

Stress Management: A Critical View

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Abstract

Now a days “Human Resource” is considered as one of the most important resources. In the era of dynamic business most of the organizations invest a huge amount of money and spend a great deal of time and effort as though they can properly utilize and manage this vital resource. Stress is one of the burning questions that hinders the workers performance and productivity. We all experience it that affects our minds and bodies. This paper has been essentially built around the inputs obtained by conducting a comprehensive study covering the various aspects of stress in today’s business. This paper has also tried to address three major key areas related with the type and sources of work related stress, impact of stress on individuals and the way of managing stress.

Key words: Stress, Human resource, Management, Individual and Organizational approach.

1. Introduction:

Stress can be defined, in general term, as the people’s feeling about pressures in their own life. Stress is a very much dynamic condition in which people confronted with opportunities, constraints or demand related to what he or she desires and for which outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. Stress is associated with constraints and demand. Two conditions are necessary for potential stress to become actual stress. There must be uncertainty over the outcome and the outcome must be important. Stress produces not only the bad things all time but also produces some positive outcome in some special events. Sometimes when people would remain under pressure they feel to get something and they work more and harder which increase the total productivity. This paper will provide the critical view about the stress and consequences of it which will be more helpful to manage it and development of way to handle more stressful situation.

2. Objectives:

The main objective of the study is to evaluate the stress and the way of managing it in personal and organizational life. Other objectives are:

- a) To identify the causes of stress;
- b) To measure the extent of stress;
- c) To measure the impact of stress on job &
- d) To suggest the way of managing stress.

3. Methodology:

This study has been conducted based on both primary and secondary data available on the relevant field. The primary data have been collected through personal interviews from some professionals in the business arena, employees of service organization and manufacturing organization and physician. Secondary data have been collected from research works, publications, journals and texts on these relevant fields that are used for this study.

This study covered by 90 respondents broadly from different fields and categories. Among the respondents 70 were married, 20 unmarried, 70 male, 20 female, & 15 respondents were physician. Among the 90 respondents 20 were working in financial organization, 5 service organization, 40 manufacturing and 10 were businessmen. To measure the opinion of respondents especially for physicians we used 5 point Likert scale (1-5) which indicates more popular to least.

Sample distribution

Nature of respondents	Married	Unmarried	Total
Businessmen	10	0	10
Employees of service organization	0	5	5
Manufacturing employees	35	5	40
Physicians	10	5	15
Employees of financial organization	15	5	20
Male	55	15	70
Female	15	5	20

4. Conceptual Issues:

Is there anybody who is not familiar with the term “Stress”? Definitely the answer will be “no”. In the era of super flexibility and rapid changing environment we all experience stress, rather it, is better to say “we are anxious about to stress the way of managing stress fall us in stress too. Before managing stress we should know what it is. In Oxford Dictionary stress is defined from various points of view. Among these we pick up the two meanings from these. Mental Pressure: pressure or worry caused by the problems in someone’s life. Physical pressure: pressure put on that can damage it or make it loose in shape.

According to the father of stress research Han Sleeve- “Stress is the spice of life, the absence of stress is death”. The famous author R. S. Schuler define stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. From this above discussion we can find some of input about stress :

- a) Stress is caused by our reaction to the external environment
- b) It affects directly related to our mind and body that means it has physical and emotional effects on us.
- c) Stress creates positive & negative feelings.

We can define stress in many ways based on its area and impact. Though the impact of stress is directly related to both the body and mind of individuals but from the view point of sources we can define it into two ways :

Direct Stress: When the sources of stress is directly related to the person. i.e.: suppose, Mr. X and Mr.Y are working in a same department in a same factory and suddenly Mr. X loses his Job. Then stress for X is direct stress.

Indirect Stress: When the sources of stress is not directly related to the person. In previous example the incident of loosing Job of X creates a stress for Mr. Y who is still in job. The loosing of job of peer group (Mr. X) of Mr. Y or the fair of loosing his (Mr. Y) job could be a cause of stress. It is found that the impact of direct stress is more than that of indirect stress.

From the view point of duration of time, when the stress affects for a limited period of time then it is called short term stress. i.e. in a production-oriented factory in the peak period of production (generally 3 to 6 months) or at the end of the month in accounts department of a company workers face a short term stress.

Long-term or perpetual stress: When the stress affects for a long period of time then it could be called long term stress.

