

# Psychological stress experienced by Arab simultaneous interpreters

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the psychological stress faced by interpreters proficient in the Arabic <> English language pair. Using a five-Likert-point survey, the study seeks to ascertain the perceptions of simultaneous interpreters regarding the stress-inducing elements they encounter during their professional engagements. The findings highlight that primary stress precipitators encompass subpar remuneration, an intensified sense of accountability for the interpreted content, and the lack of cooperation from private clientele. Concurrently, approximately two-thirds of the identified stressors trigger moderate stress levels. These include specialized terminology, inadequate speaker visibility, and the need for frequent travel, among other factors. The medical manifestations of this stress are prominently throat irritation, characterized by dryness and headaches, compromised concentration, somnolence, back pain, fatigue, eye irritation, and minimal rates of insomnia. The implications of this study could contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge on stress dynamics within the realms of translation and interpreting and addressing human-centered concerns within the context of court interpreting.

**Keywords:** Psychological Stress; Simultaneous Interpreting; Job Satisfaction; Interpreting Coping Strategies



## I. INTRODUCTION

The domain of translation and interpreting holds a crucial place in a globalized world, bridging the communication divide between diverse language groups. Interpreters and translators function as essential communication facilitators between parties that do not share a common linguistic code. Their task is not merely to convert words from one language to another but to convey the original communication's essence, context, and nuances. They must possess a profound and holistic command of source and target languages to do so. This implies a deep understanding of grammar and vocabulary and an awareness of cultural subtleties and contextual specificities associated with each language. Such a comprehensive grasp allows for the delivery of high-quality services that ensure accurate and effective communication. In addition to language mastery, interpreters and translators must continually broaden their knowledge and develop domain-specific expertise. Given that they might work across different fields such as law, medicine, technology, and more, they need to master the specialized terminology, concepts, and norms associated with each. Such understanding enables them to accurately transfer the information contained in the original text or speech, ensuring that the communication is accurate and coherent.

The profession of translation and interpreting, often perceived as a mere linguistic bridge, is a complex field characterized by a myriad of challenges that extend far beyond basic language conversion. Interpreters, whether engaged in simultaneous or consecutive modes, are required to navigate not just linguistic differences but also the intricate demands of diverse cultural and situational contexts (Pratiwi, 2022). This multi-faceted role transcends basic linguistic abilities, encompassing cognitive processing, emotional labor, and cultural intelligence (Fischbach & Schneider, 2022). These dimensions are critical, especially in high-stress environments such as courtrooms, international conferences, and healthcare settings, where interpreters must exhibit linguistic dexterity and high emotional resilience and adaptability (Kudrya & Lyzhina, 2019).

Scholarly works, such as Beeby et al. (2003) and Chabasse and Kader (2014), have underscored the importance of psychophysiological skills in interpreting. These include self-confidence, which allows interpreters to trust their skills and judgment; motivation, which drives them to maintain high-quality work; memory, which supports the retention and recall of information; emotion control, which aids in managing high-pressure situations; and stress management, which helps them maintain performance under demanding conditions.

In the same vein, Korpál (2021) stresses the importance of cognitive and non-cognitive skills in interpreting. Cognitive skills encompass a mastery of language, broad knowledge, and cognitive abilities like problem-solving and analytical thinking. On the other hand, non-cognitive skills involve self-control, resilience, personality traits, and motivation. A balance of cognitive and non-cognitive skills equips interpreters with the tools to manage their profession's demands effectively. However, constantly honing and improving these skills can appear daunting to future translators and interpreters. This is especially true considering the high-stress environments they might have to work in, such as courtrooms or hospitals. These settings pose unique challenges that demand advanced technical knowledge, emotional resilience, and strong stress management skills. Hence, developing these competencies becomes essential to thrive and perform effectively in these demanding scenarios. This study, therefore, aims to provide an in-depth understanding of these stress factors and their implications, contributing valuable insights to the field of translation and interpreting studies.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **II.1. Background on Interpreting**

Interpreting has evolved through several key developments, including the emergence of standardized practices, the recognition of multilingualism in modern society, and the founding of professional associations that have helped establish interpreting as a discipline. As a result, interpreting has grown significantly over recent decades into

a well-established area of research with bright prospects for the future. At the same time, it maintains a pivotal role in facilitating communication across languages in many critical domains such as healthcare, international relations, community services, and others. Advanced technological tools such as the Interpreting Delivery Platform have also enhanced interpreters' ability to navigate the multi-faceted linguistic, cultural, and logistical issues that can arise before and during the interpretation process.

Fundamentally, the practice of interpreting goes beyond literal word-for-word conversion between languages. The interpreter's role is to comprehend the original message's meaning and intention and accurately convey that message into the target language without altering the original tone, register, or nuance (Napier, 2021). This complex process involves multiple steps. First, interpreters must grasp the entire meaning of the spoken or signed source message. This comprehension extends beyond essential linguistics to encompass subtle cultural contexts, unstated inferences, and the communicator's intentions (Angelelli, 2004). Next, interpreters analytically process the content and determine how to interpret the target language best accurately. This demanding task requires remarkable cognitive dexterity, deep linguistic proficiency in multiple languages, and keen cultural competence (Gile, 2009).

