaili and Abuadas, 2023). Nurses' high workload and decreased autonomy adversely impact job satisfaction and reduce it gradually. Decreased job fulfillment results in nurses adversely affecting mental and physical health by the occurrence of multiple diseases, decreases work efficiency, and adversely impacts human relations. It is illustrated that when nurses acquire high efficiency in their workplace, they have high job fulfillment, elevated performance, patient fulfillment, and quality of care.

Nurses at the healthcare system's forefront often deal with the stress of patient management and care, which can result in compassion fatigue. Desperation, a diminished sense of fulfillment in life, stress, worry, and a decline in self-efficacy and confidence are all consequences of compassion fatigue, which lowers the effectiveness and efficiency of the care provider's services (Hasanfard et al., 2024). Employees that have a lower professional quality of life are more likely to quit, be less satisfied, and receive less recognition from the company. Nurses undergo fatigue and subsequent traumatic stress, which can be reduced by increasing their professional autonomy.

Theoretical Overview of the Main Concepts

Job Autonomy

Another important aspect of organizational empowerment is job autonomy, which refers to the degree of control over the workers in regard to the activities, schedules, and decision-making of their occupation, particularly in professions that demand professional judgment and expertise (like nursing). Job autonomy also allows healthcare providers to make key decisions, change according to

patient needs as they emerge, and offers healthcare providers professional discretion, which contributes to job satisfaction and commitment in the organization (Nie et al., 2023).

Job autonomy is mostly considered in the view of self-determination that upholds that competence, relatedness, and autonomy are the underlying demands that are inherent in psychology that guide wellbeing and employee morale. High workplace autonomy enhances the chances of healthcare professionals, especially nurses to be competent and self-driven, which enhance job satisfaction and performance. Hasanfard et al., (2024) claim that burnout, stress, and dissatisfaction are associated with low autonomy.

The other conceptual framework that will be needed is the Job Demand-Control approach that lists the employees who have the worst stress level when they have high demand and low control over what they do. In healthcare, an increased number of patients, administrative responsibilities, and strict rules can result in demanding surroundings. However, granting nurses greater freedom to make critical decisions about patient care can help improve and reduce their level of burnout (Alruwaili & Abuadas, 2023).

Job Stress

The emotional and physical reaction that arises when a job's criteria do not align with an employee's needs, resources, and talents is known as job stress, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (1999). It can result in poor health and even injury. Additionally, according to Alipour (2018), within the nursing profession, stress can result from various factors such as increased workload, limited resources, strain on patient emotions, and restricted autonomy to make decisions. Increased stress exposure can lead to burnout, a lack of job satisfaction, and a higher chance of negative health consequences for nurses and patients.

The transactional model of stress and coping lists resources as the background against which cognition and assessments take place (Yuan et al., 2024). The strategy shows that stress occurs when individuals think that job demands exceed their coping resources. The way people deal with stress includes methods of emotion-focused coping strategies and problem-focused coping strategies. As Hasanfard et al., (2024) claim, the problem-oriented coping methods in nurses become possible with the autonomy to make decisions on their own and follow effective work strategies to reduce the level of stress.

In addition, the imbalance approach of effort-reward lists the importance of balancing job requirements and suitable rewards. Stress in the nursing profession may increase when the high effort, which includes extended working hours and emotional distress, is not achieved through adequate rewards like autonomy, professional identification, or economic gains. Georgiou et al., (2017) claim that enhancing job autonomy may help to achieve the balance between effort and reward dynamics, which will lead to the reduction of stress and better job satisfaction.

Association Between Job Autonomy and Job Stress

Some of the studies have investigated the relationship between job autonomy and stress and have found out that job autonomy can help to alleviate stress at work when it is increased (Nie et al., 2023). Autonomy allows nurses to balance their workload and make important decisions and adjust their timeframes, improving work satisfaction and preventing burnout. Limited autonomy on the contrary has been associated with an escalation of stress, lower job performance, and frustration (Bavier, 2018). Moreover, the Conservation of Resources also is an additional prism of recognizing this connection. As per this notion, individuals aim at obtaining guarded resources, and retention is made up of recognition, social support, and autonomy. Lack of autonomy of the healthcare practitioners, like nurses, translates to loss of control, hence burnout and stress. However, according to Huston (2022), autonomy is a valuable resource provided when supported that is enough to enhance nurses to handle the work demands.

