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## Job stress, Causes and Treatment of Job Stress among Teachers and Nurses: a Review.

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### ABSTRACT

Job stress is one of the varieties of daily stresses. According to the definition presented by The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), job stress is “any harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities of the worker”. Teaching and nursing are two of the most stressful jobs. Some of the causes of stress among teachers are the atmosphere of the school, huge amount of work, students’ misbehavior, time pressure and the poor conditions in schools. Some of the causes of stress among nurses are high workload, facing patients die, sleep disorders, long working hours, numerous night shifts, high risk of the job, visitors making lots of noise and etc. In this study, the key words of stress, job stress, poor job conditions, job burnout, teacher, nurse, anxiety and treatment which are searched, studied and analyzed in published papers in reliable scientific-research journals in recent years, as well as reliable scientific websites are used for data collection. Statistics show that stress and its side effects result in waste of a hundred of work days each year and in average, one million individuals per day refrain from going to work due to the disorders and illnesses resulted from going to the workplace. Therefore, a plan should be made. Some of treatments of stress are controlling job elements, reducing workload, reducing work teams and inoculation training.

Keywords: anxiety, organization, job, stress, job stress, poor job conditions, job burnout, teacher, nurse, treatment.

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## INTRODUCTION

The troublesome and full of anxiety life of the twenty first century has transformed the mental pressure into an important issue in organizational behavior topics. Due to the increase in competition, the workers are asked to work more with better quality, in a shorter period of time and using fewer resources. Research findings indicate that these job pressures have adverse effects on the private lives of the workers and the quality of their performance [1, 2].

Stress might be the most common issue in daily human life [3, 4]. Nowadays it has become so universal that it can be considered as the inseparable part and the main characteristic of human beings such that all human beings face stress in their daily life and in all aspects of their life. Human beings cannot live without stress [5].

### Definition of Stress

The study of job stress started by Hans Selye in 1965. Selye defined stress as the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change and has called it the exhaustion level of body According [6]. to Lazarus and Folkman [6,7], stress is a relationship between an individual and environment which is evaluated by the person and endangers his welfare. Poly and Trumbull also believe: "ever since this term was taken into consideration and possessed a specific status among studies, it has been used as a substitute for what was previously called anxiety, conflict, emotional distress, hard environmental condition, security threat, stimulation and tension [6].

Hans divided stress into two components and emphasized that "distress" as the first component deals with the negative aspects of stress, while the second component; that is, "stress" includes its positive aspects. These positive aspects can be effective in increasing motivation and attempts to reach a goal in his life. In consequence, the positive aspects of stress seem necessary for a healthy life [8, 9].

According to the definition presented by The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), job stress is: "any harmful physical and emotional response that occur when the requirements of a job do not match the capabilities of the worker" that might result in aggressive behavior, occupational injuries, psychological or physical disorders or even death [8]. The International Labor Organization (ILO) has defined job stress as the most important threat for an employee's health, while The World Health Organization (WHO) has pointed to the role of job stress in health problems of the employees, reducing motivation and workers' safety in workplace and calls it the cause of unwanted cost incurred on the employer to a large extent [8, 10]. Stress is permanently present everywhere and in all aspects of our lives in different degrees. The main causes of stress are issues such as main changes in life, preoccupations, adversities, failures, conflicts [11-13], physical problems, educational and financial problems and etc [14-20]. In some cases, dealing with stress might teach the life skills to the person and reveals different aspects of his/her personality to him/her. During this interaction, his/her personality becomes mature and in balance [21].

Nowadays job is one of the main aspects of any person. Apart from providing money, job meets our psychological needs such mental and physical activity, social contact, the sense of self-worth, trust and ability [22]. Stress is present in all employees' life and puts them under mental pressure [23].

### Causes of Stress

A research conducted by Princeton Research Council in 1997 showed that three-fourths of employees believe the worker has more on-the-job stress than a generation ago [2]. The cause of stress can be inside the workplace or outside of it or both [2].

Job stress is a mixture of stressors in workplace, the person himself/herself and the stressors outside the organization. These pressures can lead to symptoms of diseases in workplace or real diseases [2]. These causes in human resources can be divided into three categories: the first category includes the "organizational stressors" that are directly depended on the job or the workplace; the second category includes "life events" which are not related to the organization, like the employees' personal problems in life, concerns and failures in future plans; and the third category includes "individual stressors" such as the type of personality which

results in personal impressions from the environment. Stress is rooted in the aforementioned facts. However, it should be noted that “individual stressors”, “life events”, and “organizational stressors” have influence over one another as well [2].