Interpreting typically follows one of two primary delivery modes: consecutive or simultaneous. In consecutive interpreting, the interpreter listens to the speaker deliver messages segmented by pauses, then provides interpreted renditions of those messages in the target language during those deliberate pauses. This format provides the interpreter sufficient time to cognitively process the speaker's statements and formulate accurate translations (Pöchhacker, 2011). In contrast, simultaneous interpreting requires the interpreter to convey the speaker's messages in the target language in real time, with only a slight lag of a few seconds behind the original speech, which continues uninterrupted. This modality places significant additional cognitive demands upon the interpreter due to the need for rapid mental translation and information processing even as the speaker continues delivering new content (Gile, 2009).

While interpreting offers intellectual rewards and satisfaction from enabling cross-cultural communication, the practice poses numerous core challenges (Bontempo & Napier, 2011). In particular, simultaneous interpreting can impose considerable stress upon practitioners stemming from this modality's real-time, high-stakes nature, as will be explored in this literature review (Moser-Mercer, 2003).

## **II.2. Cognitive Demands of Simultaneous Interpreting**

Simultaneous interpreting pushes the limits of human cognitive capabilities due to the complex mental processing and multi-tasking this modality inherently demands. According to influential cognitive psychology models, such as Baddeley's (2000) seminal theoretical framework detailing the components of working memory like the phonological loop and central executive, simultaneous interpreters must continuously perceive, encode, and analyze the meaning of incoming speech; rapidly access relevant terminology in long-term memory; formulate coherent renditions in the target language; monitor their output for accuracy; and process subsequent incoming information nearly simultaneously. This necessitates seamlessly alternating between comprehension, production, and self-monitoring with only seconds of lag between the source and interpreted speech (Gile, 2009; Sweller, 2011).

Specifically, the real-time multi-channel processing simultaneous interpreting requires heavy taxes on the brain's limited cognitive capacity. Interpreters must constantly divide their attention between fully comprehending the newest input speech, committing key fragments to memory, conducting contextual and cultural analysis, producing fluent, coherent output in the target language, monitoring their delivery for mistakes, and preparing to process the next segment concurrently. This simultaneity of demands readily exceeds the limits of ordinary human working memory, according to extensive research on cognition and mental resource allocation. The result is an intrinsically heavy real-time mental processing burden (Christoffels & Groot, 2005; Pöchhacker, 2016).

Abundant psycholinguistic evidence from empirical studies demonstrates that the intrinsically high demands of simultaneous interpreting consistently overwhelm

human cognitive capabilities. This frequently results in interpreters making significantly more omission, approximation, and imprecision errors while experiencing substantial mental fatigue that gradually degrades their output quality over time. For example, Gile's influential Effort Models of simultaneous interpreting elegantly demonstrate the trade-offs between the different cognitive components involved and illustrate how cognitive saturation occurs, leading to declining accuracy and fluency in the interpreted speech as mental resources are depleted (Gile, 2009).

Furthermore, controlled experimental research confirms that even among highly experienced professional interpreters, prolonged periods of simultaneous interpreting lead to measurable increases in lexical and phrasal approximations, omission of content details, distortion of meaning, and overall loss of precision in the interpretation as mental fatigue inevitably builds across a session.

Therefore, an extensive foundation of empirical literature supports the conclusion that without proper mitigation tactics and adequate recovery time between assignments, the heavy innate cognitive processing load imposed by the real-time demands of simultaneous interpreting will readily exceed the sustainable mental capacity of most practitioners. If consistently unchecked over time, this chronic overload can result in exhaustion, progressively deteriorating job performance, increased risks of both mental and cardiovascular health issues, and eventual burnout. These evidenced risks underscore the tremendous importance of comprehensive interpreter training that imparts scientifically validated cognitive load management strategies, psychological resilience-building techniques, and organizational workplace support systems tailored to meet interpreters' unique needs.

### **II.3. Emotional Labor and Demands**

Interpreting in high-stress settings such as legal proceedings and healthcare environments often requires emotional labor on behalf of the interpreter. They are regularly exposed to sensitive, emotionally intense, or disturbing content while needing to maintain professional composure. For example, healthcare interpreters frequently

must communicate tragic news to patients and families or interpret painful medical examinations. Legal interpreters may be repeatedly exposed to graphic accounts of violence, abuse, or trauma while translating witness testimony. Such occupational exposure increases the risk of vicarious trauma for interpreters (Hsieh, 2007; Valero-Garcés, 2014).

These significant cognitive demands of simultaneous interpreting are further compounded by the emotional labor inherently required to process and relay such sensitive content while regulating internal reactions and displaying appropriate outward professionalism (Bontempo & Napier, 2011; Gavioli & Baraldi, 2011). Extensive research conducted across human services professions demonstrate that the effort involved in managing one's natural internal emotions in order to exhibit expected external reactions is mentally demanding. Over time, this emotional labor can lead to psychological exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 2012).

