STRESS MANAGEMENT IN THE WORK PLACE–A THEORITICAL STUDY

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Abstract—The main focus of this study is to identify the level of frequency of the job stressors for corporate individuals surveyed and trace out the distressing factor that affects most individuals. The paper also throws light upon the areas explored where changes can be made by the employees and management so as to reduce the stress factors by making a change. The emphasis was mainly on the corporate sector of India to assess the degree to which indicators of job stress at workplace (Work timings stretched, Inadequate break times, Repeated heavy workload, Unfair distribution of work, Monotony at work, Deadline Pressures, underutilization of skills and working relationships) influence Indian native's mental and emotional well-being. The purpose of this present study is to determine the main reasons for and consequences of stress at work, and to find the most effective ways of preventing it and coping with it. The research also analyzes the overall current situation of stress at work and takes a look at some historical facts related to the origins of stress.

Index Terms—Employees, Job stressors, stress indicators, work-related issues, flexible working hours, Origins of stress.

I. INTRODUCTION

Stress is often coined as a medical term or a psychological phenomenon because of its possibilities in deteriorating the health condition of a person and the stimulus that triggers the fight or flight response respectively. Modern time is the age of anxiety and stress which itself will be affected by number of stressors as concluded by Coleman (1976). Occupational stress in the workplace can make people dread walking in to the office every morning and then make them worry about their jobs at night. It has become more globalized and has the tendency to affect all workers irrespective of the job profile or category, the only difference being the intensity levels. Behr and Newman (1978) defined Stress as a situation which forces a person to deviate from its routine functioning due to change in psychological or physiological condition. When staff is unhappy, they are less efficient, less effective and more likely to squander work hours or ultimately quit. Stress affects not just morale, but a company's bottom line. The main area of this study is occupational stress caused to an individual because of the corporate culture in today's time. As fascinating and alluring it may seem, this package comes with certain cons for most of the people. Juggling between their work and life to strike that balance, meeting with the high demands of the market, giving into the competition at workplace to prove their worth et al. With this and many more struggles which the corporate culture gives in return to what it offers, makes it impossible to achieve the goal for a few. Stress is not always dreadful, as some people are derived to work much better with certain amount of stress as it provides them motivation, creativity and mild feeling of euphoria but the concern lies where too much stress or repeated stress can have negative physical, mental and emotional consequences on a person’s mind and body. Striving to achieve a mark or a goal set is often in the mind of many but by putting health at stake would mean deriving yourself backwards to accomplish that target as excessive stress can interfere with the productivity and impact the physical and emotional health. Ability of an individual to deal with it can mean the difference between success and failure for themselves. A person can’t control everything in their work environment, but that doesn’t mean being powerless—even when stuck in a difficult situation. Finding ways to manage workplace stress isn’t about making huge changes or rethinking career ambitions all the time. The bottom line is, focus on the one thing that’s always within a person’s control: Themselves.

Pressure and stress Pressure at the workplace is something unavoidable due to the demands of the
present-day scenario in the corporate field. As an individual it should be known that there is a thin line between pressure and stress. Pressure is always there as it’s essential that people experience challenges within their lives that helps in pushing themselves to feel motivated. Certain level of an increase in pressure is acceptable and can improve performance and the quality of life. However, when that pressure becomes unmanageable, there comes the necessity to identify the level that has altered into stress and is persistently affecting an individual’s attitude and behavior at the workplace. The pressure of working life can lead to stress, if it is excessive and long term. Stress is the adverse reaction of extreme pressure, which an individual is unable to cope up with for various reasons such as absence of proper delegation and authority to complete a certain task, not being able to match the job demands with emotional and physical ability etc. Some of the factors of work stress include lack of control on the job, excessive workload, poor working relationships within the workplace, repeated stretching of working hours. It is believed that, not all individuals are same, so is the cause of stress to them.

Work-related stress It arises when people are presented with work demands and pressures that do not match their knowledge and ability and thus challenge them to cope with it. Stress may sound to be a common factor related to workplace and job but the pressure leads to stress when there is little or no help and support from supervisors and colleagues. Work-related stress is often caused by the way the jobs have been designed and the working system of an organisation, poor management, lack of support within the organisation.

II. COPING WITH JOB STRESS IN TODAY’S COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT

For employees in the corporate sector, the journey in the job feels like a roller coaster ride to an extent that they lose the self-control and just work with the flow often neglecting the impact that it will have on them. Emotions are contagious and stress directly affects the emotional state of an individual besides the physical aspects. Stress is not a negative phenomenon; Stress management is a wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person’s level of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning.

