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THE EFFECT OF MENTAL STRESS ON EMPLOYEES' JOB PERFORMANCE (CASE STUDY OF SOCIAL SECURITY ORGANIZATION OF KHUZESTAN)

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the effect of mental stress on employees' job performance in social security organization of Khuzestan and define the factors of mental stress on job performance and also to examine the status of job performance in this organization. The study sample consisted of male and female employees of the social security organization of Khuzestan which 200 of them were selected as sample members. For data collection, mental stress- job pressure measurement questionnaire and evaluation of the efficiency of individual's questionnaire were used. By using the Cronbach's alpha and assistance of spss software, reliability coefficient was calculated which based on conducted calculations, the reliability coefficient of questionnaire related to job stress measurement, $\alpha = 0.856$ and the reliability coefficient of performance efficiency measurement questionnaire $\alpha = 0.95$. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to analyze the hypothesis and the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ was considered to test the hypothesis. The findings showed that mental stress on the individual level influences performance efficiency and there is a significant positive relation between individual mental stress and efficiency. No significant relation has been observed between organizational and extra- organizational mental stress and performance efficiency in this organization.

Keywords: *Mental Stress, Job Stress and Employees' Efficiency*

INTRODUCTION

In everyday life of people, following major trends such as continuous change, more varied of employees compound, more teamwork, less face to face communication (more electronic interaction), global economy with greater cross-cultural exchange are factors that have made conflict inevitable (Robert, 2004).

Work is the most important concern for the lives of people who have a significant impact on his lives. Career life is one of the most important parts of our daily life which leads to high levels of stress. Due to the competitive nature of workplace, many people spend their time on the job for business purposes which leads to ignoring stressor that affects their work and life (Ahsan *et al.*, 2009).

Every organization to achieve optimal performance and effective performance and productivity, seek ways to create a favorable environment for staff to arrive a degree of their ability to be more effective on their job. In fact, job performance as overall value expected by organization is defined by separated pieces of behavior that a person can do during a certain period of time (Matavidlo, 2003).

Spector states people can do their jobs well as benefit from necessary ability and motivation for proper functioning (Spector, 2009). Motivation is an individual characteristic, but it can also arise from individual (e.g., personality) and also due to environmental conditions.

Mental stress and its impact on employees at work have been studied in recent years. People do not live only in workplace, but what will affect employees in workplace is also effective at home. Some employees dissemble mental stress for failure to perform duties properly. Many others suffer great mental stress and there is other employees would create pressure for them for doing job properly. The goal of psychological pressure management is helping staffs to understand commensurate stress level with their ability to do the job properly and keep it up to changing level.

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Psychological pressure management is control psychological pressure in order to provide a quiet environment for staff to perform administrative duties. Psychological pressure has the most important effect on individual's performance, thus, when stress exceeds a certain limit, it reduces performance. The best performance will be followed by moderate amount of pressure and if its amount is less or more than one range, performance will be low. If stress continues for a long time, gradually people will get tired and continuation of this situation can reduce individual's emotional and physical energy and weakened his ability. Since, a person's ability is one of the essential elements in increasing productivity, so application of people will fall in the organization. So, topic of this research is recognizing problems caused by occurrence of stress and its impact on job performance of Social Security Administration of Khuzestan.

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Psychological Pressure (Job Stress)

Psychological pressure is: an adaptive response that is formed under influence of individual characteristics or psychological processes i.e. that is result of an act, condition, or external event and impose special psychological or physical demands on human. "If we reduce this definition into three major aspects of psychological pressure, it won't be difficult as is seemed: Environmental applications which are "said factors causing pressure and they cause adaptive response caused by individual differences (Rezaeian, 2012).

Stress or pressure is physiological and reactions that is created as conscious or semi-conscious, than a perceived threat or adverse circumstances that is beyond individual's moment deal. Also, stress in workplace is applied as a responding to imposed job demands (stressors) on person due to working and career environment (Chiang *et al.*, 2009).

