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Relationship between job satisfaction, job stress and their outcomes in administrative workers of an employment agency (Barranquilla, Atlántico, Colombia).

Relación entre satisfacción laboral, estrés laboral y sus resultados en trabajadores administrativos de una agencia de empleo (Barranquilla, Atlántico, Colombia).

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Abstract

The relationship between job satisfaction, job stress, and their perceived outcomes was examined among administrative workers at an employment agency in Barranquilla. A cross-sectional, analytical, observational study was conducted with census sampling and 67 self-administered, anonymous, and completed surveys. Satisfaction, stress, and the impacts of stress on health, performance/satisfaction, relationships, and personal life were measured using five-point Likert scales; internal consistency was excellent across all three scales. Average levels indicated moderate-to-high satisfaction, low-to-moderate stress, and low impacts. The correlation matrix showed a strong and positive association between stress and impacts, and weak and negative correlations between satisfaction with stress and impacts. In multiple linear regression, stress emerged as a robust and positive predictor of impacts, while satisfaction did not contribute an independent effect when controlling for stress level; the overall model fit was substantial. The analysis by area (Procurement, Sales, OSH, Payroll, and Document Management) showed no significant differences in stress or impacts, and only a marginal signal in satisfaction, suggesting a relatively homogeneous profile across departments. The findings support the JD-R and COR frameworks, underscoring the central role of demands and resource loss in the genesis of adverse outcomes. It is concluded that interventions should prioritize workload management, workflow organization, disconnection, and instrumental support during peak periods, complemented by actions that sustain satisfaction, in order to reduce the impacts of stress and promote the sustainable functioning of administrative work.

Palabras clave: Job Satisfaction; Psychological Stress; Psychosocial Factors; Occupational Health; Workload.

Resumen

Se examinó la relación entre satisfacción laboral, estrés laboral y sus resultados percibidos en trabajadores administrativos de una agencia de empleo en Barranquilla. Se realizó un estudio observacional analítico de corte transversal con muestreo censal y 67 encuestas completas aplicadas de forma auto-administrada y anónima. Se midieron satisfacción, estrés e impactos del estrés en salud, desempeño/satisfacción, relaciones y vida personal mediante escalas Likert de cinco puntos; la consistencia interna fue excelente en las tres escalas. Los niveles promedios indicaron satisfacción moderado-alta, estrés bajo-moderado e impactos bajos. La matriz de correlaciones mostró asociación alta y positiva entre estrés e impactos, y correlaciones débiles y negativas entre satisfacción con estrés e impactos. En la regresión lineal múltiple, el estrés emergió como predictor robusto y positivo de los impactos, mientras que la satisfacción no aportó efecto independiente al controlar por el nivel de estrés; el ajuste global del modelo fue sustantivo. El análisis por áreas (Contratación, Comercial, SST, Nómina y Gestión Documental) no evidenció diferencias significativas en estrés ni en impactos, y solo una señal marginal en satisfacción, sugiriendo un perfil relativamente homogéneo entre dependencias. Los hallazgos respaldan marcos JD-R y COR, subrayando el papel central de las demandas y la pérdida de recursos en la génesis de los desenlaces adversos. Se concluye que las intervenciones deberían priorizar la gestión de carga, la organización de flujos, la desconexión y el apoyo instrumental durante picos, complementadas con acciones que sostengan la satisfacción, con el fin de reducir los impactos del estrés y favorecer un funcionamiento sostenible del trabajo administrativo.

Keywords: Satisfacción en el Trabajo; Estrés Psicológico; Factores Psicosociales; Salud Laboral; Carga de Trabajo.

Introduction

The relationship between job satisfaction, stress, and their outcomes constitutes a central axis in occupational health and organizational behavior, due to its direct influence on psychophysical well-being, performance, and work sustainability. In administrative environments, such as employment agencies, demanding goals, high document traceability, and simultaneous attention to multiple interlocutors converge, a set of demands that can accumulate and undermine well-being even when perceptions of the climate are favorable (Schneider et al., 2017; Taris et al., 2021). Recent literature shows that satisfaction is associated with positive health and performance outcomes, although its effect can be offset when the intensity and chronicity of the demands exceed people's capacity for recovery (Bowling et al., 2020; Mazzola & Disselhorst, 2019).

