



## Managing the stress and improving productivity in women employees: a study with special reference to Kerala

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### ABSTRACT

*Work stress can be defined as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it". The word stress has been borrowed from the natural sciences. Stress management encompasses a range of modalities designed to treat the physical and emotional toll of stress. Both positive and negative events in one's life can be stressful. However, major life changes are the greatest contributors of stress for most of the people. This paper examines the level of stress among women employees working in private sector undertaking in Kerala. It suggest some pragmatic suggestions to manage stress effectively*

### KEYWORDS :

#### Introduction

Stress and Stress management have received adequate attention in the recent past. There are large numbers of Publications available in the Subject of Stress management. There are Social, Religious and Professional institutions engaged in the area of Stress management with the sole intention to reduce the level of the effects of stress among the people in specific and among the working force in Particular. In spite of all the efforts taken to reduce the stressful life, it is amply clear that stress do exist among the working population with no exception to the Women Employees. Occupational stress is a pervasive problem among blue-collar workers, and women employees are especially vulnerable, yet this population is rarely addressed.

The word 'stress' is defined by the oxford dictionary as "a state of affair involving demand on physical or mental energy". Condition or circumstances (not always adverse), which can disturb the normal physical and mental health of an individual. In medical parlance 'stress' is defined as a perturbation of the body's homeostasis. At one point or the other everybody suffers from stress. Relationship demands, physical as well as mental health problems, pressure at workplaces, traffic snarls, meeting deadlines, growing-up tensions- all of these conditions and situations a valid causes of stress.

In a broad context, stress management is part of health promotion. Strategies in health promotion include stress management, nutrition, and exercise. Stress management is the psychological part of health promotion. Stress management involves learning how to regulate the stress response in the body. Typically the learning process with stress management begins with general information about stress, what is and how it works.

#### Review of Literature

Work stress can be defined as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it". The word stress has been borrowed from the natural sciences. During the past, stress was equated with "force, pressure, or strain" exerted upon material object or person which resists these forces and attempts to maintain its original state. Thus, stress in engineering is known as "the ratio of the internal force brought into play when a substance is distorted to the area over which the force acts".

#### Generally, the term used to refer to

1. Stimulus(due to external force acting on the organism)
2. Response (due to changes in physiological functions)
3. Interaction ( due to interaction between an external force and the resistance opposed to it, as in biology) and
4. More comprehensive combination of the above factors.

#### Definition of Stress

In medical terms stress is described as, "a physical or psychological stimulus that can produce mental tension or physiological reactions

that may lead to illness." When you are under stress, your adrenal gland releases corticosteroids, which are converted to cortisone in the blood stream. Cortisone have an immune suppressive effect in your body.

#### Definition of stress management

The person's current ways of coping with stress and anxiety are explored, suggestions are made to build on these strategies, and relevant practice is provided using simple stress management and relaxation techniques Stress management encompasses a range of modalities designed to treat the physical and emotional toll of stress. The approaches used can include bodywork, meditation, counseling, energy work, and education.

#### Causes of stress

Both positive and negative events in one's life can be stressful. However, major life changes are the greatest contributors of stress for most of the people. If the people have to travel a lot and have to move from place to place, it can cause stress. Individuals can also be under stressed if they are about to enter some new environment. They may be going to join a new organization. Some events which are generally once in a life time can also cause stress. There are some major events which undergo stress. They are:

- Time pressure
- Competition
- Financial problems
- Noise
- Disappointment

#### Stress Impact

Stress impact is a research study of long time absence (LTA) from work due to stress related health problems. The project will address the following;

1. What characteristics, if any, are shared by the people who are long term absent from the work related reasons?
2. What factors do people say are important to them in making a decision to take sickness absents?
3. To what extend does a person's family set up influence the decision to take sickness absents or to stay at work?
4. What is the individual perspective, the institutional and professional perspective to LTA, and how they relate to each other?

