



Research Paper

Examining the Relationship between Job Stress and Career Aspirations with the Mediating Role of Management Styles among Employees of the Department of Education



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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between job stress and career aspirations with the mediating role of management styles among employees of the Department of Education in Bojnurd City. Based on the research topic and objectives, this study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-survey in nature, employing a correlational research design. The statistical population consisted of all employees of the General Department of Education in Bojnurd City, with a total number of 321 individuals. According to Morgan's table, a sample size of 175 participants was estimated. The participants were selected using stratified random sampling based on gender. To measure job stress, the Osipow and Spokane (1987) Job Stress Questionnaire was used; career aspirations were assessed using the questionnaire developed by Bigliardi et al. (2005); and management styles were measured using Dehghani (2004) questionnaire based on a Likert scale. The content validity of the questionnaires was examined, and the reliability of the instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The obtained Cronbach's alpha values for job stress (0.792), career aspirations (0.795), and management styles (0.698) indicated that the research instruments had acceptable reliability. The data collected through these questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS Version 23 and SmartPLS 2 software through structural equation modeling, confirmatory factor analysis, and the Mann-Whitney U test. The findings indicated that there was a significant relationship between job stress and career aspirations, and management styles were able to play a mediating role in this relationship. Furthermore, the results showed that autocratic, benevolent, and participative management styles could mediate the relationship between job stress and career aspirations.

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Introduction

Nowadays, occupation and career choice are considered among the most important and decisive aspects of individuals' lives (*Heidari et al., 2023*). Employees in organizations are regarded as one of the most valuable assets of an organization, and due to their role in fostering innovation and creativity, they can assist organizations in competitive environments. Therefore, special attention should be paid to individuals' characteristics and attributes (*Hemmati Noedoust Gilani et al., 2025*). Many individuals choose an occupation but abandon it after a while due to job dissatisfaction, lack of success, or loss of interest. Therefore, individuals need an optimal career strategy and career planning to make appropriate occupational choices (*Phillips & Gully, 2015*). In career planning, the central element of career choice is the collection of relevant information about the occupation (*Cho & Kim, 2016*). Rational career choice depends on a careful examination of related information and individuals' self-assessment. Such information includes awareness of career aspirations, interests, motivations, expectations, attitudes, and learning experiences (*Janger & Nowotny, 2016*). Career aspiration is an important variable in understanding individuals' self-concept, and an individual's professional life is based on the aspirations they hold regarding their career (*Siadat et al., 2010*). Understanding aspirations is important because they are key drivers in the career choice process (*Irajirad & Malakzadeh nasrabadi, 2017*). Career aspirations are considered one of the main

factors influencing individuals' career choices and constitute an important component of professional development theories (*Rojewski, 1999*). Career aspirations refer to individuals' orientation toward their future work life and serve as a major factor shaping their movement and planning of social life (*Irajirad & Malakzadeh nasrabadi, 2017*). Human aspirations represent a symbol of individuals' personality structure, and life itself can be viewed as a collection of personal goals and aspirations. One way of understanding individuals, which has also received attention from psychologists, is identifying their hopes and aspirations. Individuals' aspirations may have positive and constructive or negative and destructive consequences for both themselves and society. Identifying teachers' career aspirations is valuable and important because it enables them to determine more appropriate career paths. Furthermore, when teachers become aware of their career aspirations, they can better support students' growth and development. Career aspirations are based on the assumption that congruence between individuals' occupational orientations and their work environment leads to job satisfaction, increased commitment, and enhanced performance, whereas incompatibility results in dissatisfaction and career change (*Suutari & Taka, 2004*). Career aspiration refers to an individual's conscious effort to gain awareness of their skills, orientations, values, opportunities, limitations, choices, and achievements (*Wong, 2007, p. 125*). It also involves identifying career-related goals and developing a plan to achieve those goals

(*Valcour & Ladge, 2008, p. 300*). These aspirations represent the stages and pathway that develop over time and reflect individuals' needs, motivations, and desires regarding work and activities that, according to societal beliefs, lead to financial and status-related rewards for employees (*Schein, 1996, p. 80*).

According to *Mignonac and Herrbach (2003)*, career aspirations are specific patterns of talents, capacities, motivations, attitudes, and values perceived by individuals that guide and consolidate their developmental pathways after years of experience and feedback from the real world (*Mignonac & Herrbach, 2003*). *Klapwijk and Rommes (2009)* stated that career aspirations indicate that individuals do not intend to limit themselves to a specific field (*Klapwijk & Rommes, 2009*). According to *Schein (1996)*, most individuals develop a strong self-concept regarding their career identity, which directs their aspirational behaviors toward their occupation and work-related tasks. This self-concept motivates individuals and causes them to remain committed once they have selected a career path. Furthermore, Schein considered career aspirations as one of the fundamental components of professional life and argued that this component shapes individuals' career choices. An individual's professional life is, in fact, a manifestation of their career aspirations, which includes their perceived talents and abilities, fundamental values, and, more importantly, an evolved sense of motivation and needs that individuals seek to satisfy throughout their career journey (*Schein, 1996*). *Rahimnia et al. (2016)* demonstrated in their study that organizations

should pay sufficient attention to employees' skills and motivations so that employees with career aspirations related to technical and functional competence are more inclined to remain in technical and specialized positions and occupations within the organization. Similarly, *Rezvanian and Samiee (2016)* concluded that occupational success is influenced by career aspirations and personality, and that attention should be paid to these factors in order to enhance career success. Individuals' occupations are among the major sources of stress in their lives. For every individual, occupation serves as a factor shaping social identity, a source for meeting life needs, and a fundamental component of personal identity; therefore, it is considered one of the important sources of stress. Stress is more prevalent in occupations that involve interpersonal interactions (*Rahimnia et al., 2016*). Nowadays, job stress has become a common and costly issue in work environments, which can affect individuals' career aspirations and career pathways.