Contemporary theoretical frameworks offer a solid framework for understanding these links. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model proposes that demands trigger burnout processes, while resources (autonomy, support, feedback) fuel motivational processes that sustain engagement and satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Lesener et al., 2019). Additionally, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory posits that perceived losses of time, energy, or control trigger spirals of deterioration that impact health and performance (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Taken together, both approaches anticipate that perceived stress will tend to more strongly predict adverse outcomes than global affective job evaluations (LePine et al., 2016; Mazzola & Disselhorst, 2019).

Empirical evidence in services and administration converges on a robust pattern: daily stressors and sustained overload are associated with burnout, somatic complaints, work-life conflict, and lower self-reported performance; these effects persist even when satisfaction reaches moderate levels (Sonnentag et al., 2017; Demerouti et al., 2021). Furthermore, social and structural resources can partially mitigate these impacts, but their compensatory capacity is limited when demands exceed certain thresholds or

become chronic, underscoring the need to manage workload and protect recovery beyond purely motivational initiatives (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015; Sonnentag, 2018).

In Latin America and Colombia, the digitalization of processes, the formalization of service metrics, and exposure to peak demand have made administrative work more complex, increasing the likelihood of interruptions, multitasking, and decision fatigue (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015; Pujol-Cols & Lazzaro-Salazar, 2021). Employment agencies represent a paradigmatic case, due to their combination of time pressure, data sensitivity, inter-area coordination functions, and expectations of immediate response. This framework requires interventions that integrate workflow redesign, instrumental support during peak periods, and effective disconnection windows, along with actions that sustain satisfaction as a motivating resource (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2017).

From a methodological perspective, valid and reliable measurement of satisfaction, stress, and impacts is crucial for guiding decisions. Likert-type scales with high internal consistency allow for estimating risk gradients and targeting strategies, while multivariate models facilitate distinguishing the net effect of stress on impacts by controlling for satisfaction and other covariates (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Lesener et al., 2019). However, the cross-sectional design common in these studies limits causal inferences, so longitudinal designs or intensive sampling are recommended, as well as objective indicators that mitigate common method bias (Fuller et al., 2016; Taris et al., 2021).

Based on this background, this study examines the relationship between job satisfaction, stress, and health, performance, and personal life outcomes among administrative workers at an employment agency in Barranquilla. It is proposed that perceived stress will exhibit a stronger association with impacts than overall satisfaction, and that differences between areas will be smaller than the variability attributable to work

microprocesses. By providing localized and actionable evidence, the study seeks to inform an intervention agenda focused on regulating demands, protecting recovery, and, in parallel, strengthening motivational resources that favor healthy practices and continued performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll et al., 2018; Mazzola & Disselhorst, 2019; Parker et al., 2017).

Methodology

A cross-sectional, analytical, observational study with a descriptive-correlational scope was conducted to estimate the relationship between job satisfaction, job stress, and perceived stress outcomes among administrative staff at an employment agency in Barranquilla. Planning and reporting followed the STROBE recommendations for observational studies, to promote transparency and reproducibility (Cuschieri, 2019). The target population included administrative workers with a current employment relationship during the survey period; a non-probability census-type sampling was used in the areas of Contracting, Sales, OSH, Payroll, and Document Management. Eligible employees were adults with at least one month's seniority and consent to participate; interns, induction staff, and questionnaires with substantive omissions were excluded. Sixty-seven completed surveys (n = 67) were obtained, consistent with the study's statistical results.

The core variables were overall job satisfaction, job stress, and the impact of stress on health, job performance or satisfaction, interpersonal relationships, and personal life. All variables were measured using straightforward five-point Likert-type scales, and indices were constructed by averaging the corresponding items. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, following best practices for instrument development and validation in health and behavioral research (Boateng et al., 2018). The definition of domains and the expectation of associations were based on the Job Demands-Resources Model and Conservation of Resources Theory, which

position demands and the loss or protection of resources as key mechanisms in the genesis of stress and its outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll et al., 2018; Lesener et al., 2019).

Data collection was conducted through a self-administered, anonymous application during work hours, in designated spaces by the organization, with standardized instructions and questions resolved before completion. To mitigate common method bias, the order of the questionnaire blocks was alternated, and quality controls were applied: integrity review, independent double coding, and pre-analysis cleansing, ensuring database consistency and decision traceability (Fuller et al., 2016).

Statistical analysis was conducted at three complementary levels. First, descriptive measures were calculated to characterize the levels of each construct. Pearson correlations were then estimated between satisfaction, stress, and impacts, with confidence intervals and two-tailed contrasts. Finally, a multiple linear regression model was fitted with stress impacts as the dependent variable and stress and satisfaction as predictors, reporting standardized coefficients, intervals, and significance. Additionally, differences between areas were explored using one-way ANOVA. Assumptions of normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, independence, multicollinearity, and influence were verified, and sensitivity analyses were performed by excluding influential observations and comparing specifications with and without adjustment for area. The significance level was set at 5 percent, and processing was performed using institutional-grade statistical software.

