Stress Management At Workplace

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Abstract

Stress management is the most important subject of contemporary competitive world wherein every individual, irrespective of gender, race, religion, caste, class etc. is undergoing stress and strain due to a multiplicity of factors-specially ever growing cut throat competition in today’s achieving society in which every sky is not the limit of success. Varied kinds of artificial needs have been created in the quest of leading a luxurious life and tendency of showing of material possessions. It is high time when social scientists must seriously come out with certain well tested strategies of preventing and coping stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress is the reaction that people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. It arises when they worry that they cannot cope. The pressures of working life can lead to stress if they are excessive or long-term. Examples of long-term or chronic stress are the fear, frustration and anger that may be produced by an unhappy relationship with one’s boss or with a difficult customer, and the unhappiness of an unsuitable job. Up to a certain point an increase in pressure will improve performance and the quality of life. However, if pressure becomes excessive it loses its beneficial effect and becomes harmful. Employers should become more aware of the factors that are most likely to lead to excessive pressure and stress in the workplace (Somaz & Tulgan, 2003). While it will not be possible for organizations to remove all these stressors it is important that they work with employees and managers to identify which aspects of the working environment are causing most difficulties and work together for improvements.

This paper will discuss various techniques of stress management at workplace, measures to reduce workplace stress and interventions when sources of stress cannot be eliminated.

Keywords: Signs of stress, Organisational stressors, Stress-Related Illnesses, workplace stress.
Introduction
Stress management is the most important subject of contemporary competitive world wherein every individual, irrespective of gender, race, religion, caste, class etc. is undergoing stress and strain due to a multiplicity of factors—specially ever growing cut throat competition in today’s achieving society in which every sky is not the limit of success. Varied kinds of artificial needs have been created in the quest of leading a luxurious life and tendency of showing of material possessions. It is high time when social scientists must seriously come out with certain well tested strategies of preventing and coping stress.

Stress is the reaction that people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. It arises when they worry that they cannot cope. The pressures of working life can lead to stress if they are excessive or long-term. Examples of long-term or chronic stress are the fear, frustration and anger that may be produced by an unhappy relationship with one’s boss or with a difficult customer, and the unhappiness of an unsuitable job. Up to a certain point an increase in pressure will improve performance and the quality of life (Selye, 1950).

However, if pressure becomes excessive it loses its beneficial effect and becomes harmful.

Signs of Stress:
The first signs that indicate individuals may be suffering from excessive pressure or stress are changes in behaviour or appearance (Lehrer et al., 2007). A guide on the kind of changes is following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work performance</th>
<th>Regression</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Declining/inconsistent performance</td>
<td>● Crying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Uncharacteristic errors</td>
<td>● Arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Loss of control over work</td>
<td>● Undue sensitivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Loss of motivation/commitment</td>
<td>● Irritability/moodiness</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Indecision</td>
<td>● Over-reaction to problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Lapses in memory</td>
<td>● Sulking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Increased time at work</td>
<td>● Immature behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Withdrawal</th>
<th>Aggressive behaviour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Arriving late to work</td>
<td>● Malicious gossip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Leaving early</td>
<td>● Criticism of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Extended lunches</td>
<td>● Vandalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Absenteeism</td>
<td>● Shouting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Resigned attitude</td>
<td>● Bullying or harassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Reduced social contact</td>
<td>● Poor employee relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Elusiness/evasiveness</td>
<td>● Temper outbursts</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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Other behaviours
- Out of character behaviour
- Difficulty in relaxing
- Increased consumption of alcohol
- Increased smoking
- Lack of interest in appearance
- Accidents at home or work
- Reckless driving

Physical signs
- Nervous stumbling speech
- Sweating
- Tiredness/lethargy
- Upset stomach
- Tension headaches
- Hand tremor
- Rapid weight gain or loss

Organisational stressors
Employers should become more aware of the factors that are most likely to lead to excessive pressure and stress in the workplace. According to McGonagle and Ronald (1990), problems identified most frequently by employees as causing stress at work are:
- Heavy targets and workloads
- Insufficient resources
- Long working hours
- Rapid change
- Conflicting priorities
- Uncertainty/insecurity

Techniques of Stress Management
- **Become knowledgeable about stress**
  Understand the process and effects of stress. Identify your major sources of stress. Anticipate stressful periods and plan for them. Find your optimum stress levels in all the areas of your life-be honest about what you really can cope with.

- **Develop a healthy life style**
  Drink in moderation. Eat a balanced diet, have regular meals and always begin the day with an adequate breakfast. Cut out to reduce smoking. Minimize you use of foods high in sugar, salt and saturated fats. Increase you fiber intake. Maintain your recommended weight. Adopt yoga as a way of life.

- **Manage your time**
  Determine your priorities, distinguish between what must be done and what it would be desirable to do.

Measures to reduce workplace stress
Schultz & Schultz (2010) have stated that, it is in a manager's best interest to keep stress levels in the workplace to a minimum. Managers can act as positive role models, especially in times of high stress, by following the tips outlined in this article. If a respected manager can remain calm in stressful work situations, it is much easier for his or her employees to also remain calm (Hardy, 1998). According to Boman et al. (2003) there are a number of organizational changes that managers and employers can make to reduce workplace stress. These include:
**Improve communication**
- Share information with employees to reduce uncertainty about their jobs and futures.
- Clearly define employees’ roles and responsibilities.
- Make communication friendly and efficient, not mean-spirited or petty.

**Consult your employees**
- Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their jobs.
- Consult employees about scheduling and work rules.
- Be sure the workload is suitable to employees’ abilities and resources; avoid unrealistic deadlines.
- Show that individual workers are valued.
- Offer rewards and incentives.
- Praise good work performance, both verbally and officially, through schemes such as Employee of the Month.
- Provide opportunities for career development.
- Promote an “entrepreneurial” work climate that gives employees more control over their work.

**Cultivate a friendly social climate**
- Provide opportunities for social interaction among employees.
- Establish a zero-tolerance policy for harassment.
- Make management actions consistent with organizational value

**References**