In particular, simultaneous interpreters very often work in emotionally complex settings such as legal proceedings, healthcare facilities, and social services, where they are repeatedly exposed to ethically ambiguous dilemmas, cultural dissonance, power imbalances, and narratives involving psychological trauma (Hsieh, 2007; Valero-Garcés, 2014). Needing to maintain composure despite personal reactions in such situations can lead to moral distress when internal values conflict with professional interpreting duties and code of ethics (Williamson et al., 2020). Furthermore, prolonged occupational exposure to profoundly disturbing material and accounts increases the risk of vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue, similar to other trauma-exposed professions like counseling and social work (Bontempo & Malcolm, 2012; Conrad & Kellar-Guenther, 2006; Craig & Sprang, 2010).

Potential adverse psychological effects include post-traumatic stress symptoms, emotional burnout, and chronic emotional distress. Recommended mitigation tactics to equip interpreters include limiting the frequency of exposure to deeply traumatic content where feasible providing training in self-care techniques like mindfulness

and counseling support (Bontempo & Malcolm, 2012; Harrison & Westwood, 2009; Splevins et al., 2010).

The high-stakes nature of simultaneous interpreting adds further pressure and mental load, as interpreters must maintain total composure and professionalism while managing their own emotions even as they deliver empathetic, emotionally laden content. If unaddressed, attempting to balance regulated outward behavior with authentic inner reactions during continuous high-cognitive demand tasks can lead to immense emotional strain and psychological burnout (Dean & Pollard, 2005).

Therefore, comprehensive interpreter training programs should include education in emotional intelligence development, scientifically validated stress coping skills, fundamentals of trauma psychology, the establishment of peer support networks, and advocacy for supportive working conditions. Such initiatives will be crucial for mitigating the known emotional hazards of interpreting and ensuring sustainable career longevity, especially when serving vulnerable populations (Crezee et al., 2013; Hubscher-Davidson, 2017).

#### **II.4. Job Satisfaction and Well-being**

Given the established fast-paced, chronically high-stress nature of simultaneous interpreting work, the organizational environment and management practices play a critical role in preventing or directly contributing to practitioners' experiences of fatigue, burnout, and job dissatisfaction. Multiple studies confirm that persistently high levels of occupational stress and burnout negatively impact professional interpreters' job satisfaction and elevate turnover intentions (Huang et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2017).

An extensive body of research has consistently emphasized that granting simultaneous interpreters greater perceived autonomy and an enhanced internal sense of control over managing their workflow and process promotes self-efficacy, professional empowerment, and increased resilience in successfully handling multi-faceted occupational demands (Dean & Pollard, 2001; Mikkelsen, 2016).



For example, workplace policies enabling flexibility by providing adequate preparation time, sufficient resources, regular breaks, and the ability to pace assignments are beneficial. These allow practitioners to prepare optimally for assignments and deliver their highest-quality interpretation work while minimizing mental fatigue (Angelelli, 2004; Baistow, 1994).

Additionally, providing abundant, continuous skills enhancement and upgrading opportunities through access to training workshops, mentors, and structured specialization tracks satisfies intrinsic human needs for ongoing learning and competency development. These are critical for sustaining passion, enabling career advancement, and supporting personal growth in a cognitively demanding profession over the long term (Hubscher-Davidson, 2017).

Implementing transparent advancement pathways and protocols for benchmarking compensation levels to proven expertise also helps. This objectively recognizes achievements, fulfills higher-order esteem needs, and enhances perceived success and job retention rates by making simultaneous interpretation practitioners feel valued, engaged, and motivated to excel (Angelelli, 2004; Bontempo & Napier, 2011).

Finally, the provision of customized workplace wellness programs offering counseling, stress and fatigue management, and mindfulness practice tailored to address the known and well-documented rigors of simultaneous interpreting are additionally beneficial. Ergonomic equipment and physical office environments optimized for peak cognitive functioning also provide vital infrastructure to support practitioner health. However, it remains equally important for individual interpreters themselves to proactively take personal ownership of their sustainability and resilience. This can involve purposefully utilizing personalized stress coping strategies, building professional peer support networks to share experiences, and actively prioritizing self-care practices, including maintaining healthy work-life balance and boundaries (Crezee et al., 2013).

## II.5. Implications for Training and Support

Given the substantial cognitive, emotional, and occupational demands faced by practitioners of simultaneous interpreting, as thoroughly evidenced in the contemporary scientific literature, several crucial implications emerge for designing and implementing tailored training programs, mentorship frameworks, and organizational policies appropriately. The goal is to genuinely equip these professionals for peak effectiveness, career sustainability, and resilience (Okoniewska, 2022).

First, educational curriculums aimed at developing the next generation of practitioners must integrate rigorous instruction in a diverse range of strategies empirically shown to be effective for managing the intrinsically high cognitive load during the fast-paced demands of simultaneous interpreting tasks. Such cognitive load management techniques that should be explicitly taught include methods of strategically chunking input speech into meaningful units, effective note-taking strategies to optimize the capture and retrieval of data, and mindfulness exercises designed to enhance concentration skills and sustain focus even amidst significant performance pressure (Moser-Mercer, 2003).

Given the evidenced risks of vicarious trauma and burnout stemming from frequent occupational exposure to highly distressing content, training programs must also prioritize providing foundational education in evidence-based stress management tactics, psychological resilience-building activities tailored to the known rigors of interpreting, and peer support network creation. This will help equip learners with essential career-coping skills as early as possible (Hubscher-Davidson, 2017).

