

Perceived Stress and Anxiety Among Pakistani Journalists and Psychologists: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Perceived stress and anxiety are prevalent among employed individuals due to workload and constant pressure across the globe. However, few studies have specifically addressed the issue of comparing Pakistani journalists and psychologists. This study aims to fill that gap by examining the association between perceived stress and anxiety among Pakistani Journalists and Psychologists. A cross-sectional correlational design was adopted, and purposive sampling was used to collect data from 179 Pakistani men and women, including 92 journalists and 87 psychologists who had been employed for at least one year, with an age of at least 23 years, and were Pakistani residents and citizens. Two instruments were utilised: the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) to measure perceived stress, and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (second edition) to measure anxiety. The results showed a significant relationship between perceived stress and anxiety among Pakistani journalists and psychologists. The study also found that psychologists scored significantly higher on perceived stress and anxiety. The study offers practical implications for mental health interventions and workplace support for professionals in these fields.

Keywords: Pakistani Journalists, Psychologists, Perceived Stress, Anxiety.

Introduction

Psychologists are mental health professionals who use psychological evaluations and talk therapy to help individuals cope with life challenges, relationship issues, and mental health conditions (Amari, 2025; Yuryevna et al., 2024). Journalists are individuals who write for newspapers, magazines, or online platforms, or create content for broadcast media (Araújo, 2024; Yoedtadi et al., 2024).

Studies have reported significant levels of perceived stress and anxiety among psychologists and journalists due to the demanding nature of their professions. Perceived stress refers to an individual's subjective assessment of the amount of stress they experience over a specified period. It reflects feelings of unpredictability, lack of control, and overload in one's life and is influenced by confidence in one's ability to handle challenges (Babore et al., 2020; Bossola et al., 2025). Anxiety is an emotional state characterised by inner turmoil, fear, and anticipation of future threats. It differs from fear, which is a response to a present threat (Craske et al., 2011; Terlizzi & Zablotsky, 2024).

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Several studies have investigated stress among journalists. A study in Benin City, Nigeria, involving 320 journalists found that most experienced moderate stress and job dissatisfaction. Job title, gender, and stress levels were significantly associated with psychological morbidity, emphasising the need for workplace interventions (Ofili et al., 2014). Research on Finnish journalists revealed that past trauma, ethical dilemmas, and crisis exposure increased risks for PTSD, depression, and burnout. Around 20% reported long-term symptoms, suggesting a need for training in trauma awareness and ethical crisis reporting (Backholm, 2012; Backholm & Björkqvist, 2010). Soto-Sanfiel and Salojärvi (2024) explored the emotional impact of conflict reporting on 20 Venezuelan journalists, highlighting stressors such as political instability, repression, and personal threats. Despite some seeking psychological or religious support, many were hindered by financial and cultural barriers. The study emphasised the importance of emotional literacy training in promoting ethical and mentally healthy journalism.

Among psychologists and other health professionals, similar patterns of stress and anxiety have been found. An online survey of 139 allied health professionals revealed perceived stress as the only significant predictor of psychological distress and life satisfaction (Harris et al., 2006). In a study of 264 U.S. therapists, irrational beliefs—such as the expectation to be constantly competent—were linked to elevated stress. Client behaviours like suicidal ideation and aggression were the most stressful (Deutsch, 1984). In Pakistan, Babur and Liaqat (2017) found high levels of depression (70.1%), stress (60.05%), and anxiety (53.17%) among 378 physiotherapists, with financial issues, low salaries, and job dissatisfaction as primary stressors.

There is substantial literature on perceived stress and anxiety among professionals such as journalists and psychologists. However, in Pakistan, there is a lack of comparative studies specifically examining these variables between the two professions. This study aims to address this gap by providing contemporary insight and practical implications for improving mental health support for both journalists and psychologists.

Rationale of the Study

Journalists and psychologists operate in high-stress environments, where exposure to emotional strain is a daily occurrence. Despite their distinct professional roles, both groups often face chronic stress and anxiety due to job-related demands. However, limited research has explored a direct comparison between them, especially in the Pakistani context. By investigating perceived stress and anxiety among these professionals, this study seeks to uncover commonalities and differences in their mental health profiles. The findings are expected to inform targeted interventions, training programs, and policy recommendations that enhance professional well-being in both sectors.

Hypotheses

1. There is likely to be a positive and significant relationship between perceived stress and anxiety among Pakistani journalists and psychologists.
2. There is likely to be a significant mean difference in perceived stress and anxiety between Pakistani journalists and psychologists.

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional correlational design to examine the relationship between perceived stress and anxiety among Pakistani Journalists and Psychologists. A purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from a sample of 179 participants, including both men and women aged 23 years or older. Participants were required to have completed a minimum of a four-year BS (Honours) or equivalent degree in Psychology, Journalism, or Mass Communication, must have been employed for at least the past year, and be Pakistani residents and citizens.

