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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB STRESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING IN DIGITAL NOMADS

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## ABSTRACT

Globalization and the rapid development of technology have led to major changes in working life, and this transformation has brought the concept of "digital nomadism" into our lives. Digital nomads are individuals who can work without being bound by geographical boundaries and live freely in different parts of the world thanks to the internet and mobile technologies. While this lifestyle offers freedom, flexibility, and the opportunity to experience different cultures, it can also bring challenges, such as job stress, social isolation, and psychological well-being.

This study aims to examine the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being levels of digital nomads and to understand how demographic factors play a role in this relationship. Forty digital nomads from countries such as Turkey, Germany, India, Venezuela, Italy, France, Spain, England, Australia, Australia, and Pakistan participated in the study. Data were collected using a survey method and analyzed using job stress and psychological well-being scales.

The findings show that there is a significant relationship between the psychological well-being of digital nomads and job stress. On the other hand, it was determined that demographic variables such as age, gender, education level, and marital status do not moderate this relationship. This research contributes to understanding the dynamics between work stress and psychological well-being, especially by revealing the opportunities and challenges of digital nomadism. At the same time, it aims to shed light on future studies in this field by emphasizing the effect of demographic factors such as age on psychological well-being.


**Keywords:** Digital nomad, psychological well-being, job stress


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## 1.Introduction

In today's world of globalization and rapid technological advances, working patterns and lifestyles are changing significantly. One of the most striking examples of this change is the emergence of "digital nomadism." Digital nomads are individuals who, thanks to the internet and mobile technologies, can work regardless of location, travel and experience different cultures, and adopt a free lifestyle (Mancielli, 2020). This new lifestyle brings with it many opportunities and challenges.

One of the biggest advantages of digital nomadism is balancing work and private life better. Location-independent work allows individuals to create a more flexible schedule and travel (Mancielli, 2020). However, this freedom can also bring some challenges. Issues such as constantly working in different environments, maintaining social relationships, coping with health issues, and dealing with work stress are among the main problems digital nomads face (Hensellek & Puchalla, 2021).

In this article, the relationship between job stress and the psychological well-being of digital nomads, as well as the moderating roles of demographic variables in that relationship, will be examined.

The research findings will help us better understand the phenomenon of digital nomadism and develop solutions to the problems faced by individuals who adopt this lifestyle.

## 2.Theoretical Framework

Digital nomadism has become a growing trend in recent years. This lifestyle allows individuals to travel, experience different cultures, and manage their work from anywhere (Davenport & Beck, 2002). However, digital nomads face some challenges. One of these challenges is coping with work stress. Digital nomads may often have to juggle multiple jobs simultaneously, work in different time zones, and adapt to constantly changing environments (Mancinelli, 2020). This can lead to increased job stress and reduced psychological well-being.

Psychological well-being is a broad concept that covers individuals' physical, mental, and social health (Ryff, 1989). On the other hand, job stress is a negative situation that arises due to the difficulties and pressures encountered in the work environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Studies show that there is a negative relationship between job stress and psychological well-being (Schurman & Israel, 1995; Zhang et al., 2020).

In other words, as job stress increases, individuals' psychological well-being levels decrease.

Some factors affect the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being in digital nomads. One of these factors is demographic variables. Demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level, and marital status may affect individuals' coping with job stress and psychological well-being (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). For example, young digital nomads may have more difficulty with job stress because they have less experience.

### 2.1 Psychological Well-Being and Job Stress

In today's fast-paced and competitive business environment, job stress has become a common problem that significantly impacts employees' psychological well-being. Job stress is a negative situation that arises due to the challenges and pressures that individuals face in the work environment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Psychological well-being is a broad concept encompassing individuals' physical, mental, and social health (Ryff, 1989).

#### 2.1.1 Factors Affecting Job Stress

Many factors lead to job stress. These factors include workload, time pressure, role ambiguity, inadequate support, injustice, and work-life imbalance (Cooper et al., 2001). The workload can lead to stress when individuals deal with tasks beyond their capacity. Time pressure can increase stress when there is insufficient time to accomplish tasks. Role ambiguity can cause stress when individuals' job roles and responsibilities are unclear. Inadequate support can increase stress when there is insufficient support and resources at work. Injustice can lead to stress if unfair practices exist in the work environment. Work-life imbalance can cause stress if the balance between work and private life is not established.

