

**Research Article**

**Assessment of Job Stress in the Female Staff Working in  
Public Hospitals of Shoushtar<sup>1</sup> in 2017**

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**Running title: Job Stress in the Female Staff Working in Public Hospitals**

**ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:** Job stress is one of the problems that exists in today's society. Hospital jobs are among the most stressful jobs. Job stress is also a factor in reducing mental-physical health and reducing productivity of those working in organizations. Women are the fundamental principle of the family and their physical and mental health has a direct influence on physical and mental health of families and their children's upbringing.

**Aim:** The present study aims to assess job stress among female staff working in public hospitals of Shoushtar in 2017.

**Materials and Methods:** This study is a cross-sectional research, which is conducted by census method among 130 female staff working in public hospitals in Shoushtar. Data were collected by a HSE job stress questionnaire. Data were analyzed using SPSS software version 16, and by the methods of mean descriptive statistics, standard deviation and variance analysis test.

**Results:** There was no statistically significant relation between the age of the person, the spouse's age, the different levels of education of the individual and her husband, number of children, age of marriage, the overtime and job stress ( $p > 0.05$ ). There was no statistically significant relation between the type of job of a person and the level of her job stress ( $f = 1.586, p = 0.146$ ).

There was a significant and inverse correlation between experience and job stress ( $\rho = -0.193, p = 0.032$ ). Also there was a significant and direct correlation between job stress and working hours per week ( $\rho = 0.201, p = 0.023$ ).

**Conclusion:** Despite the findings of this study that reported no relation between person's job and the level of their job stress, most of the participants had moderate and high levels of job stress. Therefore, due to the influence of stress on people's lives, there should be a plan to reduce staff's job stress.

**Key words:** job stress, hospital's staff, HSE questionnaire

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<sup>1</sup> Shushtar is a city in Khuzestan Province, Iran.

## INTRODUCTION

Stress is a normal reaction to pressure from the outside world, such as workplace, family or inner world such a desire to succeed and being accepted. Although the usual stress is a reminder of an unpleasant feeling in people, but a minimal amount of it is necessary as a motivating factor in life to perform tasks, activities, competition and progression [1], so stress is not just a stimulus or response, it is a process that people understand and is used to deal with the threats and challenges [2]. Due to the expansion of globalization, promotion of competitions and changing employment relations, stress has become significantly important in occupational health and is considered one of the most important causes of economic losses in all of the world [3]. On the other hand, the people's job is one of the major reasons of stress in their lives and there is more stress in jobs that human communication is raised [4]. Job stress is among the common problems in the workplace. Job stress is the influence of job on people and it leads to internal changes and deviation from their usual action [5]. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines stress as a harmful physical and psychological response that is caused due to lack of coordination between job requirements and abilities, supportive resources and the needs of employers [6]. Since 150 years ago, work and environmental health doctors and specialists have been examining conditions and work atmosphere as stress factors [7]. Many work accidents also may occur as a result of job stress. It is approximately reported that each year 15,000 people lose their lives because of work-related accidents [2]. United Nations introduced job stress as disease of the twentieth century in 1992; later, the World Health Organization introduced job stress as an epidemic problem in the world [8]. Also, as it is reported in several studies, approximately 30% of the workforce in developed countries suffer from job stress and the rate is higher in developing countries [9]. International Labor Organization (ILO) has estimated the costs imposed on the country by stress from 1 to 3.5 percent of GDP and confirms that this amount is

increasing [7, 9, 10]. Evidence obtained from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) organization shows that 20% of employees faced with job stress in a large extent in their workplace, which of course in some jobs this rate reaches 40% [11]. Psychologists and researchers have investigated the role of stress in different situations; in the meantime, the effect of stress on employees of healthcare sector, due to the complexity of work, is more significant and is known as an important and influential factor [12]. However, the midwives and nurses cover a large part of healthcare employees across the world and are responsible for more than 80% of patient care [13]. Job stress symptoms are appeared in three domains: psychological, physical and behavioral. The psychological domain of job stress is associated with job dissatisfaction that causes depression, anxiety, boredom, Sexual disorders, frustration, isolation and alienation [14]. Some of the physical symptoms of job stress are heart and vascular disease, gastrointestinal disease, allergies, skin diseases, sleep disorders, headaches. Behavioral symptoms include behaviors such as work stoppages, smoking, alcohol consumption, overeating or loss of appetite, aggressive behavior towards colleagues or family members and organizational behaviors such as absenteeism, leaving job, increased accidents, reduced productivity and performance [15]. In the study conducted by Newton et al job stress was defined as the most important reason that causes unpleasant and psychiatric disorders [9]. Also the effects of job stress can lead to the destruction of relationships, especially in the family. That's why many companies in the measures called "Employee Assistance Programs" have tried to utterly deal with job stress [16]. In conducted studies, factors such as permanent encounter with patients, responsibility for the health of patients, carrying out the clinical processes, dealing with dying patients, lack of adequate facilities, dealing with unpredictable situations, shift work and place of duty (hospital, clinics) were identified as professional stress factors among hospital staff [17]. These factors can decrease the quality of patient care, on time and correct decisions,

