

The Study of Stresses in National and International Iranian Referees

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to identify the stressful factors international and national referees. The subjects of the research include of (N=723) Iranian international and national referees which 605 of them participated in the study. The SOSS questionnaire was used to collect information that included 29 questions and statements and 15 faculty members identified its validity and its internal consistency was proved on 30 referees ($r=0.93$). Data were analyzed by Friedman Test and U-Man Whitney tests and analyze of variance in the significant level of $P \leq 0.05$. The results indicated that among six stressors the fear of failure, personal and technical performance, and evaluation of performance were higher levels respectively. There were not significant differences between ranking of stress factors on international and national referees, but the group sports referees have high stress on interpersonal conflict and time condition problems, and the factor of evaluation of performance, personal problems and technical performance have the most effect to cause stress. Also low background has a high percentage of stress which related to personal & interpersonal conflict factor.

KEY WORDS: Stress, Official, Technical Performance, Fear of Failure, Performance Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Sport officials are a very exciting occupation and a stressful one in any stage (Moharamzadeh, et al., 2006). It could sometimes cause threatening physical and physiological outcomes (Conti, D. J., & McClintock, S. L. 1983). Some researches show that officiating is stressful just like some special occupations and officials suffer from various stressors (Balch, et al., 2007; Tsorbatzoudis and Kaissidis- Rodafinos, 2005; Wineberg et al., 2002). After coaches and athletics, officials are the third corner of sports matches. In fact they have the most difficult responsibility (Wineberg et al., 2002). If an official performs properly, result of the match will be determined due to technical and tactical superiority of the teams. Otherwise, other environmental factors influence on the result and even pleasure of challenging competition decline in sportsmen and spectators, especially that officials rushed by coaches and team management personnel, spectators and medias after each poor officiating. Even some of baseball spectators believe that shouting and curse on team of officials is an acceptable behavior (Rainey, and Schweickert and Granito and Pullella., 1990). In another research, a few coaches and competitors approved expletives to coaches (Rainey and Schweickert., 1991). Officials incline that sportsmen compete relying on their abilities and spectators are active and continues presentation. Of course hockey and baseball officials believe that spectators arise excitement of a match (positive aspect), however boisterousness negatively influence on officials' performance (Mitchell and Leonard and Schmitt., 1982).

Despite importance and sensitivity of officials' role in quantitative holding of a sport competition and calmness of competitors and spectators, there have been a few researches about different aspect of their job. Even about stress and confronting with it, the most researches have conducted about sportsmen (Panahi., 2007; Ramzaninezhad et al., 2008 and Taylor and Daniel., 1987). Sport organization stuffs (Asadi and Golabi., 2003; Moharamzadeh and Rajaian., 2006). coaches (Ramzaninezhad., 2002; Reihani., 2010), physical education instructors (Asadi and Golabi., 2003; Ramzaninezhad et al., 2004), and sport managers (Chardahcherik and Rahimi., 2009). In general not only officials have been less consideration but also they have ignored and forgotten lots of matters. In addition of their sensitive responsibility in competitions, officials have determinant role in economics of soccer especially in professional levels and their officials influence effectively on sportsmen's performance and result of matches. Meanwhile, in season of matches, they must not only continuously endure physical pressure (keeping their body build) but also they should be psychologically willing to endure various stresses. It is considerable that their stresses are more than sportsmen and coaches. As the best performance could not be expected from sportsmen and coaches in such a condition, officials could not represent a proper performance due to stresses (Mirdar et al., 2010, Silva and Fernandes and Fernandes., 2008). especially that Burke et al (2000) have shown that cognitive stress of basketball officials is very high before competition (Baryon., 2009). The most studies related to officials' stress have been conducted by a single group and about an especial sport and mostly by the same instrument. The main resource of these instruments is SOSS questionnaire (Soccer Officials Stress Survey). These researches have been started from 1990 when this main questionnaire was made by Taylor & Daniel (1987) for officials (Taylor and Daniel and Leith, and Burke., 1990). In the present investigation six stressors were identified: interpersonal conflict, fear of injury, time pressure, conflict with colleagues, role conflict and fear of failure in officiating. In other researches, some other factors such as verbal abuse were introduced by Smith (1982) for wrestling officials. Pressure of game was the other factor which introduced by this researcher too (1985). Through a research by Taylor

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et al. (1990) about 529 soccer officials reminded importance and sensitivity of stressors of individual conflicts, role conflict and fear of failure and they showed by path analyzing that these factors are related to officials' diminishment.

