

Mosutoa Monyai¹, Nghamula Nkuna², Hlanganipai Ngirande¹ and Wiza Munyeka^{3*}¹University of Venda, Faculty of Management Sciences, Commerce and Law, South Africa²University of Limpopo, Faculty of Management and Law, South Africa³Durban University of Technology, Faculty of Management Sciences, South Africa

Enhancing Job Performance: Mindfulness Among Public Hospital Nurses in South Africa

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Abstract:

Research Question The study's purpose was to investigate the relationship between mindfulness and job performance among public hospital nurses in Polokwane Local Municipality, South Africa. **Motivation:** This study examines public hospital nurses' mindfulness and job performance and the nature of this relationship. The study is one of the first to investigate the relationship between mindfulness and job satisfaction among South African nurses and addresses a discernible dearth of knowledge about mindfulness and job satisfaction. **Idea:** The idea behind this study is to model the relationship between mindfulness and job performance in view of the fact that nurses work in stressful conditions that require them to balance how they conduct their work and also being mindful that they are working with people afflicted by health challenges. **Data:** A cross-sectional deductive design with 1287 nurses from Polokwane Local Municipality's three public hospitals was used in conjunction with the positivist paradigm and a quantitative approach. A stratified random sampling method was used with a recommended sample size of 297 nurses divided into professional and assistant nurses determined by the Raosoft sample size calculator. **Tools:** Data collection utilised a self-administered questionnaire and the analysis was done by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28, using the Hayes Process add-in software for mediation. **Findings:** The findings indicate a relationship between mindfulness and job performance among Polokwane Local Municipality public hospital-based nurses ($r = .393^{**}$; $p = .000$). Mindfulness influences job performance = 1.09 , + $(298) = 1.09$, $p = .000$, according to the regression results.

Keywords: mindfulness, job performance, nurses, local municipality, hospitals

JEL Classification: L23, M54

1. Background Introduction

In healthcare, nurses are pivotal, directly impacting patient outcomes and the quality of care. They continuously navigate a wide range of clinical and emotional challenges (Huang et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020). The intricate balance between providing empathetic patient care and managing their own emotional wellbeing places nurses in a unique position, making them susceptible to burnout and job dissatisfaction (Salvarani et al., 2020).

Job satisfaction significantly influences nurses' decisions to continue in their profession or remain at their current workplace (Morton, Topper, Bowers, Jardien-Baboo, Nyangeni & Mabitja, 2020). Nurses play a crucial role in delivering safe, individualised, holistic, and effective patient care through the application of the nursing process (Jordan Iwu -Jaja, Mokoka, Kearns, Oamen, De Lange, & Naidoo, 2023).

As a result, persons in need of health services must receive high-quality care. In light of this, it is critical to comprehend how aspects of human resource management, such as psychological health and mindfulness, might complement one another to support exceptional job performance. Madingwane, Mazenda, Nhede and Munyeka (2023) highlight that employees are an organisation's most precious asset, and the success or failure of a company is determined by its employers' capacity to recruit, retain, and compensate suitably skilled and competent workers. Nonetheless, job satisfaction and professional nurses' working circum-

* Corresponding author: Wiza Munyeka, e-mail: masterwiza2000@yahoo.com

stances are intertwined in order for nurses to provide services, and it is the responsibility of management to effectively manage these factors in order to improve nurses' job satisfaction (Manyisa & van Aswegen, 2017). According to Irfansyah (2020), employee performance and the results of an individual's efforts within an organisation or corporation are inextricably linked, claims Irfansyah (2020). These results cover a wide range of factors, such as professional growth, quantity, and quality.

According to Monyai (2022), nurses in South Africa play a vital role in delivering healthcare services to diverse communities across the country. Given this critical responsibility, it is imperative for the healthcare sector to prioritise the delivery of high-quality services to meet the needs of the population effectively. One crucial aspect that can significantly impact the quality of healthcare services is the management of human resources, particularly focusing on the mindfulness and psychological well-being of nurses. Monyai (2022) goes on further to state that, ensuring that nurses are mindful and psychologically well-equipped is essential for several reasons. Firstly, mindfulness practices can enhance nurses' ability to manage stress and maintain focus during demanding situations, ultimately leading to improved patient care and outcomes. Additionally, promoting psychological well-being among nurses can contribute to a positive work environment, fostering teamwork, collaboration, and job satisfaction.

Implementing strategies to support mindfulness and psychological well-being can have a direct impact on nurses' job performance. By reducing burnout, enhancing resilience, and promoting a sense of fulfillment in their roles, nurses are more likely to provide compassionate, patient-centered care and sustain high levels of performance over time (Monyai, 2022). Furthermore, Monyai (2022) mentions that, investing in the well-being of nurses not only benefits individual healthcare professionals but also contributes to the overall effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare delivery systems. It can lead to reduced absenteeism, lower turnover rates, and increased productivity, ultimately resulting in better healthcare outcomes for communities and improved healthcare service quality across the board. Mphephu (2019) reported that, with the nursing profession growing at a rate of 10% at a yearly basis and South Africa's population growing at her 1 % pace, there continues to be a nationwide shortage of appropriately qualified nurses. When hospital turnover is high, fewer nurses have to deal with heavy workloads that can affect job performance. Previous research has identified a number of characteristics that affect nurses' well-being and job satisfaction, including work-life balance (Schluter et al., 2011), supportive work settings (Smith, 2022), and effective communication skills (Kirca & Bademli, 2019). Furthermore, resilience (Delgado, Upton, Ranse, Furness & Foster 2017) and emotional intelligence (Christianson, 2020) have been recognised as critical components that assist nurses in overcoming the difficulties in their line of work.

