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Impact of Stress in Organisations and Managing Stress at Workplace

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Abstract:

In this age of highly dynamic and competitive world, man is exposed to various stresses that is likely to affect his productivity, which in turn will affect the organization's productivity. In this present scenario the influence of staff activities who plays a pivotal role in the organization is studied and therefore this study is considered to be of great significance. To enable staff to perform to their utmost potential it is important to manage stress particularly staff performance in organizations. Although a certain amount of stress can enhance a person's performance, however, too much stress can have a reverse impact on a person's health resulting in lower productivity (Belmonte, 2008). 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 in the long term. Examples of long term and 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 unhappy of an unsuitable job. The influence of various staff members and managerial employees belonging to both public and private sector organizations draw special attention in the study. Therefore the aim of this research is to identify and determine how stress can effectively be managed by the given techniques within the organization to enhance staff effectiveness and performance.

Keywords: Stress Identification, Staff Performance, Workplace Stress, Managing Stress

1. Introduction

Globalisation and Technological innovations have brought about new challenges to employees in the managerial cadre which in turn has paved way the study of mental health and stress management. Stress in the current scenario is considered to be universal and people in almost all walks of life experience to a very great extent. Due to the impact of globalization the influence of stress in this era of high technology speed ,global competition and consumerism is found to be increased at a faster rate. Taking its toll on the physical and psychological health of the employees especially the managers. It is found to be affecting the productivity and functioning of an organization. Workstress is thought to affect individual's psychological and physical health, as well as an organisation's effectiveness. Workers who are stressed are also more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work. The impact of stress free environment on the competitive advantage of the organization cannot underestimated. Researchers carried out in the Indian perspective support the fact that work related stress and mental fatigue is found to affect the Indian employees at the managerial cadre to a very great extent. In such an environment, it becomes the responsibility of the employing organizations and individuals to identify the causes of stress at the workplace make efforts to reduce them for the effectiveness and efficiency of both individuals as well as the organization. This article suggests the importance of stress management and ways and means to enhance creativity both at individual as well as organizational level to be at a competitive advantage.

2. Factors that Cause Stress Within an Organisation

The factors that cause stress is known as a stressor. Stressor begin either directly within an organisation's work environment or in a person's personal life situation which significantly impact their work attitude, behaviour as well as their job performance. Although technology has come a long way in the last couple of years, it has also brought with it a tremendous amount of stress for its users, particularly when new systems and software are being implemented from time to time within organizations. Schernerhorn et al.,(2004) states that stress can increase within an organization that is undergoing organizational performance due to staff cut backs and downsizing. Thus the lack of corporate loyalty can create stress among staff that considers themselves as career employees and those that are close to retirement age.

According to Old,(2009), some of the main factors that cause stress within an organization are :

- Establishing unclear and unrealistic goals for staff.
- Unable to meet staff requirements.
- Job uncertainty.
- Discrepancy over organization values.
- Lack of support, respect and admiration from superiors.

- Excess work overload and unrealistic deadlines due to poor management.
- Some of the other factors that cause stress within an organizations are :-
- Establishments of new goals and policies by top management in areas in which they have no knowledge about. This causes operational effectiveness within the organization and results in stress among the staff working in these areas as they are the ones that have to adapt to the change while knowing the reality of the situation without being able to say or do anything about it.
 - Lack of training and guidance. Many organizations try to save on the cost of training end up losing more money due to poor performance by staff.
 - Unclear job requirements, tasks and responsibility.
 - Highly competitive internal work environment.
 - The “Me first” and “I know all” attitude in leadership where management and work colleagues disregard other’s opinions and feelings for their own.
 - Poor working conditions consists of excessive noise, poor surroundings, lack of air cross ventilation and inadequate or outdated equipments.
 - Poor communication and lack of trust among staff and management and/or departments.
 - Government regulations including high taxation policy impacting the autonomy and initiative of staff at work.
 - Poor decision making due to stress relating to depression and fear of failure as well as success.
 - Organisational development comprising of more than too much personel resulting in management inefficiencies.
 - Inequality among staff due to disorganized management’s ability and lack of attention within organization.
 - The use of drugs to enhance performance which in turn affect the individual’s abilities to maintain stable relationships at work and at home.