A survey research was conducted by Anshel and Vinberg (1995) on basketball officials, it was found that more than 45% of them represent their occupation as a stressor and they mentioned that they experience symptoms like headache, muscle cramp and blood pressure. They classified stress into 3 categories so that they were approved in other investigations. These factors included stress of failure (Abbasi, 2008) fear of inefficiency, or improper technical performance (Anshel, and Weinberg., 1995) and understanding of lack of control. In addition, personal and family problems (Fry and Soften., 1992) and interpersonal conflict were introduced as stressors (Goldsmith and Williams., 1992) respectively by Fry and Safton (1992) and Philips (1985). Goldsmith and Williams (1992) made another questionnaire known as OST (Officials' Stress Test) though SOSS. Stress of 99 soccer, volleyball, and American football officials were measured. Five factors of fear identified: fear of injury, time pressure, and player's verbal abuse, pressure of game and fear of failure. Fear of physical injury was more profound and significant in American football (a contact sport with high collision). Generally, stress was in level of upward medium (Goldsmith and Williams.,1992). Also Anshel & Vinberg identified for stressors in basketball officials: wrong decision (false whistling), verbal abuse by coaches, threat to physical harm and locating in improper place (Anshel, and Weinberg .,1995).

Raini (1995) changed questionnaire of Taylor & Daniel (1987) and showed that fear of failure, fear of injury and time pressure are three main factors of stress in basketball referees (Rainey and Schweickert., 1991). Duda (1996) surveyed the source of stress for 647 female gymnastic officials and mentioned that coping with referee's standard, occupational necessities and performance, relation with other referees, relation with factors out of competition, conflict by federation and official's committee, and confront to players and spectators are the major stress resources. He also reported the percentage of stressors experience as follow: 23% inside the competition, 19/8% in conflicts and disagreement between referees, 15/5% in bylaws and referee's standards, 5/6% in common difficulties experienced by referees, 10/5% in fears related to refereeing, 7/1% travels, 3/7% sickness and 5/6% other factors. Stewart & Ellery (1998) also obtained those results about Volleyball officials (Tasadoghi .,2008). Reini (1999) surveyed stress and diminishment resources f 721 basketball officials using 31 questions questionnaire of Taylor & Daniel (1987). He mentioned the following factors as stress resources respectively: interpersonal conflicts, lack of cognition, time pressure, and performance (Rainey .,1999).

Folkesson et al. (2002) studied refereeing experiences of soccer officials and have shown that three resources of coaches or technical personnel, spectators and players are the main resources which threat officials. These active resources could affect negatively on officials' concentration, motivation and performance. Neville et al. (2002) concentrated on spectators and by survey on 40 views of English soccer officials on 1998-1999 showed that rumpus by crowd influences on officials' decisions and it could be a resource of stress. Friman et al. (2004) believed that spectators' aggressiveness is the main threat for soccer officials.