Psychological Pressure at Individual Level

Some jobs cause more psychological pressure. Generally, we can say that following cases impose more psychological pressure on practitioner: 1) Making decision, 2) Continuous monitoring and tracking of tools and materials 3) Frequent information exchange with others 4) Poor working conditions 5) Doing no structure works 6) Hidden unemployment and 7) Workload out of power. Most people prefer a job that is fun and challenging enough for them. Expect individuals for work over power or not enough time to do the job will cause psychological pressure. On the other hand, not using individual's full capacity has same effect too. In other words, if people do not have sufficient activity to fill time or are not allowed to use all their skills and abilities, will suffering from psychological pressure.

Another important factor that needs to be managed at individual level is job security that cause increasing job satisfaction, organizational commitment and improve performance.

Today job security is declining every day due to integration and adjustment of human resources in organizations (Rezaeian, 2012).

Psychological Pressure of Group Level

Factors of psychological pressure in group level are raised due to group dynamics and management behavior. Managers can cause psychological pressure in employees in the following ways: 1) Exhibit maladaptive behaviors 2) Lack of support 3) Failing interest to employees 4) not enough guidance 5) Expect high productivity 6) Focus on staff's performance weaknesses and ignoring their performance strengths.

In collective job whatever coordination between groups is much less; more psychological pressure should be tolerance. Group member's conflicts with each other's are also responsible for psychological pressure. People are different in personality and whatever their personality differences is more, more psychological pressure predominate group members. Lack of suitability between individual's roles in group and their dignity out of it and lack of respect for individual's dignity in group will cause psychological pressure. Sexual harassment at group level is another factor for psychological pressure. Studies show that sexual harassment has a negative effect on work, supervision and job satisfaction and increase uncertainty, conflict and eventually lead to psychological pressure at work (Rezaeian, 2012).

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Psychological Pressure of Organizational Level

Technology is another factor of psychological pressure at organizational level. Technology depends on how much attention and patience is needed, enter psychological pressure on those who are deal with it.

Also, very hot or cold environments, painstaking works, hazardous materials and constantly travels around the world that cause different physical demands on individuals cause unique risks. Loss of body water, very hot climates issue, chilling, cold climates issue, painstaking work of steel worker and risks associated with transfer of weapons, each have different physical demands. Unique physical demands, often linked to a particular profession, such as military pilots in flying powered aircraft lose consciousness due to pressure of attraction or senior managers develop psychological pressure because of foreign trips demand for work and insomnia or delays of airplane. Paperwork also has its own health risks. Busy office such as buying and selling center enter psychological pressure.

Another factor is inadequate organizational pressure. A job that is not divided good or many strict rules and regulations face employees with high psychological pressure. Psychological pressure amount, the various stages of life cycle of organization are different. Formation and demise of most organizations follow psychological pressure for employees.

Management style can also be a source of psychological pressure.

In a hierarchical system, if behavior or style of manager is accommodating with staff's taste, less pressure exerted on them, but if staff's expectations is compatible with style of manager, employees must endure mental stress than incompatibility.

This relationship is true in style or type of behavior of high-level executives with lower level managers.

Finally, design of office and work environment is effective factors at organizational level. Research indicates that poor light, loud noises, bad sorting of administrative requirements, movable walls or dirty environment are causing psychological pressure (Rezaiean, 2012).

Psychological Pressure at Extra-Organization Level

Factors of extra-organization psychological pressure are created by factors outside of organization; i.e. it will be related to family and the community which one lives in it. For example, inability to resolve family issues, poor economic conditions, lack of exercise, lack of possibility to travel from time to time, not traveling with family members and friends can cause psychological pressure. In general conflict caused by an imbalance between career and family life are causing psychological pressure. Organizations can create balance between work and family life by providing a flexible work schedule and varied benefits of working. Individual's economic and social prestige is another extra-organization factor. People with combined reputation are as follow: 1) economic credibility is measured by income, 2) Social validation that is analyzed by individual's education and 3) work connection that is given according to type of business. Nevertheless, these factors will be more important in the future.

Each person works about forty hours a week, experiences which he gets at other times of a week i.e. 128 hours non-business time or problems that he are faced with, will affect on his work (Rezaiean, 2012).

Reasons and Effects of Job Stress on Employee's Performance in Organizations

Salehipour and Yavarsad (2011) in their research entitled "determine occupational stressors depending on its preference and relationship to management's performance in Water and Power Authority Company" concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between job stress and declining managers also, there is a relation between job stress and reduce efficiency due to management's dissatisfaction of job.