According to a poll conducted in a few public hospitals in the Vhembe District, 79 percent of participants felt overworked by nursing duties (Mphephu, 2019). Nurses are expected to perform non-professional duties such as delivering and retrieving meal trays, cleaning, and patient transportation, according to Mphephu (2019). Alongside their professional work, they fulfil all of these obligations. Because of their increased workload, nurses are more likely to experience workplace mishaps such as prescription errors and procedural errors.

Mindfulness is increasingly prevalent, with growing attention to its positive impacts in scientific research and media. However, the business world often oversimplifies claims about the benefits of mindfulness for well-being, concentration, and success. While businesses are giving more attention to employee well-being, academic research on attention and its effects on organisations has also expanded. This highlights the importance for managers and organisational staff to approach productivity and focus critically, considering a nuanced perspective (Decuypere, Audenaert & Decramer, 2020). This is even more important in the medical profession and, more specifically for the purposes of this study, the nursing profession. Nurses must use mindfulness while doing their duties in order to reduce workplace accidents. According to Ngo, Nguyen, Lee, and Andonopoulos (2020), mindfulness is the ability to actively concentrate on the here and now and practise acceptance without passing judgement. Performance may improve and workplace accidents may be reduced if nurses are aware of what they are doing. More recently, mindfulness has been defined by Mohamed, Zaki, and Kotb (2021) as embracing one's present events with acceptance and retaining a conscious awareness of them.

2. The Problem Statement, Purpose, Aim and Hypothesis of the Study

Although the body of research on mindfulness and job performance has grown, as noted by Good, Lyddy, Glomb, Bono, Brown, Duffy, and Lazar (2016), little is known about how mindfulness might be used in the nursing field. It has been found that to introduce mindfulness in the workplace, managers must undertake

leadership and management development training (Dane & Brummel, 2013; Witschel, 2019). In the South African context, the Department of Health report found that only 15 percent of nursing managers attended the leadership and management development training (Annual Inspection Report, 2016/17). According to the strategy plan for nursing education, training, and plan (2016–17), there are now more non-nurse practitioners in management and leadership roles in South Africa than there were official, dedicated nursing leadership positions.

Nurses are in short supply at the Department of Health in Limpopo Province, particularly in the tertiary hospitals in Polokwane and Mankweng (Mbombi, Mothiba, Malema and Malatji 2018; Shipalana, 2013). Tshitangano (2013) attributed some factors of nursing turnover in Limpopo province to lack of workplace resources and long working hours which led to low job satisfaction. According to Shipalana (2013) and Ramarope (2015), inadequate management, a lack of opportunities for career advancement, a subpar workplace, excessive workloads, and inadequate incentives are all factors that lead to health care workers leaving their jobs. Nurses in the province of Limpopo perform poorly on the job as a result of a number of reasons, including a heavy workload, significant turnover, and a lack of training (Makunyane, 2012; Ramakuela, Mundalamo & Ndou, 2018).

The goal of the study is to better understand how mindfulness and job performance relate to each other among nurses working in three public hospitals in the Polokwane Local Municipality. The aim and objective of the study is to establish the relationship between mindfulness and job performance among nursing staff in three public hospitals in the Polokwane Local Municipality. The hypothesis of the study: There is a significant relationship between mindfulness and job performance among nursing staff in three public hospitals in Polokwane Municipality.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Weiss and Cropanzo's (1996) affective events theory (AET), which holds that employees' internal influences—such as their emotions and mental states—and how they respond to events that occur during their workdays have an impact on how well they perform on the job. Effective events are defined by Weiss and Cropanzo (1996) and Luo and Chea (2018) as the regular encounters that workers have at work, which can either positively or negatively affect their employment. An employee's performance on the job may be psychologically impacted by these workplace incidents.

In other words, positive work events instill positive outcomes. The theory highlights that when nurses experience positive work events they will be more productive, which leads to high job performance. Li, Liu, Zheng, Liu, Wang, Miner Ross and You (2020) found that negative work events, such as burnout, may activate nurses' affective responses, resulting in a change in work attitudes and behaviour. This means that the mindfulness and psychological well-being of nurses in the healthcare services relay in the hands of the healthcare management for the nurses to produce high performance. Therefore, in the context of this study, nurses' experiences of favourable working conditions, such as manageable workloads, can significantly influence their attitudes and subsequently impact their performance. However, negative psychological events such as depression and stress also influence the productivity of the nurses. These positive and negative events can result in long-term emotional reactions that can affect job performance.