Effects on Nursing Practice

The above notions clarify that job autonomy plays a significant role in reducing stress among healthcare professionals, especially nurses. Healthcare organizations must execute policies that support autonomy via a versatile work arrangement, participative decision-making, and professional growth opportunities. According to Asl et al., (2022), institutions can enhance nurse retention, general organizational efficiency, and patient care quality by improving a surrounding that values autonomy.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The general objective was to explore the relationship between job autonomy and stress among nursing staff.

Specific Objectives

1. To evaluate the impact of job autonomy on stress levels among staff nurses.
2. To evaluate the main factors impacting job autonomy in the nursing profession.
3. To evaluate the impacts of limited job autonomy on nurses; job fulfillment, performance, and wellness.

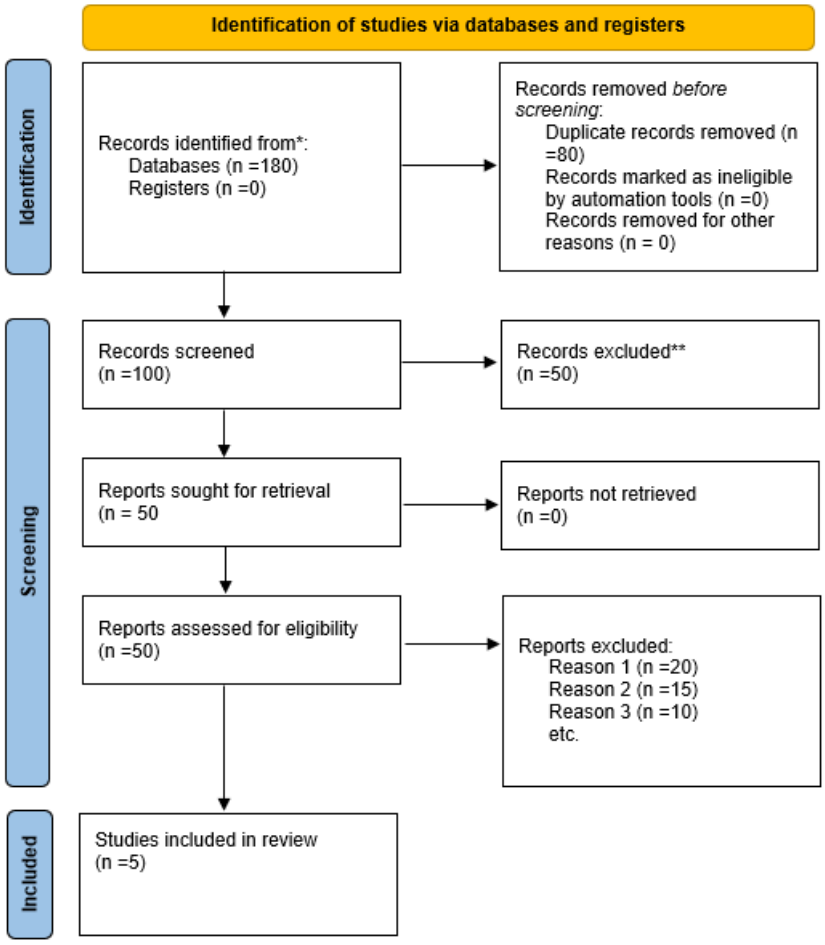

Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 flow diagram

2. REVIEW METHODS

Data Sources and Search Strategy

A comprehensive data search was carried out using a number of databases, such as Science Direct, PubMed, and Google Scholar, with a specific focus on publications published between January 2015 to July 2025. A manual data search was also conducted to identify additional studies that met the eligibility criteria. The search terms comprised "job autonomy" OR "work autonomy" OR "professional autonomy" AND "job stress" OR "work stress" OR "occupational stress" AND "nurses" OR "staff nurses" OR "nursing professionals." More search terms comprised of "job autonomy," OR "professional autonomy," AND "Self-Determination Theory," OR "Job Demand-Control Model," OR "Effort-Reward Imbalance Model," OR "Transactional Model of Stress and Coping" OR "Conservation of Resources Theory" AND "nurses" OR "nursing staff." Additional search terms comprised of ("job autonomy" OR "decision-making autonomy" OR "clinical autonomy") AND ("stress" OR "burnout" OR "job dissatisfaction") AND ("healthcare professionals" OR "nurses" OR "hospital staff"). Zotero 6.0.4 was utilized to screen and maintain the records, eradicating duplicates. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systemic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) were carefully followed in organizing the systemic review and theme synthesis. Table 1 presents the search term. The PRISMA 2020 flow diagram is highlighted in Figure 1.