Manoori (2011); Checking status of workplace stress of Shahid Tondgooyan petrochemical workers and its relationship with their job performance. Findings show that there is a negative and significant relationship between study's cases.

Amiri (2002) by studying occupational stressors in staffs of Water and Power Authority Company of Khuzestan concludes that among listed items in first factor that has been named managing-organizations, data of regulated system, personalization practice managers, discrimination and inequality in organization, factionalism and sociality and non-use of expertise of its own respectively, have had the greatest contribution to cause mental stress.

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Also, among factors that have been named to personal-social heavy work and limit time, anxiety and stress caused by inability to cover the cost of living, doing several jobs to subsistence and fatigue caused by work respectively were assigned the most effect on creating mental stress on subjects.

Mohtasham (2005) in his study concluded that, there is a significant relationship between occupational stress and its relationship with staff's job performance of Power Distribution Company of Khuzestan.

Satavat (2009) by check understanding problems of job stress and mental health threats of staffs of National Oil Products Distribution Company of Ahwaz concludes that there is a significant relationship between job stress and mental health threats of staffs.

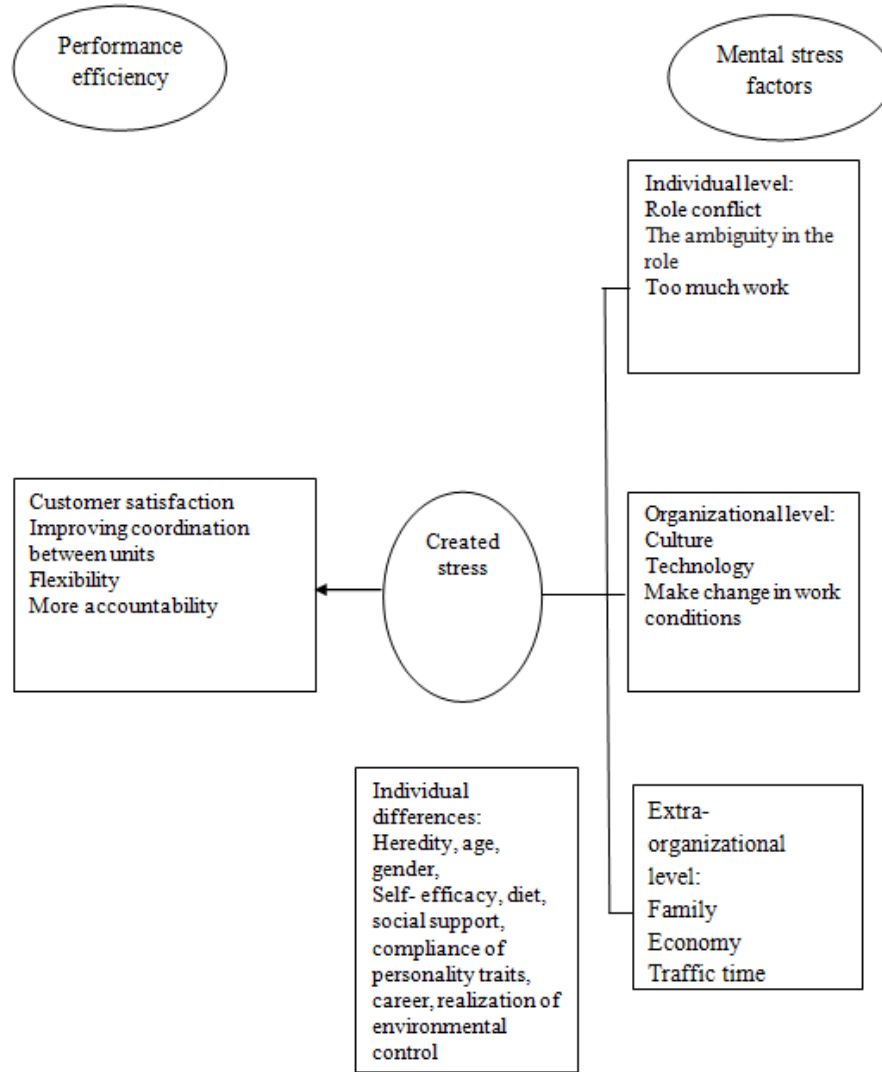


Figure 1: Conceptual model of research

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between the job stress of individual factors and the efficiency level of employees' performance of Khuzestan social security organization.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between the stress organizational factors and the efficiency level of employee's performance of Khuzestan social security organization.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between the stress extra-organizational factors and the efficiency level of employees performance of Khuzestan Social Security organization.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research in terms of purpose is considered as applied-researches and based on data gathering method, this study is regarded as survey-descriptive method by using of field researches branch. The statistical population of this research is the entire set of male and female employees of Khuzestan social security organization that have Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Bachelor, and Master degrees and are working in the various branches of Khuzestan social security organization in the year of 2014.

For choosing a sample which is the representative of the studied population, 200 people were selected as the sample members among 32 branch of Khuzestan social security organization in the simple random method, and random sampling formula has been used. For data collection, mental stress- job pressure measurement questionnaire and evaluation of the efficiency of individuals' questionnaire were used. The questionnaire reliability coefficient was calculated by using of spss software based on Cronbach's alpha method, that in terms of the conducted calculations ,the questionnaire reliability coefficient related to measurement of job stress ,equal to $\alpha = 0.856$ and the questionnaire reliability coefficient related to measurement of performance efficiency equal to $\alpha = 0.95$ has been determined.

In order to hypothesis analysis, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used and the significance level to the hypothesis test $\alpha = 0.05$ has been considered.

The Data Analysis

In order to assess the normality of the research data distribution was used of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

Table 1: Test normality of research data