4. Literature Review

In 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) designated the year as the “Year of the Nurse and Midwife” to honour Florence Nightingale's 200th birthday and highlight the essential contributions of over 28 million nurses and midwives worldwide. This declaration, made in 2019, took on even greater significance than initially anticipated (Mason, 2020). As noted by Amiresmaili and Moosazadeh (2013), nurses fulfill multiple roles within healthcare teams, including providing care, support, treatment, coordination, advice, management, education, and research. Consequently, nurses are responsible for overseeing patient care and support, managing ward activities, prioritising patient visits, and making timely decisions for emergency cases (Amiresmaili & Moosazadeh, 2013; Kexian, Tingting & Qu, 2020). Thus, healthcare departments must support nurses in carrying out these vital tasks effectively.

Research by Dane and Brummel (2013) and King and Haar (2017) indicates that workplace mindfulness positively influences job performance in dynamic work environments. Van Gordon, Shonin, Zangeneh, and Griffiths (2014) highlight that several mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) are now recommended by

both the British National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (BNICE) and the American Psychiatric Association (APA). This underscores mindfulness as a tool that organisations increasingly rely on to enhance psychological well-being and job performance. Consequently, nurses who engage in mindfulness practices are likely to contribute greater value to hospitals through enhanced productivity and job performance.

As nurses improve their job performance, hospitals are better positioned to achieve their objectives and enhance service delivery. Dane and Brummel (2013) and King and Haar (2017) suggest that mindfulness practices bolster flexibility and alertness while mitigating distractions and performance errors. Collectively, these findings imply that mindfulness in the workplace can support employees in achieving higher performance levels. Additionally, research by Vaculik, Vytaskova, Prochazka, and Zalis (2016) indicates that more mindful nurses demonstrate greater productivity, as mindfulness equips individuals with skills to navigate challenging or stressful situations with proactive and adaptive responses.

Sahin, Ozcan and Babal (2020) mentioned that nurses who practice mindfulness are more focused and pay more attention to their work and patients. Mindfulness enables individuals to effectively cope with a range of experiences which enhances job performance (Dane, 2011). Dane and Brummel (2013) build on the work of Dane (2011) who maintains that mindfulness can help with task performance in a variety of ways. White (2014) found that nurses who are mindful can work in a stressful situation which leads to job performance. Therefore, mindful nurses are more likely to maintain focus despite the high-pressure demands of their profession. This heightened focus can reduce the likelihood of errors, such as administering incorrect medications to patients.

Sahin et al. (2020) conducted a study on mindfulness and job performance on nurses from various hospitals in Turkey. They found a positive relationship between the two variables. Penque (2019) found a positive link between mindfulness and task performance among nurses in the United States, suggesting that mindfulness enhances performance. However, contrasting studies by Baas, Nevicka, and Ten Velden (2014) in the Netherlands and Hafenbrack and Vohs (2018) in Portugal reported a significant but negative relationship between mindfulness and task performance among nurses in these regions. The literature reveals inconsistencies in findings regarding the relationship between mindfulness and job performance, highlighting the need for further investigation. Additionally, previous studies have not focused on nurses in Limpopo, underscoring the importance of conducting research specific to this population.

5. Research Methodology: Data Collection, Study Population, Instrument Reliability, Research Procedures and Approach and Statistical Analysis

A cross-sectional deductive study was conducted under the ethical clearance of a South African university where the researchers are based with the aid of permission letters from the hospitals under investigation. To describe and summarise respondents' demographic information, as well as their levels of mindfulness and job performance, descriptive statistics were used. To define the relationship between mindfulness and job performance, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used. The prediction between the study variables was also determined using a multiple linear regression analysis.

An online approach was employed due to the restrictive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on data collection. A self-administered online survey questionnaire was created using Google Forms® and distributed to a purposive convenient online sample from January 31 to February 11, 2022. A survey questionnaire link was made accessible through the *Google Forms*® platform. The respondents who were the nurses received a link to a Google forms survey, which is easily accessible either with the Gmail email platform and even regular mail.

The difficulty faced in distributing questionnaires mirrors the obstacles encountered in the study conducted by Munyeka and Munzhedzi (2022). Like the present study, Munyeka and Munzhedzi encountered similar challenges in the distribution of questionnaires. These challenges in questionnaire distribution play a crucial role in the research process as they directly affect data collection, potentially impacting the quality and reliability of the study's results. The design enabled the researcher to obtain the same data from a large group of the population at hand in a standardised way. The information collected from the sample will also be generalised to the targeted population (Kraemer & Pinsonneault, 2014).

Using an Online Raosoft sample size calculator, a minimum recommended sample size of 297 respondents was obtained. However, to increase the response rate 500 questionnaires were distributed among the study population (Sample size calculator, 2019).

The subjects were professional nurses and nursing assistants working in three public hospitals in the city of Polokwane.

The hospitals consist of Polokwane Provincial Hospital, which has 356 professional nurses and 217 nursing assistants; Seshego Hospital, with 98 professional nurses and 120 nursing assistants; and Mankweng Hospital Campus, with 327 professional nurses and 169 nursing assistants (Limpopo Department of Health, 2018/2019).

