

# Stress in a Shoe Store in Brazil

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## Abstract

The objective of this paper is to bring information about stress at work, in order to generate discussions about the subject to promote clarifications that are useful in the administration of these problems within the organizations. For that, a bibliographical review was carried out to verify the approach of different authors and a data collection was performed. The questionnaire was composed of ten questions and distributed to ten company employees. Nowadays, there are a fast pace of work in companies, besides increasingly pressures for results and reaching goals, which require long hours of dedication and deprivation of social and family life. All these factors affect employee's physical and mental health. In this way, problems such as stress, depression and anxiety arise, psychological factors that influence the development of other diseases.

**Keywords: Work. Stress. Quality of life at work.**

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## 1 – INTRODUCTION

We are living an accelerated process of change that reaches every area of human activity. Our society has undergone changes in its living standards through modernization and technological development, with consequences on psychological and social aspects. With the hustle and bustle of modern life, some situations have arisen that human beings cannot handle, one of them is stress, which allied to changes in eating habits, physical inactivity and the new professional market landscape have contributed to make people more nervous. The stress response is not harmful. Rather, it is an adaptive reaction that has allowed us to survive over time. However, excessive stress can affect the individual in many spheres, be responsible for many illnesses and contribute to the development of diseases such as depression, hypertension, cholesterol increase, among others. Emotional distress in work relationships is a very important factor in determining stress-related disorders, such as depressions, pathological anxieties, panic, phobias, psychosomatic diseases. People with this type of occupational stress are those who do not respond to work demands and are usually depressed.

Employees of a company are significantly impacted by the social, economic and technological changes that society currently faces, giving new directions and meaning to the work. The professional of the modern century, participates in a scenario consisting of several factors, such as high competitiveness, the rise of outsourced labor and fierce competition, causing physiological and cognitive wear. Workers whose activities depend on a high degree of accountability, decision-making, and other aspects that demand satisfactory results are increasingly renouncing the leisure and rest that body and mind need to reestablish themselves.

According to a survey by Isma-BR, 70% of Brazilians suffer from stress at work. This number does not differ much from the world level, the percentage is identical in England. In the United States, it rises to 72%. The expert points out the qualification of stress, characterized by four phases: initial, resistance (when the first symptoms persist), chronic, and burnout (the most advanced level). Stress is a reaction of the body that occurs when it has to deal with situations that require a lot of emotional effort to overcome. The longer the situation lasts or the more severe it is, the more stressed the person can get, but there are ways to learn to deal with stress so that even at the worst of times, the body does not collapse.

“Stress arises from any circumstances that threaten or are perceived as threatening one's well-being and undermine one's coping ability. The threat can affect physical safety, self-esteem, tranquility or aspects that people value or wish to maintain.” Chiavenato (2005, p.390).

Due to the relevance of the theme, this article aims to present the factors related to occupational stress, highlighting the main symptoms, based on research done at a shoe store, located in the city of Três Rios (Rio de Janeiro).

## 2 – THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTALS

Stress is a common word in many people's vocabulary. Who never said he was stressed about something? The word brings us to a nuisance, something negative, but stress is simply the way our body reacts to different situations. Regardless of whether you are a calm or nervous person, you produce stress hormones every day. For the authors Limongi-França and Rodrigues (1997), stress can be more easily understood:

[...] It can be an important and useful resource for a person to cope with the different life situations he faces in his daily life. The stress response arises, or rather is activated by the body, with the aim of mobilizing resources that enable the person to face situations - the most varied - that are perceived as difficult and that require effort from them. Undoubtedly, this ability has been of fundamental importance to the human species, helping it to survive and develop alternatives on how to cope with the multiple threat situations - concrete or symbolic - that it may encounter in its existence (LIMONGI-FRANÇA; RODRIGUES, 1997, p. 19)

According to the definition of Selye (1936), "stress is a reaction of the organism that occurs in situations that require adaptations beyond its limits". We can see a very large presence of this definition today. In Brazil, for example, many people report experiencing stressful situations daily, and most of them at work, where they spend most of their time.

All people are subject to something that bothers them, whether in the professional, personal or social environment, we are surrounded by stressful situations. According to Dr. Gabriela Lotin Nuernberg, a psychiatrist at Moinhos de Vento Hospital (Brazil), there are several factors that can cause stress at work and in general, and sometimes, these factors are combined: "Working environment with a lot of competition, a lot of work combined in a short time to do it, a very long workday, little recognition, very repetitive and little rewarding tasks, perfectionism and problems with coworkers are some of the most common causes".

Occupational stress consists of a set of stress-related phenomena and symptoms in the workplace. Thus, it can be defined as a process in which the individual perceives work activities, tasks and demands as stressors, which, when exceeding their coping resources, provoke stress reactions (JEX, 2002; PASCOAL and TAMAYO, 2004). Therefore, stress is the imbalance between the work and the employee emotional, which may be caused by fear of failure, physical and emotional tiredness, lack of support from their superiors, highly competitive work environment, long working hours, among others. Therefore, it is important not only to pay attention to the environment as a whole, but also to each individual in the company.