Statistical index	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistic test	Significance level
Variable		
Stress in individual level	1.087	0.188
Stress in organizational level	1.075	0.198
Stress in extra- organizational level	1.095	0.182
Performance efficiency	1.078	0.195

By proof of normality, to examine the relationship between variables, we used of Pearson's parametric test.

The First Hypothesis

H₁: There is a significant relationship between individual factors of job stress and the efficiency level of employee's performance of Khuzestan social security organization.

H₀: There is no a significant relationship between individual factors of working stress and the efficiency level of employees performance of Khuzestan social security organization.

Table 2: Correlation coefficient between the job stress of individual level and employee's performance

Criterion variable	Forecast variable	Correlation coefficient (R)	Significance level (P)
Performance efficiency	Stress of individual level	0.149	0.036

According to the test results, we observe that the significance level is equal to 0.036 that is less than of test level value (0.05). Therefore, we conclude that this test is significant.

The Second Hypothesis

H₁: There is a significant relationship between stress organizational factors and the efficiency level of employees performance of Khuzestan social security organization.

H₀: There is no a significant relationship between stress organizational factors and the efficiency level of employees performance of Khuzestan social security organization.

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Table 3: Correlation coefficient between the stress organizational level and employee's performance

Criterion variable	Forecast variable	Correlation coefficient (R)	Significance level (P)
Performance efficiency	Stress organizational level	0.065	0.358

According to the test results, we observe that the significance level is equal to 0.358 that it is greater than of test level value (0.05). Therefore, we conclude that this test is not significant. Then the null hypothesis test is confirmed.

The Third Hypothesis

H₁: There is a significant relationship between stress extra-organizational factors and the efficiency level of employee's performance of Khuzestan social security organization.

H₀: There is no a significant relationship between stress extra-organizational factors and the efficiency level of employees performance of Khuzestan social security organization.

Table 4: Correlation coefficient between the stress extra- organizational level and employee's performance

Criterion variable	Forecast variable	Correlation coefficient (R)	Significance level (P)
Performance efficiency	Stress extra- organizational level	0.098	0.198

According to the test results, we observe that the significance level is equal to 0.198 that it is greater than of test level value (0.05). Therefore, we conclude that this test is not significant. So the null hypothesis test is confirmed and can be concluded that extra-organizational stress has no significant impact on the performance efficiency of employees of Khuzestan social security organization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The First Hypothesis

Based on the conducted analysis in the previous chapter, we conclude that there is a significant relationship between the individual factors of job stress and the efficiency level of employee's performance of Khuzestan social security organization. In other words, the hypothesis of H₁ is accepted and H₀ is rejected. The accepted hypothesis of H₁, means that the factors such as the individual stress (i.e. high workload and equitability of tasks, lack of independence in relation to job tasks, job objectives and vague and unclear work objectives, pressures due to the finished deadline for doing things) have been impact on the efficiency level of employees performance of Khuzestan social security organization.