Ethical aspects were addressed in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and the CIOMS International Guidelines for research involving human participants, with voluntary participation, written informed consent, absence of personal identifiers, and aggregated communication of results to protect confidentiality (CIOMS, 2016; World Medical Association, 2013). The interpretation of the findings was framed within the JD-

R and COR models, which anticipate greater explanatory weight of stress derived from high demands and loss of resources on adverse outcomes compared to global satisfaction; this approach also guided the proposal of actions focused on regulating demands and protecting recovery (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll et al., 2018; Lesener et al., 2019).

Results and discussion

A total of 67 completed questionnaires were analyzed. The mean age of the sample was 33 years (SD ≈9.5). The most common areas were Contracting and Sales, followed by OSH, Payroll, and Document Management. The scales showed excellent internal consistency: Job Satisfaction (α = .916), Job Stress (α = .904), and Impacts of Stress (health, performance/satisfaction, relationships, and personal life; α = .905). Regarding levels, overall satisfaction was in the moderate-high range (M = 3.64; SD = 0.88), stress was low-moderate (M = 2.39; SD = 0.78), and impacts of stress was low (M = 1.96; SD = 0.87).

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics and reliability of the scales.

Construct	n	Average	OF	a
Overall satisfaction	67	3.640	0.876	0.916
Global stress	67	2.390	0.780	0.904
Impact of stress	67	1955	0.871	0.905

Source: Own elaboration

The correlation matrix showed a strong and positive association between stress and impacts (r = .747), indicating that the greater the frequency of stressful experiences, the greater the perceived impact on health, performance/satisfaction, relationships, and personal life. Satisfaction, in turn, was weakly and negatively correlated with stress (r =

−.188) and impacts (r = −.140), small magnitudes that suggest modest buffering at the bivariate level.

Table 2.

Pearson correlations between constructs

	Satisfaction	Stress	Impact
Satisfaction	1,000	−0.188	−0.140
Stress	−0.188	1,000	0.747
Impact	−0.140	0.747	1,000

Source: Own elaboration

In the linear regression model with Stress Impact as the dependent variable and Stress and Satisfaction as predictors, the fit was substantial (R^2=.558; R^2aj=.544; F(2,64)=40.44; p=4.42e−12). Stress emerged as a robust and positive predictor of impacts (β=0.835; 95% CI [0.646, 1.023]; p<.001), while satisfaction showed no independent effect when controlling for stress level (β≈0.000; 95% CI [−0.168, 0.168]; p=1.000). This suggests that, in this sample, recent stressful load is the decisive factor in explaining the variation in perceived impacts, above the additional contribution of satisfaction.

Table 3A.

Regression model fit (DV: Impact of stress)

Statistical	Worth
N	67
R^2	0.558
Adjusted R^2	0.544
F	40.44
p(F)	4.42e-12
AIC	121.9
BIC	128.5

Source: Own elaboration

Table 3B.

Regression model coefficients

Predictor	β	95% CI lower	95% CI upper	p
Constant	−0.040	−0.877	0.798	.925
Global stress	0.835	0.646	1.023	<.001
Overall satisfaction	0.000	−0.168	0.168	1,000

Source: Own elaboration

The analysis by work area revealed no statistically significant differences in stress or impact; a marginal difference was observed for satisfaction (F=1.706; p=0.063), which did not exceed the conventional significance threshold. These results indicate a homogeneous profile across departments, with variations more attributable to individual stress load than to structural factors within the department

Table 4.

ANOVA by work area (global effect)

Construct	F	p
Overall satisfaction	1,706	0.063
Global stress	0.719	0.808

Source: Own elaboration

The joint pattern of high reliability, moderate-high satisfaction, low-moderate stress, and low impacts is compatible with a largely stable administrative environment, although with subgroups who, when faced with peaks or accumulation of demands, report clear impacts when stress becomes frequent. Consequently, intervention actions should prioritize workload and recovery management (e.g., disconnection, recovery breaks, task organization, and instrumental support) as the primary means of reducing impacts. General improvements in climate/satisfaction, while valuable, do not replace the need to contain stress to protect workers' health, performance, and personal lives.