Human resources are considered the primary, largest, and most valuable capital of an organization, society, and country. Therefore, countries and organizations have long invested in this valuable resource and attempted to develop and enhance its potential. Societies achieve progress, advancement, and excellence when they are able to cultivate these human resources and unleash their hidden talents. Today's employees think more about their work life than in the past and are more concerned about it. They seek secure, long-term, and satisfying jobs and are willing to experience growth and

development in their careers. On the other hand, employees often begin their careers with specific hopes and expectations of reaching the highest levels within an organization, and most of them place importance on personal advancement, attaining power, acquiring higher responsibilities, and receiving rewards. Undoubtedly, stress exists in the lives of all individuals who are employed and imposes psychological pressure on them in various ways. Occupational changes, such as organizational changes, salary and wage modifications, career promotions, organizational management, workforce reduction or expansion, and social transformations, are among the issues that exert pressure on individuals and cause disturbance, concern, distress, and anxiety. Consequently, when excessive job stress is imposed on individuals, it inevitably affects their career paths and career aspirations, which in turn can negatively influence both their performance within the organization and their family quality of life (*D'Ettorre & Greco, 2015*). Since the 1970s, attention to occupation has constituted a substantial part of individuals' lives. Although employment can be an exciting challenge for individuals, the same occupation may also serve as a major source of stress in their lives (*Lambert et al., 2007*). Stress is an unavoidable characteristic of work and personal life. Managers, employees, and organizational clients are affected by psychological pressures and experience particular psychological states, leading them to engage in behaviors and actions that are directly reflected in organizational performance.

Some experts believe that, in addition to organizational factors, individual factors such as age, work experience, gender, marital status, and educational level also play a role in the emergence of stress among individuals (*Poorkareemee, 2010*).

According to some scholars, the causes of stress can be divided into two major categories: intra-organizational and extra-organizational factors. Extra-organizational stressors include social changes, technological developments, family issues, relocation, economic conditions, race and social class, and living environment conditions. The identification of stress sources and stress-inducing factors depends on the perspective through which scholars examine human beings. Followers of organizational behavior view individuals within organizations; therefore, they classify stress sources into internal and external organizational factors. Others consider individuals within the broader social context and present classifications of stress sources primarily from a sociological perspective (*Masoomali & Mehrabi, 2013*). Job stress can be regarded as the accumulation of stress-inducing factors and work-related conditions that most individuals agree are stressful. Moreover, job stress can be defined as the interaction between work conditions and employees' individual characteristics, in such a way that workplace demands exceed an individual's ability to cope with them. In some cases, assigning individuals to tasks that are inconsistent with their abilities and knowledge, or changes in their work activities, can lead to the development of

stress. One factor that can reduce such stress in the workplace is management styles. Selecting an appropriate management style is one of the most important elements of managerial success and a determinant of the climate, culture, and strategies governing educational organizations. A manager's style can provide conditions for employees' maturity and development. In fact, by adopting an appropriate style, managers can encourage employees to accept greater and more challenging responsibilities. Management knowledge and its various styles are among the most important factors determining efficiency, effectiveness, and ultimately productivity in organizations and institutions. Undoubtedly, organizational success depends on the effective utilization of human resources (*Zamani et al., 2018*). Although all managers are responsible for leading and guiding groups to achieve specific goals, they may perform this process through different approaches, each of which is categorized as a particular management style (*Fiqhi Farahmand, 2015*). Management is, in fact, the process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling the activities of organizational members and utilizing all available resources to achieve predetermined organizational goals. Management style refers to the way through which managers influence their followers. The term manager refers to an individual who administers and coordinates a group in order to achieve a common goal. Some scholars define management by referring to managerial functions, including planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling (*Kunter et al., 2012*). Therefore, managers can reduce

employees' job stress through the styles they adopt and influence their career paths and career aspirations. Numerous studies have examined the effects of management styles on job stress. *Shafizadeh et al. (2017)* concluded that there was a relationship between all dimensions of management style and job stress, and that an increase in autocratic management style led to higher job stress. Furthermore, an increase in participative management style reduced job stress. *Ghare and Hesami (2016)* also found that there was a significant negative relationship between people-oriented leadership style and job stress, whereas task-oriented leadership style had a significant positive relationship with job stress. To achieve sustainable development, the existence of experienced and efficient human capital is essential. The development of such human capital requires several actions: first, the organization must take responsibility for this process; second, experienced and competent individuals should undertake the fundamental roles and missions of organizations; and third, adequate financial resources should be allocated to the relevant organizations. Moreover, in order for an organization to move effectively toward its predetermined goals, it should not only meet individuals' physiological and psychological needs but also foster their motivation for progress and advancement (*Fathi et al., 2014*). Alongside this issue, organizations today are experiencing numerous rapid and unpredictable environmental changes. Increasing global competition, the development and expansion of information technology, and changes in the demographic characteristics of the workforce are at the

center of these transformations. Under such circumstances, managers have limited opportunities to directly control employees and must devote most of their time and energy to identifying the internal and external environments of the organization while delegating routine tasks to employees. Therefore, the most important competitive advantage of organizations is committed, motivated, and conscientious employees (Mooghali et al., 2009). Mayor (2001) believes that qualified and skilled human resources are valuable factors and an endless source of capital for organizational growth and development. One of the organizational challenges regarding individuals' careers is the lack of adequate insight into the capabilities and incentives that make potential success in career domains possible. In fact, individuals often do not have an appropriate understanding of their own career aspirations. Managers' neglect of employees' career aspirations leads to forced work within organizations; that is, managers assign individuals to tasks without considering their skills, interests, and motivations. This situation creates a gap between individual and organizational goals and may cause employees to lose interest in their occupations (Horne, 2010).

This issue is particularly important for organizations such as education systems, which are responsible for the vital mission of educating and nurturing children and adolescents in society. In this regard, one of the variables that should be considered is employees' career aspirations. Research in this area is valuable because, first, it helps

identify individuals' interests, tendencies, and personal and occupational capabilities; second, it provides individuals with comprehensive knowledge and information about the organization; and third, it creates conditions in which individuals' activities can be aligned with available career opportunities. Furthermore, it enables individuals to better understand their actual circumstances and career paths and ultimately make necessary efforts toward educational planning, further learning, personal changes, and self-development in order to achieve their goals. In any case, the growth and development of this construct require an understanding of how knowledge, experience, skills, and individual competencies such as creativity, innovation, initiative, risk-taking, and similar capabilities can be enhanced. In this context, one of the primary sources of concern is stress-related issues in career development. Job stress can influence what individuals seek in life, affect their career choices and reactions to occupational experiences, and play a role in decisions to move from one occupation to another. Management can influence employees' job stress in the workplace through its approaches and management styles. Management styles are highly important in all areas of social activities, particularly in educational systems, because they contribute to the development of work conscience. Work conscience refers to a form of internal satisfaction and practical commitment toward assigned responsibilities, based on which employees perform their duties in the best possible manner without requiring any external monitoring system. Today, effective management is considered

one of the indicators of development in the global system. One of the factors contributing to increased effectiveness is the management styles adopted by organizational managers, which represent a distinguishing feature between successful and unsuccessful organizations (*Bass & Riggio, 2006*). Therefore, considering the aforementioned issues, the present study seeks to answer the following question: Is there a relationship between job stress and career aspirations with the mediating role of management styles among employees of the Department of Education in Bojnourd City?