ability, skills and also can cause job dissatisfaction, depression, and feelings of inadequacy, resentment, fatigue, absenteeism and delays, sickness leaves and the resultant work commitment of healthcare staffs [18]. The impact of the entered stress factors on the healthcare employees can lead to reduced quality of healthcare services [14]. Therefore, we can prevent the development of mental illness in this group of people by identifying and correcting the stress factors of workplace [19]. The results of Tuveesson et al (2012), which examined the relationship between internal stress and environmental and individual factors among nurses for signifying internal stress showed that *the feeling of moral responsibility*, skill, anger management and behavioral violent in the line of duty are related with people's stress [20]. Due to the inevitability of some stress factors in hospital jobs and the need to prevent mental and behavioral effects of stress on the one hand, and the importance of the staff's health in providing care to patients on the other hand, thus, determining stress levels and assessing the association between variables among staff in different clinical environments can lead to the introduction of measures to improve the quality of working life and education of coping methods that are the responsibility of healthcare managers[21]. However, due to the increasing amount of stress in the workplace and because job stress is very critical in different aspects of health, this study aimed to investigate the job stress among employees working in different parts of public hospitals in Shoushtar.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross-sectional study was conducted in 2017, by census method among 130 personnel working in the only two public hospitals of Shoushtar. The participants worked in maternity wards, maternity and gynecological surgery, neonatal intensive care, neonatal, operating rooms, laboratories, emergency, nursing station, thalassemia, radiology, dialysis, endoscopy, general surgery, pediatrics, internal medicine, intensive care unit (ICU) and Cardiac Care Unit (CCU). Inclusion criteria included: The person

should be medically educated, married, age between 20-50 years old, Iranian, be her husband's only wife and longtime suffering from infertility, pregnancy, suffering from physical and mental diseases, having family problems, consumer of alcohol or drugs, physical problems (spinal cord injury, amputation, paralysis, deformity, etc.), medical diseases (cardiovascular disease, hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism, epilepsy, diabetes, respiratory, and cancer. ...) and psychological disorders (such as depression or other mental disorders, treated with antidepressants and other drugs known to affect the psyche were excluded). On this basis, all participants were asked to, if desired, enter the studies. Data collection tools included demographic and job stress questionnaire (HSE), respectively. Questionnaires were administered between those who wish to participate in the study. The first part of the questionnaire assessed demographic characteristics of research units such as age, age of spouse, the person and her husband's level of education, number of children, years of marriage, work experience, job and amount of overtime, working hours in a week and employment status. The second part is Job Stress Questionnaire (HSE) that was made in the late 1990s by the English Health and Safety Institute in order to measure job stress of workers and English staffs [22]. The tool consists of 35 questions and has seven scales that each have some sub-scales; these measures include: the role of communication, managerial support, peer support, control, demand and changes, which are based on a 5-point Likert scale of always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never. This measure was scored with a score of 1 to 5 as the sum of scores of phrases for each sub-scale indicate the measured values of the subscale where favorable response points 1 and undesirable and stressful response points 5. According to the total stress score, the score of (35-0) measured as the favorable stress, (70-35) as low stress, (105-70) as moderate stress, (140-105) as high stress, and (175-140) as undesirable stress. Validity and reliability of the mentioned questionnaire to determine the level of stress were studied by Azad marzabadi and Gholami

Fesharaki in 2011 in Iran. In order to determine validity of job stress the researchers used the Cronbach's alpha and split-half method which were 0.78 and 0.65 respectively. This implies the desirable validity of this questionnaire. To evaluate the content validity of the questionnaire, a translated version of the questionnaire was sent to a group of psychology professors in Baqiatallah Medical University and teacher training university as well as some professors in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics of Tehran and Esfahan and Shahid Beheshti Universities of Medical Sciences. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to check the construct validity which its result was  $r = -0.48$  [23].

### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Collected data were analyzed using SPSS software version 16 and descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and ANOVA. In this study,  $P < 0.05$  is considered significant.