Mindfulness was measured using the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) developed by Brown and Ryan (2003). This 15-item scale employs a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) "almost always" to (5) "never." Sample items include "I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some-time later" and "I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else." In prior studies, the scale demonstrated strong reliability, with a coefficient of .82 among nurses in Turkey (Sahin et al., 2020) and .85 among South African student nurses, both considered very good (Hair, Money, Samouel, & Babin, 2003).

This study followed Hair et al.'s (2003) guideline, which considers Cronbach's alpha values between .60 and .90 and above as reliable. Consequently, all three questionnaires in this study achieved acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The highest reliabilities amongst the questionnaires included job performance ($\alpha = .935$) followed by Mindfulness questionnaire which obtained the lowest alpha coefficient ($\alpha = .630$).

Job performance was assessed using Goodman and Svyantek's (1999) job performance questionnaire, comprising 25 items across three dimensions: altruism, conscientiousness, and task performance. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree." Sample items include "help other employees with their work when they have been absent" and "achieve the objectives of the job." Khamisa et al. (2017) reported acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each dimension in a study of nurses in Johannesburg hospitals: altruism at .82, conscientiousness at .89, and task performance at .96, with an overall scale reliability of .83, considered very good (Hair et al., 2003).

Three hospitals were purposely selected for this study. The rationale to choose these hospitals was because these are the only public hospital in Polokwane City. In this study, samples were selected using a stratified random sampling method. Nurses were divided into two different strata (professional nurses and assistant nurses). Respondents were then randomly selected from each stratum. The sampling method was applied because the researchers had two specific strata in mind based on location (professional nurses and nursing assistants in three public hospitals).

Prior to conducting the survey, the researchers contacted the Polokwane Department of Health for permission to conduct the survey. Information was provided on the main objectives of the study and how this study could contribute to the development of nurses. An informed consent form was also drafted and given to participants prior to conducting the survey. A Survey was created and sent to participants. Brace (2018) states that questionnaires are a form of communication between researchers and subjects and are sometimes administered by interviewers on behalf of researchers. Participants accessed the questionnaires via the **Google Forms**® link and answered them online and were they faced challenges, the participants were given the two avenues of communicating via email or telephone. This was done to adhere to the COVID-19 restrictions that were in place at the time of data collection. The participants were asked to return the completed questionnaire within 14 working days.

Data in this study were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28. Descriptive statistics summarised nurses' mindfulness and task performance and examined demographic patterns such as gender and age, with results presented graphically in frequencies and percentages. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2014), descriptive statistics capture the current state of a situation; thus, they were used to provide insights into nurses' mindfulness, psychological wellbeing, and job performance. Additionally, Pearson's correlation coefficient assessed the relationship between mindfulness and job performance, while regression analysis tested predictive relationships among variables.

6. Results

As the research was conducted very widely, a number of 1287 of nurses from Polokwane Local Municipality's three public hospitals were included and the Raosoft sample calculator deemed a sample of 297 and so 500 questionnaires were sent out as a link and 345 questionnaires were returned. The researchers ob-

served missing data in some questionnaires, which left 300 fully completed questionnaires for analysis. Consequently, the final sample size consisted of 300 questionnaires. The missing data were resolved by imputation which involves estimating the missing values based on the observed data (replacing missing values with the mean of the observed values), regression imputation (predicting missing values using regression models), and multiple imputation (creating multiple plausible imputed datasets and combining results).

Results in Table 1 show that the majority 189 (63%) were females, whereas there were 111 males (37%). Most of the respondents were between 31-35 years of age, 94 (31.1%). The lowest number of respondents were respondents between 20-25 years of age, 5 (1.7%). Moreover, most of the respondents, 165 (55%), had a Diploma as their highest qualification. Furthermore, 85 (28.3%) respondents had been in the nursing profession from 6 to 10 years, followed by those who had served in the nursing profession for less than 5 years (55) representing 18.3% of the respondents. Table 1 shows that most, 236 (78.7%), participants in the sample were registered nurses, followed by 55 (18.3%) who were nursing assistants. The number of enrolled nurses who participated in this study was 4 (1.3%). The results indicate that 3 (1%) licensed professional nurses participated, while only 2 (0.7%) were advanced practice nurses. The majority of participants, 249 (83%), were permanently employed, and 51 (17%) were on contract, suggesting that most participants were permanent nursing staff.