Tsorbatzoudias et al. (2005) surveyed stressors of 84 Greek handball officials and reported 4 factors as major stress resources: evaluation of performance, fear of injury, interpersonal conflict and fear of inefficiency. Thatcher (2005) by reviewing related researches to stressors conducted by Taylor and Daniel (1987) on soccer officials, Goldsmith and Williams (1992) on volleyball and soccer officials, Anshel and Weinberg (1995) on basketball and baseball officials, Reini (1995) on baseball and softball, Masson and Lovell (2000) on soccer officials showed that many of the stressors in different sports are common and there are special stressors for some of sports. For example spectators' rumpus in team sports such as soccer and proper locating in basketball are very sensitive but in volleyball location of referees is fixed. Conclusions of his research showed that deciding factors, expectations and evaluations, nature of competition (type of sensitivity), individual and personal factors (age, experience), and self-assertion (controlling others) are negative stressors. In addition attempt to prevent from failure and soft playing, professional development, complying with others expectations and the importance of competition are considered as positive challenges and stresses for them (Tsorbatzoudis et al.,2005). Doric and Paskovich (2007) surveyed stressful experiences of 421 officials of ice-hockey and showed that the severity of stressors was in medium level and serious conflicts, working with colleagues, and contacting by coaches are the main factors of stress . Many of these researches concentrated on psychological and social stressors while Silva et al. (2008) showed that Brazilian soccer officials run approximately 9 kilometers through aerobic energy system and this physical stress could intensify stressors .However more researches concentrated on non-physical stressors because a referee should preserve, control and develop his body build but there are lots of stressors which are out of his control. On this matter, Baryon (2009) concentrated on time stresses of a competition and omitted other family and social stress. Using Sport Official Stress (SOS) questionnaire, he surveyed views of 347 baseball officials, 618 basketball officials, and 400 American football officials and showed that the following factors the top three sources of stress considering frequency and effectiveness: 1. Whistling and deciding, 2. wrong settlement and location,3.Verbal abuse by coaches. Of course in basketball, inconsistency with other officials was in the second place and wrong settlement and location was in the third place (Baryon.,2009). To survey about soccer in American universities, Voight (2009) used 15 questions questionnaire of Basketball Official's Sources of Stress Inventory (BOSSI) and added 7 other question (SOSQ). After factor analysis of new 22 questions questionnaire, six main stressors were identified: behavioral abuse, pressure of game, fear of failure, interpersonal conflict, time pressure and role conflict. Comparing questions with the words of this questionnaire revealed that officials suffer from following factors respectively: conflicting between officiating-family, inconsistent decisions, conflict between officiating-employment, wrong decision, verbal abuse by coaches, wrong location, making a controversial call, verbal abuse by players, importance of game's conclusion, being evaluated by supervisor (Wineberg et al., 2002).However it was reported that stress is in upward medium level in most of these researches. For example Gencay (2009) through a survey in stress resources of 156 Turkish soccer officials showed that stress is different from very low to medium and there are not any differences between officials and assisting officials. He concluded that stresses of these officials were not high (Gencay.,2009). Regarding variety of foreign researches, there have been few researches on stressors of Iran different sports. For the first time Ahmadi (2005) studied stressors of the state soccer officials by questionnaire of

Taylor & Daniel (1987) and revealed that stress of these officials is downward medium and following stressors have the most influence on them respectively (Ahmadi, 2008): 1. Technical performance; 2. Evaluation; 3. Time pressure; 4. Individual conflicts. Nazari & Sohrabi (2008) studied four psychological skills of 66 officials in Iran superior soccer league and showed that level of their diminishment was in medium level and stress was common between them. due to pressure of Medias, coach's nervousness, spectators' aggressiveness, unsatisfied athletes, and high pressure of refereeing. However it is considered that even existing three skills of communication, confidence or certainty and concentration in officials of this research requires psychological energy, otherwise they probably had more stress. Abbasi (2008) revealed that there is significant negative relation between amount of stress and performance of the state soccer officials, yet there was not any relation between age/experience and education and amount of stress. In addition Mir Jamali (2009) was the first one who compared stressors of officials of four common team-sports: handball, soccer, volleyball and basketball in Iran. She revealed official's general stress is in medium level and upward. She reported that following factors were the top stress resources respectively: 1. Technical & individual performance; 2. Evaluation of performance; 3. Personal problems; and 4. Fear of mistake in refereeing. Time condition and interpersonal conflicts had the latest superiority. Comparing stressors of officials of four sports revealed that only time condition stress was more significant in soccer officials. International officials had more stress in technical and individual performance than national officials. Also, personal problems stress was more in men than women and there were not any differences in superiority of stressors in officials with different education and experiences (Mirjamali, 2009).

