



ISSN Print: 2664-8792
ISSN Online: 2664-8806
Impact Factor: RJIF 8
IJRM 2024; 6(2): 234-236
www.managementpaper.net
Received: 23-06-2024
Accepted: 29-07-2024

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Managing stress at the workplace: A perspective

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26648792.2024.v6.i2c.214>

Abstract

In today's competitive world, organisations are facing tremendous challenges in terms of effectiveness in a borderless world, unbaiting pressure of increasing customer expectations, knowledge and information explosion and technological advancements. To survive in the present dynamic environment, the employees will have to shift themselves to meet the new challenges confronting them. The challenges encountered by the employees today are numerous such as stress, pressure and uncertainty etc. are also part of our daily life. In this backdrop, the present paper emphasis on discussing the concept of stress, its consequences and strategies for managing stress in organizational context. Also, the research paper aims to make a theoretical unity of thought in studies about stress.

Keywords: Stress, workplace, employees, perspective, technological advancements

Introduction

According to Richard Lazarus (1984) ^[6] "stress is a condition or a feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize"

Any job worthy is likely to involve a certain amount of 'pressure' when some sense of urgency is needed to meet deadlines and produce good result. But prolonged pressure leads to stress and then chronic stress can lead to destructive cycle of poor performance, declining confidence,

Inefficiency and decreasing productivity. Pressure can be a good thing when it helps to provide both stimulation and motivation. It becomes a problem when it leads to stress, resulting in ill- health or individual poor performance.

Stress is an exclusive relation between person and her/his surrounding environment which she or he perceives as taxing or is gone far beyond her/his coping resources and threatening her/his health. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) ^[6].

According to American Psychiatric Association (2014), Stress is described as a sense of being overwhelmed, worry, destruction, pressure, exhaustion and lethargy. Therefore, stress can influence people in every age, sex, race and situation and can result in both physical and psychological tension. Stress is a situation which individual is forced to act and cannot bear the received mental tension. In other words, stress means readjustment of individual with new situations and conditions. Whenever a change occurs in life, individual is confronting with stress.

Stress Management-An Overview

Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress can lead to poor health and even injury. Job stress relates to a serious physiological condition that causes adverse mental and physical reactions to the body because of excessive workplace obligations.

Causes of work-related stress (Job stress)

Some of the factors causing work-related stress include:

- a) High workloads, with unrealistic deadlines making people feel rushed, under pressure and overwhelmed.

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- b) Insufficient workloads, making people feel that their skills are being underutilized.
- c) A lack of control over work activities.
- d) A lack of interpersonal support or poor working relationships leading to a sense of isolation.
- e) People being asked to do a job for which they have insufficient experience or training.
- f) Difficulty in settling into a new promotion, both in terms of meeting the new role's requirements and adapting to possible changes in relationships with colleagues.
- g) Concerns about job security, lack of career opportunities, or level of pay.
- h) Bullying or harassment.
- i) A blame culture within your business where people are afraid to get things wrong.
- j) Weak or ineffective management which leaves employees feeling they don't have a sense of direction which can leave employees feeling undervalued and affect their self-esteem.
- k) Multiple reporting lines for employees, with each manager asking for their work to be prioritised.
- l) Failure to keep employees informed about significant changes to the business, causing them uncertainty about their future.
- m) A poor physical working environment, eg: excessive heat, cold or noise, inadequate lighting, uncomfortable seating, malfunctioning equipment, etc.

The National Institute for Safety and Health (NIOSH) Model of Job Stress

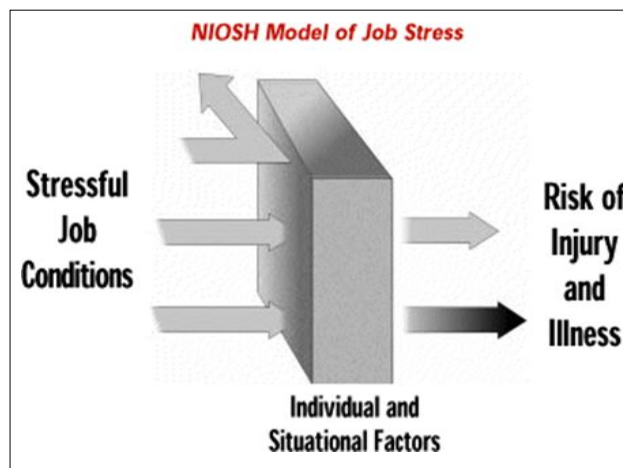


Fig 1: representation of individual and situational factors influencing job stress in the workplace