Table 1: Search Terms

Search terms/ Keywords
“Job autonomy" OR "work autonomy" OR "professional autonomy"
AND
"Job stress" OR "work stress" OR "occupational stress"
AND
“Workplace stress” OR “Job stress”
AND
"Job autonomy" OR "professional autonomy"
AND
"Self-Determination Theory," OR "Job Demand-Control Model," OR "Effort-Reward Imbalance Model," OR "Transactional Model of Stress and Coping" OR "Conservation of Resources Theory"
AND
"Nurses" OR "nursing staff."

In collaboration with colleagues, the researcher developed a search strategy. The coworkers were nurses who had worked in the sector for more than two years and were well-versed in the topic. They were familiar with the review's objectives, duties, and expected contributions. Certain filters were used and the librarian was consulted so as to be able to ascertain a complete coverage of the terms related to job autonomy and stress in nurses. It is worth noting that teamwork facilitated the negotiation of the multiplexity of the data search.

The studies that passed the eligibility criteria investigated the interconnection between stress and professional autonomy of nurses. Additionally, they focused on techniques for collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data. The studies that met the criteria addressed a wide range of topics, including autonomy, job stress, the relationship between job autonomy and job stress, and the implications for nursing practice. Additionally, studies that evaluated the impact of these features on job autonomy and nurses' stress outcomes were included in the systemic review.

Selection Process

Basic review questions are key before starting any research since they assist in focusing attention, recognizing key literature utilizing keywords and themes, and narrowing down the subject. The reviewed topic was further explored using the PICO (Population, Intervention, Context, Outcome) approach. Population: Staff nurses working within a healthcare setting. Interventions: Increased Job autonomy. Comparison: Decreased level of job autonomy. Outcome: minimized job stress, enhanced job fulfillment, improved performance, and decreased rates of burnout. Table 2 shown PICO process.

Table 2: PICOT

PICOT	Keywords
Population	Staff nurses working within a healthcare setting.
Interventions	Increased Job autonomy.
Comparison	Decreased level of job autonomy
Outcome	Minimized job stress, enhanced job fulfillment, improved performance, and decreased rates of burnout.

Table 3 presents the following studies did not meet the eligibility requirements: a) studies that describe healthcare workers other than nurses; b) articles that do not measure job autonomy or job stress directly; c) dissertations or non-peer-reviewed literature; d) articles written in languages other than English; and e) studies carried out in non-healthcare settings that do not apply to nursing practitioners.

Table 3: Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Articles focusing on all nursing cadres within healthcare settings.	Studies that describe healthcare workers other than nurses.
Articles that evaluated the relationship between job autonomy and stress among nurses.	Articles do not directly measure job stress or job autonomy.
Studies highlight the different job autonomy levels and their effect on stress and job satisfaction.	Non-peer-reviewed literature, dissertations.
Studies evaluating job stress, burnout, job fulfilment, work performance, and nurse retention.	Studies published in other languages other than English.
Articles published in English within the last 10 years.	Studies conducted in non-healthcare settings that do not apply to nursing practitioners.
Data is collected worldwide within healthcare settings, hospitals, and surroundings.	

Data Extraction

Each study included the following information: the year of publication, the author (s), and the relationship between nurses' occupational autonomy and stress.

Synthesis of Findings

Thematic synthesis incorporated three steps. The initial step was to have the researcher code content line by line. Free codes were organized in order to develop descriptive themes during evaluations. To ensure a systematic approach to data coding, a coding manual was developed. After a careful examination of the problems raised, disputes were resolved until an acceptable solution was reached. The third step entailed going beyond the data to identify analytical themes, which together with the original study provided clear opinions. By employing group brainstorming to overemphasize themes and elucidate the relationship between job autonomy and stress among nurses, the researcher formulated a model to specify how these themes relate to this relationship.

