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Management

A Review On Job Stress: Concept, Causes And Remedy

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ABSTRACT

Seeing the complicated nature of the concept of job stress also called as work or occupational stress, it is a challenging task to come up with a single generalized definition of job stress. As it is a well-known truth that a sole technique or approach is not capable of elucidating the extent of the phenomenon. So, the motive of the present study is to offer a standard assessment of a number of the demanding conditions surrounding the conceptuality of job stress in literature. Further, the proven understanding relating to the nature and causes of job stress have been examined in light of the conceptual typology of Murphy (1995) and Michie (2002) that portrays bases of place of job stress which has been classified as arising from the environment and content material of work. These stress bases are certainly considered to produce grim organisational and auxiliary-organisational effects like low morale, bad overall performance, career insecurity, absenteeism, health issues, work-life clash, employee turnover and other adversities that threaten progressive goals of organization. As a corrective measure to this, stress remedial methods have been reviewed so that managers can recognize the importance of imparting powerful stress control strategies to augment the personal well-being of the workers and also boost the organisational productiveness.

KEYWORDS : Job insecurity, Job stress, place of work, Stress control strategies, worker well-being.

Introduction
Concept
Job stress is a universal development that has been found to boost adverse health, performance and general well-being issues in various organisational and behavioral studies. However, Colligan & Higgins (2005, p. 90) claim that job stress may be a difficult scientific construct that needs primary knowledge and understanding of the "parent concept" called stress. Broadly speaking, stress is usually perceived in terms of general physiological and psychological reactions that provoke adversarial mental or physical health conditions once a person's integrating capabilities are overstretched. Thus, job stress is popularly represented as arising when there are incongruities between the physiological demands among a work and the inability of workers to either manage or deal with such work demands. But Dewe & Trenberth (2004) advocated that the varied nature and perception of stress experiences arising at work makes it complex to get a singular definition of stress from a band of readings and reports on the influence of stress on workers' well-being and productivity. So, over the years, stress has been outlined in numerous ways that as either a stimuli, or a response, or a stimuli-response combination or a transactional inter-relationship between people and their surroundings. Stress as a stimulant is supposed as embracing the characteristics of the surroundings that are alarming and have the result of inflicting strain reactions within the individual open to such external options, things or environmental factors. Thus, the originator of the stimuli-based models of stress concentrates on what happens to the individual and not to that what happens within the individual. In contrast to this, stress as a response mainly considers stress from associate individual's psychological reactions to stressors. According to old school of thought, influential study of Selye (1974) outlined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand upon it" and that includes a high propensity of disturbing normal equilibrium in physiological functioning of the individual involved. Additionally, Selye formerly theorized the dissimilarity between eustress and distress. "Eu" being a Greek word which suggests 'good' was understood to mean that eustress signified positive reactions to external stressors whereas distress is termed as reactions to stressors that are interpreted as bad and adverse to well-being (Colligan & Higgins, 2005). Therefore, Selye claims that in spite of either stress reactions are positive (eustress) or turn out negative (distress) outcomes, the bodily stimulant still undergoes its overall metabolic developments for the purposes of either forming reactive secretions to conflict, accommodate or take away stressful situations.

Though, it is recommended that the true nature of the above discussed definitions lead to a comprehensive and commonly known definition of the stimuli-response relationship. The combinations of the definitions come out of understanding and knowledge advancement that stress is not just an individual reaction to external factors.

But stress has been stated as the interface between the individual and bases of demands that weakens wellness. This outlook considers that stress can be overpowering, erratic, vague and sometimes unacquainted and, making it favourable in some situations than others and within some individuals than others (Michie, 2002). But then again, the basic suggestions of the 'interactionist' approach towards stress according to Cooper & Cartwright (1997, p. 7) exhibits "stress as the outcome of a fundamental lack of fit between the requirements and demands of the individual and the environment". As result of this, the lack of a unified definition of the 'stress' over the time has created various models used in regard to stress research. A few stress theories range from individual-environment fit theory, job features structure (Hackman and Oldham, 1980, job demand-control framework (Karasek, 1979), effort-reward inequality concept (Siegrist, 1996) and the transactional theory of psychological stress and managing (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Some additional models which have gained popularity over the years in directing stress research and practice in spite their difference in popularity and experiential support (Mark & Smith, 2008). On the other hand, one of the significant stress models out of the stack is the transactional theory of psychological stress and managing.