Stress Management Approach

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<tr>
<th>Primary: (Preventive approach)</th>
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<td>To reduce job stressors</td>
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2.1. Reducing job stress by taking care of yourself
Stress at work interferes with the ability to perform the job due to various effects of it like distraction, headaches, feeling of depression, social withdrawal, loss of interest in the work etc. even if the individual is passionate about the work or feels committed to it, the first thing that should come to the mind is taking care of yourself. When the needs of the body are taken care of, the person is more active and resilient to stress. The better one feels, the better they are equipped to combat job stress.

2.1.1 Get Support The most effective and vital way to get through times of stress is to reach out to family and friends. It might not be a way out for every person but just sharing the feelings can most of the times bring down lot of stress that’s caused mentally to an individual. For some, accepting support is a sign of weakness but at times most family and friends feel wanted that they are being trusted enough to be confided in and it will only strengthen the bond.

2.1.2 Proper rest People often avoid this simple formula of dealing with stress either by getting entangled in social gatherings which are an obligation at times, family requirements or most of the times due to work itself. Some feel that they can suffer but their work mustn’t but they forget that their body is not a machine which can work according to
their needs. In short what you give, you will get back and pay for it later.

2.1.3. Connection with your inner-self It’s often believed that one understands oneself better than anyone else but at times ability to think and process those feelings need connection with our inner self. Some people have strong intuitive power but seldom use it for decision making purposes especially on the job. One should always pay attention to their feelings and factor them into the decision making at work. If emotions are ignored, it becomes difficult to fully understand the motivations and needs, or to communicate effectively with others.

2.2. Reducing job stress by organizing and prioritizing It’s not always possible to do every piece of work at the same time or juggling between work and life outside work. There comes the need of prioritizing the work within the office or outside the office because both set of things affect the work at job. People need to understand that they are human beings and not super humans; the need to define their own limits is necessary often to put the best foot forward at the place of work and outside it. It’s imperative to comprehend that both the lives are equally central, the only fact is sometimes one is important over the other but what needs to be taken care of is that those things need to be organized and prioritized to lead a hassle free life most of the times.

2.2.1. Don’t over-commit Individuals have the habit to keep their plate full, trying to fit too much into one day or trying to feel superior by undertaking jobs which will just overburden them. If those tasks cannot be eliminated they can be prioritized as it’s not possible everything holds equal weight. Some tasks can be done later and the one which needs more attention can be done first. People need to be realistic in their approach before committing themselves to anything at work.

2.2.2. Delegation of responsibility The need to do it all by yourself approach is not worth all the time because appreciation might come your way but in that course what all is required to be given up needs to be foreseen. It might be worth it at that moment but might not be later. It’s the capability of an individual to think what’s beneficial in the long run. If other people can take care of the tasks, why not let them? A person’s desire to control or oversee every little step can attract unnecessary stress in the process.

Be careful of the desires because what is wanted is not always needed.

III. ROLE OF MANAGERS AND EMPLOYERS IN HELPING EMPLOYEES DEAL WITH JOB STRESS

Managers and employers play a vital role in shaping the future of employees as they are the support pillars who can make or break any situation for them. It should be in their best interest to keep stress levels in the workplace to a minimum level. They are sometimes the role model for an employee’s behaviour in certain situations, as they may act like their manager in that given state. There are some organizational changes that managers and employers can undertake to reduce stress at workplace related to the job in hand as that’s the point of ignition for stress.

Work stress is defined as stress that is generated due to conflicting demands in one’s job. While all work has an element of stress, true work stress is harmful in that an employee has emotional and physical reactions to job demands that are difficult to control.

Different Ways to Managing Stress

3.1. Improve communication with employees Employees often try to be in the good books of their superiors and for that they try to create a professional rapport with their managers. It should be the duty of the manager to strike a conversation now and then with the employees which should be friendly and efficient and not disreputable so as to build a comfort level at the workplace. Sharing information related to
them or little feedback now and then in a good spirit can be helpful at times.

3.2. Employee participation

Seek and encourage participation from the employees in matters related to their job, this will increase their commitment and build their self esteem which will directly reduce any kind of stress as they feel indispensable.

Managers should make sure that the workload is suitable to employees as per their abilities and resources to avoid any kind of unrealistic deadlines. Just to get the work done approach is not feasible time and again Show that they are valuable and so is their time to get the things done.

Social participation and interaction amongst employees should be arranged time after time as peers are the workplace friends who curtail stress most of the times.

Not having enough work at job can be a stressor for some, as an empty mind is devil’s workshop.

IV. ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN MANAGING WORK RELATED STRESS

HR can help organizations create a culture that respects people’s personal lives and their obligations outside work. They can also help employees set reasonable goals and expectations for themselves.

When work becomes a routine and slowly monotony creeps in, there is the challenge to break the chain and implement ideas to create an atmosphere of connection with the organisation.

V. WAYS TO OVERCOME STRESS

Coach and train managers on having reasonable expectations from employees.

Utilizing the in between break/meal time or dedicate a day or few hours to plan an event. Invite suggestions to get employees involvement and perk-up the excitement.

