

A Study on Workplace Stress and its Impact on Employee Performance

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ABSTRACT

Stress is a part of life and is generated by dynamic situations that a person faces. It is the mental and physical state that occurs when the resources of an individual are not sufficient to handle the current circumstances. Certain amount of stress is essential for the growth of individual and even a part of stress can lead to the serious disorders. The challenge is a key ingredient for healthy and productive work. Challenge can be referred as the bit of stress good for the sustenance and growth and results to be positive. But when the challenge moves in fast pace with high impact and pressure, it lead towards negative impact of stress. This stress increases pressure and deteriorate the condition of the individual leading to harmful problems which may be of physical, mental, emotional, behavioral nature and even create imbalance in lifestyle. Managing the stress is needed to cope with the increasing level of challenges. Stress also ruins the accomplishment of targets. This paper shall throw light on the causes of work stress and how it can affect both the individual and the organization's success. It will suggest measures to both management and employees to deal with stress.

Keywords: Workplace stress, good employment practices, stress management, employee performance, stressors

I INTRODUCTION

The father of stress theory Dr. Hans Selye (1956) defined stress as a general reaction of body to any demand made upon it. These demands are called 'stressors' and can be either pleasing or unpleasing situations or factors. As per Professor Richard S Lazarus (1966), "Stress occurs when an individual perceives that the demands of an external situation are beyond his/her perceived ability to handle them".

Stress can have both positive and negative effect at workplace. Two types of stressors are visible in organisations. They are the Challenge Stressors and hindrance stressors. The former one is associated with Workload, Competition, Time Urgency, and Frequent Organisational Changes. The later one is related to those Stressors which distracts the individuals from achieving the targets (viz., Red Tappism, Organisational Power & Politics, Role Ambiguities, etc.) Thus stress can be divided into Eustress and Distress. Eustress is positive or good stress whereas; distress is the stress responses to those events and actions that have negative impact on individual.

Stress not only impacts the physic but also mental state of a person. Job insecurity, Target Oriented Job Characteristics, Working on Deadlines, Frequent Organisational Changes, Excessive Workload, Inconvenient Work Schedules are the major sources of stress at work. In today's competitive era resources are limited and demands are more. This imbalance is causing lot of mental and physical pressure on the employees.

The word stress was originally used in physics to describe strain, pressure or force on a system. The stress reaction results from an out pouring of a stimulant hormone called adrenaline into the blood stream. This along with other stress hormone

produces a number of changes in the body which are intended to be protective. The result often is known as "The Fight or Flight Responds", because it gives the strength and energy to either fight or run away from danger.

Stress causes various types of reactions. They can be as follows:

- (a) Physical (fatigues, headache, muscle ache, heart problems, sweating, overweight, blood pressure).
- (b) Mental (decrease in concentration power & memory, indecisiveness, confusion).
- (c) Emotional (anxiety, nervousness, depression, short temperedness, frustration, worry, fear, irritability, impatience).
- (d) Behavioural (biting nails, taping of foot, blaming, drinking, smoking, yelling).
- (e) Lifestyle (imbalanced food habit, lack of sleep, disturbed daily routine).

For the long term economic interests of organization it is good to prevent stress, as it can lead to increase in employee leaving organization, rise in sickness, absenteeism and early retirement, lower quality of work, more mishaps and unsatisfied customers.

Effective stress management means keeping the stress levels from exceeding the level where it energizes and improves the productivity of individuals. The key to increase productivity while reducing stress is understanding the factors that influence whether someone working very hard will feel stressed out and burned out, or whether they will feel motivated, excited and committed.

II RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- (a) **Objectives of Research Study-**
 - (i) To determine the stressors at workplace in Indian scenario.

- (ii) To identify the physical problems and psychological distractions caused due to workplace stress.
 - (iii) To analyse the role of management in existing organisations of India for managing stress of employees at work place.
- (b) Methodology** - The research that has been taken up is exploratory in nature i.e. secondary source is used for doing the research work. Wide use of Research papers, Journals, Newspaper Articles, Magazine Articles are done so as to have a deep understanding of the topic and analyse the problems pertaining the same.