From the view point of outcome -- Functional stress: when the result of stress is positive or stress improves someone’s performance in the job. Some stress supports the goals of job’s or organizations and improve the performance; these are functional, constructive form of stress. When the consequences of stress in destructive or hinder someone’s performance then it could be stated as dysfunctional stress.

From the view point certainty -- when the result of stress is known to individuals then it’s called certain stress. As for example, the peak period of production is generally temporary stress and known to all. Certain stress is less harmful and produces very constructive result & sometimes does not produce higher result.

When the length of time as well as result of stress is not perceived by the stressors is called uncertain stress. Generally uncertain stress is harmful and produces negative result or hinders the group performance.

Occupational Stress:

In a recent survey of employees, more than 80 percent said they feel stress on the job. Nearly 70 percent expressed a need to learn how to manage stress; and 45 percent felt their co-workers needed help in managing stress. The organization should consider that Occupational Stress Indicator (OSI), (Cooper et al., 1988), to whether to improve for preventing stress.

The affect of stress depends on:

As stated earlier, various types of stress could end with different result. Whether the stress with constructive or destructive it depends on what types of stress it is. Certain stress usually produces constructive result whereas the uncertain stress usually produces destructive result.

It's an important factor to consider in case of finding out the result of stress what types of stress it is but the result of stress depends on some factors like:

- a) The individual strength and personality,
- b) The environment or situation,
- c) Adoption process &
- d) Previous experience.

Everyone is affected by stress differently. The strength of an individual plays an important role in making the end result. The environment and situation, age, ability, attitude, the mentality to adopt, etc., are also important factor over here. In facing stress the support from environment and situation dramatically produce constructive result. The way of find the best to avoid, cope with or face the situation is a most considerable factor. Generally, before adoption with the situation it is need to find out the types of stress and in which way the individual wants to cope with or face the way of perceiving the goals & situation as well as the conflicts to the preparation and planning, classification and justification of the way, identifying various alternative and implement the best ways or methods or process to face could be a better way to face stress.

Stress is caused by our reaction to the external environment. The manner in which we perceive and understand the changes of the particular events because some events can bring happiness and cause stress in to different people depending upon how they react it.

Body's non-specific response to any demand made on it. On one side stress provides the means to express talents and energies and pursues happiness on the other side it can also cause exhaustion and illness, either physical or psychological. It is concerned with an individual's perceptual and cognitive characteristics.

The factors that contribute to the experience of stress are many and varied. It is found that both positive and negative events in one's life can be stressful. However, major life changes are the greatest contributors of stress for most people.

Too much travel, entering into a new environment, like new colony, new job etc., generate stress. The social institutions of marriage or divorce can cause stress. Pregnancy can also generate stress. Some of the untoward incidents like critical illness of death of a relative can also cause stress in individuals. Time pressure, Competition, Financial problems, Noise, Disappointments could be the sources of stress.

We can divide the sources of stress into two categories : Physiological or Biological.

Biological :

The causes of some stress lie in the biological make up of our body, or the interaction of our body with the food we eat or environment we live in. Some examples of the biological causes of stress include:

Internal

1. Lack of fitness,
2. Poor diet (e.g.: deficiency of vitamins taking; too much caffeine, alcohol),
3. Genetic disorder result in chemical imbalances in the body,
4. Changes in bodily functions, such as pregnancy, puberty, menopause, ageing etc.

Psychological or psychodynamic :

The term 'psychodynamic' refers to subconscious thoughts and feelings, which often arise from childhood experiences. The way in which you learned to cope in childhood is by using defense mechanisms that involved a degree of self deception. We still use those defenses today. Examples of psychodynamic causes of stress include :

1. Inner conflicts that have not been addressed, but repressed (i.e. pushed out of conscious awareness).
2. Encountering situations that evoke stressful feelings that were experienced in childhood
3. Lack of self-awareness
4. Believing one is capable of achieving far too much-setting standards and expectations too high (and therefore falling short of them).
5. Not having the skill of knowledge to cope with certain situations,

Spiritual :

The need for individual spiritual development has long been recognized by religion. It is only during the last 30 years that psychology has acknowledged the existence of a spiritual side to the individual. Some spiritual causes of stress include:

1. Violation of personal or religious moral code, contravention of accepted group practice, or violation of laws("sin")
2. Lack of spiritual development
3. An absence of truth (e.g. : self-deception and deception of others)
4. The lack of a sense of personal agency-i.e. that one can influence events-or the failure to recognize and exercise choice.
5. Absence of a relationship with God, and lack of forgiveness.

