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An Empirical Study on Workplace Stress Faced by Employees in the Oil Refinery Industry

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ABSTRACT

Job stress results from the interaction of the worker and the conditions of work. Views differ on the importance of worker characteristics versus working conditions as the primary cause of job stress. Stress is defined as a feeling of tension that is both emotional and physical. It can occur in specific situations. Everybody has a level of tolerance or inner capacity to tolerate a situation. A person acquires tolerance level from his social environment, educational background and hereditary. Further, studies probing work place stressors in relation to factors such as work environment, and nature of work are far and few. The main aim of the study is to understand the "Employees workplace stress" in petrol filling stations. The study focused on various factors like (1) employees perception about stress (2) Erratic work schedule (3) Conflict between one another (4) satisfaction level. The number of samples collected by the researcher is 98 respondents, who are employees in oil refinery industry. The Organization must begin to manage people at work differently, improve physical work environment, treat them with respect and value their contribution. Resolving conflict in healthy, constructive ways can strengthen trust between people and relieve workplace stress and tension. When handling emotionally-charged situations, stay focused in the present by disregarding old hurts and resentments, connect with your emotions, and hear both the words and the nonverbal cues being used.

KEYWORDS: Oworkplace stress, employee perception, erractic work schedule, conflict

1. INTRODUCTION

For every individual there is an optimum level of stress under which he or she will perform to full capacity. If the stress experience is below the optimum level, then the individual gets bored, the motivational level of work reaches a low point and it results to careless mistakes, forgetting to do things and thinking of things other than work during work hours and also leads to absenteeism which may ultimately lead to turnover. Stress is defined as a feeling of tension that is both emotional and physical. It can occur in specific situations. Different people perceive different situations as stressful. Stress management refers to the effort to control and reduce the tension that occurs with a situation that is considered difficult or unmanageable.

The greater the number of severe life stressors that one has recently experienced, the greater is the negative impact on ones psychological and physical health. A number of organizational studies have supported this additive conceptualization of aversive events.

The causes of stress are varied. In general, job stress is a result of the interaction between the worker and the conditions of work. Perhaps the most commonly cited cause is a lack of time or an excessive workload. Lack of time may stem from responsibilities at home, at work, or a combination of both. But other triggers (or stressors) are possible. Resolving conflict in healthy, constructive ways can strengthen trust between people and relieve workplace stress and tension. When handling emotionally-charged situations, stay focused in the present by disregarding old hurts and resentments, connect with your emotions, and hear both the words and the nonverbal cues being used. If a conflict can't be resolved, choose to end the argument, even if you still disagree. Working too much, fear of accident or injury, poor interpersonal relationships with co-workers or supervisors, or the threat of layoff or job loss can all be sources of stress in the work environment. The Oil refinery industry includes the global processes of exploration, extraction, refining, transporting (often by oil tankers and pipelines), and marketing petroleum products. The largest volume products of the industry are fuel oil and gasoline (petrol). Petroleum (oil) is also the raw material for many chemical products, including pharmaceuticals, solvents, fertilizers, pesticides, and plastics. Petroleum is extracted from underground reserves; then it is cracked or "refined" into end products for various uses. The petroleum industry thus has two parts: an oil exploration and production industry upstream and a refinery industry downstream.

INDIAN MARKET:

The oil companies, both public and private, are so large a part of the economy that the cross-subsidy regime cannot be sustained in all circumstances; sooner or later, the government has to bring domestic prices closer to international prices. Hence the state of competition in the international market and international prices are important for the domestic market.

The major players in the Indian market are

- CPCL
- BPCL
- IOCL

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Jamal M finds that job stressors were significantly related to employees' psychosomatic problems, job satisfaction, unproductive time at the job, and absenteeism. Type A behavior was found to be an important moderator of the stress outcome relationship.

Hans Selye was one of the founding fathers of stress research. His view in 1956 was that "stress is not necessarily something bad – it all depends on how you take it. The stress of exhilarating, creative successful work is beneficial, while that of failure, humiliation or infection is detrimental." Selye believed that the biochemical effects of stress would be experienced irrespective of whether the situation was positive or negative.