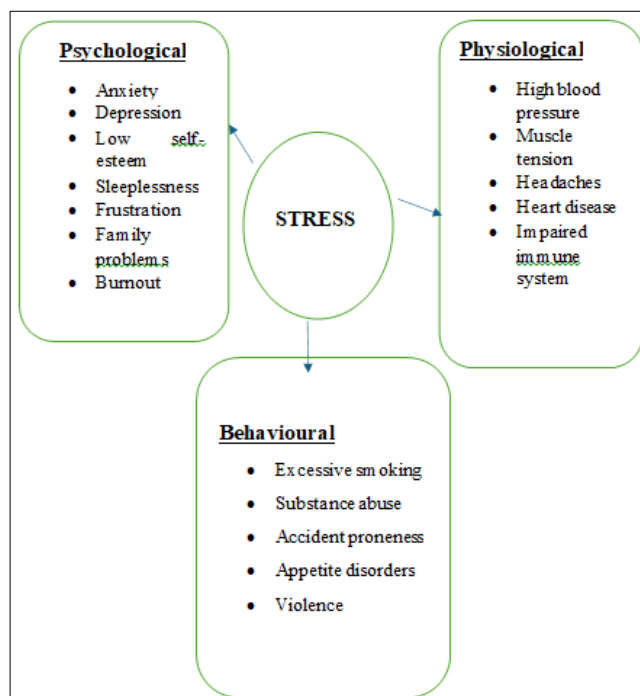


Fig 2: Illustration of strategies that managers or employers can implement to reduce workplace stress

How managers or employers can reduce stress at work

1. Employees who are suffering from work-related stress can lead to lower productivity, absence at work, and a higher turnover of staff. As a manager, supervisor, or employer, though, one can help to reduce workplace

stress. The first step is to act as a positive role model for others. If he or she remains calm in stressful situations, it's much easier for their employees to follow instructions.

2. Consult your employees. Talk to them about the specific factors that make their jobs stressful. Some things, such as failing equipment, understaffing, or a lack of supervisor.
3. Feedback may be relatively straightforward to address. Sharing information with employees can also reduce uncertainty about their jobs in future.
4. Communicate with your employees one to one basis. Listening face-to-face will make an employee feel heard and understood. This will help to lower their stress, even if they are unable to change the current situation.
5. Deal with workplace conflicts in a positive way. Respect the dignity of each employee; establish a zero-tolerance policy for harassment.
6. Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their jobs. Get employee input on work rules, for example. If they're feeling involved in the process, they'll be more committed.
7. Avoid unrealistic deadlines. Make sure that the workload is suitable to employees' abilities and resources.
8. Clarify your expectations. Clearly define employees' roles, responsibilities, and goals. Make sure management actions are fair and consistent with organizational values.
9. Offer rewards and incentives. Praise work accomplishments verbally and organization wide. Provide opportunities for social interaction among employees.

Coping strategies for stress

Here are seven ways to deal with stress

1. Keep a positive attitude – sometimes the way you think about things can make all the difference. Your attitude can help to offset difficult situations.
2. Accept that there are events you cannot control.
3. Learn to relax – purposeful relaxation, such as deep breathing, muscle relaxation and meditation is essential in training your body to relax. Relaxation should be a part of your daily regimen.
4. Be active regularly – being active also helps your body more easily fight stress because it is fit.
5. Eat well-balanced meals – staying on track with healthy eating habits is a great way to manage stress.
6. Rest and sleep - your body needs time to recover from stressful events, so sleep is an important part of caring for yourself.
7. Find your stressors and effective ways to cope with them - remember that you can learn to control stress because stress comes from how you respond to stressful events.

Conclusion

Stress is a part of day-to-day life and work. We can't expect a work free from stress. The stress will motivate employees to perform well to a certain extent. So, the minimum level of stress is required. The stress which motivates employees to perform well is called as eustress. The research carried out by many researchers revealed that some time the excess or high stress results in negative results too. Hence the research paper discussed the factors which causes stress, the impact of stress and how employees can reduce the stress at workplace.

In this competitive era, Job stress is a bigger problem faced by organization and individuals. It can cause high workforce

turnover, burnout, absenteeism, ill-health, lowered morale and reduced efficiency and performance. Most of the employees are unaware that they are undergoing consequences of stressful work life. Unknowingly they may behave in an abnormal way, this impact upon their health and their performance. The stress may occur because of many factors such as organizational and personal factors. So, the employer and employees both need to understand the importance of stress management.

Stressful work life affects the employee productivity and thereby organizational performance and effectiveness. Also, it impacts employee physically and psychologically. Hence it must be addressed at the right time and proper way. The role of management is very important in reducing the stress. Without its support it is difficult to find a solution. The management should provide healthy work atmosphere and by conducting well designed training programme to help the employees to understand the factors causing stress and it will help them to overcome the stress. Further a helping hand in the form of counselling session will be more effective to reduce the stress among the employees.

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