III LITERATURE REVIEW

Michie S (2002) states that circumstances that cause stress are those that are uncertain, unmanageable or causing conflict, reduced work expectations. Stress may be caused by time bound happenings, such as exam stress or work deadlines, or by ongoing happenings, like family demands, fear of losing job etc. Personal characteristics such as managing skills and the work climate such as a healthy working environment and social support can help in facing workplace pressures. These assets can be developed by spending on company's infrastructure; training, proper organizing of activities and HR practices, and the way that task is carried out.

Jain Priyasha and Batra Akhil (2015) said that stress is natural and is directly related to nature of work. It is definitely controllable but it requires employee counseling on regular time basis. Organizational climate and manager support are the major reason of job stress. If there is cooperation and coordination within the team and with the manager, one feels motivated to give their best. It is more essential to focus on the techniques of reducing stress as well than to know the cause of stress alone. The proper way to deal with stress is to make certain that there is a correct balance between good stress and bad stress. Employees need good stress to stay motivated and produce high yield.

Pattnaik Lopamudra and Mishra Ashamayee (2016) said that Workplace stress can affect the productivity and performance of organisations. The various results of workplace stress like physical problems, mental disturbances and emotional imbalance disturb the climate of the organisation. These problems create interpersonal conflicts, decrease productivity, organisational commitment, increase absenteeism and attrition in the workplace. By providing effective training, the management can provide them with platform to solve their stress related problems. Yoga, meditation, exercise and recreational activities can help control stress.

Prasad K.D.V., Dr. Vaidya Rajesh and Kumar V Anil concluded that job related stress in general and the causes of stress like fear of losing job affects the staff's efforts in reaching targets in IT sector. By sitting at workplace for long hours, employees developed chronic neck and back pain.

Sahoo Rekha Smruti (2016) said Work stress is a real challenge for workers and their employing organizations. The organizational effects of stress are best avoided by adopting a stress management culture requiring the 'buy-in' of both management and staff. Organizational techniques coupled with individual strategies are the most effective way to cope job stress.

IV THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

(a) Causes of Stress?

The extent of stress that an individual goes through depends on the working of two protective physiological mechanisms:

- (i) "Alarm reaction". The moment it comes to threat to our safety, the instant reaction body gives is physiological arousal: muscles tighten and breathing and heart beats increases.
- (ii) "Adaptation". The next adaptive mechanism allows us to stop reacting when we understand that stimuli around are no longer a risk to our safety. If this did not function, we would ultimately fall down from physical and mental lassitude.

Stress is caused when either of the above two mechanisms are not functioning correctly or when we find it hard to switch from one to another. This is how a person controls stress. It is how a person perceives things or assesses the situation around him that ultimately leads to stress. This is the basis of the transactional model of stress, whereby the capacity of a person to handle stress is found out by that person's assessment of (a) the dangers within a situation (primary assessment), and (b) the assessment of his/her coping skills to handle that danger or risk (secondary assessment). These assessments are formed by past reactions of facing stress and, in turn, influence future reactions and assessments. Thus, the process of assessing, reaction, and stress is continuous, and handling stress can result from altering the way the situation is assessed (cognitive techniques) or responded to (behavioural or cognitive techniques).

(b) Workplace Factors Causing Stress

The workplace elements that are observed to be linked with stress and deteriorate physical condition can be classified as those to do with the content of the task and those to do with the social and organisational context of task. Those that are intrinsic to the task include long hours of work, too much work, work with deadlines, complicated tasks, less

free time, same work all the time, and bad physical work environment etc.

Complicated task or clashing roles and responsibilities may lead to stress. The possibility for job development is the main buffer to stress, with less opportunity for advancement, improper training, and fear of losing job being stressful. Other causes of stress are relationships at workplace, and workplace climate. Never satisfied managers who always demand for more, unsupportive or bullying create stress. On the other hand, a culture where employees are involved in decisions making, are kept abreast with the latest happenings in the workplace, and are provided ample fringe benefits and recreation facilities decrease stress. Organisational change, especially when there is lack of consultation, is one of the major causes of stress. Changes like mergers, relocation, restructuring or “downsizing”, individual contracts, and redundancies within the company.