The most commonly accepted definition of stress (mainly attributed to Richard S Lazarus) is that stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that "demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize." In short, it's what we feel when we think we've lost control of events.

Brief. A. P. and J. M. Atieh (1987), argues that it is not safe to assume that job conditions that have an adverse impact on affective reactions to the job will also have a negative impact on overall subjective well-being. Women and gender in research on work and family stress.Baruch, Grace K.; Biener, Lois; Barnett, Rosalind C.American Psychologist, Vol 42(2), Feb 1987, 130-136.

Salancik & Pfeffer,(1978) and uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) are drawn on to propose a model in which communication variables lead to two stress variables then to burnout and finally to job satisfaction and occupational commitment.

Chen W (2002) Stress at work can reduce safety and increase chances for occupational injury of workers working on oil platforms.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the study is to understand the "Employees Workplace stress" in oil refinery industry. The study focused on various factors like

(1) employees perception about stress
(2) Erratic work schedule (3) Conflict between one another (4) satisfaction level.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Samples

The number of samples collected by the researcher is 98 respondents are employees in oil refinery industry.The study was conducted in Chennai city.

Measures

The questionnaire is prepared in a well-structured and non-disguised form. The questionnaire was collected various filling stations in Chennai city. The study covered the areas like Mylapore, Nungabakkam, Alwarpet, and Manali.

4. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS & ANALYSIS

Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between the erratic schedule and their attitude towards other employees in other departments.

Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between the erratic work schedules of the employees

Hypothesis 3: There is no association between the levels of satisfaction with the years of Experience.

Table:1.1 Demographic variables

Variables		frequency	percentage
AGE	25 – 30	18	18.37
	30 – 35	42	42.86
	35 – 40	38	38.78
	Total	98	100.0
GENDER	MALE	49	50.0
	FEMALE	49	50.0
	Total	98	100.0
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	UG	68	69.39
	PG	30	30.61
	Total	98	100.0
WORK EXPERIENCE	< 5 YEARS	26	26.53
	5 - 10 YEARS	55	56.12
	> 10 YEARS	17	17.35
	Total	98	100.0

Table:1.2

Variables		frequency	percentage
EXPECTED TO PERFORM JOBS FOR WHICH WAS NOT TRAINED	Always	39	39.80
	Sometimes	19	19.39
	Often	20	20.41
	Seldom	10	10.20
	Never	10	10.20
	Total	98	100
WORKING UNDER TIGHT TIME DEAD LINES	Always	44	44.90
	Sometimes	15	15.31
	Often	17	17.35
	Seldom	10	10.20
	Never	12	12.24
	Total	98	100
I FEEL LIKE CAUGHT BETWEEN CONFLICTS AT WORK:	Always	49	50.00
	Sometimes	21	21.43
	Often	13	13.27
	Seldom	7	7.14
	Never	8	8.16
	Total	98	100
CONFLICT BETWEEN WHAT EMPLOYER EXPECTS EMPLOYEE TO DO	Always	54	55.10
	Sometimes	20	20.41
	Often	7	7.14
	Seldom	9	9.18
	Never	8	8.16
	Total	98	100
FREQUENT DISAGREE WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER DEPARTMENTS	Strongly agree	25	25.51
	Agree	27	27.55
	Neither Agree or Disagree	11	11.22
	Disagree	22	22.45
	Strongly disagree	13	13.27
	Total	98	100
ERRATIC WORK SCHEDULE	Strongly agree	22	22.45
	Agree	30	30.61
	Neither Agree or Disagree	19	19.39
	Disagree	13	13.27
	Strongly disagree	14	14.29
	Total	98	100
LIKING OF PEOPLE IN WORK PLACE	Strongly agree	31	31.63
	Agree	27	27.55
	Neither Agree or Disagree	12	12.24
	Disagree	18	18.37
	Strongly disagree	10	10.20
	Total	98	100
WORKING MORE THAN 8 HOURS	Yes	58	59.18
	No	40	40.81
	Total	98	100
MISUNDERSTOOD OR UNAPPRECIATED BY CO-WORKERS	Strongly agree	23	23.47
	Agree	24	24.49
	Neither agree nor disagree	15	15.31
	Disagree	10	10.20
	Strongly disagree	26	26.53
	Total	98	100
ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS OR BUREAUCRACY FRUSTRATE MY ABILITY TO DO A GOOD JOB	Strongly agree	50	51.02
	Agree	14	14.29
	Neither Agree or Disagree	9	9.18
	Disagree	17	17.35
	Strongly disagree	8	8.16
	Total	98	100
ORGANIZATION SHOULD ENGAGE ACTIVITIES LIKE YOGA TO HELP EMPLOYEES RELIEVE STRESS	Yes	61	62.24
	No	37	37.76
	Total	98	100

Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between the erratic schedule and their attitude towards employees in other departments.

Table: 1.3

χ^2_{cv} CHI-SQUARE	DF	N
10.97	16	98

INTERPRETATION:

From the above it is interpreted that the hypothesis is rejected since the calculated value is greater than table value, and hence there is a no relationship between the erratic schedule of employees and their frequent disagreement over other employees.

Table 1.4

Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between the erratic work schedules of the employees

SOURCE OF VARIANCE	DF	SUM OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARE (VARIANCE)	F value
Between columns	4	36	9	1.52
Within columns	20	117.84	5.892	
TOTAL	24	153.84		

INTERPRETATION:

Since the calculated value is less than table value the hypothesis Ho is accepted, there is no relationship between employees who have on the job responsibilities for others and employees who feel misunderstood or unappreciated by co-workers

Hypothesis 3: There is no association between the levels of satisfaction with the years of Experience.

Table 1.5

SOURCE OF VARIANCE	DF	SUM OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARE (VARIANCE)	F value
Between columns	4	829.6	207.4	1.12
Within columns	5	925.4	185.08	
TOTAL	9	1755		

INTERPRETATION:

Since the calculated value is less than table value the hypothesis Ho is accepted. There is an association between the level of satisfaction with the years of experience of the employees.

6. FINDINGS

The finding from the demographic status reveals that the majority of the employees belong to the age group 25-30 (18.37%), 42.7 % belong to the age group 30-35, and 38.78 % belong to the group 35-40.The respondents have 5-10 yrs of experience (56.12%) .It is found that 69.39 % of the respondents are PG qualified with an MBA or equivalent degree and 30.61 % of the respondents are UG qualified. 35.71% the employees said always they were asked to do many things at a little time. 39.80% of the employees said they were always expected to do jobs for which they were not trained for, 44.90 % of the employees have said they always work under tight time dead lines, 43.88 % of the respondents replied that they were always expected to do work than reasonable, 47.96% of the employees agree that they always learn something new at work, 50% of the respondents feel that they were caught between conflicts at work always 25.51 of the employees strongly agree that they disagree with other department 22.45% of the employees strongly agree that they have an erratic work schedule, 30.61% of the employees agree that they have an erratic work schedule, 31.63 % of the employees strongly agree that they like the people who they work with, 27.55 % of the employees agree that they like the people who they work with, 47.95% of the employees say that they are in the wrong organization or in the wrong job, 62.24% of the employees feel that the organization should engage activities like yoga to relive stress, 37.76% of the employees feel that there is no need for the organization to engage activities like yoga to relive stress.

7. CONCLUSION

Most oil company workers in our study regardless of whether they work in the office, laboratory, or oilfield, believed that they were pronouncedly exposed to stress. Over three quarters of all subjects believed their job was stressful, but the perception of specific stressors depended on the workplace. The results call for additional training of workers in communication skills and preventive measures to improve health and safety in the workplace. Stress in the work place has become the black plague of the present century. Much of the stress at work is caused not only by work overload and time pressure but also by lack of recognition and praise, and more importantly, by not providing individuals with the autonomy to do their work as they would like. They must begin to manage people at work differently, improve physical work environment, treat them with respect and value their contribution.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER SCOPE FOR RESEARCH

Since the study is limited only to Chennai city, the result may not be applicable to other geographical regions. This study helps to know the causes of stress and how to reduce the same in employees since it is a well known fact that a healthy and sound employee is a productive employee. Time factor limits the study to a sample of ninety eight respondents. So, the study can be further extended to other regions.

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