The key characteristics of transactional theory of psychological stress given by Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) are the evaluations and coping frames that describe how individuals primarily appraise stressful situations in terms of possible risk through an initial evaluation (i.e. primary appraisal) which further updates the processes that decides an individual's growth of coping strategies (i.e. secondary appraisal) used to accommodate, decrease or eliminate impending stressors. Thereupon, in context of job stress, the transactional approach observes the relationship between the workers and their work environment by doing personal appraisal of workers that how they make use of their work place and assess the potential health hazards involved in the working environment. Afterwards, problem-solving and emotional-focused coping approaches were advised to handle such health challenging demands. Conversely, a drawback of the transaction model was established, though it encompasses variables such as subjective perceptions and the potential influence of individual differences in evaluating stress responses, the intrinsic complications in this personality and behavioral variations make it difficult to empirically assess the enormous nature of peoples' reaction and coping pattern under stressful situations. Generally quantitative techniques used in job stress research have been criticized as it considers only a static time moment for obtaining data (Mazzetti & Blenkinsopp, 2012). Furthermore ,approaches involving surveys and questionnaire designs also fail to cope up with the evolving complications in timeliness, past history and changing subjective understanding of individual's stress experiences. Subsequently, whenever a transactional perspective is used, the limitations already present in such methodologies gets

aggravated. From the abovementioned critical points on how the various definitional outlook of work related stress has spawned significant differences as to whether work stress should be categorized as either burdens of the working environment, or tensions present within the affected person, or the interactional or transactional association of that person and external factors. Taking these arguments further, the heterogeneity and differences of stress models seem to further aggravate the situation of evaluating an integrated meaning of work related stress. Additionally, the methodological limitations pointed out earlier also limit our full understanding of the prevalent nature of work stress certainties that are continuously changing particularly in today's modern world that is highly affected by technological developments cutthroat competition in international market place, faster globalisation and automation of various jobs and systems.

This has caused unparalleled variations that are aggravating stressful working situations. As a result, an overall review is of vital importance to study factors that leads to to stress within the working environment.

Workplace Elements Causing Stress
Still the amount of threats arising out of the workplace stress is obvious within the coverage of stress literatures (McVicar et al., 2013) but the major sources that have been found to be responsible for work stress (see figure 1) are those dimensions that are related to the constituents

and framework of work. Taking this debate ahead, stress experiences that originate from the constituents of work are the factors that are intrinsically associated to the job role as exhibited in figure 1 below. In this, the worker struggles with job characteristics that create the inability of the individual to fit between requirements of the job and his own capability to deal with such demands. The diagram below depicts that there are various factors inside the workplace that can create negative organizational and extra-organisational consequences which often end up damaging mental and physical well-being of the individuals. The first are factors that are limited to the constituents of the job role (see figure 1). Factors such as workload (either overload or underload), extreme work pace (time pressures), meaningless jobs, low work authority, external turbulences (such as noise and congestion) and toxic work structures are few instances that can damage physical and mental well-being of employees employed in such unfortunate workplace atmosphere. Other factors of work stress within Murphy's model of work stress factors are hypothesized to exist within the context of work (Murphy, 1995). Murphy's model was reframed by Michie (2002) and it now included both organizational and extra-organisational results that are produced because of these sources of stress at workplace. For example, the second category concentrates on how stress is brought by the role and responsibility of the individual in the organization. Managers that are burdened with higher responsibilities and without proper specification about the roles they are supposed to play are more prone to the stress occurrences of this type or where employees have to answer multiple demands of their seniors and others inside the organization concurrently and in an impossible way as well. In such cases, role ambiguity and role conflict leads individuals to role stress. A situation wherein the employees' role is not well defined or not properly perceived by him and also if there is no proper information with him regarding his role as in how to do his role properly can be defined as Role Ambiguity. While role conflict takes place when jobs demands and expectations from members of the employee's role set (e.g. superiors, colleagues and even the organisation) are mismatched and contrasting (Ackfeldt & Malhotra, 2013). The third type of contextual stressors comes from problems that damage career development. Unquestionably the reality of stress related problems that stem out because of lack of job security is that they can lead to hampering of career progression and may also end up negatively influencing employee's well- being and their commitment to their work. For example, the continuous alterations in the nature of work due to technological growth utilised by modern organisations to improve workplace performance and maintain competitive advantage has steered to a growth in nonpermanent contracts and provisional work appointments caused by downsizing, outsourcing, mergers and acquisitions, restructuring and re-organising work schedules to stay on course with the pace of global competition and technological superiority (Kossek et al., 2012).