Risk of Bias and Quality Assessment

The researcher has done an extensive literature search in different primary databases using a well-formulated search strategy with multiple keywords and Boolean operators. To minimize the chances of selection bias, this search was limited to papers published in conference proceedings and peer-reviewed journals. Critical Appraisal Skills Program was used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the articles. All the documents were reviewed regardless of the quality. Document evaluation was done by colleagues as they discussed to resolve any issues of concern concerning quality evaluation. The review is a detailed and straightforward description of the sources of information, search strategy, selection of the study, and its synthesis. Tables were used to summarize the main data adequately and hence; the level of results was enhanced.

Systematic Literature Search

By July 2025, several electronic databases yielded 180 potentially interesting studies. Among them, 80 in Science Direct, 40 in PubMed, and 60 in Google Scholar. The appearance of the articles in other sources demonstrated that the authors were wholly dependent on well-known databases. By excluding 100 duplicates, they reduced the number of unique articles to 80, thereby improving the integrity of the review process.

A hundred and sixty articles were filtered out on various grounds including review articles, absence of data, and irrelevancy. Extensive data screening is enlisted and adherence to the strict eligibility criteria. This was followed by reading of the entire texts that

further removed papers that did not have sufficient data or were identified to be modeling studies. Ultimately, the review by the researcher identified five publications, and the targeted and selective approach provided high-quality data rather than quantity. The systemic review met the purpose of the systemic review, owing to the wide screening of the literature; this increased the reliability and validity of the study.

Study Characteristics

The study summary is presented in Table 4. The studies included in the review evaluated a variety of topics related to the relationship between job autonomy and stress of nurses. The purpose of the research was to find out the job autonomy levels of nurses and their influence on the level of stress. The primary objectives of the research were to determine the correlation between job autonomy and stress among the nurses and to determine how job autonomy influenced stress and its effects.

In healthcare environment, the research has assessed different dimensions of job autonomy that entailed both high and low autonomy effects on stress. The increase in job autonomy and its overall effect on healthcare organizations were identified as among the most relevant factors in the research. The studies conducted in different settings provided a comprehensive overview of current situation concerning the relationship between occupational autonomy of nurses and stress. The results indicated the multifaceted nature of job control and stress among nurses. The need for specific findings to enhance the wellness and resilience of nursing practitioners overlaid the studies.

Table 4: Summary of the study

References	Objective	Research Methods	Results	Themes
Hämmig and Vetsch (2021)	The study evaluated the association between work stress, health, and job resources among health professionals in Switzerland.	Cross-sectional survey data	Job autonomy, specifically social support, appeared to be the resource with the most substantial health-protective effect.	The impact of job autonomy on stress levels among staff nurses.
Areej Ahmed Bahattab and Shahid (2022)	The study aimed to evaluate factors that influenced nurses' work at King Abdulla Medical City.	Descriptive cross-sectional design	The job autonomy of nurses was affected by elevated workload and patient acuity demands.	The main factors impacting job autonomy in the nursing profession.
Ganchuluun et al., (2023)	The study aimed to establish factors associated with nurses' professional autonomy when caring for patients with COVID-19 in a University Hospital.	Cross-sectional study	The study established that factors such as cognition, performance, concrete judgment, abstract judgment, and essential nursing judgment were statistically significant factors influencing job autonomy in nursing.	The main factors impacting job autonomy in the nursing profession.
Judi et al., (2025)	The study aimed to determine the mediating effect of job fulfillment and organizational commitment in this relationship among Iranian nurses.	Descriptive Cross-sectional study	The study illustrated that professional autonomy positively, directly, and strongly impacted nurses' job performance. Therefore, limitation on job autonomy had a strong impact on job fulfillment performance and wellness.	The impacts of limited job autonomy on nurses; job fulfillment, performance, and wellness.

3. RESULTS

Following the analysis of the articles, the researcher has listed three general concerns in detail. The role of restricted autonomy on nurses, the primary factors that affect job autonomy in nursing occupation and the correlation between job autonomy and stress among nurses.