Among the stress levels, Burnout Syndrome is considered the last level. According to the International Stress Management Association of every ten workers in the world, at least three suffer from the so-called Burnout syndrome. This stage, also known as exhaustion would be the third phase of stress and is the chronic and most aggravated state. There is complete physical and mental exhaustion, the person feels profound discomfort and there are sensations such as: severe headaches, severe sleep disorders, generalized muscle aches, memory loss, lack of self-esteem, feeling of incapacity, constant weakness and fatigue, lack of creativity and loss of productivity. The term Burnout, which means to burn completely, explains how intense the sensations are at this last level of stress. Law in Brazil recognizes Burnout as a Professional Exhaustion Syndrome and considers it a work-related illness. The syndrome is understood as a feeling of being "finished". Burnout can cause heart problems since at this stage all the symptoms mentioned above are exacerbated. The University College London study with 200,000 people in the UK showed that work-related stress was associated with a 23% higher risk of heart attacks and coronary heart disease deaths.

According to the famous Brazilian physician Dráuzio Varella, stress must be combated with the constant practice of physical activities. Daily exercise for at least thirty minutes helps the body produce "beta endorphins", releasing a sense of tranquility and well-being and protecting the person's physical health. People suffering from stress may have diseases such as panic syndrome, depression, hypertension, fatigue, sleep disorders, gastritis, heart disease, among others.

For companies, stress results in reduced employee productivity, missed opportunities, errors, project delays, workplace accidents, rising health care costs, mismanagement and increased employee turnover. The company may also suffer a significant loss of revenue if the consequences of stress culminate with loss of customers or significant impairment of employee health.

## 3 - METHODOLOGY

A qualitative study was performed, that is, a method of scientific investigation that focuses on the subjective character of the object analyzed, studying its particularities and individual experiences. Therefore, our method was the interview. That is a conversation between two or more people, the interviewer and the interviewee, where questions are asked by the interviewer in order to get the information needed from the interviewee. In addition, this research seeks to present a problem from the qualitative study. In this case, it consisted of eight questions for ten employees. Five salespeople, three clerks, a secretary, and a cashier. We also made use of theoretical references published in books, scientific articles and internet.

#### 4 – RESULTS

Consequences of Stress in life	Men	Women
Nervousness	20%	40%
Pains and Bad mood	10%	10%
Use of medicines	-	10%
Excessive tiredness	10%	10%

**Source: Authors' elaboration**

As seen in the table above, we can see how much nervousness affects women the most, because of the double shift, women work in the company and also work at home. The results obtained were: 1 employee (10%) is stressed for occupying various functions without being paid for it; 4 employees (40%) are stressed with impatient or difficult to deal with customers; 4 employees (40%) are stressed due to many company charges; 1 employee (10%) is stressed because of the accumulation of tasks.

During the interview, we got some reports from employees about how stress has hit them. Kelly, 40, said, "Lately I've been very stressed, nervous and out of patience with everything and everyone", Tainara, 23, says, "I use controlled drugs, sedatives and so on ...". Marcos, 29, said, "Sometimes I can't separate and I end up taking problems home."

Therefore, we get comments on how they deal with this problem. Italo, 30, commented, "I try to be agile and understand that the ignorance of others cannot affect my mental health", and Ariana said "I go to the gym, go out and listen to music to relax."

#### 5 - DISCUSSION

The results found in this article demonstrate that work, besides allowing growth, transformation, and recognition, also causes problems of dissatisfaction and irritation. At work, the "occupational personalities" are also formed: psychologist face, bureaucrat manner, worker profile, telephone operator habits.

Often, just by observing, we realize a person's type of activity. Occupations shape your way of being and presenting yourself. Interviewee 1, 41 years old, performs the function of administrative assistant, and points out that one of the main factors that causes her stress is the responsibility, according to her, after working hours she can't disconnect from her obligations in the company. The 23 years old, interviewee 7, complains of performing various functions and not being paid for it, highlights the relationship with ignorant clients that are difficult to deal with, and has days that she resorts to prescription drugs; to relieve stress, in his spare time, seeks to read books to relax. The 29 years old, interviewee 8, comments on the flexibility of the workday to resolve personal matters, but regrets the accumulation of tasks throughout the day, and there are days that end up taking work home.

A large number of researches agree that the conflict between corporate goals and structure, with individual needs for autonomy, achievement and identity, are important stressors. There is an opposition between the realization of the worker's project and the organization of work, and this imposes a different reality. It can be said that the organization of work is the imposition of the will of the "other", of the division of labor, the content of tasks (DEJOURS, 1994).

The professor Peter K. Spink states:

What is inhumane about many companies is their own working model, a model that systematically restricts people's ability. Most likely, these real capacities are linked to intellectual and emotional potentialities, which are constantly denied, although in the name of productivity, have little to do with it.

(PETER K. SPINK 1992, P.30)

#### 6 – CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that stress is something very present in today's society. Faced with the technological advances and the rush of everyday life, many people try to keep up with this new rhythm of life. Occupational stress is what most impacts Brazilians, about 70% of the population.

This research shows that the "nervousness" in the workplace affects mostly women. They also have a harder time at the end of the day, taking a lot of trouble home. Men have problems such as moodiness, tiredness and "nervousness".

The studied organization should make some changes. A greater recognition of the workers is needed, since there is no reward for well done services. Many workers complained about the excessive number of responsibilities thus the company should reduce each employee's tasks. This increases self-esteem and would probably positively influence productivity.

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