Instruments

The study utilised two instruments to measure the study variables: the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and the Beck Anxiety Inventory Second Edition (BAI-II). The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen et al., 1994) consists of 10 items, with responses recorded on a Likert scale ranging from "never" (0) to "very often" (4). The reliability of this scale ranges between 0.84 and 0.91. Additionally, the Beck Anxiety Inventory – Second Edition (BAI-II), developed in 1988 by Aaron T. Beck et al., comprises 21 items and uses a four-point Likert scale (0–3), where higher scores indicate greater anxiety. The reliability of the BAI-II is reported to be 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Ethical Consideration

The study adhered to the APA 7th edition ethical standards. The authors of the instruments were approached for permission to use their questionnaires. Approval was obtained from the relevant institution before data Collection. Participants were provided with a written consent form that outlined the voluntary nature of participation, their right to withdraw at any stage, and information regarding confidentiality. Upon obtaining written consent, participants completed demographic and study-related questionnaires. No emotional or physical harm was caused to participants. Data Collection was conducted in a safe and supportive environment. After completing the questionnaires, participants were thanked for their contribution. The data were then entered into SPSS version 26 for analysis.

Results

Table 1: Characteristics of Participants (N=179)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age			28.82	3.56
Profession				
Pakistani Psychologists	87	51		
Pakistani Journalists	92	49		
Socioeconomic Status				
Lower Class	84	47		
Middle Class	86	48		
Upper Class	9	5		
Gender				
Men	112	63		
Women	67	37		

The above table shows that 112 (63%) men and 67 (37%) women participated in the study, with a mean age of 28.82 ± 3.56 years. Among the participants, 84(47%) belonged to the lower class, 86 (48%) to the middle class, and 9 (5%) to the upper class. In terms of profession 87, 49% are psychologists and 92, 51% are journalists.

Table 2: Relationship between Perceived Stress and Anxiety (N= 179)

Variables	1	2
1.Perceived Stress	-	.87**
2.Anxiety		-

Note: ** $p < .01$

The above table depicts positive and significant relationship between perceived stress and anxiety among Pakistani Journalists and Psychologists.

Table 3: Psychologists and Journalists Difference between Study Variables (N=100)

	PP (n=87)		PJ (n=92)		<i>t</i> (177)	<i>P</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Perceived Stress	17.05	5.74	14.51	5.85	2.93	.004	0.43
Anxiety	31.59	11.86	22.85	15.86	4.18	.000	0.62

*Note: *p<.05, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, PP= Pakistani Psychologists, PJ= Pakistani Journalists.*

The above table depicts that psychologists scored significantly higher on both variables perceived stress and anxiety than journalists.

Discussion

Mental health problems, such as perceived stress and anxiety, are on the rise among Pakistani working professionals, and there is adequate literature addressing this issue. However, limited research is available comparing Pakistani journalists and psychologists with respect to these variables. The current study aims to fill this gap and contribute useful literature to the field.

The first hypothesis of the study was supported and is consistent with a previous similar study, which showed that individuals holding degrees in psychology and sociology in Pakistan exhibit a significant association between perceived stress and anxiety (Shahid et al., 2025). The significant and positive relationship between perceived stress and anxiety among Pakistani journalists and psychologists may be attributed to collectivist norms, where seniors often view themselves as superior and emotionally mistreat juniors. Additionally, the nature of work for psychologists and journalists exposes them to emotionally taxing situations.

The second hypothesis of the study was also supported, as Pakistani psychologists scored significantly higher on perceived stress and anxiety than Pakistani journalists. According to previous studies, journalists often face extreme trauma while reporting from war zones, witnessing violent scenes, covering crime, or reporting on natural disasters in harsh environments (Monteiro & Marques-Pinto, 2017; Wood et al., 2020). However, the reason Pakistani psychologists scored significantly higher could be due to low wages, being regarded as subordinate to medical doctors in hospitals, and facing challenging work—such as treating patients through therapy in a society with limited awareness of psychotherapy. Moreover, constantly listening to patients' and clients' problems and being expected to suppress their own emotions (e.g., anger) adds to their stress and anxiety.

Conclusion

The study concluded that perceived stress and anxiety are positively and significantly associated with each other among Pakistani journalists and psychologists. Furthermore, Pakistani psychologists scored significantly higher on perceived stress and anxiety than their counterparts, the Pakistani journalists. Thus, the study fulfills its objectives and offers useful implications.

Implications

The results of this study have several important implications. There is a need to encourage Pakistani journalists and psychologists to seek psychological help. The government should

establish a system of checks and balances for Pakistani journalists and psychologists through the use of mental health screening tools, as their psychological well-being is crucial for the services they provide to the community. Financial challenges, traumatic events, and adverse circumstances that contribute to psychological distress must be addressed. The community also needs to recognize that journalists and psychologists are human beings—not immune to stress or emotion—and should not be judged harshly for occasional mistakes, emotional responses, or moments of anger.

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