External

1. Environmental
2. Organizational
3. Job-career
4. Co-worker
5. Family

External sources of Stress consist of Environmental, Organizational, Job-career, Co-worker, and Family and so on.

1. Change of social circumstances (e.g.: bereavement of spouse, moving job, marriage, holidays)
2. Pressure to conform to social or employment patterns of behavior.
3. Conflict in relationships, misunderstanding with the co-workers, superiors, subordinates, colleagues, or an absence of praise and being valued by others
4. Lack of support, time to be listened to, and time for relaxation.
5. Having a high-pressure job, being unemployed or only having a small range of social circumstances (e.g.: rarely leaving the house, few hobbies).
6. Strict dead line, too tight or too loose supervision, lack of parity of authority, working at a long stretch, lack of having chance of amusement/entertainment facilities
7. Boring and noisy, smoke filled work environment, cramped offices bitter fumes, the glare of sun and the burning heat (steel mill), high turn-over rate in organization.

Consequences and Symptoms of Stress

Symptoms of Stress

As stated earlier stress is caused by or reaction to the external events and bring about changes in our response and our general behavior. The presence of stress can be estimated by the analysis of certain symptoms an

individual shows. These symptoms can be divided into three different categories. They are Psychological, Behavior and Physiology. When the individual experiences stress, one or more of the following symptoms can be exhibited :

Physiological

- Perspiration
- Irritability
- Headaches
- Illness
- Insomnia
- Tiredness
- Increased heartbeat and blood pressure

- Trembling
- Nervous ticks
- Dryness of throat and mouth
- Tiring easily
- Urinating frequently
- Sleeping problems
- Diarrhea, Indigestion, Vomiting, Nausea
- Butterflies in stomach
- Headaches
- Premenstrual tension
- Pain in the neck and or lower back
- Stomach ulcers
- Heart problems
- Minor illness (allergies, skin disorder, migraine)
- Serious illness(arthritis, cancer, diabetes)

Behavior

- Impulsive Behavior
- Speech problems
- Crying for no apparent reason
- Laughing in a high pitch and nervous tone of voice
- Grinding of teeth
- Increasing smoking and use of drugs and alcohol.

- Being accident-prone
- Susceptibility to illness
- Loss of appetite or over eating
- Productivity
- Turn over
- Absenteeism

Psychological Symptoms

- Physical trauma
- Anxiety
- Fear and tension
- Depression
- Dissatisfactions
- Strenuous exercise
- Metabolic disturbances

The impact of excessive stress on team work is also harmful, and it can damage:

- Individual work performance
- Team performance
- Working relationship
- Cooperation between team members
- Team spirit

Though stress is caused by our reaction to external environment so it should be reminded that a positive attitude can dramatically reduce the stress. So in case of managing stress at first we have to develop a positive outlook that plays an important role. Stress can be managed if we understand the reasons that cause stress and the level of stress. We should also try to estimate if we could bring about any change in environment that can subsequently reduce stress. Both the individual and Organizational it is necessary to manage stress.

Individual approach

Planned life could reduce or prevent negative stress. To manage stress we can follow the sequences :

- Problem identification
- Goal selection
- Generation of alternatives
- Choose the best
- Implementation and evaluation the outcomes
- Take corrective action if necessary

Besides this we can apply the following tips to get rid of from stress which provided by Dr. Peret Jaret:

Do nothing:

At least once during the day, take five or ten minutes to sit quietly and do nothing. Focus on the sounds around you, your emotions and any tension in your neck, shoulders , arm, chest, etc. Doing nothing can be a real struggle. Just sitting quietly slows the heart rate and reduces blood pressure, countering two of the most obvious effects of stress.

Laugh out loud:

Keep something handy that makes you laugh. It could be a collection of your favorite comic strips or a funny voice mail from, say, your child or a friend. You could even take a few moments to think about watching your favorite television comedy.

Tune in

In a study at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, two groups of students were told to prepare an oral presentation, Some worked in silence; others listened to pachelbel's "Caron in D Major" stress caused the silent workers' blood pressure and heart rates to climb. Not so the volunteers in the musical group whose measurements remained steadier. They also reported feeling much less stress.

Think happy

Here's how: focus on someone or something you care deeply about for anywhere from 15 seconds to five minutes. Or picture a scene from a peaceful vacation phrase that makes you feel positive about yourself and the world can work.