#### 2.1.2 Factors Affecting Psychological Well-Being

There are also many factors affecting psychological well-being. These factors include personal characteristics, social support, life events, and lifestyle (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Personal characteristics are characteristics of individuals, such as their personalities, values, and beliefs. Social support is the support individuals receive from friends, family, and others. Life events are positive or negative events experienced by individuals. Lifestyle refers to the habits of individuals, such as diet, exercise, and sleep.

### 2.1.3 The Relationship Between Job Stress and Psychological Well-Being

Studies show that there is a negative relationship between job stress and psychological well-being (Michel et al., 2011; Schurman & Israel, 1995; Zhang et al., 2020). In other words, as job stress increases, individuals' psychological well-being levels decrease. Job stress can negatively affect individuals' physical and mental health, reducing their psychological well-being. For example, job stress can lead to sleep problems, depression, anxiety, and burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2001). These conditions can negatively affect individuals' quality of life and job performance.

## 2.2 The Role of Demographic Variables

Demographic variables can affect individuals' levels of job stress and psychological well-being. Demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level, and marital status may affect individuals' coping with job stress and psychological well-being differently (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). For example, younger employees may have more difficulty with job stress because they have less experience. Women may experience more job stress than men. Individuals with higher levels of education may cope with job stress more easily because they have better coping skills. Individuals with married marital status may cope better with job stress because they have more social support than singles.

### 2.2.1 Age and Job Stress

Age is an important demographic variable affecting the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being. Young employees may experience more job stress because they usually begin their careers (Lachman et al., 2011). During this period, they may need to exert more effort to learn their job, prove themselves, and advance their careers. Also, younger employees may find it more difficult to cope with job stress as they usually have less experience.

### 2.2.2 Gender and Job Stress

Gender is another demographic variable that affects the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being. Research shows that women experience more job stress than men (Bekker & Boselie, 2002). This is because women often have to juggle work and family responsibilities. In addition, women may be more exposed to discrimination and harassment in the work environment.

### 2.2.3 Education Level and Job Stress

The educational level is an important factor that affects individuals' ability to cope with job stress and psychological well-being. Individuals with higher levels of education can cope with job stress more easily because they generally have better coping skills (Judge et al., 2001). Moreover, higher educational attainment may increase the likelihood of better job opportunities and higher income, reducing job stress.

### 2.2.4 Marital Status and Job Stress

Marital status may affect individuals' levels of social support, which in turn may affect the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being. Married individuals may have more social support than single individuals (Gallagher & Waite, 2000). Social support may help individuals cope with job stress and increase their psychological well-being.

## 3. Methodology Of The Research

In the context of research methodology, questionnaire form, sampling, scales, research model, hypotheses, and data analysis methods are discussed.

### 3.1 Sample

The study population comprises 40 digital nomads in Turkey, Germany, India, Venezuela, Italy, France, Spain, Spain, England, Australia, and Pakistan.

### 3.2 Scales

The 8-item Psychological scale developed by Diener et al. (2009) was used to measure the psychological well-being levels of digital nomads. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to determine the scale's reliability, which was prepared on a 5-point Likert-type rating scale, and the alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.77. KMO and Bartletts's test values were significant.

The job stress levels of digital nomads were measured using the 7-item Job Stress Scale developed by House and Rizzo (1972). Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was 0.90.

### 3.3 Hypotheses of the Study

Digital nomads are individuals who, thanks to the internet and mobile technologies, can work and live their lives in different places regardless of geographical limitations (Manktelow et al., 2019). While this lifestyle offers individuals freedom, flexibility, and the opportunity to experience different cultures, it can also bring challenges. In particular, work stress can negatively affect the psychological well-being of digital nomads.

Digital nomads may often have to juggle multiple jobs simultaneously, work in different time zones, and adapt to constantly changing environments (Jarvis, 2015). This can lead to increased job stress and reduced psychological well-being. Furthermore, digital nomads may experience a lack of social support as they often live alone, making it difficult for them to cope with work stress.

In addition, demographic variables may influence individuals' levels of job stress and psychological well-being. Here are some thoughts on how these variables play a role in digital nomads:

**Age**

- Young digital nomads: They may be at the beginning of their careers, which can increase uncertainty and a sense of competition. They may experience more stress around learning new skills, finding customers, and stabilizing income.

- More experienced digital nomads: They may have established careers, which can provide more confidence and stability. However, as they get older, issues such as health problems, family responsibilities, and retirement may arise, creating new sources of stress (Jarvis, 2020; Mello, 2019).