### RESULTS

In this study, 130 women were studied. The mean age was  $(34.38 \pm 6.47)$  years old, of which approximately 47 percent of people aged 40-30 years old. The average age of marriage was  $(9.91 \pm 6.26)$  years old. The average work experience was  $(9.08 \pm 5.85)$  years, the amount of overtime was  $(27.57 \pm 19.09)$  hours, average working in a week was  $(49.34 \pm 10.53)$  hours, of which nearly 40% of people were in the class of 50-40 hours. Almost 46% of people's employment status were official and covenant. The mean of job stress was  $(99.03 \pm 17.72)$ , which their lowest stress score was 45 and the highest score was 140, 38.5% of people had high levels of job stress, 56.2 percent had mean occupational stress, and 5.4% had low levels of job stress. Job stress and other demographic information is given in the following [table1/fig-1]. In this study there was no significant relationship between age and stress, but as shown in the tables, we realized that people's stress levels have declined with age ( $p$ -value = 0.11,  $r = -0.141$ ). There was no statistically significant relationship between the number of children and job stress but the ones

with more than 3 children had more job stress ( $p$ -value = 0.83,  $r = -0.019$ ). There was no significant correlation between the number of years of marriage and job stress but those people whose years of marriage were more than 10 years had a decreased their job stress level ( $p$ -value = 0.83,  $r = -0.019$ ). There was a significant and reverse relationship between job stress and the work experience, which means that job stress has decreased with increased work experience ( $p = 0.023$ ,  $r = -0.205$ ). The amount of overtime did not have any effect on job stress ( $p$ -value = 0.275,  $r = -0.146$ ). There was a significant and direct relationship between the weekly working hours and job stress which means that increased hours per week (50 hours and more) causes an increase in job stress ( $p$ -value = 0.030,  $r = 0.192$ ). Job stress has affected their employment status and as you can see in the tables, job stress in people with contractual employment status is more than those who are official, covenant or scheme. (Education  $P$  had an impact on job stress ( $p$ -value = 0.147,  $F = 1.948$ ) and they were mostly held a bachelors' degree. Work did not have an impact on job stress ( $p$ -value = 0.11,  $F = 1.837$ ), but findings showed the highest score of stress in nurse aid staffs [Table 2/fig-2].

### DISCUSSION

In the present study, there was no significant relationship between age and job stress that is consistent with the studies of Golyan Tehrani et al (2008) and Hasheminejad et al (2011) [24-25]. However, studies by Mollart et al (2013) and Knezevic et al (2011) showed that in the case of job stress for nurses and midwives the factors such as age, has an impact on job stress and younger people are more vulnerable [14,17], which may be due to an increased susceptibility of older people to deal with stressful situations [16]. However, in the study of Lambert et al (2004) titled Stress Factors and Ways to Deal with Stress in Nurses in Japanese Hospitals showed that with increase of age, job stress increases [26]. This is incompatible with the results Mollart and Knezevic study. Also in this study, there was no significant relationship between job stress and level of education ( $f =$

1.052, p-value = 0.384). The reason for this can be sought in the approximate homogeneity of the study population in terms of education which agreed with the results of Ahmad-Nia (2002) on working women and housewives [27]. In this study, most of the female staff who participated in the study 56.2% (73 cases), experienced moderate intensity of job stress that agreed with the results of Anjazab et al (2000), which examined the relationship between job stress and mental responses among midwives in Yazd public hospitals about job stress and psychological responses [28]. In the study of Hasheminejad et al (2011) the majority of midwives had experienced 81.08% moderate job stress that was consistent with the results of the present study [25]. yaghubian et al(1999) in their study showed that job stress of the most (72.86%) nurses in hospitals of east of Mazandaran province is in average level [29]. The study of Nourian et al (2010) aimed to investigate the relationship between job stress factors and health status of nurses in hospitals affiliated to Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, and showed that 76.48% of the participants experienced moderate stress [30]. Also Bahri Bynabaj (2003) figured that working in clinical environment is very stressful [4]. In this research using Pearson correlation test, an inverse and significant relationship between work experience and job stress has been found ( $p = -0.193$  ,  $p = 0.032$  ). It means that with increasing work experience, job stress is reduced. According to the research of Payami et.al (2002) and Gholamnejad (2009), there is an inverse and significant relationship between work experience and job stress which is consistent with the results of this study [31-32], also in the research of Mollart et al (2013) which was conducted on Australian midwives, the participants with more work experience, over 21 years, had far less job stress than the group with much less work experience [17]. This could be the result of increased experience and coping with the stress factors as well as getting skilled on the job. In the research of Hasheminejad there is no significant relationship between job stress and midwives' work experience that was