(c) Individual Stress Management

Most of the measures to reduce the damage to health related with stress at workplace include both individual and organizational measures. Individual stress management involve training and one-to-one psychology services—clinical or occupational health counselling sessions. Their focus should be on changing the person’s skills and resources and aid the person in changing their condition.

Training helps in reducing stress by:

- (i) becoming acquainted with the signs of stress
- (ii) applying this to modify behaviour when stress is just at the starting stage.
- (iii) acquiring skills to cope stress and relaxation techniques, developing a lifestyle that creates a buffer against stress.

(d) Organisational Stress Management

At the foremost, organizational level involvement is very essential as it is here where the workplace stress begins. Organisational approaches can range from structural (like staffing levels, task plans, workplace environment) to psychological (like, social support, authority over work, involvement in decision making). Evaluating the chances of stress in the workplace must take into consideration:

- (i) the chances and the extent of ill health which could arise because of exposure to some menace.
- (ii) the degree to which a person is vulnerable to the risk.
- (iii) Number of workers exposed to the risk or danger.

Now the law requires organisations to assess and locate all dangers with respect to a worker’ health and wellbeing.

Successful approaches involve training and organizational interventions to increase employee involvement in decision making and resolving issues, friendly managers who give timely feedbacks and better communication.

Success depends on the climate existing in the workplace. Stress at the workplace has to be viewed as information that directs our reactions to it, and not as a person’s weakness. An open culture and concern for one another, rather than of finding fault and criticisms, is important. Building such a culture demands good leadership from the top management side, enforcement of stress policy all across the workplace and ways to recognize issues fast and to review and refine the measures designed to resolve them. The policy and its enforcement should be negotiated with proper labour unions and health and safety committees. Lastly, interventions should be checked, so that their effectiveness can be assessed.

V FINDINGS

- (a) Research shows that workplace stress lowers productivity, increases absenteeism and unhappy employees resulting in employee turnover.
- (b) Research revealed that excessive workload and organisational conflict are the major causes of workplace stress. Lifestyle imbalance is the common reason for stress.
- (c) It has been identified that employers have a role in ensuring that worker do not lose their health. Also for the long term success of organization it is essential to reduce stress as it leads to increase in employees leaving organization, an increase in ill health, absenteeism and early retirement, decreased results, more of accidents and unsatisfied customers.
- (d) Through the study it was found that employees going through persistent work stress have unstable blood pressure jump in cholesterol level, muscle tension, diabetes, hypertension, headaches and clinical depression. It also revealed that these employees lack focus and their capacity to retain information is also reduced. They also experience significant anxiety, anger and irritability.
- (e) Increased workplace stress may cause depression, frustration, pessimism and disappointments. These further results in reduced employee morale, increased interpersonal conflicts, decreased productivity, and increased absenteeism.
- (f) Study reveals that individuals having better muscular function and health report lower amount of stress in their life.
- (g) Study explores that individual counselling have clear benefits for employees psychological well-being.

VI SUGGESTIONS

- (a) Management can play a vital role by providing training, recreational activities, meditation and yoga classes to the employees for managing stress at workplace.
- (b) Good employment practice should be adopted which covers evaluating the chances of stress amongst workers. This involves:
 - (i) identifying factors at workplace that cause prolonged stress.
 - (ii) deciding who might be affected by those stress factors.
 - (iii) Ensuring whether proper measures are taken to control the risk.
- (c) To manage health challenges, emotional instability and mental disturbance arising out of stress, organizations must provide health care training to the employees.
- (d) Flexi work timing and good working environment must be provided to the employees to reduce stress.
- (e) Employees should be taught time management skills.

VII CONCLUSION

Through the research it can be concluded that workplace stress plays a vital role not just for the well-being of employees but also for organization's success. It affects the productivity and performance of organizations. It causes physical problems, mental disturbances, emotional imbalance, lifestyle disturbances and behavioural problems which ultimately affect the organizational climate. These issues create interpersonal conflicts, lowers organisational commitment, increase absenteeism and attritions. By giving effective training, management can provide them with platform to solve their stress related issues. Yoga, meditation and recreational activities can provide better environment to cope with stress. Developing time management skills through training can also help employees to face pressures. These are some of the ways that can pave the path for improved efficiency of employees and increased productivity of organisation.

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