Method

Based on the subject matter and objectives of the study, this research is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-survey in nature, employing a correlational research design. The information related to the theoretical foundations was collected through field research, documentary and library methods, internet resources, and questionnaires. The statistical population of this study consisted of all employees of the General Department of Education in Bojnourd City, with a total number of 321 individuals. According to the Krejcie and Morgan sampling table, the sample size was estimated at 175 participants. The participants were selected using stratified random sampling based on gender. The data collection instruments used in this study were the following questionnaires:

To assess job stress, the *Osipow and Spokane (1987)* Job Stress Questionnaire was used. This questionnaire consists of 60 items and six dimensions, including role overload,

role insufficiency, role ambiguity, role boundary, responsibility, and physical environment. The items were scored based on a five-point Likert scale.

To measure career aspirations, the questionnaire developed by *Bigliardi et al. (2005)* was employed. This questionnaire consists of 25 items and aims to assess various dimensions of career aspirations, including technical/functional competence, general managerial competence, organizational stability, geographical security, entrepreneurial creativity, service or dedication to a cause, autonomy/independence, lifestyle, and pure challenge.

To assess management styles, (*Dehghani, 2004*) Management Style Questionnaire based on Likert's perspective was used. This questionnaire includes 20 items and four dimensions related to managers' management styles: autocratic management style, benevolent management style, consultative management style, and participative management style. The reliability of the research instruments was examined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The obtained coefficients were 0.792 for job stress, 0.795 for career aspirations, and 0.698 for management styles, indicating acceptable reliability of the instruments.

The data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS Version 23 and PLS software through structural equation modeling (SEM), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and the Mann-Whitney U test.

Findings

- Main Hypothesis

There is a relationship between job stress and career aspirations with the mediating role of management styles among employees of the Department of Education in Bojnourd City.

To assess the fit of the structural model, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used. The values of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 are considered as criteria indicating weak, moderate, and strong levels of R^2 , respectively. According to Figure (2), the R^2 values were calculated as 0.369 for the career aspirations construct and 0.339 for the management styles construct. Since these values exceed the moderate criterion, the appropriateness of the structural model fit is confirmed.

According to Figure (1), the path significance coefficients among the variables of job stress, career aspirations, and management styles (36.855, 2.393, and 2.272) are greater than 1.96. This indicates that the direct effect of job stress on career

aspirations, as well as the indirect effect of job stress on career aspirations through the mediating variable of management styles, is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, the main hypothesis of the study is supported.

Figure (2) illustrates the magnitude of the effects. The standardized path coefficient between job stress and career aspirations (-0.648) indicates that job stress directly explains 64.8% of the variance in career aspirations. On the other hand, the two coefficients (-0.510) and (-0.275) indicate that job stress indirectly affects career aspirations through the mediating variable of management styles by 14.02% (0.510×0.275).

Therefore, the presence of job stress among employees leads to a decrease in their career aspirations regarding their occupation. Furthermore, the findings of this hypothesis demonstrated that the mediating variable of management styles can play an effective and beneficial role in the relationship between job stress and career aspirations.