not consistent with the result of the study of Mollart et al [25]. The reason for this may be due to the low work experience in the studied population by Hasheminejad In this study, a significant correlation was observed between job stress and weekly working hours using the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.201$  ,  $p = 0.023$ ). This means that with increased working hours per week (50 hours and more), job stress increases. The study of Green glass ben (2016) showed a significant relationship between working hours and job stress in his study, because the increase in working hours causes more work and family conflict that it can cause stress [33]. Also in Menati's study (2015) a positive correlation between mental health and job stress in people who work more than 60 hours per week was observed [34]. Seyed fatemi et.al (2007) reported a significant relationship between job stress among nurses and their shift work [35]. In the research of Gholamnejad (2009) and Willy et.al (2006) there was also a positive relationship between job stress and long working hours, long working hours were mentioned as a risk factor for mental disorders and tensions [32,36]. In this study, there was no statistically significant difference between the type of job and job stress ( $f = 1.586$ ,  $p = 0.146$ ), but findings showed the highest average score of job stress in nurse aid and health workers. The reason for this may be due to the low number of nurse aids and health workers, high amounts of pressure and work load and their diverse responsibility in different parts of studied community. In this study there was no significant statistically relationship between the number of children and stress (p-value > 0.05), but the highest job stress scores belonged to people who had three or more children and one possible explanation could be that women in the workplace in addition to their tasks also have the responsibility for protecting their children, which leads to increased stress. There was no significant correlation between job stress and the number of years of marriage, but people who have been married more than 10 years had a decreased job stress. This could be because with

aging some years have also been added to their marital age, and the readiness of people to deal with stressful situations increased and their job stress reduced. Difficulties of coordination to enter the hospital as well as non-participation of some hospital personnel due to fatigue and the number of questions of questionnaire were some of the problems in this research. More specific studies are recommended to evaluate the role of other factors such as the type and amount of equipment in the sectors, non-occupational stress, mental pressure due to management and social factors in the development of occupational stress.

### CONCLUSION

Despite the findings of this study that showed no relation between individuals' jobs with levels of their job stress, the majority of them had moderate and high job stress. Therefore, due to the impact of stress on people's lives, there should be some plans in order to reduce staff's stress for preventing from psychological and physical damages and for reducing the efficiency of their work.

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Variable		(Percent) Frequency	Mean ± standard deviation
<b>The age of the person</b>	20 – 30	43(33.1)	100.42 ± 16.74
	30 – 40	61(46.9)	100.61 ± 18.57
	40-50	26(20.0)	
			93.03 ± 16.61
<b>The number of children</b>	0	23(16.9)	98.39±17.31
	1	37(28.5)	98.38±18.93
	2	49(37.7)	98.22±17.93
	3 and more	21(16.2)	102.76±16.18
<b>The number of years of marriage</b>	less than 5 years	36(28.6)	100.67±17.23
	5 – 10	37(29.4)	100.38±19.03
	10 – 15	30(23.8)	99.00 ±18.79
	More than 15 years	23(18.3)	94.65 ±15.19
<b>Work experience</b>	less than 5 years	33(26.8)	103.55±16.75
	5 – 10	48(39.0)	99.94±17.35
	More than 10 years	42(34.1)	92.79±17.30
<b>The amount of overtime</b>	less than 5 hours	73(56.2)	99.78±19.33
	5 – 15 hours	18(13.8)	95.17±17.81
	15 – 25 hours	16(12.3)	106.25±12.01
	More than 25 hours	23(17.7)	94.65±14.24
<b>Weekly working hours</b>	less than 40 hours	29(22.7)	94.90±14.19
	40 – 50 hours	52(40.6)	96.04±15.55
	More than 50 hours	47(36.7)	105.0±220.51
<b>Employment Status</b>	Formal	73(56.2)	96.01±18.61
	Contractual	40(30.8)	104.88±14.76
	Projective	17(13.1)	98.03±17.72
<b>Education</b>	Associate Degree	27(21.3)	100.81±19.63
	Bachelor	96(75.6)	99.23±17.34
	Higher degree of Bachelor	4(3.1)	82.25±6.39
<b>Job</b>	Midwife	19(14.6)	90.32±18.50
	Nurse	64(49.2)	100.47±16.87
	The personnel of operating room	24(18.5)	102.92±18.00
	Laboratory sciences	13(10.0)	93.77±17.40
	Health worker and nurse aid	5(3.8)	109.00±17.84
	Radiologist	5(3.8)	98.03±17.72

[Table 1/Fig-1]: frequency, mean and standard deviation of job stress in terms of other variables



Variable	Statistic	P- value
The age of the person	r=-0.14	0.110
The number of children	r=0.019	0.830
The number of years of marriage	r=-0.074	0.411
Work experience	r=-0.205	0.023*
The amount of overtime	r=-0.14	0.275
Weekly working hours	r=0.192	0.030*
Employment Stat	F=3.368	0.038*
	Contractual	
	Projective	
Education	F=1.948	0.147
	Associate Degree	
	Bachelor	
	Higher degree of Bachelor	
Job	F=1.837	0.110
	Midwife	
	Nurse	
	The personnel of operating room	
	Laboratory sciences	
	Health worker and nurse aid	
	Radiologist	

[Table 2/ Fig- 2]: The relationship between job stress and other variables