

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT

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**RESULTS & DISCUSSION** 

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### **WORK STRESS AND EMPLOYEE COUNSELLING**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Modern life is full of stresses and strains; there isn't one of us who has not experienced turmoil of one sort or another. Most of the time we are able to deal with problems on our own, or with the help of a partner, family member or friend. Sometimes, however, a problem may be too difficult for us to resolve on our own. Occasionally, the ups and downs of life can spill over into our workplace and make working life seem a little overwhelming and stressful. Stress is a prevalent and costly problem in today's workplace. About one-third of workers report high levels of stress. One-quarter of employees view their jobs as the number one stress or in their lives. Three-quarters of employees believe the worker has more on-the-job stress than a generation ago. Evidence also suggests that stress is the major cause of turnover in organizations. There comes the need & importance of employee counseling to enhance mental health of employees. This paper highlights the various types of employee problems that exists in organizations, need for employee counseling and mainly focuses on the employee stress & burnout which affects the work place performance or in attaining the organizations goal. In this conceptual paper, the author will be emphasizing on work stress and employee counseling. In the present scenario, employees are experiencing stress due to the rapid and dynamic growth of globalization and vocationalization. Keeping this as a base the current paper focuses on the conceptual aspects of work stress and employee counseling. Through employee counselling in organizations, the employee's mental health can be enhanced. There by resulting in improved work performance, achievement of organizational goal and develop balanced family life and healthy work life.

### **KEYWORDS**

Employee, Employee counseling, Stress, work stress.

### **INTRODUCTION**

N EMPLOYEE is a person who works in the service of another person under an express or implied contract of hire, under which the employer has the right to control the details of work performance (Black's Law Dictionary). An employee is hired for a specific job or to provide labor and who works in the service of someone else (the employer).

STRESS is the body's reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or response. Stress can come from any situation or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, nervous, or anxious. Stress is caused by an existing stress-causing factor or "stress or." Stress is our body's way of responding to any kind of demand. It can be caused by both good and bad experiences. When people feel stressed by something going on around them, their bodies react by releasing chemicals into the blood. These chemicals give people more energy and strength, which can be a good thing if their stress is caused by physical danger. But this can also be a bad thing, if their stress is in response to something emotional and there is no outlet for this extra energy and strength.

### **EMPLOYEE STRESS**

Historically, stress has been viewed as an inevitable consequence of work life; or at most, a health care issue. Neither view begins to capture just how costly this problem is to employers. Research shows that stress interferes with human intellectual, emotional, and interpersonal functioning. In fact, nearly every popular training and organizational development initiative is directly compromised by the intellectual, emotional, and interpersonal consequences of stress.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines **job stress** as "the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job requirements do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the employee.""**Job stress** arises when demands exceed abilities, while job-related strains are reactions or outcomes resulting from the experience of stress." (West man). Stress can be of two types, namely eustress and distress. The theoretical reviews relating to stress was examined, where **Hanseyle** assumes that stress depended only on intensity of the stress or while **Lazaurus** proposed that mental process determines whether stress occurs. Keeping this as a base the current paper focuses on the conceptual aspects of work stress and employee counseling. While many employees derive great satisfaction from their jobs, the workplace itself may be the source of stress. At these times it is useful to know that there is someone to talk to - someone who is professionally trained and skilled to listen without making a judgment, someone who will understand and help in the discovery of a solution. He is none other than the professional counselor.

**EMPLOYEE COUNSELING** can be explained as providing help and support to the employees to face and sail through the difficult times in life. At many points of time in life or career people come across some problems either in their work or personal life when it starts influencing and affecting their performance and, increasing the stress levels of the individual. Counseling is guiding, consoling, advising and sharing and helping to resolve their problems whenever the need arises. Workplace stress is the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when there is a poor match between job demands and the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Work-related stress occurs when job demands are "incompatible with mental regulation processes, such as information processing, planning, and movement execution".