The Impact of Job Autonomy on Stress Levels Among Staff Nurses

According to Hämmig and Vetsch (2021), job autonomy, specifically social support, appeared to be the resource with the most substantial health-protective effect.

The Main Factors Impacting Job Autonomy in the Nursing Profession

According to Areej Ahmed Bahattab and Shahid (2022), the job autonomy of nurses was affected by elevated workload and patient acuity demands. Additionally, Ganchuluun et al., (2023) established that factors such as cognition, performance, concrete judgment, abstract judgment, and essential nursing judgment were statistically significant factors that influence job autonomy in the nursing profession.

The Impact of Limited Job Autonomy on Nurses: Job fulfillment, performance, and wellness

According to Judi et al., (2025), professional autonomy positively, directly, and strongly impacts nurses' job performance. Therefore, limitations on job autonomy had a substantial impact on job fulfillment performance and wellness.

4. DISCUSSION

Three main topics in the study examining the connection between nurses' occupational autonomy and stress were listed in the evaluation. The subjects covered included how work autonomy affects staff nurses' stress levels, the main elements influencing job autonomy in the nursing field, and the consequences of having little job autonomy for nurses in terms of job satisfaction, productivity, and well-being. The data is incorporated and the issues are thoroughly reviewed in this part.

The Impact of Job Autonomy on Stress Levels Among Staff Nurses

Job autonomy, specifically social support, was seen to be one of the most significant health protective resources (Hämmig & Vetsch, 2021). Nurses with elevated autonomy experience decreased stress levels as they have more control over their work schedules, task management, and patient care decisions. Reduced stress levels within a working environment result in improved job fulfillment, enhanced decision-making, and promoted wellness. Quite the contrary, nurses with limited autonomy have been listed to undergo an emotional distress, a decline in motivation and burnout, which are negative impacts on patient outcomes and organizational effectiveness. Nurses that have little control over what they do experience more frustration and stress levels which often result into emotional distress. Professional decision-making and independent decision-making can alleviate patient care and workload stressors. Increased autonomy has been linked to resilience, self-efficacy, and job engagement to develop mental well-being and effectiveness in nursing practice.

In addition, the autonomy of the job loss can cause stress to the nurses since they might get a sense of constant surveillance and limited decision-making, which can cause stress and frustration. Stress may be caused by an increased workload and a limited capacity to give priority to tasks. There is less autonomy of the job thus leading to role conflict where they perform jobs that are in their practice or conflicting priorities which lead to stress. Job stress has negative consequences on the health provider and the patient leading to negative quality of life among the nurses and the patient. Karaferis et al., (2022) state that the job performance of nurses is tied to the job fulfillment. It is associated with positive attitudes and thoughts of the nurses concerning their work, which are grounded in their expectations regarding the profession and not on the character of the practitioner (Isfahani and Sarzehi, 2019). The impact of job satisfaction is vast and far-reaching with nurses. It improves the quality of care and enhances patient satisfaction.

The Main Factors Affecting Job Autonomy in the Nursing Profession

Several professional and organizational conditions influence job autonomy in healthcare practitioners especially nurses. Areej Ahmed Bahattab and Shahid (2022) discovered that workload and patient acuity requirements were influencing professional autonomy in the nurses. All these factors may impair their decision-making capability making them burn out and experience stress and reduced job satisfaction. Furthermore, Ganchuluun et al., (2023) revealed that cognition, performance, concrete judgement, abstract judgement, and essential nursing judgment are statistically significant factors that affect job autonomy in the nursing profession.

The ability to make decisions and a good clinical skill enables nurses with more autonomy as they are likely to have the confidence to assess the needs of patients and implement a care plan. However, issues in the work environment, including the addition of more administrative tasks and hierarchies, constantly frustrate a health care professional, especially the independence of nurses.

Nevertheless, nurses that practice in settings that encourage leadership and professional growth are more likely to be more autonomous. Constant learning, ongoing leader assistance, and well-structured tasks have the potential to empower nurses to make vital decisions and improve patient outcomes and job satisfaction. Thus, improving job autonomy should involve managing workloads, fostering professional development, and reorganizing hospital policies to support independent nursing practice.