Table 1: Demographic information (N = 300)

Variables	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	189	63
	Male	111	37
Age (years)	20-25	5	1.7
	26-30	60	20
	31-35	94	31.3
	36-40	74	24.3
	41+	68	22.7
Highest qualification	Certificate	51	17
	Diploma	165	55
	Degree	73	24.3
	Post-graduate	10	3.3
	Any other qualification	1	0.3
Work experience	0-5	55	18.3
	6-10	85	28.3
	11-15	76	25.3
	16+	84	28
Rank	Nursing assistant	55	18.3
	Licensed professional	3	1
	Registered nurse	236	78.7
	Advanced Practice	2	0.7
	Enrolled nurse	4	1.3
Job status	Permanent	249	83
	Contract	51	17

Table 2 summarises Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the overall questionnaires. From the mindfulness questionnaire, a fair Cronbach's alpha of .630 was found. Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha of .935 was found for the job performance questionnaire which reflects an excellent co-efficient. Therefore, the reliability coefficient attained by all constructs is satisfactory as they are above .60 thus showing the consistency and stability of the questionnaires (Hair et al., 2003).

Table 2: Cronbach's alphas of the study for the overall scale

Construct	No of items	Cronbach's alpha score	Level of reliability
MASS	15	.630	Fair
JP	24	.935	Very good

Note: MASS = Mindfulness; JP = Job performance

6.1 Descriptive statistics (measure of central tendency, dispersion, and normality)

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for mindfulness and job performance, including the mean and standard deviation to measure central tendency. It also assesses data normality through skewness and kurtosis. The mean scores of mindfulness and job performance were (M = 4; SD = 5.64) and (M = 4; SD = 15.57) respectively. This implies that most respondents agreed with the statements.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics displaying central tendency, dispersion, and data normality measures

Construct	M	SD	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
MASS	4	5.64	-1.32	.141	3.20	.281
JP	4	15.67	-2.03	.141	4.03	.281

Note: MASS = Mindfulness; JB = Job performance; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation; SE = Standard Error

6.1.1 Hypotheses testing correlations results

The Pearson product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationship between mindfulness and job performance among nurses. The results in Table 3 indicate a significant positive correlation ($r = .393^{**}$, $p = .000$), confirming the study's purpose. Thus, it can be concluded that improvements in mindfulness are associated with enhanced job performance among nursing staff in three public hospitals in Polokwane Municipality. This conclusion is supported by a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between mindfulness and job performance, highlighting the significant role mindfulness plays in enhancing various aspects of job performance in high-stress environments such as healthcare. Mindfulness, which involves maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the surrounding environment, has been shown to positively influence both psychological and physiological well-being. For nursing staff, this heightened state of awareness and presence can lead to more effective patient care, improved decision-making, and a greater ability to manage the demands and pressures of their work environment.

Table 4: Pearson correlation analysis results among the variables

Variables		MASS	JP
MASS	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
JP	Pearson Correlation	.393**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

6.1.2 Regression analysis

Regression analysis was used to examine the influence of mindfulness on job performance. The results in Table 5 show a positive effect of mindfulness and psychological well-being on job performance. The regression results are as follows:

$$\hat{Y} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

Where:

- $\hat{Y}$ represents the predicted value of the dependent variable (job performance in this case).
- β_0 is the intercept term.
- β_1 is the coefficient of the independent variable (mindfulness).
- X is the value of the independent variable (mindfulness score).
- ϵ is the error term.

Based on the information provided, the regression equation can be written as: $\hat{Y} = 1.09 + (.298) X$ Where X represents the mindfulness score of the nurses. The 1.09 is the intercept term, and (.298) is the coefficient of the mindfulness variable. The coefficient (.298) signifies that for every unit increase in mindfulness score, the predicted job performance score increases by 298 units. The p-value of .000 indicates that the regression coefficient for mindfulness (β_1) is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, confirming a significant relationship between mindfulness and job performance. To further assess the predictive power, additional metrics such as R-squared or adjusted R-squared are needed to determine the proportion of variance in job

performance explained by mindfulness. These metrics can help assess the predictive power of the regression model. This means that when nurses experience satisfaction and mindfulness, they are likely to demonstrate improved performance.

Table 5: Regression analysis

Steps	Variables	β	T	DF	P
Step 1	MASS predicting JP	1.09	7.372	298	.000

Note: MASS = Mindfulness; JP = Job performance; β = Beta; t = t -value; df = degrees of freedom; p = level of significance

7. Discussion

7.1 Discussion of demographic characteristics of respondents

The demographic profile of participants in this study revealed notable trends. The majority were female, consistent with Tshitangano's (2013) findings, which shows that 70% of nurses in Limpopo Province are women. Additionally, the highest participation rate was among those aged 31 to 35, indicating that a significant proportion of nursing staff in the three public hospitals in Polokwane Municipality are in young adulthood. The study also found that a significant proportion of participants held a diploma qualification, aligning with Mbombi et al. (2018), who reported that registered nurses were the majority in a tertiary hospital in Limpopo. Additionally, many participants had 6 to 10 years of work experience, consistent with Mphephu's (2019) findings, which suggest that a substantial segment of nurses in the healthcare sector possess considerable experience. One noteworthy finding from the study was that a majority of respondents were permanent employees. This observation could be attributed to the ongoing shortage of nursing staff in the healthcare sector. The nursing profession experiences a growth rate of 10% annually, while South Africa's population increases by 14%, leading to a progressive scarcity of adequately qualified nursing professionals nationwide, as noted by Uhunamure (2018).