The results show moderate-to-high levels of job satisfaction, low-to-moderate levels of stress, and low impacts of perceived stress on health, performance/satisfaction, relationships, and personal life. The internal consistency of the three scales was excellent, supporting the internal validity of the measurements and reducing the likelihood of random error. Overall, the pattern suggests a relatively stable administrative environment, with subgroups exposed to peaks in demand that, when frequent, translate into concrete impacts.

A central finding is the strong association between stress and impacts and the robust effect of stress in the regression, even when controlling for satisfaction. This result is consistent with contemporary frameworks such as the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model and Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which posit that demands (workload, time pressure, task accumulation) erode personal and organizational resources and, therefore, more powerfully predict adverse outcomes than affective resources such as global satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Recent studies in administrative services contexts have reported comparable relationships, where the frequency of daily stressors explains substantive variance in burnout, somatic symptoms, and self-reported performance, above and beyond job satisfaction (Sonnentag et al., 2017; Mazzola & Disselhorst, 2019).

In contrast, satisfaction showed weak correlations with stress and impacts and did not contribute an independent effect in the multivariate model. This pattern suggests that, in settings with recurrent demands, the benefits of a valued work climate or positive affective evaluations of work are not sufficient to contain the effects of stress on health and performance if the workload is not managed and recovery is not ensured (Sonnentag, 2018). Recent literature has highlighted that motivational resources (e.g., recognition, support) partially buffer stress, but their compensatory capacity is saturated when demands exceed certain thresholds or become chronic (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

The homogeneity across departments, with no significant differences in stress or impacts and only a marginal signal in satisfaction, suggests that outcomes depend more on micro-work processes (e.g., task peaks, bottlenecks, interruptions) and recovery habits (disconnection, effective breaks) than on the structural features of each department. Recent organizational studies have found similar patterns, where within-department variability exceeds that between-department variability and where process interventions (shift management, prioritization, flow redesign) generate a greater impact than generic climate changes (Parker et al., 2017).

From an applied perspective, these findings support interventions focused on demands and recovery: (a) load leveling through task scheduling and limits on multitasking, (b) short but frequent windows of disconnection and recovery breaks, (c) instrumental support for peak times (cross-backup, quick checklists), and (d) expectation clarification to reduce uncertainty and role-demand alignment (Sonnentag, 2018; Barber & Santuzzi, 2015; Parker et al., 2017). Furthermore, the results justify continuous monitoring of high-frequency everyday stressors (not just critical events), given their explanatory power on impacts.

Methodologically, high reliability strengthens inference, but the cross-sectional design limits causality; the stress-impact relationship is theoretically plausible, although the simultaneous nature of the measurement makes it difficult to rule out feedback loops (e.g., deteriorating performance that increases perceived pressure). Future research should incorporate longitudinal designs or short-latency repeated measures (e.g., diaries/momentary experience) to capture accumulation and recovery dynamics, as well as objective indicators (absenteeism, productivity metrics, IT logs) to mitigate common method biases (Taris et al., 2021; Fuller et al., 2016).

Finally, the lack of an independent effect of satisfaction does not negate its usefulness: motivational resources can enhance adherence to recovery practices and

improve the sustainability of interventions. However, the data suggest that prioritizing demand management is the path with the greatest immediate return on investment for reducing impacts on health and performance, and that satisfaction, while desirable, is no substitute for concrete policies and practices that contain stress at its source

Conclusion

The study describes a largely stable administrative environment in which job satisfaction remains favorable, but is insufficient in itself to contain the adverse effects of work when demands intensify. Evidence shows that perceived stress acts as the primary determinant of impacts on health, performance, and personal life, displacing the specific weight of satisfaction when analyzed jointly. The relative homogeneity across departments suggests that outcomes depend less on structural features of the area than on microprocesses of work organization, task accumulation, interruptions, and real opportunities for recovery. Direct implications arise from this: prioritizing workload balancing, organizing flows and schedules, limiting multitasking, opening windows for disconnection, strengthening instrumental support during peak activity periods, and clarifying expectations to reduce role uncertainty. These actions, complemented by measures that sustain satisfaction as a motivating resource, aim to reduce the frequency and intensity of daily stressors that impact well-being and productivity. Methodologically, the high internal consistency of the measurements strengthens the inference, although the cross-sectional design limits causal attribution and calls for longitudinal or intensive sampling studies, along with objective indicators that mitigate common method biases. Overall, the findings guide an intervention agenda focused on managing demands and protecting recovery, rather than relying on general climate improvements, as the most effective way to prevent impacts and consolidate the sustainable functioning of the agency.

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