It sounds like advice from a greeting card, but thinking happy calming thoughts can counteract the psychological changes that occur when under stress. "A lot of stress we experience comes from negative emotions we carry around with us grudges, anger, hurt" says Laskin who studies healing power of forgiveness.

Hit the road

Get from your desk, the coach- wherever you may be- and take a minute walk. Those who began walking four times a week, the scientists found, reported feeling less distressed and sleeping better. Tests showed that their blood pressure was that their blood pressure was more likely to hold steady when they. Don't have an hour to spar? Don't sweat it. Taking five or ten minute walks when ever you whenever you're under pressure may be just as effective.

Breathe easy

For five minutes, slow your breathing down to about six-belly breaths a minute. In other words, inhale for about five minutes to relax your entire body. Start by testing by your toes; then consciously relax them. Move on to the muscles in your feet, and then your calves, upper legs, but tocks, moving upward until you end by scrunching up and then relaxing the muscles in your face. If you start your day feeling tense, chances are you'll feel tense all day, say stress experts Gueth. If you take your troubles to bed with you, they're likely to disturb your sleep. And that can mean even more tension.

Rise Relaxed:

Right before bed, and after the alarm goes off in the morning, take five minutes to relax your entire body. Start by tensing your toed; then consciously relax them. Move on to the muscles in your feet, and then your calves, upper legs, but tocks, moving upward until you end by scrunching up and then relaxing the muscles in your face. If you take your troubles to bed with you, they're likely to disrupt your sleep and then can mean even more tension.

Organizational Approaches

Organization plays an important role in reducing stress. For better use of these HR to pick up the best result management must consider these areas :

- a) Personnel
- b) Selection of job replacement
- c) Training and development
- d) Use of realistic goal setting
- e) Redesigning job
- f) Increased employee involvement
- g) Improve organizational communication
- h) Establish wellness programs

The following guidelines could help the Organization in maintaining a negative-stress-free environment :

- All employees must evaluate risks to health and safety and whenever possible employers should implement avoidance and control measures. The preventive strategies and compliance facilities play an important role in reducing stress.
- Company should carry out the activities including; timely inspection, investigate hazards and complaints, receive information from the workers regarding health and safety, and keeping consultancy with the worker about any safety issues.
- In stressful occupations such as the police force, social and health services, power supply company, crime reporter in press media, journalism, nursing (specially in public medical hospital), workers in overheated, sound-polluted, just covered area (like steel mill, cement industry) sweeper, night guard, the employer should minimize the risks and treat personnel who have suffered from violence at work with due care.
- Key personnel like managements and personnel officers receive training to recognize stress related problem such as high absenteeism, high turnover.
- The organization should have a “stress policy” or guidelines so that staffs know that to do if they are suffering from stress.
- Instead of just offering staffs stress management workshop, employer could set up stress working parties that could actively involve the staff, trade unions and other representatives who could then develop stress policies and make other useful recommendations.
- Arranges health related seminars, stress management workshops, managing pressure to increase performance workshop.

Other techniques :

1. Meditation can also be a good effort to bring down the stress levels.
2. Taking exercise.
3. Effective time management.
4. Good food and nutrition.

5. Analysis of Findings:

From the study of all respondents' views we found that most of the sources of stress is organizational workload and family related problems. 70% of respondents told that their stress mainly comes from workload and a little bit from family, 30% told their stress mainly from family related problems and moderately from organizational workload, in organizational level 70% of women told that they feel stress due to social insecurity, among the 40 respondents of organizational level 75% think that due to over control and excessive supervision they feel stress. From the study we found that most of the stress we can minimize by individual approaches. In this study we observed all physicians told 7 ways to control the stress and among the 7 ways we found Do Nothing is the most popular one and 80% suggested it as the first choice and scored 4.0 point in the five point scale, Laugh out and Rise Relaxed stood the 2nd and 3rd position with 3.5 and 3.0 scale point respectively.

6. Conclusion:

The study indicates that nobody can free from stress, everybody is under the stress a little bit or more. Managing stress is a collaborative effort especially within an Organization that helps individual to focus problem-solving in a structured and systematic way. The objective of this study is not to eliminate the

Stress rather to prevent the negative stress that hinders the individual and group's performance. Choose the best way to prevent stress in your Organizations and within you. It is also necessary to remind that the negative effect of stress could never be over looked and it is necessary to consult with physicians or psychiatric consultant.

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