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Work stress, emotional labor and health in Venezuelan Occupational Therapists. Estrés Laboral, Trabajo Emocional y Salud en Terapeutas Ocupacionales Venezolanos.

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The professionals of health, and among them the Occupational Therapists, face manifold labor demands: they are overloaded with work due to the huge amount of people to assist; face uncertainty about the effectiveness of the interventions due to dysfunctions and disabilities; all these demands could result in a considerable source of work stress. On the other hand, the Occupational Therapists are in direct contact with users, and this means that they must manage both the regulation and the emotional control of users each time they provide them for assistance, and at the same time they have to regulate their own emotions - an additional risk they face in their workplace. This study aims at providing data on some of the effects caused by occupational risks the therapists are exposed to.

The idea is take care of health of those in charge of providing wellbeing to others. Who take care of care providers?

The objective of the study was to determine the influence of work stress (under the model effort-reward and imbalance ERI) and the emotional labor on the health perceived in a labor group who has been rarely studied in Venezuela, namely, the Occupational Therapists.

The sample was made up of 117 Occupational Therapists, who were handed questionnaires on work stress (effort-reward and imbalance ERI), Emotional labor (TREMOS), self-perceived health and self-esteem.

The studied group presented high levels of reward in their work and average levels of effort and implication. Through the model of linear regression, it was observed that the greater perception of reward in the work, the greater self-esteem and the fewer problems of health. As far as the emotional work is concerned, we could see that greater levels of organizational norms, emotional discrimination and emotional dissonance produce greater perception of symptoms and lower self-esteem. Nevertheless, self-esteem increases proportionally with a greater expression of positive emotions, a greater emotional discrimination and a smaller emotional dissonance.

One of the first studies made in Venezuela on Occupational Therapists, this investigation makes it evident that the emotional demands in the workplace have a negative impact on Occupational Therapists' health.