3. Stress Factors Impacting Staff Performance

Organizations in today’s world are significantly being confronted by intensification being confronted by intensification of global competition. Hence to obtain maximum competitiveness it is recommended that Human Resources (HR) should address and work alongside Employee Relations (ER) in order to achieve competitive advantage. Both HR and ER share common features such as taking into account organizational effectiveness as a primary goal including recognizing and focusing on employment and workplace issues. While identifying solutions with regards to the conflict of interest that satisfies both employees and employers.

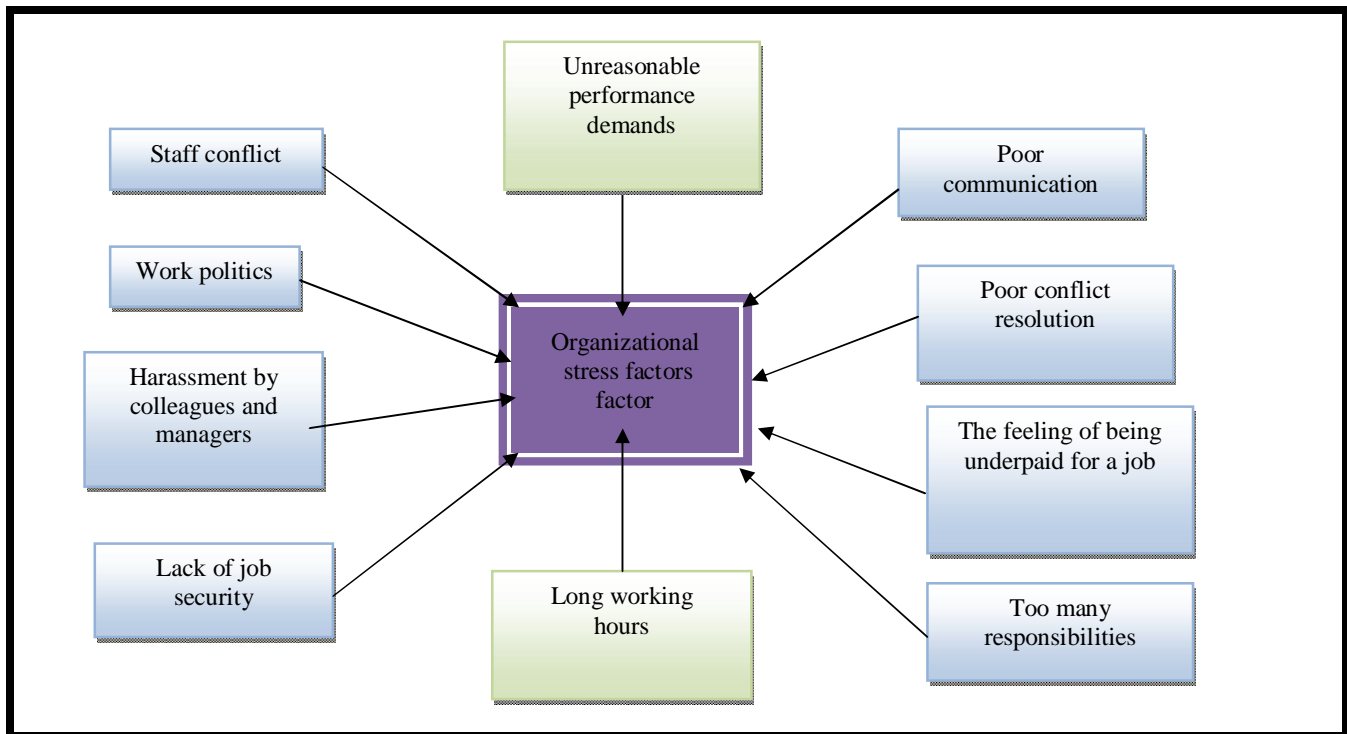


Figure 1

Therefore for an organization to maintain its competitive advantage it is vital to have stability and core values with the Human Resource Deptt. taking responsibility. This can ensure that feed values and their needs within an organization is recognized as failure to do so can result in loss of trust, demoralization, frustration and litigation. Hence, to enhance organizational performance by managing stress it is vital for an organization to invest in hiring, training and developing employees.

4. Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity is an another important factor that causes stress when an organization undergoes restructuring. According to the manager's perspective the majority of organizations encounter a number of problems relating to integration of technology including role ambiguity when it comes to forming alliances (Gunarante and DU Plesis, 2007). Role ambiguity can arise due to conflicting and unclear demand of managers, William, (2009), states that when role ambiguity is less in an organization there is a reduction in work related stress.

5. Poor Organizational Stress Management

Poor organizational stress management can also lead to loss of focus and distraction among staff which in turn deteriorates their performance. This further has a significant impact on an organization and its productivity leading to poor customer service, more mistakes and accidents , high staff turn over increased use of sick leave and litigations relating to employment.

6. Impact of Stress: (Medically Proven Stress)

- Heart Disease
- High blood Pressure
- Irritability
- Depression
- Diabetes
- Insomnia
- Fatigue
- Skin diseases
- Asthama
- Kidney disorders
- Breathing problems

7. Organizational Stressors

Employees should become more aware of the factors that are most likely to lead to excessive pressure and stress in the work place. 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
- Poor communication
- Lack of involvement
- Poor delegation
- Lack of trust in management
- Lack of control

8. Managing Stress at Workplace

When stress is high within an organization, it is important for managers to think and act in a positive manner.This helps reduce stress among subordinates and other staff members as staff tend to act in accordance to how management react during such times.The methods and guidelines stated below are too much important for managers including other staff comprising of lecturers and administration.

9. Enhance Communication

- Staff roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined.
- Staff must be made aware of their jobs prospects during training to minimize ambiguity.
- Communication should be carried out regularly and efficiently among staff in a pleasant manner.

10. Conduct Staff Discussions

- Staff should feel that they are valued by discussing scheduling of work activities and rules within the organization.
- Encourage staff participation in decision making.
- Assign appropriate workload among staff that matches their skills and abilities.

11. Provide Staff Incentives

- Reward staff for their achievements.
- Offer career development prospects for staff.
- Congratulate staff verbally and by offering certificates of merit based on their performance.
- Create a friendly work environment.

12. Develop a Social Environment

- Social gatherings among staff should be carried out from time to time.
- Harassment at work should not be accepted.(Belmonte,2008).

Stress to an extent can be both a good thing as it helps motivate people and bad in excess as it can cause a person in making irrational decisions. Stress if not managed properly can also cause sickness and death(Waters and ussery,2007). Hence some of the other methods and guidelines that must be considered by all staff to minimize and manage stress more efficiently within an organization are follows:-

8.1.Improve Business and Time management skill

Staff members should have a realistic “To Do List” that is achievable and within their capabilities.If anyone is in doubt and have any queries, they should not hesitate in asking for help, staff within an organization should also be frank and should learn to take on extra responsibilities that they think they will not be able to cope with.

8.2.Take Regular Breaks

In order to reduce stress staff should take breaks regularly by either taking a stroll or then closing their eyes at their work stations to unwind from everything.Walking up and down stairs is also a form of physical exercise that helps reduce stress among staff while enhancing their focus at work.

8.3.Be a good talker and an equally good listener

Staff members should try and consider everyone’s point of view and try and see things from others perspectives rather than their own.

8.4. Work environment

An organization must have an work environment where staff feel comfortable working by taking into account manageable factors comprising of temperature, level of sound,lighting and so on.

8.5. Avoid anxiety over factors that are not in your control

By not thinking and worrying about things that you cannot change is another way of reducing stress levels.

8.6. Get extra sleep

Research shows that getting six to eight hours of sleep everyday is very important and can significantly influence a person’s performance at work.Sleeping for required hours a day can radically reduce stress and increase a persons energy levels enabling them to concentrate better at work.

8.7. Perform short breathing exercise

Breathing exercises can help reduce stress considerably.By breathing deeply through our nose and mouth we can boost deeply through our energy levels as we increase the intake of oxygen which in turn helps lower stress.

8.8. Cheer up

Staff within an organization can reduce stress by simply smiling , laughing and cracking jokes with their colleagues.Hence fostering a work environment that is pleasant towork in helps reducing stress at work.

8.9. Discover a mentor or friend within the organization

To have a mentor or friend with whom a person can share things and get advice from is another way of reducing stress.