**Gender**

- Female digital nomads: They may have more difficulty balancing work and personal life. Gender roles and responsibilities such as childcare and housework can increase women's workload. They may also have safety concerns when traveling.

- Male digital nomads: They may experience social expectations, pressure to succeed and restrictions on emotional expression. The feeling of loneliness brought about by remote work can also negatively affect men (Bianchi, 2000; Lund, 2018).

**Education Level**

- Highly educated digital nomads: They may have better job opportunities, higher income, and more social support. These factors can reduce work stress and increase psychological well-being.

- Low-educated digital nomads: They may have fewer job opportunities, low income, and limited social support. This can increase work stress and negatively affect psychological well-being.

Marital Status

- Married digital nomads: Factors such as family responsibilities and partner's career can impact work stress. However, they can reduce this stress with support from their spouses (Bianchi, 2000; Lund, 2018).

- Single digital nomads: They may experience feelings of loneliness, social isolation, and anxiety about the future. However, they may have a freer and more flexible lifestyle (Gerber, 2022; Wilson, 2021).

In this study, we develop the following hypotheses based on the results of the above studies:

- Hypothesis 1: There is a negative and significant relationship between job stress and the psychological well-being levels of digital nomads.

- Hypothesis 2: Demographic variables have a moderating effect on the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being.

- Hypothesis 2a (H2a): The age of digital nomads has a moderating role in the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being.

- Hypothesis 2b (H2b): The gender of digital nomads has a moderating role in the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being.

- Hypothesis 2c (H2c): Digital nomads' level of education has a moderating role in the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being.

- Hypothesis 2d (H2d): The marital status of digital nomads has a moderating role in the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being.

4. Findings

The study data were obtained from digital nomads living in different countries through a questionnaire prepared in Turkish/English. The data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical program.

**1. Findings Related to Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

Demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education level, work experience, department, and occupation of the 40 participants are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

| ***Variable*** | ***Category.*** | ***Frequency (n)*** | ***Percentage (%)*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Gender*** | Woman | 26 | 65,0% |
| | Male | 14 | 35,0% |
| ***Marital Status*** | Single | 24 | 60,0% |
| | Married | 16 | 40,0% |
| ***Education Status*** | Undergraduate and below | 25 | 62,5% |
| | Undergraduate | 15 | 37,5% |
| ***Age Groups*** | 18-25 | 6 | 15,0% |
| | 26-35 | 22 | 55,0% |
| | 36-45 | 10 | 25,0% |

Note Marital status: 1 Single, 2 Married

Gender: 1 Male, 2 Female

Table 1 shows that 65% of the 40 participants in the research are women; 60% are single; 62.5% have a bachelor's degree and below; and 55% of the digital nomads in the 26-35 age group are in the age group of 26-35.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

| **Variable** | Ort. | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| **Age** | 33,20 | 6,70 |
| **Gender** | 1,35 | 0,48 |
| **Marital Status** | 1,58 | 0,50 |
| **Education** | 1,38 | 0,54 |
| **Psychological Well-Being (PI)** | 4,00 | 0,47 |
| **Job Stress (OS)** | 2,77 | 0,93 |

Note Marital status: 1 Single, 2 Married

Gender: 1 Male, 2 Female

Psychological Well-Being: The mean value is 4.00, and the standard deviation is 0.47. It is seen that the participants generally have high levels of psychological well-being (on a 5-point Likert scale), and the answers are relatively homogeneous.

Job Stress: The mean value is 2.77, and the standard deviation is 0.93. Work stress levels are moderate, but the high standard deviation indicates that there are differences in the perception of work stress among the participants.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix (Pearson Correlation Coefficients)

| **Variable** | Age | Gender | Civilized Status | Education | PI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Age** | | | | | |
| **Gender** | 0,11 | | | | |
| **Marital Status** | -0,43** | -0,01 | | | |
| **Education** | -0,08 | -0,03 | 0,04 | | |
| **Psychological Well-Being (PI)** | -0,48** | 0,19 | 0,18 | -0,03 | |
| **Job Stress (OS)** | 0,11 | -0,25 | 0,03 | 0,05 | -0,55** |

Note: Significant correlations at $p < 0.01$ are indicated by *.