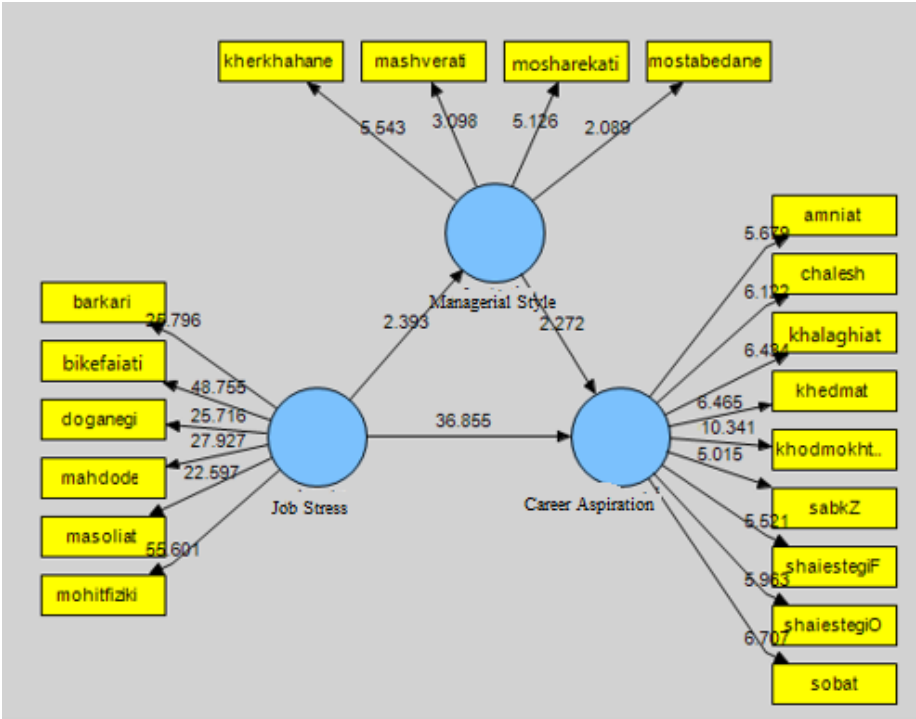


Figure 1. Results of the t-test for the main hypothesis of the study

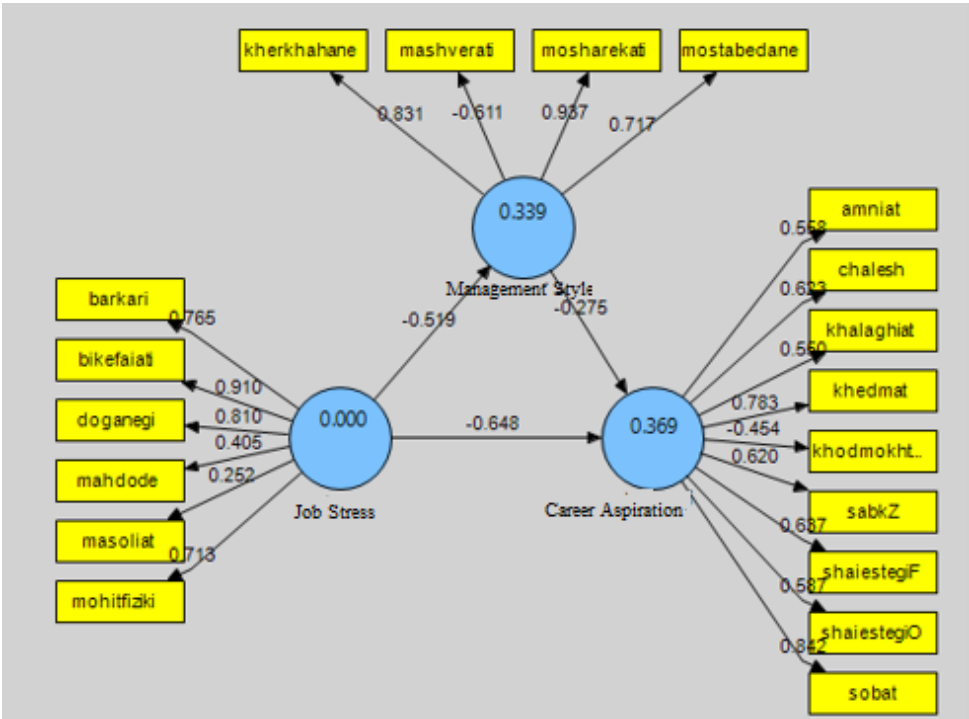


Figure 2. Path Coefficients and Factor Loadings of the Main Hypothesis of the Study

Table 1. Results of the Analysis of the Main Hypothesis

Direct Path	Path Coefficient	Significance Value (Test Statistic)	Result
Job Stress → Career Aspirations	-0.648	36.855	Supported
Job Stress → Management Styles → Career Aspirations	-0.788	42.291	Supported

Sub-hypothesis 1:

There is a relationship between job stress and career aspirations with the mediating role of the autocratic management style among employees of the Department of Education in Bojnourd City.

According to Figure (3), the path significance coefficients among the variables of job stress, career aspirations, and autocratic management style (20.319, 6.013, and 2.693) are greater than 1.96. This indicates that the direct effect of job stress on career aspirations, as well as the indirect effect of job stress on career aspirations through the mediating variable of autocratic management

style, is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, the first research sub-hypothesis is supported.

Figure (4) illustrates the magnitude of the effects. The standardized path coefficient between job stress and career aspirations (-0.488) indicates that job stress directly explains 48.8% of the variance in career aspirations. On the other hand, the two coefficients (-0.220) and (0.232) indicate that job stress indirectly affects career aspirations through the mediating variable of autocratic management style by 5.1% (0.232×0.220).

In other words, the findings indicate that the autocratic management style plays a significant role in the relationship between job stress and career aspirations.

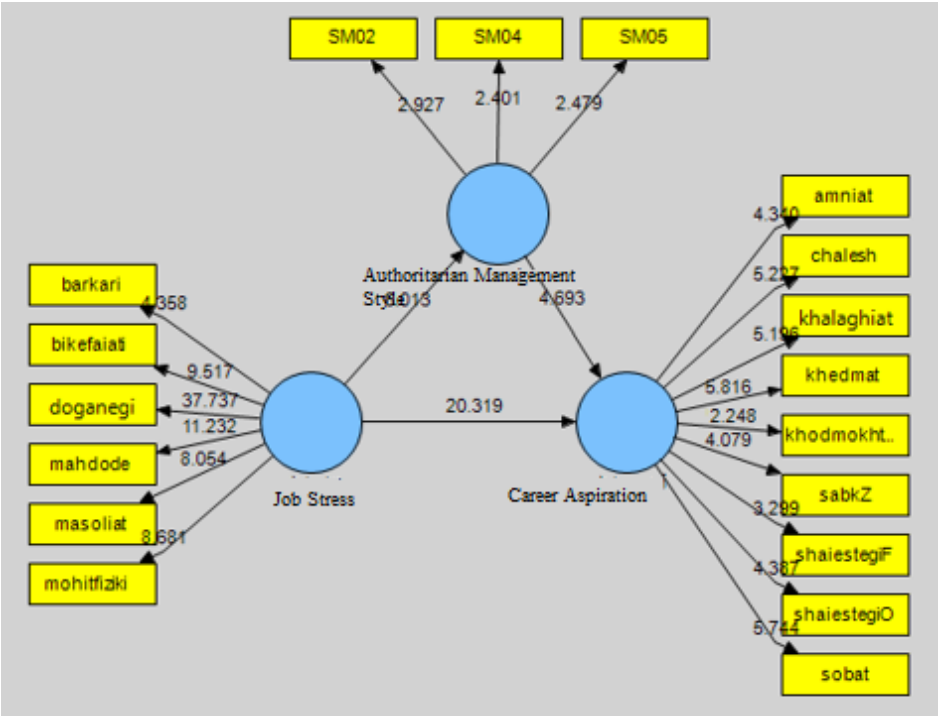


Figure 3. Results of the t-test for the first sub-hypothesis of the study

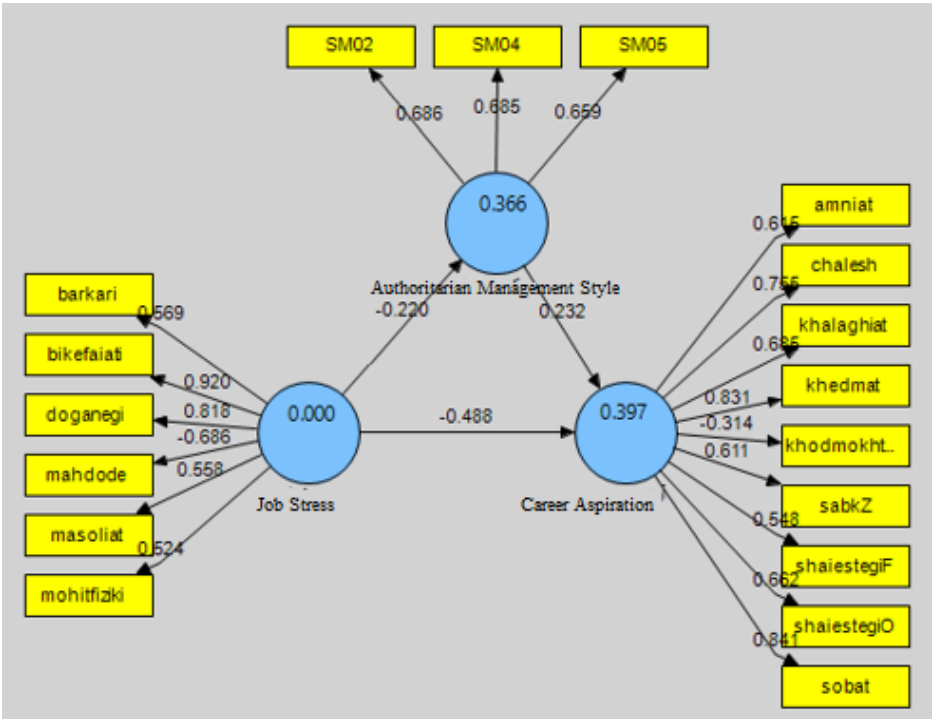


Figure 4. Path Coefficients and Factor Loadings of the First Sub-hypothesis of the Study