Furthermore, implementing thoughtfully designed mentorship opportunities that purposefully pair entry-level interpreters with highly seasoned veteran practitioners for extended guided practice can provide invaluable experiential guidance. Such mentoring frameworks enable novice interpreters to learn directly from experts who can share wisdom and proven strategies for proactively navigating the multi-faceted cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and ethical challenges inherent to delivering truly high-caliber simultaneous interpretation performance in real-world, intrinsically

high-pressure interpreting settings across community, medical, educational, and legal contexts (Hubscher-Davidson, 2017; Okoniewska, 2022).

Finally, from an organizational management perspective, workplace environments, online knowledge databases, physical resources, ergonomic equipment provisions, workload policies, and interpreter scheduling protocols should all be collaboratively designed to structurally align with and support the extensive evidence-based insights into proven interpreter needs that have emerged from the scientific literature (Fu et al., 2020). Organizations can support interpreters by allowing adequate preparation time and regular breaks during assignments, educating other staff about interpreter stress, and fostering work-life balance through reasonable schedules.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

Embarking upon a comprehensive exploration of psychological stress among simultaneous interpreters, this study employed a robust quantitative approach. An intricate online questionnaire developed via Google Forms was deployed as a primary data collection tool. The questionnaire was meticulously designed to encapsulate interpreters' perceptions, experiences, and potential stressors during their professional engagements. Notably, the survey comprised two sections: one designed to gather demographic data and another segmented into six key constructs or variables. These variables were carefully chosen to extensively probe the intricacies of the interpreters' professional experiences, including stressful situations, job-related stressors, health symptoms as an aftermath of stress, job satisfaction levels, strategies used to alleviate stress, and their attitude towards stress as a correlate of their professional experience.

The researchers extensively reviewed previous studies and surveys on stress management strategies in related fields to enhance the survey's robustness. This meticulous process enriched the survey's breadth and depth, making it adept at capturing various experiences and perceptions. For instance, stressors, health symptoms, and job satisfaction categories were incorporated, drawing inspiration from Fitchett's (2012)

research. Additional variables were adopted from Korpál's (2016) and Valero-Garcés's (2005) seminal studies to ensure the comprehensive assessment of potential stress-related health symptoms. Lastly, valuable insights into stress management strategies were gathered from noteworthy surveys by Carver et al. (1989) and Endler and Parker (1990), thus providing a holistic view of coping mechanisms in stressful work conditions.

### **III.1. Population and Sample**

Aiming for a targeted yet encompassing analysis, the study focused on simultaneous interpreters based in Jordan. An ambitious outreach program was embarked upon, with the survey reaching 150 interpreters across the region. The crucial assistance from Mr. Abd Al-Latif Al-Najjar, the chair of the Jordan Association of Interpreters, was instrumental in this broad-based distribution, as he kindly agreed to share the survey among the association members. Furthermore, leveraging the potential of digital media, the survey was disseminated through emails and professional social media platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook. Each participating interpreter was requested to score each variable on a five-point Likert scale, thereby providing their assessment of each construct and adding a rich subjective layer to the data collected.

### **III.2. Questionnaire Reliability**

The questionnaire was scrutinized by a panel comprising three accomplished experts in translation studies to ensure its reliability and validity. They critically evaluated the survey, offering constructive feedback on its comprehensiveness, relevance, and the effectiveness of variables in capturing the constructs of interest. This feedback was thoroughly reviewed and judiciously incorporated to enhance the questionnaire's effectiveness. Subsequently, an internal consistency test was conducted using the Cronbach Alpha statistic to ascertain the survey's reliability further. A pilot study, comprising a sample size of 20 participants, was undertaken. The promising Cronbach Alpha score of 0.87, exceeding the standard threshold, underscored the survey's reliability and internal consistency, aligning with the reliability benchmarks set by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Reliability Analysis (Cronbach Alpha) for the questionnaire's constructs

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Stressor Situations	10	0.78
Stressors of Job Experience	16	0.90
Health Symptoms	10	0.80
Job Satisfaction	8	0.78
Stress Management Strategies	12	0.83
Attitude of Stress	8	0.76

### III.3. Data Analysis

Upon successful data collection, a comprehensive data analysis process was set in motion using the sophisticated Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 25. Frequency analysis was conducted as the primary analysis method, designed to record the number of occurrences of each response, revealing prevalent trends among the responses. The analysis used aggregated data to ensure a thorough and nuanced understanding of the results, allowing the study to generate detailed insights and draw far-reaching conclusions about the stress experiences of simultaneous interpreters in Jordan. This approach ensures that the observations and conclusions drawn reflect the collective experience, providing a comprehensive picture of the professional landscape these interpreters navigate.

## IV. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### IV.1. Demographic Information

The demographic section of the survey was composed of five detailed questions designed to gain insight into the participants' backgrounds and professional profiles, as

shown in Table 2 below. These questions were specifically crafted to gather information regarding the participants' gender, age group, education level, professional experience, years of experience, and the frequency with which they perform interpreting services.

Data analysis indicated a significant representation of women in the participant group, constituting 62.1% (93 out of 150) of the total respondents, compared to the 37.9% (n = 57) representation by male counterparts. The demographic dispersion across age groups revealed that a significant proportion of participants, 57.3%, belonged to the age bracket of 31-50. This was followed by those aged 50 and above, comprising 26.7% of respondents, and the youngest group of 20-30, representing 16% of the total respondents.