Arranging lunch meet outside the workplace boundaries, organizing a get together to have some chit chat session or gaming session when at workplace.

Wellness programs can also improve overall employee health and cut back on stress and sick-day losses. It may involve bringing in a nutritionist to speak with staff, sponsoring a cooking class or subsidized gym memberships. Organizing a company sports team can also give employees something fun to do together after work that can build friendly teamwork and competition.

Family-friendly policies can be incorporated by welcoming families into employee events. By maintaining a family-friendly attitude, employees get an opportunity to engage their family members in the other half of their lives which is spent at the workplace and around those people. Employees who have a comfortable home life are also likely to feel more satisfied with their jobs and maintain healthy relationships at work.

Strengthening the Inter-personal relationships at work can also be encouraged among staff members by developing a rewards system. For example, HR might develop certificates that colleagues can award each other anonymously for a job well done or for displaying qualities that the company values in its policy. At the end of the month or quarter, staff can exchange the certificates for gift certificates or prizes. This will also make employees work better with a positive attitude.

Turning work into play by incorporating humorous activities, anecdotes, role plays or fun training materials into training sessions, meetings and activities as and when possible. This can help lighten the job environment and add an incentive for employees to participate and learn.

The ultimate goal is for HR to remain available to resolve issues and to proactively step in and give employees the impetus and opportunity to work together in an effective way. The HR department should set an example for building a positive work environment by combating job stress at workplace.

VI. RENEW AND REMOVAL STRATEGIES

Stress can be at times a positive force for some, focusing a person’s attention or say letting them prioritize the work, perk up determination and put things in action rather than procrastinating. But at the same time, without a clear approach in mind and
calm demeanor, it can trigger negative effect and thus, loss of focus.

A person needs to renew themselves to get the grip of the situation and workload and for that the individual needs to renew themselves which is renewal of health through exercise and sleep which are the most common types. Other than that, removal is the another category wherein the person eludes itself from the work struggles by spending time with friends and family, going to concerts, using relaxation techniques by visiting the spa etc. Another fit in this can be engaging in intellectual activities or hobbies of their own interest.

VII. MANAGING STRESS IN THE MOMENT

All is said about managing stress which focuses on what needs to be done and what can be done to avoid the surmounting pressure that makes place for stress to creep in. But, what is not talked often is how to deal with it at the very moment when a person in under stress at workplace because when an individual enters the workplace, he/she is already laden with stress wither from yesterday’s work or home related burdens. These things just pile up even further when the person starts a new day at work with added pressure of work. Personal and professional life is inseparable but to avoid over stressing situations, the key is to manage stress in the moment.

1. Talk to yourself When a person is under stress, people start talking to themselves unconsciously as if there are two people inside one body. Screaming and screeching negative voices on one hand and on the other side, a calm representative of one’s own self who is often subdued by the negative agent. Stress is the time when the calmer agent needs to be listened to, to get hold of the situation before reacting or blasting on others. Cooling down is very important and making yourself understand that these situations have arrived in past as well and managing it again is not a problem. The — I can do it! attitude is what matters most at this time and this can only be done by talking to your own self.

2. Solicit for a friendly ear Every person has someone who they can rely on and in the moments like these, a friendly ear comes as an advantage. The purpose of this is not only to vent your frustrations but also giving an opportunity to the other person to gauge on the matter presented and may be that can give a new perspective and connotations to the situation, which the mind is not able to foresee due to blockage of negative thoughts.

3. Project an impression of calmness around others Stress is contagious and so is mood. If one person talks frantically to the other, there are high chances of getting the response in the same tone which would further create tensions between the people and around affecting the work environment. If matters need to be resolved, work it up as it should be when faced with the same situation but on the flip side.

4. Think about the time when the period of stress will be over A break in the thought process is necessary and instilling the feeling of happiness and alleviation when the job will be done. Slow down and process the thoughts to think over what all can be done once the burden is over. Sometimes by channelizing these thoughts to the after work situation gives a boost to the energy levels and a new energy is developed to do away with the tasks as soon as possible.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Stress is natural and is directly related to nature of work. It is definitely controllable but it requires employee counseling on regular time basis.

Atmosphere of the office 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.

Friendly atmosphere at workplace reduces stress due to excessive workload.

It is more necessary to focus on the techniques of reducing stress as well than to know the cause of stress alone. The appropriate way to deal with stress is to make sure there is a correct balance between good stress and bad stress. Employees need good stress to stay motivated and productive.

Family and work are inter-related to the extent that experiences in one area affect the quality of life in the other. So, it’s important to strike the right balance between the two and understand the degree of priority of work and family in life.
Feedback is important but balancing the negative and positive feedback is important. Managers to need to analyze the mood and temperament of the employee first and accordingly put forth the feedback. It should be done on one to one basis, especially while communicating the negative feedback.

REFERENCES