Considering limited researches inside the country, which was conducted on soccer and several common team-sports officials, surveying stressors in different sports' officials especially in individual and team sports' referees is necessary. From other hand, most of the researches out of Iran was conducted on one sport and sometimes on uncommon sports in Iran (like baseball and American football) while those factors may be different in other countries. Therefore this question arises that what factors are considered as stressors by Iran sport officials? Does the difference of these factors vary in national & international officials, different sports officials, male and female officials, and individual and team sport officials? Conclusion of this research could help to authorities of the state sport federation and especially to officials' committee to obtain a complete understanding of officials' job conditions so that it decreases effectiveness of stressors for officials and develop health and quality of sport competitions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is descriptive and survey research. Statistical society of this research included all international and national officials of individual and team sports. Consider to status of league competitions during performance and data collection, officials of six team sports (soccer, handball, volleyball, water polo, basketball and hockey) 5 individual sports (Wrestling, wushu, boxing, karate, Tae Kwon Do) were selected randomly for statistical society. These officials undertook officiating in the first and premier league competitions of 2009 as an official.

Statistical sample in this research is considered equal to statistical society and 605 officials (83%) out of 723 officials participated in this research.

At first SOSS (Soccer Officials Stress Survey) questionnaire of Taylor and Daniel (1987) was translated and corresponded (Teipel et al., 1983) by 20 questions questionnaire of Ahmadi's research (2006). 4 stressors were identified by these two questionnaires. Although face and content validities of this questionnaire was approved and its internal consistency reported (Ahmadi, 2008) as acceptable ($r = 0.91$) but it was reviewed again and performed in a primitive and key study of four sports. Then it was given to 15 physical educational and psychological authorities to approve its face and content validities. After presenting specialized thought, personal interview was conducted by 12 famous officials and 10- other questions were added to the questionnaire. 4 values Likert scale was used in this research (0 without effectiveness to 3 with high effectiveness). Conclusions of Ekteshafi factor analysis revealed that it could be possible to categorize 29 stressors in six factors with the minimum factor loading of 40%. Each factor represents situations which a referee confronts during or after game. The amounts of internal consistency in different stressors were as follow: 1. Fear of wrong refereeing (6 questions) $r = 0.83$; 2. Interpersonal conflict (9 questions) $r = 0.89$; 3. Evaluation of performance (3 questions) $r = 0.72$; 4. Personal problems (3 questions) $r = 0.72$; 6. Technical and individual performance (5 questions) $r = 0.72$; 6. Time condition (3 questions) $r = 0.73$. Two new stressors in this research were fear of wrong officiating and personal problems (Mirjamali, 2009).

After coordinating by officials' committee of sport federations, one of the researchers traveled to places where competitions hold in different cities. He personally distributed questionnaires to national and international officials and then collected them. Time of responding to questions was 30 minutes for each referee. As the data distribution was unnatural, Friedman Test, U-Man Whitney test and Kruskal-Wallis test were used in the significant level of $P \leq 0.05$.

RESULTS

Survey in characteristics of the officials participating in the research showed that most of the officials (41%) were 30 to 40 years old and about 20% of them were less than 30 years. Therefore most of officials are young. In addition a half of officials had bachelor degree or more (48.2%) and 22.8% of them had high school diploma. On the other hand most of the officials in the research were male (82.5%). Most of referees were national referees (65.7%) and a few of them has 4 years' experience (49.4%). 41.5% of officials officiated in team sport and 58.5% officiated in individual sports.