Marital status: 1 Single, 2 Married

Gender: 1 Male, 2 Female

As seen in Table 3, r= -0.55 (correlation coefficient) was found between job stress and psychological well-being, and this relationship is statistically significant at 0.01 level of significance ($p < 0.01$). This shows that psychological well-being decreases when job stress increases. The relationship is negative and above the medium level.

The relationship between age and psychological well-being is negatively significant (r= -0.48, p<0.01). This shows that psychological well-being decreases with increasing age. The relationship between age and marital status is negative and significant (r= -0.43, p <0.01

Hierarchical regression was used to test Hypothesis 1 of the study. First, demographic variables that may affect the research result were added to the model as control variables. In the next stage, job stress, the independent variable of the research, was included in the model.

Table 4. Model Summary and Coefficients

| Model | R | R2 | Adjusted $R^2$ | F | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | .542a | .294 | .213 | 3.64 | ,014 |
| 2 | .700b | .490 | .415 | 6.54 | <0,01 |

| **Coefficients** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Model** | | **β** | **t** | **Sig.** |
| **1** | (Fixed) | | 8.88 | .000 |
| | Age | -.53 | -3.32 | .002 |
| | Gender | .25 | 1.72 | .094 |
| | Marital status | -.04 | -.23 | .817 |
| | Education | -.06 | -.45 | .658 |
| **2** | (Fixed) | | 10.89 | .000 |
| | Age | -.44 | -3.16 | .003 |
| | Gender | .12 | .96 | .342 |
| | Marital status | .02 | .11 | .913 |
| | Education | -.04 | -.29 | .768 |
| | Work stress | -.47 | -3.62 | <.001 |
| Note Dependent variable Psychological well-being | | | | |

After controlling for the effect of demographic variables, the model examining the effect of job stress on psychological well-being is statistically significant ($\beta = -0.47$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is confirmed. In other words, job stress perceived by digital nomads has a negative and significant relationship with psychological well-being (Table 4).

To test hypothesis 2a, hypothesis 2b, hypothesis 2c, and hypothesis 2d, hierarchical regression analysis with moderator variable was applied. A moderator variable is a variable that affects the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent

variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). First, the variables were centralized to find the effect of the moderator variable. In the first step, the independent variable (job stress) and the moderating variable (age for H2a, gender for H2b, education level for H2c, and marital status for H2d) are entered into the regression model. The second step enters the interaction term (standardized independent variable X moderator variable) into the regression model.

Table 5. Moderating effects for demographic variables

**Age**

| **Variables** | **Model 1** | | **Model 2** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***β*** | ***S.H.*** | ***β*** | ***S.H.*** |
| **Work stress** | -,25*** | ,06 | -,70*** | ,42 |
| **Age** | -,03** | ,01 | -,06 | ,03 |
| **Job stress X Age** | | | ,01 | ,01 |
| **R** | ,69 | | ,70 | |
| **$R^2$** | ,47 | | ,49 | |
| **F** | 16,70*** | | 11,56*** | |

**Gender**

| **Variables** | **Model 1** | | **Model 2** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***β*** | ***S.H.*** | ***β*** | ***S.H.*** |
| **Work stress** | -,27*** | ,07 | -,29 | ,22 |
| **Age** | 06 | ,14 | ,01 | ,42 |
| **Job stress X Age** | | | ,02 | ,15 |
| **R** | ,55 | | ,70 | |
| **$R^2$** | ,30 | | ,49 | |
| **F** | 7,97** | | 5,16** | |

**Education**

| **Variables** | **Model 1** | | **Model 2** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***β*** | ***S.H.*** | ***β*** | ***S.H.*** |
| **Work stress** | -,28*** | ,07 | -,21 | ,21 |
| **Age** | -,01 | ,12 | ,14 | ,46 |
| **Job stress X Age** | | | -,05 | ,16 |
| **R** | ,55 | | ,55 | |
| **$R^2$** | ,29 | | ,30 | |
| **F** | 7,80** | | 5,11** | |

**Marital status**

| Variables | Model 1 | | Model 2 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***β*** | ***S.H.*** | ***β*** | ***S.H.*** |
| **Work stress** | -,28*** | ,07 | -,07*** | ,20 |
| **Age** | ,19 | ,13 | ,61 | ,41 |
| **Job stress X Age** | | | -,15 | ,14 |
| **R** | ,58 | | ,60 | |
| **$R^2$** | ,34 | | ,36 | |
| **F** | 9,41*** | | 6,69** | |

As seen in Table 5, the fact that the product of the interaction between job stress and the demographic variables of age, gender, education, and marital status is insignificant shows that there are no regulatory effects. Therefore, hypotheses H2a, H2b, H2c and H2d are not supported.