## **MAJOR CAUSES OF WORK STRESS**

The physical environment of the job. Extreme levels of noise, temperature, humidity, or illumination cause stress (Mackay & Cox, 1978).

Perceived insufficient control. People experience stress when they have little influence over work procedures or the pace of the work (Cottington &House, 1987)

Poor interpersonal relationships. Stress increases when an employee's boss or colleague is socially abrasive, being insensitive to the needs of others or condescending and overly critical of the work other individuals do (Quick and Quick, 1984).

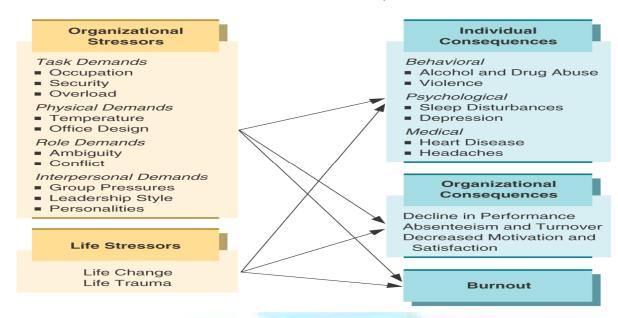
Perceived inadequate recognition or advancement. Workers feel stress when they do not get the recognition or promotions they believe they deserve (Cottington et al, 1986).

Job loss is the sense of job insecurity is stressful, particularly if the employee has little prospect of finding another job (Cottington et al, 1986). Unemployment is associated with stress, such as in people's loss of self-esteem and heightened blood pressure (Olafsson & Svensson, 1986).

### SIGNS OF STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Some of the behavioral signs of stress found in the employees at workplace include:

- 1. Persistent irritability and anxiety, Insomnia, Occasional forgetfulness and/or inability to concentrate which denote his mental health status.
- 2. During Stress Resistance Stage the employees depict following behaviors, such as Absenteeism, Tired and fatigued, Procrastination and indecision, Social withdrawal Resentful, indifferent, defiant, increased use of coffee, alcohol, tobacco, etc.may result.

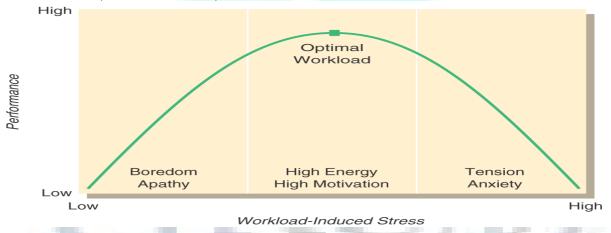


### **INDIVIDUAL CONSEQUENCES**

- Behavioral Consequences: Alcohol abuse may harm the person under stress or others.
- Psychological Consequences: Relate to a person's mental health and well-being, which may precipitate in the form of sleep disturbances & depression.
- Medical Consequences: Affect a person's physical well-being. Heart disease and stroke, are common illnesses, that have been linked to stress.

### RESEARCH REVIEW SHOWS THAT:

- 1. 46% of workers find job to be extremely stressful
- 2. Cost of stress related disorders is estimated to be \$150 billion a year
- 3. Stress related disorders comprise 14% of workers' compensation cases.



### ORGANIZATIONAL CONSEQUENCES

- \*Performance: When an employee is under too much of stress, there is a decline in his performance.
- \*Withdrawal: Absenteeism results due to sever stress and finally quitting the job .
- \*Attitudes: Employee develops negative effect on job satisfaction, has low morale, reduced organizational commitment, and low/diminishe dmotivation to perform at high levels.
- \*Burnout: It is the general feeling of exhaustion that develops when an individual simultaneously experiences too much pressure and has too few sources of satisfaction.

Hence, here we would like to emphasize the importance of employee counseling for treating stress in the work place.

