

Workplace Stress and coping strategies

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Abstract

Stress is an inherent physiological and psychological reaction to the demands or pressures of everyday life, and it can have a serious influence on the workings of the body and mind. In the workplace, stress can be a result of organizational factors like managerial style, workplace control, workplace obligations, time limits, human relationships, and expectations that are not explicitly stated. Where moderate levels of stress, which is referred to as eustress, have been known to be advantageous to employees and organizations, by enhancing focus, productivity, and innovation, high or prolonged levels of stress have been found to be negative. Excessive stress can cause different health problems such as burnout, anxiety, depression, and physical diseases such as heart disease and sleeping disorders. It may even deter cognitive functioning, decision making, job satisfaction, which results in lower productivity and work quality. The effects of stress are not limited to the individual employees but may adversely affect the performance of the entire organization, increasing absenteeism and decreasing the quality of work. As such, stress management is a crucial factor in ensuring a healthy, productive and motivating work environment.

Keywords: Stress, eustress, organizational stress, managerial style, work control, workload, deadlines, interpersonal relationships, employee well-being, productivity, burnout, anxiety.

1.Introduction

Stress may be defined as any alteration in the normal functioning of the body or mind, either physically, emotionally or psychologically. It is a normal reaction to the needs or the stress we encounter in our everyday life. There are many causes of stress within an organizational setting, most of which arise as a result of work-related issues, including managerial style, work control, workloads, deadlines, interpersonal relationships, and unclear expectations. These are the factors that may lead to stressful work environment which may either encourage or interfere with the performance and well being of an employee(1).

Some degree of stress which is commonly known as eustress is in fact beneficial not only to the organization but also to its employees. It can act as a driving force and assist people to remain focused, be more productive, and meet deadlines. It is also possible that small amounts of stress might promote innovation, enhance problem-solving skills, and personal and professional development. Although some level of stress can cause employees to become more motivated to reach their personal and organizational objectives, it might make them feel more motivated.



FIGURE 1 Understanding Stress in the Workplace

But on excessive or chronic basis, stress may cause harmful influence in the body, mind, and psychology of employees. Excessive stress over a long period can cause health problems of all kinds, such as burnout, anxiety, depression, and even physical diseases such as heart diseases, sleep disorders, and compromised immune

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systems(2). It can also reduce cognitive functioning, deteriorate decision making and lead to waning job satisfaction and motivation. The adverse effects of stress on employees may also extend to the entire organization such as low productivity, increased absenteeism, and less quality work being produced.

What Is stress?

Stress was defined by Hans Selye as non-specific response of the body to any demand; it can be positive or negative. He is called the father of stress research.

What Is Workplace Stress Management?

Workplace stress is a term used to refer to the psychological and physiological responses of workers who fail to cope with the workload they are exposed to. This can be caused by other factors such as a challenging workload, poor working environment, strict deadlines and lack of support(3).

What is stress management at work place? "A broad set of occupational and work demands as well as environmental stressors" (Quick & Henderson, 2016, p. 2) have an effect on the complex interplay between the working environment and our psychological, cognitive, and physiological responses to stress.

2.Reasons for work-related stress

Reasons for Work-Related Stress refer to the various factors and conditions within the workplace that contribute to an employee's experience of stress. Such stressors may be both external and internal and may include the character of the job itself as well as interpersonal relations and organizational policies. High job demands, long working hours, tight deadlines, inability to control work, scarcity of resources, role ambiguity and poor communication are common causes of work-related stress. Also, stress could be caused by a hostile working environment, i. e. poor work culture, poor management or personal incompatibility. Stress can also occur to employees as a result of job insecurity, lack of career advancement opportunities or an inability to be recognized as a result of their efforts. Combined over time, they may overwhelm the employees, impairing their mental, emotional, and physical health, reducing their productivity, job dissatisfaction, and burnout(4). The reason behind this is that when organizations are aware of these reasons they can act upon them and alleviate the stress that comes with work which can lead to a healthier and more productive working environment.

Some of the common causes of work stress include the following:

Long working hours, heavy workload, organisational restructuring, rigid timeframes, and adaptation to tasks Lack of control and job security tedious work, lack of job skills, over-supervision, unfavourable working environment and a lack of appropriate resources poor-quality tools and limited promotion opportunities catastrophic events, e.g. death in the workplace or being held up by the armed force. poor relationships with superiors or colleagues.

The effects on the organisation may include:

High level of absenteeism High employee turnover Time management problems Low level of output and performance Low level attitude Lack of motivation Employee grievances have escalated. More reports of events, accidents, and illness.



FIGURE 2 Analyzing Work Stress Causes and Effects

Task demands:

Job insecurity, workload, occupation, etc.

Role demands:

Role conflict and ambiguity.

Physical demands:

Workplace, lighting, and temperature.

Interpersonal demands:

Staff density, leadership style, and personality conflicts.