Table 2. Results of the Analysis of the First Sub-hypothesis of the Study

Direct Path	Path Coefficient	Significance Value (Test Statistic)	Result
Job Stress → Career Aspirations	-0.488	20.319	Supported
Job Stress → Autocratic Management Style → Career Aspirations	-0.539	48.53	Supported

Sub-hypothesis 2:

There is a relationship between job stress and career aspirations with the mediating role of the benevolent management style among employees of the Department of Education in Bojnourd City.

According to Figure (5), the path significance coefficients among the variables of job stress, career aspirations, and benevolent management style (18.973, 2.307, and 10.516) are greater than 1.96. This indicates that the direct effect of job stress on career aspirations, as well as the indirect effect of job stress on career aspirations through the mediating variable of benevolent management style, is statistically significant

at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, the second research sub-hypothesis is supported.

Figure (6) illustrates the magnitude of the effects. The standardized path coefficient between job stress and career aspirations (-0.404) indicates that job stress directly explains 40.4% of the variance in career aspirations. Furthermore, the two coefficients (-0.289) and (0.383) indicate that job stress indirectly affects career aspirations through the mediating variable of benevolent management style by 11.06% (0.383×0.289).

In other words, the findings of this hypothesis demonstrate that the mediating variable of benevolent management style can play an effective and beneficial role in the relationship between job stress and career aspirations.

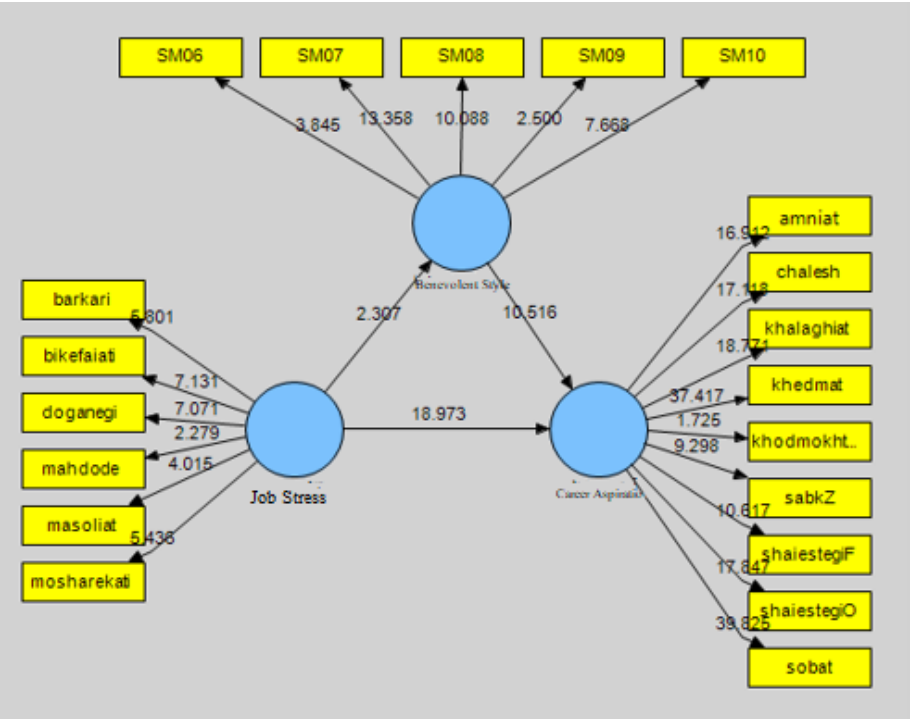


Figure 5. Results of the t-test for the second sub-hypothesis of the study

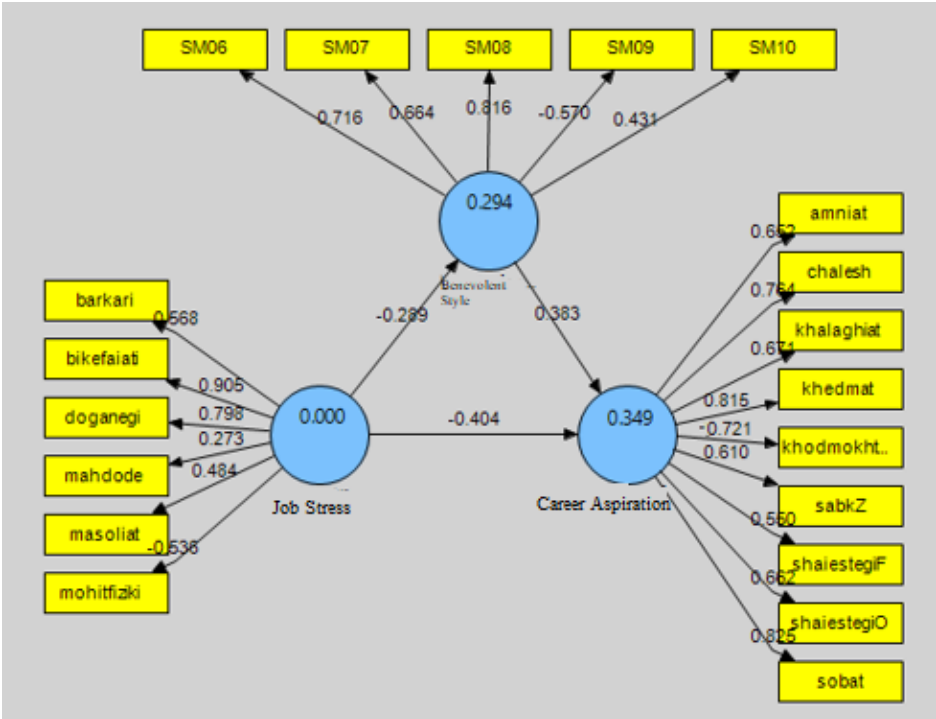


Figure 6. Path Coefficients and Factor Loadings of the Second Sub-hypothesis of the Study

Table 3. Results of the Analysis of the Second Sub-hypothesis of the Study

Direct Path	Path Coefficient	Significance Value (Test Statistic)	Result
Job Stress → Career Aspirations	-0.404	18.973	Supported
Job Stress → Benevolent Management Style → Career Aspirations	-0.514	43.23	Supported

effect of job stress on career aspirations is statistically significant.