Survey in the most stressful condition in officials' view showed that personal and individual variables had the most effect on officials and fear of wrong officiating (factor 1) and technical and individual performance (factor 5) were the most important stressors for officials (Table 1). As, based on Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, distribution of all variables of the research had significant difference with natural distribution ($P \leq 0.01$), therefore non-parametric tests such as Friedman Test, U-Man

Whitney test and Kruskal-Wallis test were used. Comparing research data showed that among six officials' stressors following factors had the most effectiveness on officials respectively: 1. Fear of wrong officiating, 2. Technical and individual performance, 3. Evaluation of performance, while time condition and interpersonal conflicts had less superiority (Diagram 1). Regarding to table 3 and amount of χ^2 test and level of significance in Friedman Test, there is a significant difference between all stressors of officials ($P \leq 0.05$). Therefore fear of wrong officiating, technical & individual performance, evaluation of performance and personal problems are respectively important stressor for officials. Time condition and interpersonal conflict have less influence on officials. Comparing the priority of stressors for national and international officials revealed that fear of wrong officiating, evaluation of performance; personal problems and time condition have more effect on them. However these differences were not meaningful. Officials with more than 9 years' experience suffered more from fear of wrong officiating and personal problem ($P \leq 0.01$) and time condition ($P \leq 0.05$) than official with less.

Table 1. Priority of ten situation or main stressors of officials

General Priority	Standard Deviation	Mean	Stressors	Factor
1	1.00	1.76	Officiating for popular teams	1
2	0.94	1.67	Officiating in important and sensitive competition	1
3	0.95	1.58	Disagreement with authorities of officials' committee	3
4	0.94	1.57	Less concentration and losing control of competition	5
5	0.88	1.51	sensitive decision in competition	1
6	1.04	1.46	Conflicts and family problems	4
7	1.06	1.44	improper evaluations by supervisors	3
8	0.94	1.42	Changing rules and execution those rules in competition	1
9	0.97	1.41	Physical & psychological problems	5
10	0.98	1.41	lack of experience in officiating	5

Data for table 2 show that interpersonal conflicts (Factor 2) and time condition (factor 6) are the least stressful factor for officials.

Table 2. Priority of ten variations which cause less stress on officials

General Priority	Standard Deviation	Mean	Stressors	Factor
21	1.04	1.10	Improper climate	6
22	1.00	1.07	Threatening Officials	2
23	0.93	1.04	Aggressiveness of spectators	2
24	0.93	1.04	Broadcasting in TV or radio	1
25	1.05	1.03	Sever objection by players before playing	2
26	0.92	0.97	Verbal conflict of players	2
27	0.89	0.94	Improper time of competition	6
28	0.87	0.88	Improper day of competition	6
29	0.83	0.85	Managing aggressive players	2
30	0.82	0.82	non assisting by coaches and players in competition	2