Employee counseling is a psychological health care intervention which can take many forms. Its aim is to assist both the employee and employee by intervening with an active problem-solving approach to tackling the problems at hand. The costs to industry and commerce each year associated with employees' poor psychological health are enormous. A significant proportion of the Gross National Product (GNP) of industrialized countries is lost each year through ill-health, particularly in respect of stress-related illness. These costs increase substantially when lost productivity resulting from stress-related inefficiency and incompetence is taken into account. Stress-related incompetence is not inevitable though. Employee counseling can do much to prevent the negative effects of

stress at an individual level and ultimately at an organizational level. Few organizations can now afford to ignore the consequences associated with employees' psychological health.

#### **EMPLOYEE COUNSELING**

Counseling involves the individual employee meeting with a psychological adviser, usually on a one-on-one basis. It is not uncommon for the individual employee and counselor to meet once or twice a week for several weeks. However, the number and frequency of meetings required will depend upon the nature of the perceived difficulty and the nature of the intervention needed.

The focus of counseling sessions is to encourage discussion of personal and work-related difficulties. This is often followed by the adoption of an active problem-solving approach to tackle the problems at hand.

The specific aims of employee counseling are to:

- 1. Explore and find the key sources of difficulty.
- 2. Review the individual's current strategies and styles of coping.
- 3. Implement methods of dealing with the perceived problem, thereby alleviating the issue. Often, this step may involve also improving interpersonal relations at work and/or improving personal performance.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the chosen strategies.

Some of the techniques to be followed at organizational level include

- 1. Organizational Techniques
- 2. Provide sufficient support for change
- 3. Provide sense of control through participation
- 4. Clearly define employee roles
- 5. Eliminate work over and under load
- 6. Employee Assistance Pro grammes for stress reduction (teach coping strategies)
- 7. Provide opportunity for social support (formal or informal)
- 8. Techniques for Stress Reduction: Exercise, Relaxation Training, Biofeedback, Behavior Modification Exercise and eat regularly
- 9. Avoid excess caffeine intake which can increase feelings of anxiety and agitation
- 10. Avoid illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco, Learn relaxation exercises (abdominal breathing and muscle relaxation techniques)
- 11. Develop assertiveness training skills. For example, state feelings in polite firm and not overly aggressive or passive ways: ("I feel angry when you yell at me" "Please stop yelling.")
- 12. Rehearse and practice situations which cause stress. One example is taking a speech class if talking in front of a class makes you anxious
- 13. Learn practical coping skills. For example, break a large task into smaller, more attainable tasks
- 14. Decrease negative self talk: challenge negative thoughts about yourself with alternative neutral or positive thoughts. "My life will never get better" can be transformed into "I may
- 15. Listening to music
- 16. Playing with a pet
- 17. Laughing or crying
- 18. Going out with a friend (shopping, movie, dining)
- 19. Taking a bath or shower
- 20. Writing, painting, or other creative activity
- 21. Praying or going to church
- 22. Exercising or getting outdoors to enjoy nature
- 23. Discussing situations with a spouse or close friend
- 24. Gardening or making home repairs
- 25. Practicing deep breathing, meditation, or muscle relaxation.

### **CONCLUSION**

Organizational growth and employee growth are inter woven concept which is inseperable. If ethier of them is affected the organizational goal achievements also gets affected. Employee counselling can do much to prevent the negative effects of stress at an individual level and ultimately at an organizational level. Tackling employee problems can have a positive effect on, employee commitment to work. Employee Counselling today, minimizes the negative effect of employee layoffs through effective announcements. Employee Counselling ... in the workplace, can have a detrimental effect on employee performance and morale. If employees are to function at an optimum level of well-being and competence, it is vital that they feel supported and valued. Organizational systems are sometimes quick to make demands and 'hinder' but occasionally slow to 'help.' Employee counseling can be a vehicle to provide help in an effective, practical way. It is through such help that individuals are motivated to understand and realize their own career potential, thus maximizing the chances of functioning in the best interests of the organization.

Thus employee counseling enables and enhances the mental health of the employees which will result in, increased productivity, conducive stress free environment in achieving organizational goals, enhanced interpersonal relationship, team building and capacity building.

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