What are the problems that stress can cause among people and society?

In 1946 the World Health Organization (WHO) defined it as: “health is comprised of a state of full physical, mental and social tranquility and not merely the absence of disease or disability” [24, 25].

Job stress can be accompanied by numerous psychological (anxiety, depression, nervous exhaustion, irritability, incuriosity, aggression, emotional discharge, gluttony, impulsive behavior, nervous laughter, inability to make decisions, poor concentration, lack of attention, mental breaks, and sensitivity towards criticism), physical (Migraine Headaches, increase in heart rate and blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal pain, pulmonary and digestive disorders, kidney diseases and rheumatoid arthritis) and organizational problems (absence from work, turnover, low production rate, alienation with colleagues, job dissatisfaction, a decrease in commitment to the organization and a decline in job performance and quality) [26-28].

According to the reports of National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, %30 of the employees suffer from backache, %28 complain about the stress, %20 feel tired, %17 have muscle pain and %13 have headache due to job pressures [28, 29]. A large amount of money is lost annually due to lack of physical and mental health of the employees, the decrease in their performance, job quit and turnover as a result of job stress. Stress and its side effects result in the waste of a hundred of work days each year and in average, one million individuals per day refrain from going to work due to the disorders and illnesses resulted from going to the workplace. It is clarified that about %30 of the work force are suffering from job stress in developed countries. The International Labor Organization (ILO) has also estimated the costs incurred by the countries due to job stress to be about 1 to %3.5 of the gross domestic product which is increasing at the moment [28, 30, 31]. Statistics indicate the depth and intensity of the costs that are incurred by the economy of the countries annually in different workplaces and due to stress. In the U.S. about 200 billion dollars are spent annually in the U.S. as the damage caused by different sections of industry as a compensation for absence from work, accidents, death caused by working, chronic diseases and employees turnover [28]. Stress also has negative effects on organizational results (such as violence at workplace, an increase in disasters and accidents at workplace, absence from work and job burnout) [32-35].

Workplace stress can also result in behavioral problems such as an increase in the use of alcohol and drugs [33]. One common consequence of job stress is its negative effects on families and family life [33]. This means that the consequences of job stress are not limited to the workplace and it might later spread on other living environments as well. Job stress influences married life. It has determining effects on the quality of interactions in family [32, 33].

Statistics show that stress and its side effects result in waste of a hundred of work days each year and in average, one million individuals per day refrain from going to work due to the disorders and illnesses resulted from going to the workplace [22]. The studies conducted by Mouse and Billing show that factors such as permanent tension, feeling danger, intense competition, struggle and conflict at workplace, hatred from job and lack of good human communication can make the person feel his job is meaningless. Such a feeling towards job can lead to the feelings of being under job pressure, fatigue, exhaustion of energy, inability and as a consequence can result in job burnout [22, 36].

#### How Stress Emerges

Hans believes that respond to stress develops through three detectable steps: when the person is subject to permanent or repetitive sources of mental pressure, when the person faces the stress source for the first time, an alarm reaction occurs and the level of resistance decreases [22]. In this step, the sympathetic nervous system response such as secretion of adrenaline, rapid breathing, muscle tension and etc. are deactivated [22]. If the source of pressure at this stage is intense enough, the person might not be able to resist and might die. Otherwise, the person will enter the second stage, that is, resistance. At this stage, body attempts to reach the state of balance and peace through parasympathetic system [22]. Stress might end at

this stage. However, if despite body resistance, the stress is continued or increased, body enters the third stage. Finally if body energy for compatibility finishes at this stage- that is, exhaustion- death is probable. In other words, this stage happens in case of intense stress which is accompanied by mental diseases and inabilities such as psychosomatic diseases [22].

#### Stress among Teachers

Stress is a common phenomenon in teaching and teachers in different levels and different periods of time, report job stress in various amounts from low to severe. Based on the research conducted in different countries, teaching is known as one of the ten stressful occupations in the world [37]. One third of teachers believe that teaching is highly stressful [37].

In terms of responsibility towards the students' welfare, prosperity and activities, teachers are unique. They are responsible to disseminate knowledge, train students and provide discipline in due time [37, 38].

In a study on the stress among elementary and high school teachers in Norway, Mykletum identified school atmosphere, high amount of work for teachers, inappropriate communication at workplace, abnormal behavior of many students, changes in education system and unfamiliarity with objectives of new programs as the causes of stress [31, 39]. Kyriacou et al. also found four main causes of stress among teachers to be bad behavior of students, poor working condition, time pressure and poor condition in schools [40].