Sub-hypothesis 3:

There is a relationship between job stress and career aspirations with the mediating role of the consultative management style among employees of the Department of Education in Bojnourd City.

According to Figure (7), the path significance coefficient between the variables job stress and career aspirations (4.818) is greater than 1.96, indicating that the direct

However, the path significance coefficients between job stress and consultative management style (0.935) and between consultative management style and career aspirations (1.298) are less than 1.96. This finding indicates that the consultative management style does not have a mediating role in this relationship. Therefore, the third sub-hypothesis of the study is rejected.

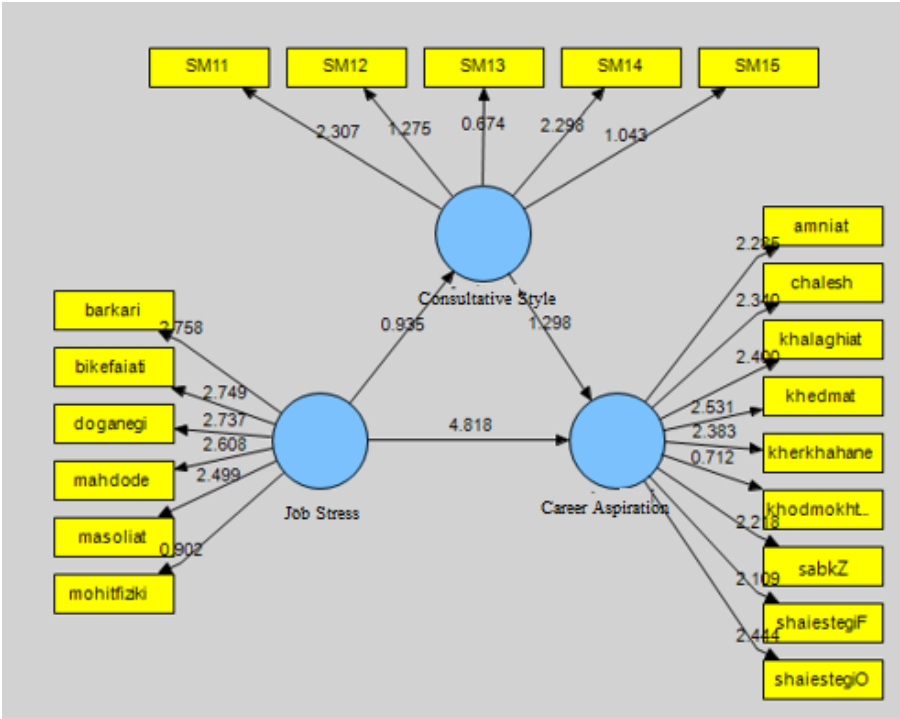


Figure 7. Results of the t-test for the third sub-hypothesis of the study

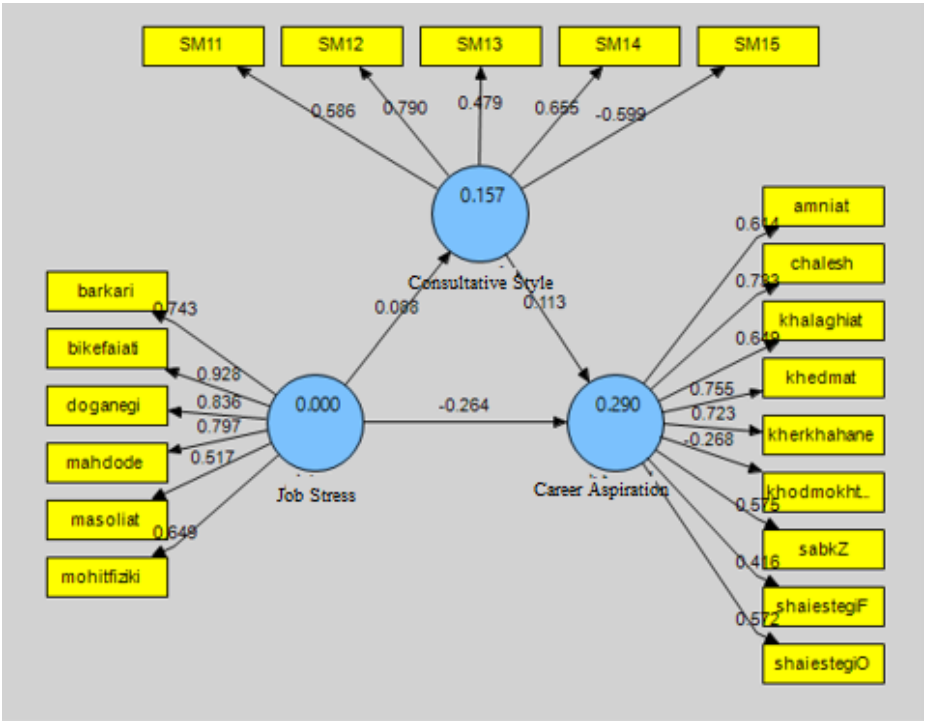


Figure 8. Path Coefficients and Factor Loadings of the Third Sub-hypothesis of the Study

Table 4. Results of the Analysis of the Third Sub-hypothesis of the Study

Direct Path	Path Coefficient	Significance Value (Test Statistic)	Result
Job Stress → Career Aspirations	-0.264	4.818	Supported
Job Stress → Consultative Management Style → Career Aspirations	-0.099	1.213	Rejected

Sub-hypothesis 4:

There is a relationship between job stress and career aspirations with the mediating role of the participative management style among employees of the Department of Education in Bojnourd City.

According to Figure (9), the path significance coefficients among the variables of job stress, career aspirations, and participative management style (24.289, 6.013, and 2.693) are greater than 1.96. This indicates that the direct effect of job stress on

career aspirations, as well as the indirect effect of job stress on career aspirations through the mediating variable of participative management style, is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, the fourth research sub-hypothesis is supported.