Regarding the participants' educational qualifications, most interpreters (48.1%; n = 72) held a Bachelor's degree in Translation, indicating a specific academic background relevant to their profession. Interestingly, individuals holding degrees in other fields of study but do interpreting made up the smallest demographic, with a mere 3.8% representation. The analysis of professional experience unveiled that a substantial proportion of participants (almost two-thirds) boasted 11-20 years of active involvement in interpreting services. This depth of experience was juxtaposed with a minimal proportion of participants (the smallest demographic subset) with only 0-1 year of professional experience, highlighting the seasoned nature of most respondents.

Finally, an exploration of the frequency with which interpreting services were rendered demonstrated that nearly 44.3% (n = 67) of respondents provided such services on a weekly basis. A substantial group of 39.2% (n = 59) conducted interpreting tasks daily, whereas a relatively smaller percentage, 11.4% (17 out of 158), offered their services every month. These statistics underscore the significant demand for such services and the frequency with which interpreters must engage in their professional activities.

**Table 2.** Demographic Information

Question	Classification	Frequency (150)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	52	34.6
	Female	98	65.4
<b>Age</b>	20-30	24	16.0
	31-50	86	57.3
	50 and above	40	26.7
<b>Education Level</b>	BA in Translation or English Specialties	76	50.6
	MA in Translation or English Specialties	51	34
	Ph.D. in Translation or English Specialties	17	11.4
	Any relevant field	6	4
<b>How long have you been an interpreter?</b>	0-1	18	12
	2-5	28	18.6
	6-10	24	16
	11-20	53	35.4
	21 and above	27	18
<b>How often do you provide interpreting services?</b>	Daily	62	41.3
	Weekly	70	46.7
	Monthly	18	12

## IV.2. Stressor Situations

In examining the dynamics of stress in interpreting, the study's respondents were asked to evaluate and rate a range of stress-inducing situations using a three-point scale. The scale was composed of low, moderate, and extreme stress, intending to capture the broad range of potential stress levels experienced in interpreting. These items are explained in Table 3 below. This assessment was crucial to understanding the significant factors contributing to interpreter stress and, thus, better comprehending their professional environment.

The second construct of the questionnaire encompassed twenty-six stressors intrinsic to interpreting, offering a comprehensive range of factors impacting interpreters in their routine professional engagements. When considering the cumulative results for the entire participant group, the study discovered that most items in this construct, precisely twenty items or 73.1%, were perceived as causing moderate stress among respondents. Conversely, a smaller proportion of stressors, six items or 26.9%, were categorized as provoking extreme stress, indicating a higher degree of emotional or psychological impact on interpreters.

An examination of these extreme stressors revealed several insightful findings. Notably, unstable income emerged as the most significant stressor, with 54.3% of interpreters rating it as such ( $n = 84$ ), which shows the precarious financial conditions interpreters often find themselves in. Following closely were unsatisfactory rates and a sense of responsibility for each item's content, registering a 45.6% ( $n = 69$ ) incidence of extreme stress among respondents. Other factors that ranked high on the extreme stress scale included uncooperative private clients and non-cooperative judicial authorities, such as situations with no access to files before the trial (41.8%;  $n = 63$ ), fast delivery rate, and poor working conditions relating to temperature (39.9%;  $n = 60$ ), and lastly, uncertainty regarding the future of the profession (38%;  $n = 57$ ).

At the same time, the majority of the study's items, more than two-thirds, were identified as moderate stressors. These included specialist terminology (69.7%;  $n=105$ ), limited visibility of the speaker, frequent travel (65.8%;  $n=98$ ), insufficient time



to prepare for an assignment (65.3%; n=98), and lack of available materials before an assignment (64%; n=96). Emotional content in texts, such as themes of war and death, also proved stressful for 58.1% (n=87) of respondents. Other moderately stressful factors included public speaking (54.5%; n=82), long working hours (54.3%; n=82), speaker's accent (53.8%; n=81), and poor organization of work (e.g., materials not sent in advance to interpreters) (53.2%; n=80). Further factors, such as an imbalance between work and private life, challenges in client negotiations, the responsibility of interpreted content, incomprehensible source text, and poor working conditions, were also prominent. These findings follow the studies by Korpál (2016, 2021) and highlight the multi-faceted nature of stressors faced by interpreters.

Understanding these stressors is essential for any entity hiring interpreters, as these factors directly impact interpreters' performance. Therefore, the relevant stakeholders must recognize and ideally mitigate these stressors to foster a conducive working environment for interpreters.