The Second Hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between the stress organizational factors and the efficiency level of employee's performance of Khuzestan social security organization. So the hypothesis of H₁ is rejected and H₀ is accepted. Rejection of the hypothesis H₁ means that the stress organizational factors such as culture, technology and changes in working conditions has not been observed impact on the efficiency level of employees performance of Khuzestan social security organization.

The Third Hypothesis

The research based on existence of a significant relationship between the stress organizational factors and the efficiency level of employee's performance of Khuzestan social security organization is rejected and the hypothesis of H₀ based on non-existence of a significant relationship between the stress organizational factors and the efficiency level of employee's performance of Khuzestan social security organization is accepted. Rejection of the hypothesis of H₁ means that factors such as family, economy and time of traffic have impact on the efficiency level of employee's performance of Khuzestan social security organization. The obtained result of this research is consistent with the research results of Salehipoor and Bavarsad (2011), entitled of the job stressor determinant in terms of priority and its relationship with the managers

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performance in Khuzestan Water and Power Company, Salehipoor and Bavarsad reached to this conclusion that there is a positive significant relationship between job stress and reduce of the managers efficiency which are similar to the results of this research and also the research result is consistent with Mohtasham research findings (2005).

Satvat (2009), in a study the problems recognition caused by job tensions and threat of mental health workers of the national Pharmaceutical Products of Ahvaz oil region, have been achieved to similar result that there is a significant relationship between the job tensions and threat of mental health of the employees that this issue is consistent with the research result.

Monavari (2011) in a research, entitled "The study of stress status of work environment of Tondgouyan petrochemical employees and its relationship with their job performance, has been achieved to this result that there is a negative relationship between the job stress and the managers efficiency reduction that in this research we conclude that there is a positive relationship between the individual stress and the efficiency performance which the result of these two research is in contrast with each other.

The obtained result with the conducted researches results also have investigated outside of the country and it was observed that the results of this research with research of Ted *et al.*, (2009) that have paid to investigation of role of job stressful and job performance of 2010 people of the retailers and the role identification of America competition environment, have been consistent, the result of this research showed that job stressful affects on employees attitude and their performance and achieved similar result is in line with of the first hypothesis of this research. Aoki *et al.*, (2010) have paid to study job stress among nurses in public hospitals in Thailand. The results indicate that job stress is significantly related to the amount of workload, work communications and social support that it is in line with the result of this research based on the effect of high workload on job stress. Kazemi (2008) in a research entitled work environment stress and its effect on job performance in a organization, has examined the issue of the environment stress in Pakistan country. The study results determine that there is a negative relationship between work environment stress and the job performance that the result of this research is in line with the obtained result of the first hypothesis in terms of the impact stress on efficiency, but in this respect this research indicates of a existence positive relationship between the stress and efficiency, which is in contrast with the research result of Kazemi based on existence of negative relationship between the stress and efficiency. The high workload and uniformity and repetitive tasks, were determined as the major weakness among individual stress factors. The high workload is considered as the main factor of job stress, causes of time pressure and extra work. The time management skills help to the employees for the effective use of their working time. The time management enables person to prioritize their work activities and leisure time and to minimize stress caused by the high workload. The work expectation of extra ability of individual or not giving enough time for doing of work will lead to stress. On the other hand not to use of all of these people capacity also has such impact; In other words whenever the people have no enough activities to fill their working time or not be allowed to use all of their skills and abilities, are involved of stress. Among the stress factors at the individual level, lack of independence is determined as one of the organization weakness. This is while that people (Staff) have different style and attitude and are doing their works with different ways, because any difference is not bad. Who has said that only management and managers can be determined the right methods to reach the right results, while the other employees may have better ways. If employees of the other generation (non-generation with the managers) or belong to other cultures, may have the different view towards of the issues. Only one thing which is importance is that objectives and results that have been defined and determined, to be realize. Therefore it is in favor of the organization management which put their mind and thought on the ideas, and thoughts and new methods and not be depriving it from the innovative ideas and employee's different viewpoint. When we give the opportunity and authority to employees, however whatever they have deserve of this opportunity and authority, thus they show better performances and more desirable behaviors from itself. The stress derived from the finished deadline or due date for doing things have known as a important weakness among the stress the factors at the individual level. The right time management to enter the center of life planning and stress management.