These demographic insights shed light on the composition of the nursing workforce in the study area, highlighting gender distributions, age demographics, educational qualifications, professional experience, and employment status. Understanding these demographic trends is essential for healthcare policymakers and administrators to address workforce challenges effectively and ensure the delivery of quality healthcare services.

7.2 Discussion of the questionnaires' reliability

The current study adhered to the reliability guidelines provided by Hair et al. (2003), which classify Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .60 to .90 as reliable. Consequently, the reliability levels observed in this study were deemed acceptable. Therefore, this study revealed that all three questionnaires obtained acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The highest reliabilities amongst the questionnaires included job performance ($\alpha = .935$) followed by Mindfulness questionnaire which obtained the lowest alpha coefficient ($\alpha = .630$).

7.3 Discussion of descriptive statistics

The findings of the study provide a detailed overview of the descriptive statistics concerning mindfulness, psychological well-being, and job performance dimensions, as indicated by mean scores and standard deviations. Specifically, the analysis revealed that mindfulness among the nursing staff had a mean score of ($M = 4$; $SD = 5.64$), indicating a moderate level of mindfulness overall. Interestingly, the study uncovered that a significant proportion of nursing staff in the three public hospitals in the Polokwane Municipality demonstrated a lack of mindfulness regarding their job responsibilities. This observation is underscored by the relatively low mean score for mindfulness. However, despite this lower level of mindfulness, participants generally indicated agreement with the statement regarding their job performance, which was reflected in a mean score of ($M = 4$; $SD = 15.57$).

These findings suggest a complex relationship between mindfulness and job performance among nursing staff. While the data reveal a lack of mindfulness, particularly in being fully present and attentive to tasks, the positive perceptions of job performance indicate an intriguing dynamic. This implies that nursing staff may still manage to perform adequately in their roles, even in the absence of optimal mindfulness levels. The cur-

rent study is consistent with the findings reported by Decuyper et al. (2020), Ngo et al. (2020), and Mohamed, Zaki, and Kotb (2021). These studies likely share similarities in their results or methodologies, reinforcing the conclusions drawn in the current study.

One plausible interpretation of these findings is that nursing staff may have developed coping mechanisms or adapted their approaches to work effectively despite not being fully mindful. This adaptation could be attributed to various factors, such as experience, training, or intrinsic motivation to excel in their professional duties.

However, it is essential to note that while the study's descriptive statistics provide valuable insights, further qualitative research or in-depth investigations may be necessary to fully understand the underlying mechanisms and implications of the observed relationship between mindfulness, psychological well-being, and job performance among nursing staff in the Polokwane Municipality. Such research could offer valuable insights into strategies for enhancing mindfulness and optimising job performance within the healthcare context.

7.4 Discussion of correlation analysis

The study utilised Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients as a statistical method to assess the relationship between mindfulness and job performance among nursing staff. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant and positive relationship between mindfulness and job performance, thus confirming hypothesis one of the study. Empirical studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between mindfulness and various job performance metrics, including task performance, job satisfaction, and reduced burnout. For instance, Hulsheger, Alberts, Feinholdt and Lang (2013) found that mindfulness interventions reduced emotional exhaustion and increased job satisfaction among employees.

This finding suggests that as the level of mindfulness among nursing staff improves, there is a corresponding improvement in their job performance. A higher level of mindfulness is associated with enhanced attention, focus, and cognitive abilities, all of which contribute to more effective and efficient performance in their roles. This finding is consistent with Jnaneswar and Sulphrey (2021) who found positive correlations between mindfulness and job satisfaction.

One practical implication of this relationship is the potential reduction in workplace accidents, such as instances of giving the wrong prescription to patients. Improved mindfulness can lead to greater accuracy, decision-making capabilities, and overall awareness of safety protocols, thereby minimising errors and adverse events in healthcare settings.

Furthermore, the positive correlation between mindfulness and job performance underscores the importance of promoting mindfulness practices and interventions among healthcare professionals. By incorporating mindfulness training into professional development programmes, healthcare organisations can empower their staff to cultivate mindfulness skills that not only enhance job performance but also contribute to a safer and more effective healthcare environment for both staff and patients.

7.5 Regression discussion

The study employed regression analysis to examine the potential impact of mindfulness on job performance among nurses. The results in Table 5 demonstrate a positive relationship, confirming the hypothesis that higher mindfulness levels are linked to improved job performance among nursing staff.

Regression analysis enables researchers to evaluate the strength and direction of the relationship between variables, in this case, mindfulness and job performance. The positive influence observed in the results suggests that when nurses demonstrate mindfulness in their work, there is a corresponding improvement in their overall job performance metrics. The current study findings are in tandem with Sahin, Ozcan, and Babal (2020) who have extensively discussed the salient connection between mindfulness and job satisfaction in their scholarly investigations. Their research elucidates that employees who possess mindfulness capabilities exhibit a heightened ability to navigate diverse work scenarios and experiences, consequently fostering job satisfaction and facilitating the effective execution of their responsibilities. In contrast, Baas, Nevicka, and Ten Velden (2014) found a significant negative relationship between mindfulness and task performance among nurses in the Netherlands. Similarly, Hafenbrack and Vohs (2018) reported a negative association between mindfulness and task performance among nurses in Portugal.