**Table 3.** *Stressor Situations*

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Low stress</b>	<b>Moderate Stress</b>	<b>Extreme Stress</b>
<b>Public speaking</b>	47 (29.7%)	86 (54.5%)	17 (10.8%)
<b>Poor working conditions – room acoustics</b>	29 (18.4%)	65 (41.1%)	56 (35.4%)
<b>Poor working conditions – temperature</b>	29 (18.4%)	58 (36.7%)	63 (39.9%)
<b>Limited visibility (of the speaker)</b>	29 (18.4%)	104 (65.8%)	17 (10.8%)
<b>Fast delivery rate</b>	29 (18.4%)	58 (36.7%)	63 (39.9%)
<b>Speaker's accent</b>	24 (15.2%)	85 (53.8%)	46 (31.1%)

Statement	Low stress	Moderate Stress	Extreme Stress
No materials are available before an assignment	35 (22.5%)	93 (64%)	22 (13.9%)
Interpreting read-out speeches	29 (18.4%)	82 (56%)	39 (24.7%)
No time to prepare for an assignment	35 (22.2)	81 (65.3%)	34 (21.5%)
Frequent travel	46 (34.2%)	104 (65.8%)	-----
Fear of making a mistake	33 (22.8%)	84 (53.1%)	33 (22.8%)
Sense of responsibility for the interpreted content	12 (7.6%)	69 (45.5%)	69 (45.5%)
Poor working conditions – clients calling late in the evening / at night	30 (19%)	63 (42.9%)	57 (38%)
No time for private life	40 (26.6%)	70 (45.5%)	40 (26.6%)
Specialist terminology	18 (11.4%)	104 (69.7%)	28 (19%)
The emotional content of the texts (e.g., war, death)	29 (19%)	87 (58.1%)	34 (22.8%)
Incomprehensible source text	17 (11.4%)	65 (44.1%)	68 (45.5%)
Non-cooperative private clients	23 (15.2%)	59 (39.3%)	68 (45.5%)
Non-cooperative judicial authorities (e.g., no access to files before the trial)	29 (19%)	59 (39.1%)	62 (41.8%)

Statement	Low stress	Moderate Stress	Extreme Stress
Poor organization of work (e.g., materials not sent to translators/ interpreters in advance)	17 (11.4%)	80 (53.2%)	53 (34.2%)
Non-cooperative translators/interpreters (e.g., dumping rates)	12 (7.2%)	60 (40.2%)	78 (52.6%)
Long working hours	12 (7.6%)	81 (54.3%)	57 (38%)
Unstable income	18 (11.5%)	51 (34.2%)	81 (54.3%)
Uncertain future of the translator's/ interpreter's profession	40 (26.6%)	53 (35.4%)	57 (38%)
Unsatisfactory rates	24 (15.2%)	58 (39.3%)	68 (45.5%)
Negotiations with clients	29 (19%)	76 (50.6%)	45 (30.4%)

### IV.3. Stress: Medical Symptoms

The third construct of the survey aimed to identify and evaluate the physical and medical symptoms interpreters might encounter during their professional activities. The participants were presented with a list of potential health issues related to their jobs and were asked to select those they had personally experienced.

Upon examination of the responses, it became evident that throat irritation (manifested as dryness) and headaches were the most frequently reported medical symptoms among the interpreters, with 32.7 between these health issues and the act of interpreting. This result is not unique to this study; a similar trend was discovered in a study conducted by Fitchett (2012) on interpreters, further reinforcing the link between these symptoms and the interpreting profession. In addition to throat

irritation and headaches, respondents also reported problems with concentration and somnolence, suggesting that the cognitive demand of interpreting might induce these symptoms. Back pain was another common complaint, which could be attributed to prolonged periods of sitting, which is common in the profession. Additionally, fatigue and eye irritation were prevalent, potentially linked to long work hours, especially when using computers or dealing with texts. Insomnia was the least commonly reported symptom, although its occurrence cannot be dismissed.

The fact that fatigue followed back pain and eye irritation in the survey results further illustrates the physically and mentally demanding nature of interpreting work. While these findings might not be entirely unexpected, considering the nature of the work, they provide crucial empirical evidence of the strain put on interpreters in their work environment. The simultaneous occurrence of these symptoms might be partially attributable to factors such as extended work hours, the sedentary nature of the job, continuous computer usage, and the repetitive process involved in interpreting legal documents.

Therefore, considering these findings when creating strategies for managing and reducing stress among interpreters is of utmost importance. Also, it highlights the need for appropriate ergonomic and health measures in the workspaces for interpreters to prevent or mitigate these medical symptoms. Further research is necessary to fully understand this profession's health implications and develop suitable solutions.

**Table 4.** *Stress Medical Symptoms*

Valid Items	Frequency (150)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percent
Fatigue	14	8.9	9.0
Throat Irritation/throat Dryness	37	24.6	25
Somnolence	19	12.6	13

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Valid Items	Frequency (150)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percent
Back pain	17	11.3	11
Eye irritation	8	5.3	5
Problems with concentration	22	14.6	15
Headaches	24	16	16
Coughing	14	9.3	9
Insomnia	1	.6	0.6

#### IV.4. Job Satisfaction

The fourth construct of the survey was dedicated to investigating job satisfaction among simultaneous interpreters. As reflected in Table 5, one of the primary objectives of this section was to gauge the satisfaction levels of interpreters concerning the subject matter of the speeches they were tasked with interpreting. Surprisingly, a substantial majority (61.9%;  $n = 93$ ) expressed satisfaction with the content of the speeches they interpreted, pointing to a considerable degree of content engagement among the interpreter community. An indeterminate 38.1% ( $n = 57$ ) of respondents did not voice either satisfaction or dissatisfaction in this area. Notably, all respondents were satisfied with the topics they were interpreting. These results reflect a certain level of professional contentment, aligning with the findings of prior research by Korpál (2016) and Pieczychna (2019), demonstrating a satisfaction rate of approximately 65% among interpreters regarding their assigned topics.