## A. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The developments created by the digital world have shown that people in many sectors can work without being tied to the office environment. Especially during the pandemic, the remote working model provided seminal innovation for many businesses and employees. Today, many businesses and employees have adopted this new work culture. This new work culture provides flexibility in one's work and private life. Many businesses have adopted this culture and offer options such as remote working and flexible working hours. Digital nomadism is gaining momentum for the young generation, which travels and pursues its career goals together. Although this work culture provides flexibility and freedom for both employees and businesses, it also requires planning and serious research to adopt this lifestyle and create the appropriate conditions for this situation. For example, as an office worker, I know that the conditions, such as a quiet environment and technological equipment offered by the business you work for, are certain. However, the attractive lifestyle of working freely, traveling, and getting to know new cultures in the digital nomad lifestyle brings uncertainty and work stress is caused by this uncertainty. However, the most important competitive power of businesses and employees is the conditions that affect their success and performance in the working environment.

Accordingly, our study aims to examine the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being in digital nomads and reveal the role of demographic variables in this relationship. In our study, two hypotheses were formulated to test the relationship between psychological well-being and job stress and the moderating role of demographic variables in this relationship.

The first of these hypotheses, H1, which states that there is a negative and significant relationship between job stress and psychological well-being levels in digital nomads, is accepted. In the literature, Michel et al. (2011) support our study with its study that directly addresses this issue and reveals that there is a negative relationship between job stress and psychological well-being; that is, as job stress increases, individuals' psychological well-being levels decrease. In addition, Maslach & Leiter (2001) supports our study with the study that job stress can negatively affect individuals' physical and mental health, which can reduce psychological well-being. Our second hypothesis: Demographic variables such as age, gender, education level, and marital status will have a moderating effect on the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being in digital nomads. The H2 hypothesis was not significant. These findings are consistent with the studies of Yıldırım (2018), Çömlekci and Güney (2021), and Yıldırım and Aycan (2017).

These findings are consistent with existing theories supporting the negative relationship between job stress and psychological well-being. Moreover, the fact that demographic factors do not moderate this relationship suggests that environmental and occupational factors influence stress and well-being for digital nomads. In this direction, both theoretical and practical recommendations can be offered.

**Theoretical Proposals:**

The acceptance of hypothesis H1 supports that job stress has a negative effect on psychological well-being. This finding is consistent with the "Job Demands-Resources Model" and "Stress-Well-being Relationship" theories in the literature. These theories suggest that job stress can undermine individuals' psychological health. This relationship may be more pronounced in individuals who work remotely, such as digital nomads. In future studies, the specific factors (e.g., uncertainty of boundaries, loneliness, technological challenges) that increase job stress in digital nomads can be examined in more detail.

The rejection of hypothesis H2 indicates that demographic factors such as age, gender, educational level, and marital status do not moderate the relationship between job stress and psychological well-being. This finding indicates that the effect of these variables may be limited among digital nomads. This result may bring a new perspective to the "Role of Demographic Factors in Job Stress" discussions in the literature. Especially in a heterogeneous group such as digital nomads, it can be theorized that the effect of demographic characteristics may be less important. In future research, other factors (e.g., personality traits, work environment, social support) that may affect the psychological well-being of digital nomads can be examined.

**Implementation Recommendations:**

Employers and organizations can offer flexible working hours, regular psychological support programs, and stress management training to reduce work stress for digital nomads. Policies can be developed to maintain work-life balance and reduce the ambiguity of boundaries in the remote working process.

Online therapy sessions and virtual social interaction platforms can be created to enhance the psychological well-being of digital nomads. Employers can use regular surveys and feedback mechanisms to monitor employees' psychological well-being.

The rejection of hypothesis H2 suggests that focusing on individual and environmental factors may be more effective than demographic characteristics. For example, factors such as working conditions, technological infrastructure, and social support networks for digital nomads can be studied. Employers can support psychological well-being by offering flexible solutions tailored to the individual needs of employees.

To meet the unique needs of digital nomads, employers, and policymakers can develop specific work policies (e.g., tax benefits, health insurance, international work permits) for this group. Virtual communities and networking events can be organized to reduce the social isolation of digital nomads.

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