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Regardless of this point that we waste how much time, can not implement the time management. We can guide it with regard to the available time amount. Lack of organizing, uncertain objectives, long (Inordinate) phones of personnel, complicate and uncertain administrative process, not having of certain procedures in works, the weak planning, to delay of affairs, lack of personnel training, lack of concentration, long (Inordinate) electronic letters, long (Inordinate) working of the personnel with internet and etc, are considered as all of the waste time factors in the organizations. All of these factors stole the time of us and people do not understand often the relationship of above cases with lack having of time. Working with such conditions certainly will provide stress field in work environment. Ambiguity is another weakness role that is determined in the organization. The tasks description exactly not be approved in the organization and there is expectations for all of the employees that was not clear for the entire employee before, so such states are called " Ambiguity in the role". Sometimes a large number of roles that individual must be playing it, caused by stress. This view is consistent with Abolaalaei and Rezaeiyan views.

Proposals

1. With regard to this fact that the high workload, caused by stress of employees, it is proposed their tasks should be classified and for obligated hours of employees must be determined the specific volume in order to reduce their stress, or can by applying go the greater forces are determined the people workload as the same as their obligated hours and it also reduced it through the stress.
2. With regard to this fact that conflict in the role of employees caused by the stress among them, it is proposed that with correct planning, duties are entrusted to each person, must to be become parallel, in order to can be reduced their stress, because conflict in duties which is the responsibility of an individual, lead to the confusion and the decrease in individual performance.
3. It is proposed that the relations between the employees and the managers should be higher and be aware the role of each other, so that through this the employees to be more sensitive towards of doing of their tasks and as well as managers have to be aware of employees performance, so that through this can provide strategies for remove of the defects that are present. (More vicinity to the employees and managing in more intimate and more official environment).
4. It is proposed that in the organization have asked of the employees and managers and through this the factors that lead to the stress among employees, to be identified and even to be remove it, so that through this to promote the employees efficiency.
5. The aim of an organization should be based on motivation and from the viewpoint of the employees that are following its realization, must be meaningful and valuable. The employees' participation in targeting, in terms of their viewpoint, to be worth their goal. Also it can be by establishing the provoke rewards and sharing of the employees in value added due to achieve to goals, try to strengthen and maintain the motivation, energy and necessary eagerness for attempt to realize of the objectives in them. The employees should not imagine that the realization or non- realization of the objectives, will not create any difference in their fate, because in this case they are involving of indifference.
6. Removing of the obstacles from the path of personnel, opening of closed doors and provide the necessary factors and conditions and enough for employees ideal performance are considered as the most important duties of managers. The managers have authority and more facilities (Compared with employees) and should be with facilities allocation and providing resources, supports of the appropriate performance and ideal of employees.
7. Having more devolution, change management style of the magisterial management to cooperative management, providing an opportunity for innovation of the employees, respect to the employee's ideas.
8. Showing more important to respect of the personality and employees social needs and deal with them in terms of the status of a coach or teacher.
9. The weak relationship with colleagues in the workplace caused by the stress. People should be develop their working relationships, to analysis them and have specified the field of problematic and try to solve these problems.

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10. In some of the working cultures, the existence of some stress is inevitable. Identifying of illegal stress is very important in the workplace. Ignoring of stress will cause more difficult and problematic to deal with long term effects. Knowing of cultures would be able to help people to some extent have better performance.

11. Cope with daily life: Making a fun family life and create of the near friendship may be also suitable way for release of stress.

12. Except of the death and divorce, there are other events in life that sometimes create stress, events such as change of residence and retirement are including of the events that people with treatment of life events can overcome of these problems and to some extent to escape from stress. During the period of stress management, the sensitive issue is that we must have control what can do it, to work and learn how to live with other things that we are not able to control it. These proposals are compliance with Rezaeian and Aboalalaei views in the field of the stress management.

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