The survey further sought to determine how respondents perceived different facets of their work (items 1 to 8). Most respondents agreed with the statements in these items, indicating a relatively high level of job satisfaction. However, one area that emerged as a point of dissatisfaction was the matter of compensation for interpreting services. A

significant number of interpreters, 41.8% (n=63), were satisfied with their rates. This echoes findings from other studies, such as those conducted by Courtney and Phelan (2019) and Piecychna (2019), suggesting a common issue among interpreters globally. In the Jordanian context, the discrepancy in pay for interpreting services stands out, with many interpreters feeling underpaid compared to international standards. This discrepancy is a pressing issue, likely reflecting the absence of a standardized pay scale or set rates for interpretation services in the country. Such findings serve as a valuable basis for future discussions on developing comprehensive compensation standards and rates for interpreters in Jordan.

**Table 5.** Job Satisfaction Constructs

Statement	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied
<b>The subject matter of interpreted speeches</b>	61.9% (n=93)	38.1% (n=57)	-----
<b>Relationship with private clients</b>	53.9% (n=81)	34.2% (n=51)	11.4% (n=17)
<b>Relationship with the judicial authorities</b>	60.8% (n=91)	39.2% (n=59)	-----
<b>Lack of routine</b>	51.1% (n=76)	34.2% (n=51)	15.2% (n=23)
<b>Interpreting rates</b>	41.8% (n=63)	34.4% (n=53)	22.8% (n=34)
<b>Adrenaline rush when providing interpreting services</b>	49.9% (n=75)	42.6% (n=64)	7.6% (n=11)
<b>Professional status of the interpreter</b>	49.4% (n=74)	35.4% (n=53)	15.2% (n=23)
<b>The prestige of the interpreter profession</b>	49.3% (n=74)	42.5% (n=65)	7.6% (n=11)

#### **IV.5. Stress Management Strategies**

Comprehending the strategies interpreters employ to manage the occupational stressors illuminated in the previous sections constitutes a crucial aspect of this study. According to the findings detailed in Table 6, interpreters lean towards particular coping mechanisms to navigate their profession's inherent challenges and pressures. One dominant strategy observed from the survey responses is the interpreters' emphasis on systematic planning and prioritizing tasks. By ensuring control and structure in their work process, interpreters successfully minimize feeling overwhelmed, thus reducing potential stress. Specifically, the strategy most frequently reported involves maintaining focus on the task at hand, a testament to the significance of attentiveness and precision in their profession. This reaffirms that stress management often relies on fostering concentration and efficiency, allowing interpreters to navigate their demanding work environment effectively.

Moreover, the study shows interpreters also engage with more holistic stress management techniques and task-focused strategies. For instance, religious meditation emerged as a commonly used strategy (54.5%; n = 82), reflecting the influence of Jordan's rich cultural and religious landscape on stress management practices. Beyond this, interpreters underscored the importance of planning their tasks well (50.7%; n = 76), cultivating positive outlooks during challenging circumstances (45.6%; n = 68), and ensuring adequate sleep (43.1%; n = 65). The prevalence of these strategies underlines the interpreters' understanding of the multi-faceted nature of stress, which extends beyond the psychological to encompass physical well-being.

Despite the tendency towards individual coping mechanisms, the study's responses also reflected the occasional reliance on social support networks for stress relief (38.3%; n = 57). Interpreters reported deriving comfort and relaxation from spending time with friends and relatives, though this strategy is less consistently applied than others. Similarly, finding positive aspects to problems, maintaining regular eating habits, and engaging in physical activities emerged as occasional but effective coping mechanisms. Conversely, the study found that interpreters seldom use other stress

management strategies such as seeking advice from friends and relatives, avoiding tasks, and indulging in passive leisure activities such as watching TV or going to the cinema. These less prevalent strategies reflect the unique demands of the interpreting profession, where specific traditional stress management techniques may not be as effective.

The study's results align with the conclusions drawn in previous research by Endler and Parker (1990), Folkman (2013), Kao and Craigie (2013), and Korpál (2016). This consistency underlines that stress management strategies can vary significantly among interpreters due to individual differences and the nature of the work environment. The findings of this study are valuable not only for interpreters to enhance their coping mechanisms but also for interpreter training programs and organizations. They can use this information to create supportive work environments that foster resilience and promote stress management among interpreters.