Diagram 1. Comparing priority of stressors in officials

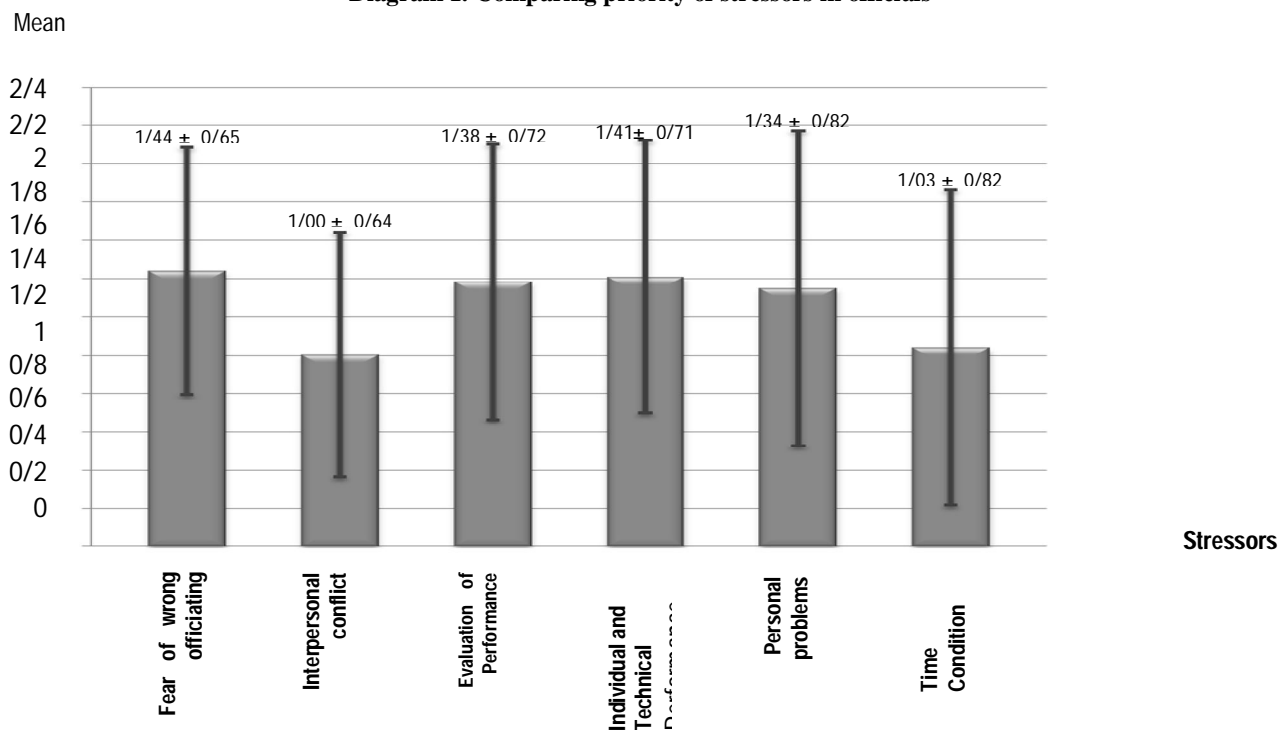


Table3. Comparing stressors in officials

Friedman T	Friedman Test	Square	of	Standard	Mean	Stressors for officials
Level of	Freedom		Khi2	Deviation		
Significance	Degree					
0/001**	5	292/91		0/65 0/64 0/72 0/71 0/82 0/82	1/44 1/00 1/38 1/41 1/34 1/03	Fear of wrong officiating Interpersonal conflict Evaluation of Performance Individual and Technical Performance Personal problems Time Condition

* It is significant in level of $P \leq 0.01$

Experience and this difference were meaningful. Young officials that were less than 40 years old felt more under stress of personal problems and individual conflicts ($P \leq 0.05$). There was no meaningful difference between priority of stressors based on officials' level of education.

The most important findings that there had s a significant difference between priority of all stressors of team sport and individual sport officials ($P \leq 0.05$). Fear of wrong officiating and personal problems were respectively the most important stressors of team and individual sport officials. Generally, it was reported that team sport officials felt more under stress than individual sport officials due to fear of wrong officiating, interpersonal conflicts and time condition but it was vice versa about stressors personal problems, technical & individual performance and evaluation of performance (table 4).

Table4. Comparing stressors of team and individual

U-Man Whitney tests		Standard Deviation	Mean	Kind of field	Stressors for officials
Level of Significance	calculated-z				
0/216	-1/24	0/68 0/58	1/42 1/48	individual group	Fear of wrong officiating
0/001**	-9/05	0/55 0/65	0/81 1/32	individual group	Interpersonal conflict
0/002**	-3/09	0/71 0/72	1/46 1/26	individual group	Evaluation of performance
0/001**	-4/34	0/71 0/68	1/52 1/23	individual group	individual and Technical Performance
0/001**	-9/66	0/78 0/72	1/61 0/95	individual group	Personal problems
0/001**	-9/99	0/67 0/68	0/80 1/40	individual group	Time Condition