8.10. Try and have a positive attitude

To think and act positively helps reduce stress to a great extent as compared to a great extent as compared to being negative. Staff members should associate with people that share the same views as others that think negative would further lower a person’s moral.(Reh,2009)

8.11. Reward staff achievement

Paying of performance remunerations schemes and promotions can further reduce stress by using cash rewards as a dominant incentives for improving staff performance.

Moreover, an organization should have certain programs in place to enable staff in managing stress more efficiently. Treven and Protocan (2005) states that stress management programmes comprising of short yoga, meditation and breathing exercises as part of relaxation training can significantly reduce stress among staff within an organization. They further explain how certain wellness programmes in the form of workshops can be developed to train and retain the physical and mental wellbeing of staff by guiding them on how to quit smoking, reduce weight and lower the intake of any toxic substances including alcohol.

Apart from the above points, stress can also be managed by means of the following table:

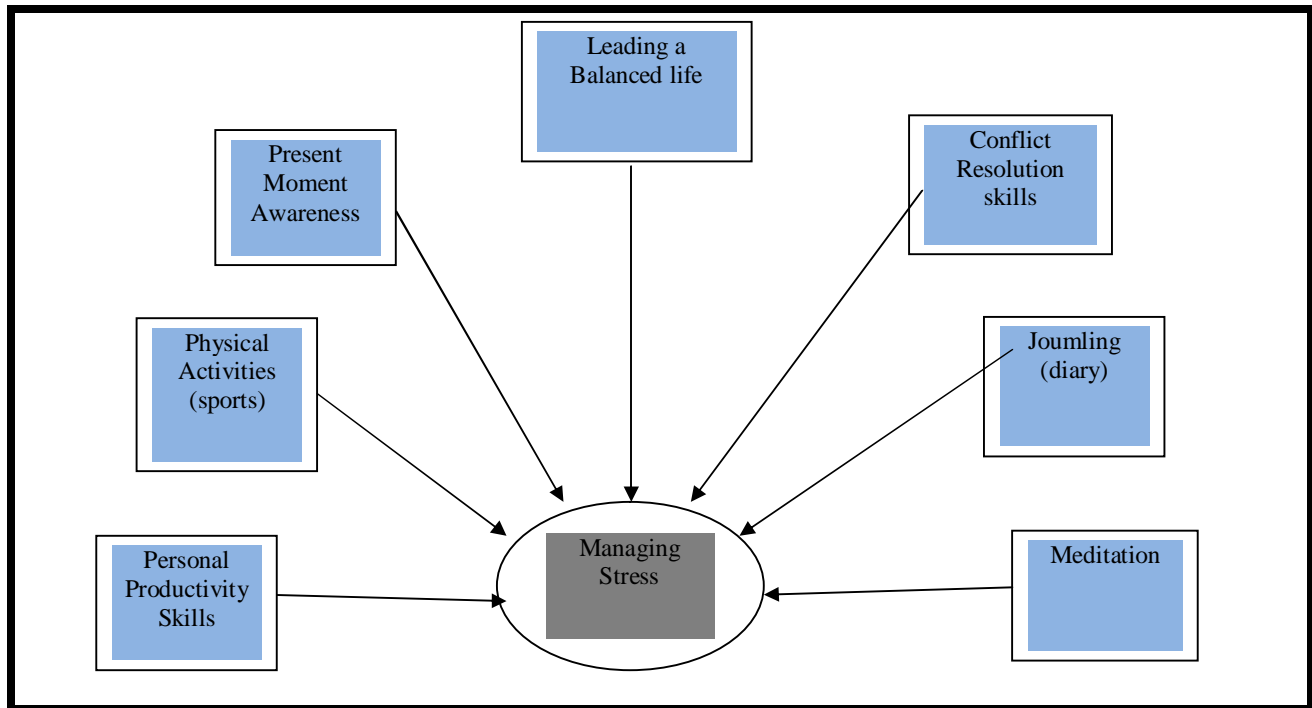


Figure 2

9. Conclusion

From the above information, it is concluded that, it is management's responsibility to ensure that all staff and processes are managed appropriately to enhance standards. One of the main roles of managers other than managing people and processes is to have an extensive knowledge about staff behavior and performance. Hence it is evident that managers need to be proactive and well-trained to manage staff more efficiently and especially downsizing to increase staff morale and an organization's continued existence. The right employee or manager always lives longer within the organization if he is applying good attitude without any stress and having a proper contribution towards the development of the organization.

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