The Effect of Low Job Autonomy on Nurses: Job satisfaction, work, and well-being

Limited job autonomy has implications on job satisfaction, overall health, and performance of the nurses. As Judi et al., (2025) explain, professional autonomy has a positive, direct and strong influence on job performance of nurses. So, work autonomy restrictions influenced job performance in terms of fulfillment and wellness significantly. The absence of autonomy can cause a shortage of fulfillment, stress, and demotivation which is harmful to nurses and the healthcare system overall.

One of the major elements of nurse retention and patient care quality is job fulfillment. Low efficiency to make independent clinical decisions and frustrations are common among the nurses due to the job insecurity, which affects their professional identity and job satisfaction (Alruwaili and Abuadas, 2023). It is necessary to note that nurses who had tight instructions and were not very flexible in thinking could get disengaged and discouraged. However, as soon as nurses are given an opportunity to make personal decisions, they will experience a sense of fulfillment and dedication to their profession, which will lead to higher rates of job satisfaction (Georgiou et al., 2017).

Nurse Autonomy is a crucial constituent towards stimulating performance of nurses. Studies have indicated that nurses with job autonomy in patient care are more efficient, have better clinical outcomes, and the level of patient satisfaction is higher (Hasanfard et al., 2024). But in the setting where autonomy is constrained, nurses may fail to do the best practices, which results in the delay of patient care and low productivity. In addition, the absence of autonomy can lead to high levels of reliance of nurses on their managers and the impossibility to acquire significant problem-solving skills (Rouhi-Balasi et al., 2020). Job autonomy determines and necessitates the physical and psychological well-being of the nursing providers. Low autonomy results in stress in the healthcare setting that results in fatigue, low-level professional performance, and burnout (Hammig & Vetsch, 2021). The researches show that the probability of a nurse feeling sad, experiencing emotional distress as well as anxiety is greater when the working hours and the decision-making processes are not controlled by this person (Bavier, 2018). Nevertheless, they mark a lower stress level and overall wellness compared to the nurses who are empowered to make decisions and practice professional discretion (Alipour, 2018).

Recommendations

Based on the study, it was suggested that:

1. The health setting must develop policies and regulations that enable nurses to have greater autonomy in clinical decision-making, which increases competence and confidence in patient care.
2. Implementation of a master plan of flexible schedule and workload management can help in alleviating stress and burnout, ensuring that nurses have a healthy work-life balance.
3. Healthcare organizations must introduce life-long learning programs with the aim of enhancing the leadership capacities, clinical judgment and problem-solving capability of the nurses.
4. Counselling services and mental health resources would help to decrease stress and emotional burnout on nurses.

5. CONCLUSION

The relationship between job autonomy and stress among staff nurses is also a critical topic in the healthcare sector. Lack of job autonomy affects job satisfaction, performance, and wellness of nurses, and has crushing effects on patient care and operational efficiency. Once nurses gain a sense of control over their decision-making, improvements in clinical outcomes, job satisfaction, and professional interest are possible. Loss of autonomy typically results in increased stress, higher rates of resignation and burnout, and poor healthcare service delivery. The outcomes of stress associated with adverse working conditions and decision-making constraints include dissatisfaction with the job, emotional distress, and low employee productivity. It does not exclude personal nurses as healthcare organizations are experiencing workforce retention and poor patient outcomes.

To overcome these challenges, healthcare facilities would need to implement measures to enhance job autonomy. Nurses given autonomy to make clinical decisions and participate in decision-making processes, and who work efficiently, can significantly reduce stress levels and increase morale in the workplace. In addition, excellence in nursing practice can be achieved in a conducive work

environment where nurses experience forward mentorship, professional growth, and teamwork. Organizations can improve job satisfaction and performance, as well as maximize patient care, by identifying the factors that lead nurses to work independently and addressing them. Future studies should further assess the relationship between occupational autonomy and stress to identify effective interventions that improve nurses' well-being. By demanding job autonomy, healthcare settings will gain a more productive, satisfied, and motivated workforce that will benefit the patients.

Acknowledgments
The authors have no acknowledgments to disclose.