**Table 6.** *Stress Management Strategies*

Statement	Never	Sometimes	Always
<b>Planning the tasks to be performed</b>	11.4% (n =17)	38% (n=57)	50.7% (n=76)
<b>Spending time with friends and relatives</b>	11.4% (n=17)	49.4% (n=74)	38.3% (n=57)
<b>Following the advice given by friends and relatives</b>	68.7% (n=104)	15.4% (n=23)	15.9% (n=23)
<b>Focus on the task</b>	11.4% (n=17)	22.8% (n=34)	65.9% (n=99)
<b>Avoiding thinking about problems</b>	22.8% (n=33)	38% (n=57)	40.3% (n=60)
<b>Avoiding doing the task</b>	54.5% (n=82)	22.8%(n=34)	22.8% (n=34)



Statement	Never	Sometimes	Always
Looking for positive aspects of problems	11.4% (n=17)	41.8% (n=63)	45.6% (n=70)
Sleep	22.8% (n=34)	34.2% (n=51)	43.1% (n=65)
Eating	26.6% (n=40)	41.8% (n=62)	31.7% (n=48)
Physical activity	26.6% (n=40)	41.8% (n=62)	31.7% (n=48)
Watching TV/ cinema	45.6% (n=68)	26.8% (n=41)	27.6% (n=41)
Religious meditation	30.4% (n=45.6)	15.2% (n=23)	54.5% (n=82)

#### IV.6. Attitude of Stress

The sixth part of the survey focused on the interpreters' attitudes toward the impact of stress on their job performance, using a five-point scale to gauge their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements related to this subject. This segment crucially connected the subjective experiences of stress with its possible tangible consequences in interpreting, thereby providing a holistic view of the implications of stress in the professional environment. The range of aspects covered by these statements included, among others, the potential increase in errors due to stress, its effect on job satisfaction, and even the possible disruption it might cause in career progress.

Analyzing these responses offered valuable insight into the interpreters' perceptions of stress, revealing their attitudes about how it influences their professional lives, as shown in Table 7. Whether they see stress as an obstacle to effective performance or a motivator that promotes resilience and adaptation, these attitudes contribute significantly to understanding the psychological dimension of professional interpreting. Furthermore, these findings are expected to facilitate more effective structuring of

support systems and training programs by interpreting institutions and organizations, informed by the nuanced perspectives of the interpreters themselves. It also empowers interpreters with self-awareness about their stress responses, potentially prompting them to adopt more suitable stress management strategies, thus fostering personal well-being and professional efficacy.

**Table 7.** Attitudes of Stress

Statement	Agreed	Neutral	Disagreed
<b>I experience a lot of stress working as an interpreter.</b>	50.6% (n=76)	19% (n=29)	30.4% (n=46)
<b>Stress motivates me to work.</b>	31.3% (n=47)	26.9% (n=40)	41.8% (n=63)
<b>Stress has a positive effect on my work results.</b>	23.6% (n=35)	30.8% (n=47)	45.6%(n=68)
<b>Stress negatively affects the results of my work.</b>	43.9 (n=65)	30.8% (n=45)	26.9% (n=40)

Table 7 summarizes the relationship between interpreters' job experience and their perception of stress, a complex dynamic that intertwines stress's negative and positive aspects at work. Most respondents acknowledged a high level of stress in their jobs, but interestingly, many also noted that they recognize the potential benefits of stress, implying a nuanced understanding of stress. These benefits can manifest in various forms, such as honing problem-solving skills, fostering resilience, or stimulating motivation and focus. However, it was also underscored that stress predominantly negatively impacts their job performance, corroborating the conventional view of stress as a detrimental factor in the workplace. It was observed that respondents considered stress less likely to foster a positive work environment, likely due to its potential to exacerbate tensions, hinder communication, and lower overall job satisfaction. This dichotomy in the interpreters' perceptions underscores the intricate nature of stress at

work, underscoring the need for a balanced approach that acknowledges its challenges and opportunities in the context of the interpreting profession.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

The primary focus of this study was to delve into the various facets of stress, including its causes, health consequences, impact on job satisfaction, and mitigation strategies among simultaneous interpreters operating within the Arabic-to-English language pairing in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The study revealed various stress factors, delineated into extreme, moderate, and low-stress categories, shaping the interpreters' working environment.

Extreme stressors included unsatisfactory rates, a pervasive sense of responsibility for the interpreted content, non-cooperative private clients and judicial authorities, a fast-paced delivery rate, and substandard working conditions. Simultaneously, the moderate stressors encompassed a wide range of challenges, including specialist terminology, limited visibility of the speaker, frequent travel, insufficient preparation time for assignments, unavailability of materials before a task, emotionally charged content (like war and death), interpreting read-out speeches, public speaking, lengthy working hours, speaker's accent, poorly organized work conditions (for instance, materials not sent to interpreters in advance), limited time for personal life, negotiations with clients, incomprehensible source text, non-cooperative colleagues (for example, those offering services at dumping rates), and poor working conditions such as clients calling late in the evening or at night.

Most participants reported common health symptoms associated with their profession, such as throat irritation (dryness) and headaches, potentially attributable to the intensive vocal and mental exertion involved in interpreting. On a positive note, the study highlighted various stress management techniques interpreters employ. The respondents often prioritized tasks and planned meticulously to stay focused and

lessen workplace stress. The primary coping strategies included always concentrating on the task, resorting to religious meditation, strategic planning, finding positive aspects in challenging situations, and maintaining adequate sleep.

The findings of this study significantly enrich the research landscape on the stress within translation and interpreting professions and the ergonomics of these professions. By unveiling the myriad stressors interpreters encounter and their strategies to manage them, this study could improve interpreter well-being and enhance interpreting quality, underscoring the crucial need for comprehensive and tailored stress management.

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### **Declare of Interests**

The researchers declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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