This finding is consistent with Jnaneswar and Sulphey's (2021) research, which also highlighted the positive impact of mindfulness on job performance among healthcare professionals. The consistency across studies reinforces the idea that mindfulness significantly enhances performance outcomes in healthcare settings. Practically, these results highlight the importance of incorporating mindfulness practices and training into healthcare education and professional development programmes. By promoting mindfulness among nurses and providing them with tools and techniques to cultivate mindfulness in their daily work, healthcare organisations can potentially improve overall job performance, reduce errors, enhance patient care outcomes, and create a more positive and productive work environment.

8. Limitations

This section highlights the limitations of this study. It should be made clear that the current study was conducted in only one Municipality in the Limpopo Province of the Republic of South Africa. Therefore, the results of the study can only be generalised by looking at the Polokwane Municipality. A limitation relating to the instruments was identified on the scale for assessing mindful attention awareness has very low internal reliability (less than $\alpha=.70$) and it affects the quality of the data and the validity of the conclusions. The limitation of the study involving the sampling of only three hospitals in the Polokwane Municipality, namely Polokwane Provincial Hospital, Seshego Hospital, and Mankweng Hospital Campus, underscores the need for cautious interpretation of the findings. These hospitals represent only a small fraction of the healthcare landscape in the region, limiting the generalisability of the study's conclusions to a broader population of nurses.

To address this limitation in future research, a mixed-methods research design is recommended. This approach would allow for a more comprehensive exploration of nurses' experiences with mindfulness, providing richer insights and capturing a wider range of perspectives. Qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups could be used alongside quantitative surveys to gather detailed information about nurses' mindfulness practices and their impact on job performance.

Additionally, the challenges encountered during data collection, such as some respondents' lack of interest due to pandemic-related pressures or staffing shortages in certain wards, highlight the importance of considering contextual factors in research design and implementation. Researchers should be mindful of such barriers and adjust their data collection strategies accordingly, as seen in this study's adaptation of data collection times to minimise disruptions and ensure adequate participation. Regarding the use of quantitative research methodology, it is acknowledged that structured questionnaires with close-ended questions may limit the depth of responses and opportunities for clarification. While quantitative approaches offer valuable statistical analysis and generalisability, they may overlook nuanced insights that qualitative methods can provide. Future research could integrate both quantitative and qualitative approaches to capitalise on the strengths of each method, providing a more comprehensive understanding of nurses' mindfulness and its impact on job performance.

9. Methodological Considerations

The study found a positive relationship between mindfulness and job performance, with psychological well-being mediating this relationship. Future research should explore additional variables that may further enhance nursing staff job performance. Furthermore, a mixed-methods research design will be highly useful for future research in this field of study, as it will aid in collecting, thoroughly, the experiences of respondents in providing more details about their mindfulness and psychological well-being. The use of questionnaires and in-depth interviews with respondents enables one to acquire more detailed information. To enhance the generalisability of the study's conclusions to all hospitals in the Limpopo Province, future research should sample hospitals across different municipalities, ensuring a broader and more representative sample of the population.

10. Managerial Considerations

The Limpopo Department of Health management plays a pivotal role in ensuring the well-being and job satisfaction of nurses within the healthcare system. Recognising and addressing the challenges faced by nurses is crucial for enhancing their job satisfaction and, ultimately, optimising their performance.

One important aspect that the management should consider is providing adequate resources and support to nurses. This involves maintaining adequate staffing, ensuring access to essential equipment and supplies, and providing opportunities for professional development and training. Through prioritising these areas, management can foster a supportive work environment that enables nurses to perform optimally.

Moreover, fostering a culture of open communication and transparency is essential. Nurses should feel comfortable expressing their concerns, sharing feedback, and contributing ideas for improvement. This can be achieved through regular staff meetings, feedback mechanisms, and channels for addressing grievances and suggestions. In addition, promoting a healthy work-life balance is crucial for nurses' well-being and job satisfaction. Implementing policies and practices that support flexible scheduling, reasonable work hours, and adequate time off can contribute to reducing burnout and enhancing job satisfaction among nurses.

Furthermore, recognising and rewarding excellence in nursing practice is essential. This can include acknowledging outstanding performance, providing opportunities for career advancement, and offering competitive compensation and benefit packages. The Limpopo Department of Health management should prioritise the needs and concerns of nurses, taking proactive steps to create a supportive and fulfilling work environment. By doing so, they can enhance nurses' job satisfaction, morale, and performance, ultimately benefiting both the healthcare professionals and the patients they serve.

11. Organisational Considerations

Various Department of Health organisations should entrench mindfulness of their nurses through the appropriate management and leadership skills in order for them to carry out their vision and mission objectives. Educating staff members about the significance of mindfulness in their work is essential, as it profoundly influences employee commitment. However, mindfulness training should transcend mere awareness of its importance; it should encompass acquiring skills to enhance mindfulness. Recommendations should be based on evidence regarding effective training modalities and durations tailored to this population. The existing research on mindfulness training among healthcare workers, including nurses, can provide valuable insights into designing impactful training programmes.