Figure (10) illustrates the magnitude of the effects. The standardized path coefficient between job stress and career aspirations (-0.418) indicates that job stress directly explains 41.8% of the variance in career aspirations. Moreover, the two coefficients (-0.368) and (0.323) indicate that job stress

indirectly affects career aspirations through the mediating variable of participative management style by 11.9% (0.323×0.368).

In other words, the findings of this hypothesis indicate that the mediating

variable of participative management style can play an effective and beneficial role in the relationship between job stress and career aspirations.

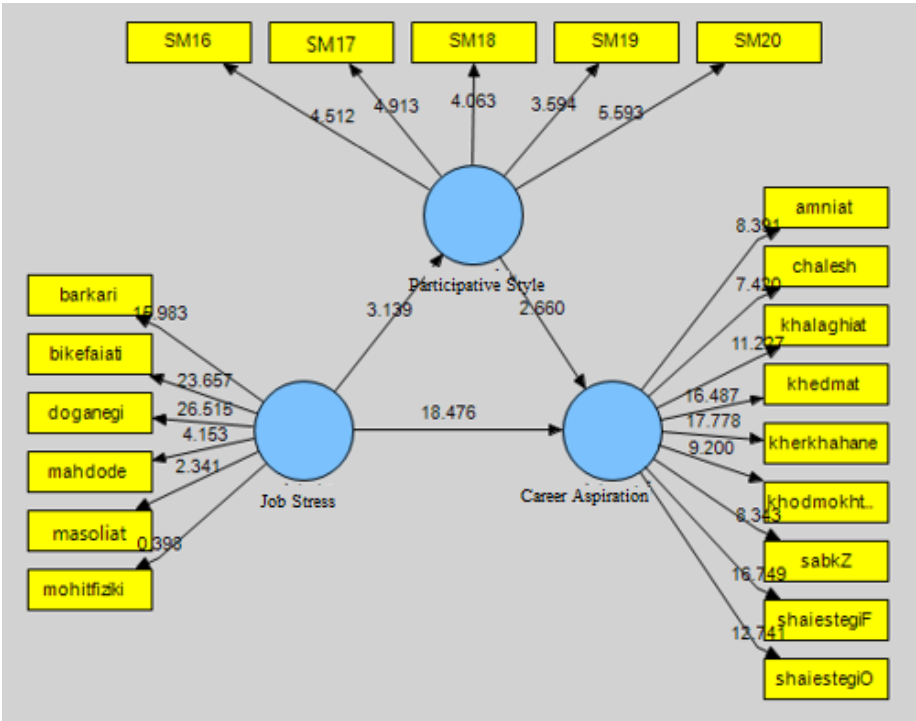


Figure 9. Results of the t-test for the fourth sub-hypothesis of the study

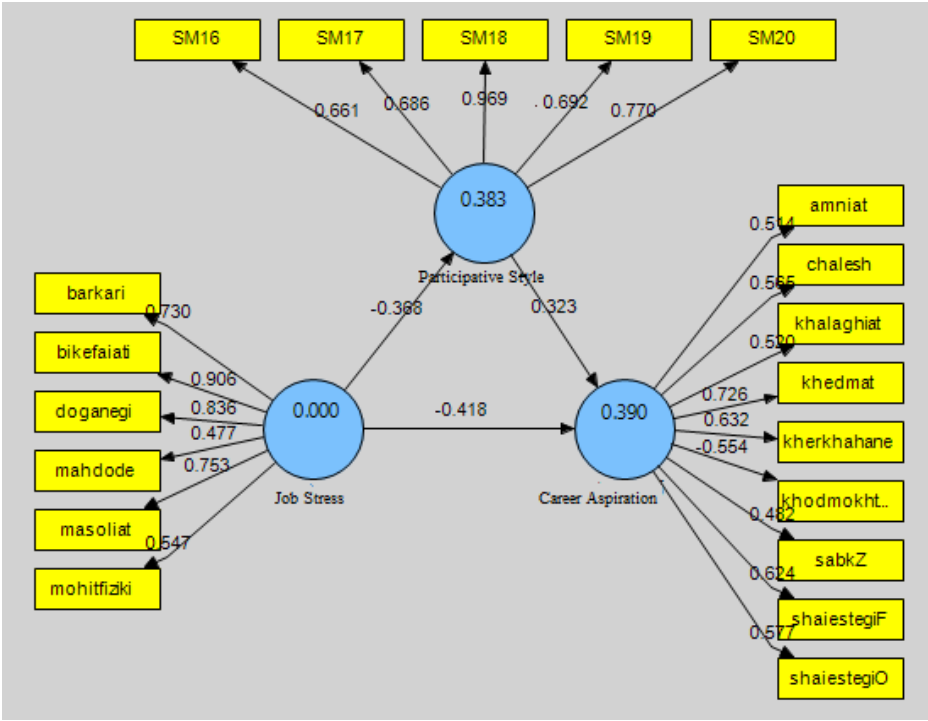


Figure 10. Path Coefficients and Factor Loadings of the Fourth Sub-hypothesis of the Study

Table 5. Results of the Analysis of the Fourth Sub-hypothesis of the Study

Direct Path	Path Coefficient	Significance Value (Test Statistic)	Result
Job Stress → Career Aspirations	-0.418	18.476	Supported
Job Stress → Participative Management Style → Career Aspirations	-0.536	26.82	Supported

Sub-hypothesis 5:

There is a difference between male and female employees of the Department of Education in Bojnourd City in terms of job stress and career aspirations. Based on the analyses conducted using the Mann–Whitney U test, the results presented in Table (6) indicate that the ranking and scoring based on gender do not differ significantly. Since the

significance levels of the variables job stress and career aspirations based on gender are greater than 0.05, this indicates that there is no significant difference between male and female employees regarding job stress and career aspirations. Therefore, no significant difference exists between male and female employees of the Department of Education in Bojnourd City in terms of job stress and career aspirations.

Table 6. Comparison of Employees’ Job Stress and Career Aspirations Based on Gender

Variable	Gender	Mean Rank	Mann–Whitney Test Result
Job Stress	Female	85.04	U = 3121p = 0.549
	Male	80.56	
Career Aspirations	Male	81.56	U = 3235p = 0.825
	Female	83.22	

Discussion and Conclusion

The results indicated that the standardized path coefficient between job stress and career aspirations (-0.648) demonstrates that job stress directly explains 64.8% of the variance in career aspirations. Furthermore, the two coefficients (-0.510) and (-0.275) indicate that job stress indirectly affects career aspirations through the mediating variable of management styles by 14.02% (0.510×0.275). Therefore, the presence of job stress among employees leads to a decrease in their career aspirations regarding their occupations. Moreover, the findings of this hypothesis revealed that the mediating variable of management styles can play an effective and beneficial role in the relationship between job stress and career aspirations.

