MANAGING STRESS AT WORK PLACE

Jatesh Kathpalia¹, Aaradhna², Rashmi Tyagi³

¹Assistant Scientist, College of Basic Sciences & Humanities CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar
²Assistant Professor, Om Institute of Technology and Management, Hisar
³Assistant Professor, College of Basic Sciences & Humanities CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar

Abstract-- Stress is a prevalent and costly problem in today’s workplace. Stress management in the workplace has become more and more difficult every day. The environment we work in has a lot more pressure and it’s a lot more stressful that it was for our ancestors.

In this difficult economy, many of us are finding it harder than ever to cope with stress in the workplace. Regardless of occupation, seniority or salary level, we are spending more and more of our work days feeling frazzled and out of control, instead of alert and relaxed. While some stress is a normal part of the workplace, excessive stress can interfere with your productivity and reduce your physical and emotional health. Finding ways to manage workplace stress is not about making huge changes to every aspect of your work life or rethinking career ambitions. Rather, stress management requires focus on the one thing that is always within your control i.e. you.

Stress management refers to a wide spectrum of techniques and psycho-therapies aimed at controlling a person’s levels of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning. Stress produces numerous symptoms which vary according to persons, situations and severity. These can include physical health as well as depression. Stress in the workplace frequently hits you with a double whammy of two-way pressures that come from a combination of both internal and external stressors. Stress results in decreased job satisfaction, reduced production and increased conflicts, which all lead to you guessed it-more-stress. When stress signals are ignored, the person is more liable to become ill or fatigued and to experience injury.

The present review paper is premised on the view that day to day life is becoming complicated and for this stress management plays a very positive role and therefore the causes and tips to reduce stress have been identified so that stress can be managed at the work place and the efficiency of the person is increased to optimum level.

INTRODUCTION

The word ‘stress’ is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as a ‘State of affair involving demand on physical or mental energy.’ Stress at work is a relatively new phenomenon of modern life-styles. The nature of work has gone through drastic changes over the last century and it is still changing at whirlwind speed. They have touched almost all professions, starting from an artist to a surgeon, or a commercial pilot to a sales executive. Job stress poses a threat to physical health. Work related stress in the life of organized workers, consequently affects the health of organizations.

What is it?

Job stress is a chronic disease caused by conditions in the workplace that negatively affect an individual’s performance or overall well-being of his body and mind. In some cases, job stress can be disabling. In chronic cases, a psychiatric consultation is usually required to validate the reason and degree of work related stress.

Causes/Reasons for Stress:

Job stress may be caused by a complex set of reasons. Some of the most visible causes of workplace stress are:

Job Insecurity: Organized workplaces are going through metamorphic changes under intense economic transformations and consequent pressures. Reorganizations, takeovers, mergers, downsizing and other changes have become major stressors for employees, as companies try to live up to the competition to survive. These reformations have put demand on everyone from a CEO to a mere executive.

Economic Factors: That employees are facing in the 21st century have been linked to increased stress levels. Researchers and social commentators have pointed out that the computer and communications revolutions have made companies more efficient and productive than ever before. This boon in productivity however, has caused higher expectations and greater competitions, putting more stress on the employee (Primm, 2005).

The following factors may lead to workplace stress:

- Pressure from investors, who can quickly withdraw their money from company stocks.
- The lack of trade and professional unions in the workplace.
- Inter-company rivalries caused by the efforts of companies to compete globally.
- The willingness of companies to swiftly lay off workers to cope with changing business environments.

High Demand for Performance: Unrealistic expectations especially in the time of corporate reorganizations, which sometimes put unhealthy and unreasonable pressures on the employees, can be a tremendous source of stress and suffering. Increased workload, extremely long work hours and intense pressure to perform at peak levels all the time for the same alert. In this case, both the worker and their family members live under constant mental stress. There is also the constant pressure to keep up with technological breakthroughs and improvisations, forcing employees to learn new software all the times.

