

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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STRESS MANAGEMENT: ITS CAUSE AND EFFECT

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ABSTRACT

Life after death is good but what about life after Birth? Is it full of stress? The only time when there is a total absence of stress is post death. Stress is an integral part of our daily life. Stress arises when individuals perceive that they cannot adequately cope with the demands being made on them or with threats to their well beings. An attempt has been made through this research paper to know the causes and effects of stress among employees and the ways or strategies to cope up with stress used by both employees and organizations. Through literature review and unstructured interview causes and effects of stress were found. It is an adaptive response to an internal and external situation that results in physical, psychological, physiological and behavioral effects. Through this study, it is found that many employees face stress due to work overload, few employees experience it due to non achievement of work targets. And remaining experience it due to family troubles. Stress coping strategies are also suggested in the paper to positively handle stress both at individual and organizational level.

KEYWORDS

Stress management, Eu-stress, Distress, work pressure, coping strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The word "Stress" was derived from the latin word "Stringere" meaning to draw tight. In the 15th century, this term was used to describe troubles or pains. A century later, the term was used to describe burden, force or pressure, especially on a person's body or soul. In the 17th century, stress denoted hardships, straits, advertising or afflictions. During the 18th and 19th century, it meant force, pressure, strain or strong effort. It came in social sciences from engineering and physics. In 1936, professor Hans Selye, "The father of modern stress", brought before the public the concept of Stress in a medical sense to indicate overloading of the human body. Stress is known as the "Age of Anxiety" as it is inescapable part of today's fast life. With the change in life style and social factors, stress has become inevitable. Stress leads to physical, mental and behavioral changes. Stress can be both positive and negative. If it is created by undesirable outcomes it is called as "Distress" whereas if it is created by desirable and successful effects, it is called as "Eu-stress". Minimum level of stress is necessary for effective functioning and peak performance as it can trigger your passion for effectiveness and ignite aspirations. It is a common saying " Brain cells create ideas, stress may kill brain cells." Negative stress is usually called distress. It includes tension, heart disease, absenteeism from work, marital problems, alcoholism, lack of concentration, headache, drug abuse, irritation etc. Stress occurs when pressure exceed one's perceived ability to cope with the resources i.e. stress is an emotional imbalance between demand and resources.

Symbolically,

$$S = P > R$$

Where S is stress, P is pressure and R is resources.

Stress refers to the strain from the conflict between our external environment and us, leading to emotional and physical pressure.

According to D' Souza, "Nervous tension that results from internal conflicts from a wide range of external situations."

According to Richard S Lazarus, stress as a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that "demand exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize."

According to Inancevich and Matterson, "Stress is the interaction of the individual with the environment. It is an adaptive response, mediated by individual differences and / or psychological process that is a consequence of any external (environmental) action, situation or event that places excessive psychological and / or physical demands upon a person."

Stress is defined as an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological and / or behavioral deviations for organizational participants.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Stress is prevalent in the society since ages. In American Vernacular, it was introduced in 1956 and was wholeheartedly accepted by American culture. Nowadays stress has become an excuse, a state of mind, as well as psychological phenomenon. The literature available on the relationship between stress and performance is too vast and extensive. The use of the term Stress is now so integrated into our thoughts that it sometimes feels it has always been there. In fact, stress as we currently think of it, is a relatively a new concept and is one that continues to evolve.

Cobb (1975) has the opinion that, "The responsibility load creates severe stress among workers and managers". If the individual manager cannot cope up with the increased responsibilities it may lead to physical and psychological disorders among them.

Barhem et al (2004), define stress as an extra ordinary state affecting individual human functions as an outcome of internal and external factors which differ qualitatively and quantitatively from individual performance, due to individual differences.

Sharma, Khera and Khandekar (2006), Computer Related Health Problems among Information Technology Professionals in Delhi: A publication in Indian Journal of Community Medicine in January 2006 found more on visual stress. It is also found that computer related sickness had become an important occupational health problem and is of a great concern.

Murali Raj (2009), depression is usually related to work and stress these people undergo because of the pressure to perform better, compete with other colleagues and meet tight deadlines. Most of their work is target oriented and if targets are not met, it can lead to anxiety. Peers are not very supportive as they are also competing in the same field. Moreover insecurity about the job may lead to feelings of expression.