To explain the above findings, it can be stated that career aspirations are an individual, subjective, and internal variable that is constantly present with individuals (Santos, 2016), and therefore, they can play a significant role in career success. According to Gottfredson (2002), individuals with high levels of subjective aspirations seek to gain rich and extensive experiences in various areas of life. They feel responsible for themselves and their lives, set short-term and long-term goals, both small and large, and strive to achieve them. These characteristics

are considered among the factors contributing to job security. Career aspirations have two levels: ideal and realistic. Ideal aspirations are subjective, whereas realistic aspirations encompass an objective dimension. As Santos (2016) emphasized, aspirations are the key and foundation of career success. Aspirations lead to motivation and dynamism; they represent life goals, and their existence motivates individuals to engage in activities. Based on the findings of Atkinson et al. (2015), the higher the level of aspirations, the greater the effort made to achieve them, ultimately resulting in a stronger sense of success. Clearly, teachers with high levels of career aspirations attempt to enhance their efforts, skills, expertise, and abilities. The greater their knowledge and professional competence, the higher the quality of education and instruction they provide, and the higher status they achieve compared with others. This higher status provides them with greater internal and external job satisfaction, and job satisfaction is closely associated with career aspirations.

The effect of occupational stress on work and employees has received considerable attention in recent decades because the most important resource of any organization is its human resources. Therefore, organizations should provide psychological, emotional, and material well-being for employees so that they can perform their duties with maximum efficiency. Most studies conducted on

occupational stress and career aspirations have confirmed the relationship between these two variables and have identified occupational stress as an influential factor affecting career aspirations, with an inverse relationship between them. Considering previous research findings, it can be argued that occupational stress, which directly influences psychological processes and psychological factors, can affect various aspects of individuals' work lives, particularly their career aspirations. According to previous studies, stress has a negative effect on career aspirations; an increase in stress levels may reduce career aspirations, leading to delays, absenteeism, and even job abandonment and turnover. Reducing occupational stress, on the other hand, can enhance organizational commitment. Furthermore, considering that the present era is regarded as the era of management recognition and implementation, it has become increasingly evident that organizational and employee success is highly dependent on the proper utilization and effective application of human resources based on behavioral sciences. In Iranian society, as in other parts of the world, every manager employs specific methods or approaches to administer their organization. When these approaches are examined collectively, they are referred to as management styles. For example, traditional management, human relations management, and systems management are recognized as three established management styles worldwide. When considering challenging management problems in various organizations, it becomes clear that

examining the characteristics of managers and leaders who are at the forefront of confronting these challenges is of great importance. Among these characteristics, management style has been one of the most extensively studied factors by researchers. Management style can influence the relationship between job stress and career aspirations.

directly explains 48.8% of the variance in career aspirations. On the other hand, the two coefficients (-0.220) and (0.232) show that job stress indirectly affects career aspirations through the mediating variable of the autocratic management style by 5.1% (0.232×0.220). In other words, the results indicated that the autocratic management style plays an influential role in the relationship between job stress and career aspirations. The standardized path coefficient between job stress and career aspirations (-0.404) indicates that job stress directly explains 40.4% of the variance in career aspirations. Furthermore, the two coefficients (-0.289) and (0.383) demonstrate that job stress indirectly affects career aspirations through the mediating variable of the benevolent management style by 11.06% (0.383×0.289). In other words, the findings of this hypothesis showed that the mediating variable of the benevolent management style can play an effective and beneficial role in the relationship between job stress and career aspirations.

Considering that the significance coefficient of the path between the variables of job stress and career aspirations (4.818) is greater than 1.96, this indicates that the direct effect of job stress on career aspirations is

statistically significant. However, the significance coefficients of the paths between job stress and the consultative management style (0.935), and between the consultative management style and career aspirations (1.298), are less than 1.96. This finding indicates that the consultative management style does not play a mediating role; therefore, the third sub-hypothesis of the study is rejected.

The standardized path coefficient between job stress and career aspirations (-0.418) indicates that job stress directly explains 41.8% of the variance in career aspirations. On the other hand, the two coefficients (-0.368) and (0.323) indicate that job stress indirectly affects career aspirations through the mediating variable of the participative management style by 11.9% (0.323×0.368). In other words, the findings of this hypothesis showed that the mediating variable of the participative management style can play an effective and beneficial role in the relationship between job stress and career aspirations. Based on the results of the Mann–Whitney U test, it was found that the ranking and scoring based on gender did not differ significantly. Since the significance levels of the variables of job stress and career aspirations based on gender were greater than 0.05, this indicates that there is no difference between female and male employees in terms of job stress and career aspirations. Therefore, there is no significant difference between male and female employees of the Education Department of Bojnourd City regarding job stress and career aspirations.

Based on the findings and results, the following suggestions are provided:

- Managers and leaders should pay greater attention to the importance of employees' career aspirations and seek to develop their creative talents by providing a suitable environment accompanied by peace of mind, so that employees can focus their efforts on delivering better and higher-quality educational services. In this regard, addressing economic problems through appropriate salaries and benefits, implementing reward and disciplinary systems, and providing welfare facilities for employees can contribute to increasing their career aspirations.
- Clear job duties and authorities should be defined for employees, and activities should not be performed solely based on organizational restrictions and rules.
- Employee performance evaluations within the organization should be conducted fairly and logically.
- Employees should be rewarded according to their level of participation.
- Payment rates within the organization should be consistent with employees' levels of responsibility.
- Since stress and anxiety cause individuals to experience dissatisfaction with their work environment, counselors are recommended to apply stress-coping techniques along with cognitive-behavioral techniques during recruitment

processes as well as in-service training programs.

- Managers should provide employees with a certain degree of autonomy in performing their duties and allow them to use their judgment and decision-making abilities in solving problems.
- Managers should pay attention to increasing employees' salaries and encouraging them to perform overtime work.
- Attention to employees' morale and job satisfaction should be considered one of the important responsibilities of managers.
- Encouragement and approval from managers toward employees can increase employee feedback and engagement.
- Managers should enhance job satisfaction and reduce job stress by creating psychological and environmental security.

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