#### Ten factors which are the most important contributors to the employees' stress

- Employees are not being free to talk with another
- Personal conflicts on the job
- Employees not being given enough control over their work
- Inadequate staffing or budgeting
- Management and employees not talking openly

- Management preserved as unsupporting
- Below average sick and vacation benefits
- Having to deal with bureaucratic red tape
- Lack of remuneration or reward for doing a good job

### Methodology

The research on Managing the stress and improving productivity in women employees was done among women employed in private sector companies in Cochin. Specific objectives were to find the level of work life balance of the women employees, to find the work related issues affecting women employees, to find the stress affecting women, to examine the exhaustion in women employees and to find the alternative ways for better stress management in the organization. The researcher adopted descriptive research design. Simple random sampling was the sampling method used by the researcher. Lottery method was sampling technique. The sample size was fifty respondents. Closed ended questionnaire were used for collecting data.

### Response rate

Questioners were distributed to 50 women employees selected from private sector companies in Cochin. Utmost care was taken to obtain the questioners get filled without delay to avoid bias in response. The researchers were successful in 42 cases. While eight respondents asked for a week time to fill it up. Three of them gave the filled up questionnaire within a week without further pressure. While two others submitted after a second reminder. Three others were reluctant to respond to researchers' further calls and hence they were rejected. Out of fifty selected candidates forty seven responded promptly and hence the response rate is ninety four percent.

### Main Findings

The major findings of the research are listed as follows

#### Work Load

It is found that seventy five percent of the respondents have agreed that they are given enough time to do the works assigned to them, sixty three percent of the respondents have disagreed that they are not able to prosper and progress in their career. Fifty two percent of the respondents have disagreed that they are being neglected in the team and sixty two percent of the respondents have agreed that they work under considerable tension. Fifty three percent of the respondents have disagreed that they have difficulty in concentrating of work and forty nine percent of the respondents have disagreed that they are over loaded with too many works.

#### Emotional Exhaustion:

It is found that fifty three percent of the respondents are drained emotionally from their work. Fifty nine percent of the respondents have agreed that their life is burden and sixty three percent of the respondents are disagreed that they have difficulties to take decision and fifty one percent of the respondents are agreed that they get nervous when they didn't meet organizational requirements.

#### Vulnerability:

It is found that forty nine percent of the respondents have disagreed that they love to take risk when the stakes are high. Ninety one percent of the respondents have disagreed that they have thoughts of suicide in their mind when they were undergoing the worst stress situations of life. Ninety two percent of the respondents have agreed that their life is a series of achievements and challenges

#### Physical:

It is found fifty percent of the respondents have agreed that they are getting 7-8 hours of sleep. Fifty two percent of the respondents have disagreed that they are having frequent headache while doing the job and eighty one percent of the respondents have disagreed that they are becoming restless and can't keep stiff while working.

#### Organizational Commitment

Eighty nine percent of respondents were proud of their work place, and forty four percent of the respondents have disagreed that the changes should happen in the company.

#### Conclusion

Some people are more susceptible than others to stress, for some, even ordinary daily decisions seem insurmountable. Deciding what to have dinner or what to buy at the store, is a seemingly, monumental dilemma, and there are those who seem to thrive under stress by becoming highly productive being driven by the force of pressure. A good way to start for many people is to cut out artificial stress reducers such as alcohol, which can mask symptoms and often make symptom worse. Eat a well balanced diet which include plenty of fruits and vegetables as well as foods which are high in complex carbohydrates, moderate amounts of protein, and low in fat. Avoid excessive amount of caffeine which has been shown to increase anxiety. An adequate level of anxiety is good as it motivates the individual to stay focused and give her best, but if anxiety is more than the desired level, it impedes performance. Examination is comparable to a marathon, which requires slow and steady strides. What is most critical is self critical is self organization and time management. Finally from the employee's perception we concluded that most of the workers are aware of stress but they don't know the consequences of it. Some of the workers are undergoing physical stress due to heavy work and mandatory overtime. In order to reduce this effect they should be given proper rest and breaks at regular intervals. Apart from the physical stress they are also undergoing personnel stress due to their financial conditions; it is also conducted that they are maintaining a good relationship with their supervision, subordinates and co-workers. This has to be maintained in order to solve the problem in future; they should make the workers to work actively in the work spot by motivating, solving problems, by counseling etc.

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