Vasudha Venugopal (2010), an increasing number of IT professionals have been finding it difficult to handle emotional stress, according to expert, an occupational hazard the stress related to work needs to be addressed without delay, they emphasize, coping with stress and striving for mental health welfare should be a matter of concern for all and not treated simply as a lifestyle problem of the IT phenomenon, says Nithya Chandrashekar, a consultant physician for many IT companies in Hyderabad. Doctors explain that handling stress that arises owing to fear of losing job or to cope up with the increasing competition affect the employees performance, eventually taking a major toll on his health.

Dr. K. Chandershekar (2011) found that environmental factors are conducive to work and he also found the factors that affect the attitude of employees to work are: interpersonal relationships, control over environment, shift, emotional factors, job assignment, overtime duty, extended work.

Dayo Akintayo (2012), found that working environment is significantly related to workers morale and also working environment is significantly correlated with perceived worker's productivity.

A 2013 survey by APA's center for organizational excellence also found that job related stress is a serious issue. More than one third of working Americans reported experiencing chronic work stress and just 36% said their organizations provide sufficient resources to help them manage that stress.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Stress is found in all individuals including professionals, students, home-makers, research scholars etc. Based on extensive review of literature and unstructured interview held on employees this study aims at finding the causes of stress among employees as well as its effect on the health of employees.

CAUSES / SOURCES OF STRESS

• ORGANIZATIONAL STRESSORS

There are several potential stressors in organizations like ineffective communication, lack of employees participation in decision making, differentiation in salary structure, role ambiguity, excessive control over employees by the managers.

• INDIVIDUAL STRESSORS

Some individual stressors prevalent among employees are some of the personality traits like aggressiveness, rigid attitude, being impatient, family issues, personal and financial problems.

• JOB STRESSORS

Lack of proper working conditions and lack of confidentiality acts as job stressors.

CONCEPTUAL PARADIGM OF STRESS

In today's dynamic and competitive work environment level of stress is increasing in almost all the employees. Due to work stress employees show signs of chronic fatigue and burnout. Various research shows stress in even best of employees leads to reduced productivity of an organization. Stress may be defined as an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological, physiological, or behavioral deviations for organizational participants.

- **PHYSICAL EFFECTS:** Stress can lower the immune system and play a crucial role in a person's susceptibility to more colds, flu and other infectious diseases. Workers who report that they are stressed incur healthcare costs that are 46% higher than for Non Stressed employees, according to The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). And 60 to 90% of doctor visits are attributed to stress related illness and symptoms. Left untreated, prolonged stress can raise the risk for developing chronic and costly diseases, among them are heart disease, diabetes, and even some cancers. Diabetes alone cost business \$58 Billions in 2007 in just indirect medical expenses such as 15 million work days lost to absenteeism and 120 million work days with reduced productivity. In fact, an APA survey found that 53% of workers reported fatigue due to work stress.
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS:** The psychological problems from stress may lead to poor job performance, lowered self esteem, resentment of supervision, inability to concentrate, make decisions and job dissatisfaction. Stressed workers have an elevated risk of mental health problems, ranging from anxiety and substance abuse and perhaps the most significant, Depression. The National Institutes of Mental Health estimates that depression has resulted in \$23 Billion a year in lost work days.
- **PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS:** In the initial stages the major concern of stress was directed at physiological symptoms. The reason was that this topic was researched by specialists on health and medical sciences. According to the researchers high degrees of stress are typically accompanied by severe anxiety, frustration and depression. Some of the physiological symptoms of stress as given by **BUSINESS WEEK** are stress, anxiety and depression. The link between stress and particular physiological symptoms is not clear. According to **Academy of Management Journal** there are few, if any, consistent relationships but the fact which is relatively significant is that physiological symptoms have the least direct relevance to the students of human behaviour.
- **BEHAVIOURAL EFFECTS:** Any behaviour which indicates that you are not acting your usual self may be a sign of adverse reaction to stress. Direct behaviour that may accompany high levels of stress include :
 1. Sleeplessness
 2. Increased smoking and drinking habits
 3. Drug abuse
 4. Losing your sense of humour
 5. Reacting nervously or irritably to everyday sounds
 6. Absenteeism and turnover
 7. Reduction in productivity