Rezaii studied the prevalence of stress and stress symptoms among Iranian teachers and concluded that %25 of Iranian teachers is highly stressed. Male teachers are significantly more stressed than female teachers [21, 41].

In a study, Sanei Sistani showed that elementary school teachers are mildly to moderately stress and the fourth grade teachers' stress was higher than others. According to the fact that teaching is one of the most sensitive and burdensome jobs in the society and this responsibility is heavier in elementary school, the necessity to consider and confront the causes of stress among teachers is more prominent in this period [41-42].

Severe stress can cause unpleasant consequences in teaching. It can demoralize teachers and decrease their abilities in teaching eagerly [38].

Stress can reduce teachers' quality of teaching in two main ways: firstly, if a teacher finds teaching stressful for a long time, his satisfaction from his job might reduce and this might despond him/her. Secondly, severe stress can reduce the quality of interaction between teacher and students [38].

The researchers in the field of education and training believe that individual consequences of stress among teachers are the psychological and physiological symptoms of job stress and its signs include job burnout, physical exhaustion and fatigue, becoming prone to diseases [6, 43], endangering physical health, for example infectious diseases, insomnia, headache [43, 44] and a reduction in job performance like job dissatisfaction, unjustified absence, reduced productivity and in general reduction in the quality of their work [44].

#### Stress among Nurses

Nursing is one of the most stressful jobs [45, 46] and due to the nature of their job, nurses are continually in stress, such that stress is recognized as one of the components of modern nursing [46-48]. It has become a challenge in nursing as well [49]. The American National Institute of Health reported that among the 130 jobs evaluated in the study, nursing was ranked 27 with regard to medical visits because of its psychological health problems [50]. Also a study conducted by Shahrak Vahedi showed that mental health of nurses reduces with an increase in their job stress [51].

Bahrami has written that %7.4 of nurses are absent from work every week due to job stress, which is %80 more than other occupational groups [50]. There are numerous stressors at workplace, the most important of which are high amount of work, facing patients' death, sleep disorders, long working hours [52],

lack of forces, conflict and ambiguity in roles [53], numerous night shifts(54), low freedom of action [47]. In a study by Gholam Nejad et al. (2009), not being encouraged, workload and not being involved in decisions made in the sections have been recognized as the most important stressors of nursing, respectively [54].

#### Stress Treatment

Various methods have been used to confront job stress. One of the utilized methods is inoculating training against stress. Inoculating training against stress is a cognitive-behavioral intervention including cognitive restructuring, problem solving, relaxation training, behavior training, and self-evaluation and attempts to change the environment [41]. This treatment method is comprised of three steps: the first step is conceptualization, the second step is acquisition and practice and the third step is application and follow-up [41].

#### Methodology

In this study, the key words of stress, job stress, poor job conditions, job burnout, teacher, nurse, anxiety and treatment which are searched, studied and analyzed in published papers in reliable scientific-research journals in recent years, as well as reliable scientific websites are used for data collection.

#### CONCLUSION

Job stress can be accompanied by numerous psychological (anxiety, depression, nervous exhaustion, irritability, incuriosity, aggression, emotional discharge, gluttony, impulsive behavior, nervous laughter, inability to make decisions, poor concentration, lack of attention, mental breaks, and sensitivity towards criticism), physical (migraine headaches, increase in heart rate and blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal pain, pulmonary and digestive disorders, kidney diseases and rheumatoid arthritis) and organizational problems (absence from work, turnover, low production rate, alienation with colleagues, job dissatisfaction, a decrease in commitment to the organization and a decline in job performance and quality). Workplace stress can also result in behavioral problems such as an increase in the use of alcohol and drugs. One common consequence of job stress is its negative effects on families and family life. This means that the consequences of job stress are not limited to the workplace and it might later spread on other living environments as well. Job stress influences married life. It has determining effects on the quality of interactions in family. Statistics show that stress and its side effects result in waste of a hundred of work days each year and in average, one million individuals per day refrain from going to work due to the disorders and illnesses resulted from going to the workplace. The International Labor Organization has estimated the costs incurred by the countries due to job stress to be 1 to 3.5 percent of gross domestic product which is increasing at the moment. According to these facts, stress damages both the person and the society. Therefore, a plan should be made. Some of treatments of stress are controlling job elements, reducing workload, reducing work teams and inoculation training.

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