The conclusion that job performance among nursing staff in three public hospitals in the Polokwane Municipality improves as mindfulness improves is supported by several theoretical and empirical foundations. This is seen in empirical studies such as Baas, Nevicka and Ten Velden (2014), Hafenbrack and Vohs (2018) Jnaneswar and Sulphey (2021), Sahin et al. (2020) and Hulsheger et al (2013) who all highlighted that mindfulness, characterised by present-moment awareness and non-judgmental acceptance, has been shown to reduce stress and burnout, which are prevalent in nursing. Enhanced emotional regulation and cognitive functioning from mindfulness practices lead to better task performance and adherence to clinical protocols. Empirical evidence suggests that nurses who engage in mindfulness interventions report higher job satisfaction and improved patient care. This positive relationship aligns with the Job Demands-Resources (JDR) model, where mindfulness acts as a valuable job resource mitigating the adverse effects of job demands. Additionally, studies by Smith (2022), Kirca and Bademli (2019), Schluter et al. (2011), and Christianson (2020) have examined mindfulness in terms of nurses' well-being, highlighting its role in fostering empathy and better communication skills, which are crucial for effective teamwork in healthcare settings. The data from Polokwane hospitals indicate that mindfulness training can be a practical tool for enhancing overall job performance. However, it is essential to address systemic issues such as staffing shortages and work design to maximise the benefits of mindfulness. Integrating mindfulness programmes within broader organisational strategies can lead to sustained improvements in nursing performance and patient outcomes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while there is limited research examining the effects of mindfulness on nurses' professional behaviours, relationships with patients and colleagues, and its association with job satisfaction, there is a compelling need for future studies to delve deeper into these areas. Future research endeavors should employ robust methodological designs to investigate the long-term implications of mindfulness on performance and job satisfaction in the workplace. By expanding our understanding of the intricate interplay between mindfulness practices and professional outcomes among nurses, we can develop targeted interventions and strategies that promote holistic well-being and enhance overall work satisfaction in healthcare settings.

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About the Authors

Mosutoa Monyai

University of Venda, Faculty of Management Science, Commerce and Law, South Africa
mosutoa.monyai@gmail.com

Mosutoa Monyai is a Lecturer at the University of Venda with eight years of teaching experience. Holding a Master of Commerce degree, she is passionate about higher education and research. Her academic interests focus on job performance, mindfulness, and psychological well-being, contributing to a deeper understanding of workplace dynamics and mental health.



Nghamula Nkuna

University of Limpopo, Faculty of Management and Law, Turf-loop Campus, South Africa
nghamula.nkuna@ul.ac.za

Nghamula Nkuna is a Professor in Public Administration at the University of Limpopo. He has a strong background in the public service and local government administration wherein he served for more than a decade in various portfolios before joining academia.

His area of research is Public Administration Theory wherein he specialises in Complexity, Policy Making, Governance, Personnel Administration, Public Finance Management and Local Government Administration specifically developmental local government. He has published and promoted extensively in those areas.



Hlanganipai Ngirande

University of Venda, Faculty of Management Sciences, Commerce and Law,
South Africa
hlanganipai@gmail.com



Hlanganipai Ngirande is the Head of the Department for the Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) and an Associate Professor at the University of Venda, South Africa, specialising in Human Resource Management and Labour Relations. He has over 14 years of teaching experience at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels within the Human Resource Management discipline. He holds a Ph.D. and master's in industrial psychology, a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education (PGDHE), and multiple professional certifications. Professor Ngirande is a distinguished South African Teaching Advancement at University (TAU) fellow. His academic contributions include 25 peer-reviewed journal articles, reflecting an impressive Google Scholar *h-index* of 20. Professor Ngirande is an active presenter at national and international conferences and has successfully supervised 14 Masters students, 1 Ph.D. candidate, and numerous Honours students. His commitment to fostering student entrepreneurship is evident through his role as an ENACTUS Faculty Advisor and his registration as a Student Training for Entrepreneurial Promotion Trainer (STEP). Furthermore, he is affiliated with the South African People Practice professional body (SABPP) and is an engaged member of various University of Venda committees.

Wiza Munyeka

Durban University of Technology, Faculty of Management Sciences, M.L Sultan
Campus, South Africa
masterwiza2000@yahoo.com



Wiza Munyeka is a dedicated academic and researcher specialising in Human Resource Management. He is a Senior Lecturer as well as the Head of Department in the Human Resource Management Department. With a strong background in research and publishing, Dr. Munyeka has contributed significantly to the field through scholarly publications and academic mentorship. Passionate about strategic HRM, employee engagement, organisational behaviour and organisational effectiveness, Dr. Munyeka actively seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice, fostering innovation in workplace dynamics.

Appendix

Ethical considerations

Ethical Clearance was confirmed by the Research Ethics Committee of the university based in South Africa, protocol number *SMS/20/HRM/05/0505*.