Informed consent
Not applicable.

Ethical approval
Not applicable. This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

Funding
This research did not receive any external funding like specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or nonprofit sectors.

Conflict of interest
The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interests, competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Data and materials availability
All data associated with this study will be available based on reasonable request to the Corresponding Author.

REFERENCES

1. Ahmed Bahattab A, Shahid M. Factors affecting the nurses work autonomy at king Abdullah medical city in Makkah. Am J Nurs Res 2022;10(3):105–10. doi: 10.12691/ajnr-10-3-5
2. Alipour N. Study of occupational stress as predictors of nursing intention to leave. J Ergon 2018;58–64. doi: 10.30699/jergon.6.1.58
3. Alruwaili MM, Abuadas FH. Professional autonomy among nurses in Saudi Arabian critical care units. BMC Nurs 2023;22(1):224. doi: 10.1186/s12912-023-01390-x
4. Asl RG, Taghinejad R, Parizad N, Jasemi M. The relationship between professional autonomy and job stress among intensive care unit nurses: A descriptive correlational study: A descriptive correlational study. Iran J Nurs Midwifery Res 2022;27(2):119–24. doi: 10.4103/ijnmr.ijnmr_375_20
5. Bavier A. An overview of health challenges faced by nurses. J Appl Biobehav Res 2018;23(1):e12118. doi: 10.1111/jabr.12118
6. Ganchuluun S, Kondo A, Ukuda M, Hirai H, Wen J. Factors related to nurses' professional autonomy when caring for patients with COVID-19 in a university hospital: A cross-sectional study. J Nurs Manag 2023;2023:1741721. doi: 10.1155/2023/1741721
7. Georgiou E, Papathanassoglou EDE, Pavlakis A. Nurse-physician collaboration and associations with perceived autonomy in Cypriot critical care nurses. Nurs Crit Care 2017;22(1):29–39. doi: 10.1111/nicc.12126
8. Hämmig O, Vetsch A. Stress-buffering and health-protective effect of job autonomy, good working climate, and social support at work among health care workers in Switzerland. J Occup Environ Med 2021;63(12):e918–24. doi: 10.1097/JOM.0000000000002404
9. Hasanfard F, Torabizadeh C, Khademian Z. A study of the relationship between professional autonomy and professional quality of life among operating room personnel: A cross-sectional study. Perioper Care Oper Room Manag 2024;37(100447):100447. doi: 10.1016/j.pcorm.2024.100447
10. Huston CJ. Leadership roles and management functions in nursing: Theory and application. Wolters Kluwer Health; 2022.
11. Isfahani P, Sarzehi T. Job satisfaction among nurses in hospitals of Iran: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Pajouhan Sci J 2019;17(4):1–8. doi: 10.52547/psj.17.4.1

12. Judi A, Parizad N, Mohammadpour Y, Alinejad V. The relationship between professional autonomy and job performance among Iranian ICU nurses: the mediating effect of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. BMC Nurs 2025;24(1):20. doi: 10.1186/s12912-024-02551-2
13. Karaferis D, Aletras V, Niakas D. Determining dimensions of job satisfaction in healthcare using factor analysis. BMC Psychol 2022;10(1):240. doi: 10.1186/s40359-022-00941-2
14. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Stress at work. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, 1999; 99-101(99-101). doi: 10.26616/nioshpub99101
15. Nie T, Tian M, Cai M, Yan Q. Job autonomy and work meaning: Drivers of employee job-crafting behaviors in the VUCA times. Behav Sci (Basel) 2023;13(6):493. doi: 10.3390/bs13060493
16. Rouhi-Balasi L, Elahi N, Ebadi A, Jahani S, Hazrati M. Professional autonomy of nurses: A qualitative meta-synthesis study. Iran J Nurs Midwifery Res 2020;25(4):273–81. doi: 10.4103/ijnmr.IJNMR_213_19
17. Yuan Q, Tan TH, Wang P, Poremski D, Abdin E, Magadi H, Goveas R, Ng LL, Subramaniam M. A modified transactional model of stress and coping on depressive symptoms among informal caregivers of persons with dementia. Sci Rep 2024;14(1):25507. doi: 10.1038/s41598-024-76339-4