Causes of stress At the office The causes of stress can be divided into two groups based on the origin.

Effects of stress on a working person may include:

diabetes, obesity, heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure.

reduced performance in the workplace, anxiety, sadness and insomnia(5).

3.Stress Management Techniques in Workplace

Stress Management Techniques in the Workplace are defined as those strategies and practices that are adopted to enable employees to manage stress and mitigate it at their workplace. The methods used are supposed to encourage a healthy and balanced attitude towards managing work related pressures in such a way that stress does not adversely affect the physical health or mental health of an individual and the overall performance of the organization. Personal coping and organizational interventions that mitigate stressors, enhance resilience, and promote a positive work culture can help to manage workplace stress. The methods may involve time management, relaxation training, habitual physical activities, good human relations, proper resources and support, work-life balance, and employee assistance programs(6). Organizations can also reduce stress by employing stress management interventions that result in employees better coping with stress, leading to better job satisfaction, low burnout and better work performance in the workplace.

Interventions could consist of

Handling disagreements Workers' well-being Workplace organisation and job redesign Coping mechanisms Fitness programs for staff members with recognised risk factors.

As a measure to minimize stress, delegating some work, share burden with colleagues, leave and time off work with family and love ones, as well as reducing work overtime ranked highest as strategies for stress management.

Verify Reality

When you're under a lot of strain, check your thoughts to determine if they're making you feel more stressed.

Effectively Manage Your Time

Many job stressors can be avoided with effective time and priority management.

Take A Break

Hourly mini-breaks during which you stretch your shoulders, back and neck can provide physical stress relief. This in turn can reduce mental stress.

Maintain Transferency in work environment

Employees that operate in an environment with transparency are aware of both their own and the organization's objectives and ambitions.

Keep your expectations reasonable.

Control both your professional and personal expectations. Give up making promises that you can't fulfil. Saying "I can't take on more at this time with the workload I have" should be kind.

On going counselling

Taking care of stress counselling at work is crucial for both mental and physical health. Finding the sources of stress, managing your time well, talking to your boss, taking breaks, taking care of yourself, and asking for help when necessary are all crucial(7).

Repetition is key.

Schedule some downtime each day, but avoid falling asleep. Close your eyes, relax your muscles, and sit comfortably.

Time management

Time management is essential for attending meetings, meeting deadlines, and working with coworkers in the job.

Prevent or Minimise Conflict with Co-workers

Conflict with others has a negative impact on your mental and physical well-being. Coworker conflict might be hard to avoid, therefore it's a good idea to stay away from it as much as possible.

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FIGURE 3 Strategies for Stress Management in the Workplace

Try your hardest and treat yourself.

While being a high achiever might boost your self-esteem and help you succeed at work, being a perfectionist can cause issues for you and people around you.

Ask for assistance from your management

Talk to your boss, if you have one, about your workload. Try establishing attainable goals and discussing ways to resolve your current problems(8).

Make an effort to manage your time.

Perhaps you're taking on too much at once. It may take longer if you don't give each task your whole concentration. If you ever need to put in more hours to finish a task, try to get your time back(9).

Try these ten strategies to reduce stress:

Be active Assume command Make connections Give yourself some "me time" Take up a challenge Stay away from bad behaviours. Give to others Make smarter, not harder, work.

4.Conclusion

Finally, stress is a natural aspect of the human experience and, in particular, in the workplace, no human experiences the pressures of work and managerial styles, not to mention interpersonal relationships without it. Although stress in moderation may be a motivational factor that increases employee productivity, concentration, and ability to solve problems, overwhelming stress or chronic stress may severely harm the employee and also the organization as a whole. The eustress or positive stress is employed to bring to the fore the argument that the correct level of stress can encourage individuals to achieve their personal and professional goals resulting in growth and creativity. However, when stress is excessive, or chronic, then severe health-related complications may arise, such as burnout, anxiety, depression, heart-related illnesses, and sleeping disorders. Such both physical and mental consequences not only reduce the well-being of an employee but may also reduce cognitive capabilities, decision-making skills, and job satisfaction.

Stress has consequences that are not only personal but also have an impact on the organizational system. A diminished workforce productivity, high levels of absenteeism, and lowered quality of work are only some of the effects of a stressed workforce. The organization can also suffer increased turnover rates, low morale and a toxic work environment as employees deal with chronic stress. Hence, it is imperative that both the organization and the employees be aware of the symptoms of stress and implement stress management techniques to ensure a healthy balance. Employers have a responsibility to ensure they make positive strides towards ensuring that the work environment is conducive enough to promote open communication, realistic expectations and healthy work-life balance. Similarly, people need to focus on self-management and stress coping strategies to reduce the effects of stress. Finally, a culture of well-being and stress management will not only enhance the mental and physical health of workers but will subsequently also increase organizational performance and success over time.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare

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