* It is significant in level of $P \leq 0.01$

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Analysis of demographic particulars of the state officials showed that about 61% of officials are less than 40 years old. This matter shows the youthfulness of Iran's officials who have proper opportunity to get experience and nearly half of them (48/2%) have at least bachelor's degree. Of course receiving international official level could consider as an educational purpose and development for committee of federations' education. Due to importance of officiating in quality of sport competitions, decreasing spectators' aggressiveness (Hematinezhad, Met.al., 2000) and satisfaction of sport authorities and fans, it considers that there are lots of stressors in active and variable sport environment which are less considered despite survey in stresses of coaches, athletes and managers. Regarding to the related researches about officiating, it was considered that the sensitive role of officials has been ignored by organizers of sport competitions because there are a few research on stressors for foreign and especially Iranian officials. Of course six stressors were identified in primitive studies of this study in four sports and it was found that in addition of four stress resources in Iran professional soccer officials, there were factors such as fear of wrong officiating and personal problems which was introduced as stressors for the most sports in Iran (Ahmadi .,2008). Taylor and Daniel (1987) also identified six stressors in soccer officials which was different with the present research due to two factors of fear of injury and role conflict. After Taylor & Daniel study, the most researches inside and outside of the country have conducted on one or two courses of sport. In the most of these researches the following stressors were common and they were reported more than other stressors: individual conflicts, fear of wrong officiating, technical performance and evaluation of performance and personal problems. Of course other various factors which have identified, are related to the variety of the courses under study. As this research has conducted on several courses of individual and team sports, identified factors in this research could be considered as the main stress resources for Iran officials. Generally, the amount of stress for referees of this research was in middle which was corresponded by the conclusion of researches conducted by: Doric and Paskovich (2007), Ahmadi (2008), MirJamali (2009), Also it was corresponded by Nazari and Sohrabi (2008) considering officials' diminishment. However in other researches such as Goldsmith & Williams (1992), Silvia et al. (2008), Martin Baryon (2009) and Voight (2009) amount of official's stress reported in high level. However Gencay believed that officials' stress is variable which has a range of less to medium. Priority of stressors for officials in researches was different. Although in this research fear of wrong officiating, technical and individual performance, evaluation of performance and personal problems were respectively the top stressors but in research conducted by Ahmadi (2009) on Iran professional soccer official, technical and individual performance, evaluation of performance and time pressure had the priority. In MirJamali research (2009),

technical and individual performance, evaluation of performance, personal problems and fear of wrong officiating in officials of four courses of sport had the priority.

Despite little difference in priority of stressors for inside officials in contrast with the present study, it considers that technical performance and evaluation of performance could be the main stressors for officials. This matter shows that personal problems and even interpersonal conflicts have less importance and sensitivity for officials and they more concern with their performance. High priority of these two factors inside the country shows that maybe officials feel more inability due to pressure of effective inside and outside factors on competitions or maybe they really worry to present a proper officiating. This matter could be recognized by an exact survey in stressors, especially that Abbasi (2008) showed that the relation of psychological pressure with performance of officials is negative and significant.

Exact survey in stressors, or ten important stressors (table 1) show that type of teams and sensitivity of competition locate in the first and second priority and these two items could easily effect on officials' performance. In addition of that, stressors, such as sensitive decisions, losing concentration and improper evaluation could on officials. Ahmadi (2009) surveyed stress resources, identified items related to technical performance of officials as the most stressful items so that it corresponds to the present research. In addition environmental condition such as time and climate of competition, players' disputes, spectators' aggressiveness and non assisting of coaches are in the latest priority. Doda (1996) reported the percentage of prevalence of stressors related to inside of competitions, conflicts and disagreement of officials and officiating bylaws (inside factors) as the most environmental stressors. In other word, internal nature and condition of sport competition cause more stresses than external condition of competition. However; in some new researches environmental and external stressors considered as important. For example Folkesson et al. (2002) Nevil et al (2002) and Friman et al. (2004) believe that aggressiveness and rumpus of spectators are the main resources of stress which are external and environmental factors. One of the limitations of the present research ignored by the most researches in this matter, is physical and physiologic stresses such as exhaustion and non-physically preparation because it considers that physical stresses could increase psychological and social stressors. The second topic is division of stressors related to nature of the competition (popular team and sensitivity of the competition) and stages of the competition (before, during and after competition) which should be more considered.

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