Workplace Culture: Adjusting to the workplace culture, whether in a new company or not, can be intensely stressful. Making oneself adapt to the various aspects of workplace culture such as communication patterns, hierarchy, dress code, if any, work space and most importantly working and behavioural patterns of the boss as well as the co-workers can be a less of life. Maladjustment to workplace culture may lead to subtle conflicts with colleagues or even with superiors. In many cases, office politics or gossips can be major stress inducers.
Richardson and Rothsetin (2008) viewed on stress management interventions, employing meta-analysis procedures. A total of 36 studies were included which represented 55 stress interventions. These were few stress interventions focussed at the organizational level.

**Stress Management Techniques/How to Manage Job Stress?**

There are a variety of steps you can take to reduce both your overall stress levels and the stress you find on the job and in the workplace:

- Taking responsibility for improving your physical and emotional well-being
- Avoiding pitfalls by identifying knee jerk habits and negative attitudes that add to the stress you experience at work
- Learning better communications skills to ease and improve your relationships with management and co-workers. Moreover, some important tips to manage job stress are:

1. **Recognize warning signs of excessive stress at work:** When we feel overwhelmed at work, we lose confidence and may become irritable or withdrawn. If we ignore the warning signs of work stress, then can lead to bigger problems. Some of common causes of excess workplace stress are – fear of being laid off; more overtime due to staff cutbacks; pressure to perform to meet rising expectations but with no increase in job satisfaction.

**Signs and symptoms of excessive job and workplace stress:**

- Feeling anxious, irritable or depressed
- Sleeping problems
- Fatigue
- Trouble in concentrating
- Social withdrawal
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope

2. **Reduce job stress by taking care of yourself:** When stress at work interferes with your ability to perform in your job, manage your personal life, or adversely impacts your health, it’s time to take action. Start by paying attention to your physical and emotional health when your own needs are taken care of, you are stronger and more resilient to stress. The better you feel, the better equipped you will be to manage work stress without becoming overwhelmed. Taking care of yourself doesn’t require a total lifestyle overhaul. Even small things can lift your mood, increase your energy and make you feel you are back in the driver’s seat. Take things one step at a time and as you make more positive lifestyles choices. You will soon notice a reduction in your stress levels, both at home and at work.

- Get moving – Aerobic exercises – activity that raises your heart rate and makes you sweat – is a hugely effective way to lift your mood, sharpens focus and relax both the mind and body.
- Make food choices that keep you going – low blood sugar can make you feel anxious and irritable, while eating too much can make you lethargic.
- Get enough sleep – not only can stress and worry can cause insomnia but a lack of sleep can leave you vulnerable to even more stress. When we are well-rested, its much easier to keep our emotional balance, a key factor in coping with job and workplace stress.

3. **Reduce job stress by prioritizing and organizing:** Here are some suggestions for reducing job stress by prioritizing and organizing your responsibilities:

**Time management tips for reducing job stress:**

- **Create a balance schedule:** Analyze your schedule, responsibilities and daily tasks.
- **Don’t over-commit yourself:** Avoid scheduling things back-to-back or trying to fit too much into one day. Drop those tasks that are truly not necessary.
- **Try to leave earlier in the morning:** Never add to your stress levels by running late.
- **Plan regular breaks:** Stepping away from work to briefly relax and recharge will help you be more, not less productive.

4. **Reduces job stress by improving emotional intelligence:** Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage and use emotional satisfaction and success at work, emotional intelligence matters just as much as intellectual ability.

Emotional intelligences in the workplace has four major components:

- **Self awareness :** The ability to recognize your emotional and their impact while using gut feeling to guide your decisions.
- **Self management:** The ability to control your emotional and behavior and adopt to changing circumstances.
- **Social awareness:** The ability to sense, understand and react to other’s emotions and feel comfortable socially.
- **Relationship management:** The ability to inspire, influence and connect to others and manage conflict.

**REFERENCES**

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