COPING STRATEGIES FOR STRESS

Minimum level of stress is required for optimum efficiency. One should have an idea as to the level of stress which is destructive to job performance. Accordingly, it is necessary for individuals as well as management to take steps to reduce stress to acceptable levels. Some of the stress coping strategies are:

I. INDIVIDUAL COPING STRATEGIES

1) KNOWLEDGE ABOUT STRESS

In the first stage, an individual should become knowledgeable about stress. He should know about the process and effects of stress. He must anticipate stressful periods and plan accordingly.

2) TIME MANAGEMENT

Most of the people are very poor in managing their time the result of poor time management is feeling of work overload, skipped schedules and tension. Therefore an individual must understand how to manage his time so that he can cope with tensions created by job demands. Few of the time management principles are:

- Preparing a list of activities to be attended to
- Prioritizing activities by importance and urgency

- Scheduling activities according to the priorities set.
- Knowing your daily schedule and handling the most demanding parts of a job when you are most alert and productive.

3) PHYSIOLOGICAL FITNESS

Any form of exercise can help people to cope up with the stress. Evidences show that individuals who exercise are less prone to stress. People who are diet conscious, health conscious, exercise conscious and with non smoking and non drinking habits are "controlled" and their bodies are more resistance to pressure and stress. Companies like TATA, HCL, Infosys, WIPRO, Escorts have inhouse physical fitness facilities for the benefit of employees.

4) MEDITATION AND YOGA

Meditation is a way of focusing on something in a relaxed state in a serene and quiet environment. It involves concentration of mind away from stress producing areas, sitting in a comfortable position, closing eyes and clearing the mind from all disturbing thoughts. Deep relaxation conditions will bring significant changes in heart rate and blood pressure. Yoga is probably the most effective remedy for stress. Studies have revealed that Yoga has cured several stress related diseases.

5) DEVELOP POSITIVE ATTITUDE

A positive attitude to both life and work does reduce stress. Make positive use of stress. This helps to develop and correct perspective and to regain control over the stress causing strategies.

6) HAVE FAITH

Faith in one's idol can reduce stress. The reciting of Gayatri Mantra or merely OM for those who follow this faith can reduce stress.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL COPING STRATEGIES

1) IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

Due to lack of effective communication from the superiors, the employees do not know what they have to do and how they have to do it. This results in role ambiguity. Effective communication with employees reduces the uncertainty by lessening role ambiguity and role conflict.

2) PARTICIPATIVE DECISION MAKING

If the organization give the employees participation in those decisions that directly affect them and their job performance it can increase employee control and reduce the role stress. These uncertainties can be reduced by the management by giving the employees a right to participate in the decision making.

3) LIFESTYLE MODIFICATION PROGRAMS

To combat the ill effects of stress, life style modification programs at individual and organizational level are recommended, after discussing experts, ultimately individual should be responsible to carry forward these programs.

4) FINDING TRIGGERS AND STRESSORS

Identifying triggers and stressors through continuously monitoring health of the employees and proactive organizational style will be a coping strategy in stress management.

5) STRESS COUNSELING PROGRAMS

Introducing stress counseling programs, in order to understand and solve stress related problems to control mostly behavioral and emotional outcomes of employees.

CONCLUSION

Stress in the workplace has become the black plague of the present era. Stress can make an individual productive and constructive when it is identified and well managed. Most of the employees fear with the fact that low quality of their work puts stress on them. Much of the stress at work is caused not only by work overload and time pressure but also by lack of appreciation, and more importantly by not providing individuals with the freedom to do their work as they would like to do. In times of great stress it is always better to keep oneself busy, to plow anger and energy into something positive and constructive. On the basis of unstructured interview, it is found that 60% employees feel that they are overloaded with work, 20% employees feel stress due to their family tensions and problems, 40% of employees feel stressed due to non achievement of work targets. Employees use YOGA to relieve themselves from stress. Let us hope that we will be successful in making Distress into Eu-stress for our healthy society as well as organizational well being.

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