As a result, Stressful working atmosphere is a result of such changes in modern working life and is leading to low job independence, job uncertainties, poor promotional prospects and even situations where the employee is "trapped in a spot with no chance for advancement" (Colligan & Higgins, 2005).
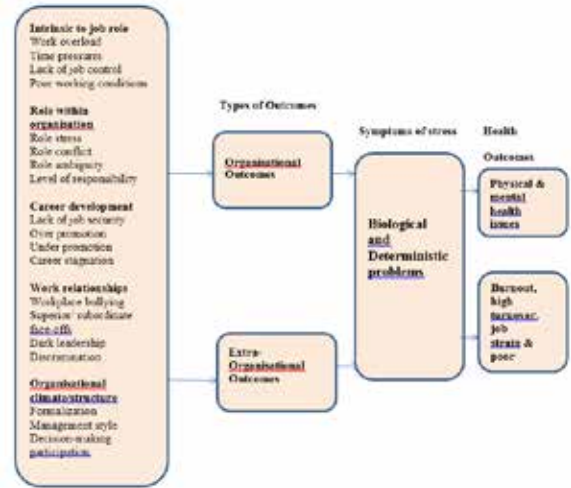
Sources of job stress

Fig. 1: A schematic framework of factors associated with Job-related stress & outcomes

Source: Murphy (1995) & Michie (2002)

The fourth category that serves as a contextual contributor to workplace stress is the predominant work relationships within the organisation. Tricky relationships between managers, assistants, co-workers in form of office bullying, intimidations of violence, partial opinions, unaccommodating management, harassment, dark leadership, artificial social or physical workplace seclusion and other divergent behaviours most often cause social disturbance which, as Dillard & Fritz, (1995, p. 12) pointed out, could result to a number of concerns ranging from "passive to active dislike, enmity, disregard, or disparaging mutual collaboration" inside the organisation.

The outcome of such instances can cause job anxiety, fatigue, personal damages and negative turnovers that further lead both employee and organisation to a situation where both are bound to be in a loose loose situation. The concluding category is related to stress induced reactions birthing out from organisational structure and environment. In this category, one of the major aspects of the structure of maximum organizations is formalization. Formalization denotes to the extent to which roles inside the organization are standardized and the degree to which the content of work is steered by rulebooks and principles. The employees, in a highly formalized environment may have very little autonomy or freedom to execute their work more productively. The resut of such formalization creates inflexible procedures and directions of assignment, there is a great chance that employees will feel high amount of stress coming out of inapt focus of control required for work demands. Similarly, corporate environment orbits around the combined sensitivities of employees on several facets of organizational work-life. This contains business objectives that drive great performance, superiority in HR policies and best practices, management style, work design, technology, employee commitment, communication systems, motivational environments, incentive mechanisms, working environments etc. As a result, existences of role stress including of role conflict and role ambiguity, inaccurate communication flows, disjointed job characteristics, lowly pay, job uncertainty and little social value to work rising from a set of properties inside a corporate environment are forecasters that can yield negative organisational and extra-organisational consequences.

Stress Outcomes
From the above-mentioned deliberations of the five distinct, but yet interconnected factors that causes stress inside the work zone, evidences found in literature advocates that work stress can adversely

effect both organisational and extra-organisational results (see figure 1). Job-related stress has become an ever inceasing concern because it is found to have substantial economic repercussions for the organisations and negative publicity as well (Kelloway et al., 2008). In practice, the poorest organisational results manifest from effort-reward imbalances (ERI) hypothesized by Siergrist (1996) who suggests that job stress results from the incongruities between the hard work individuals put into their work and the rewards they obtain (Kinman & Jones, 2008). Thus, where an individual's inherent characteristics of hard work or even (over)commitment to work demands is not responded with satisfactory obligation in form of financial entitlement (like salary, wages or bonuses), job security,self- esteem and career advancement, then it is expected to provoke negative sentiments and continuous employee strain. The ERI prudence echoes with the social exchange theory which suggests that the rational man weighs the benefits versus the costs of any social or economic affiliation. Therefore, where the resultant benefits of labour is considered negative in proportion to the input in performance and intellectual capabilities, then common biological and deterministic stress results such as low morale, poor health, exhaustions manifesting in form of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced work achievement, absenteeism, negative affective conditions and ultimate withdrawal intentions are non-avoidable (see figure 1).

Gradually, organisational stress also leads to a spillover influence onto nonworking realms of individuals with likewise high tendencies of triggering family complications, personal health concerns and other crises in his life. On the other hand, the deeply studied facet of extra-organisational stress effects is work-family clash as work-life disparity. This work-life disparity can be recognised as a type of interrole conflicts in which the accomplishment of role demands of one field (i.e. work commitments) affects the performance of other role like family duties or social life events (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). These inter-role struggles could lead to time-based conflict, stress-based and attitude-based conflict that denotes the idea that forms of behaviours vital in one role may be in disagreement with the preferred features of the other role (Messersmith, 2007).

However role conflict is two-directional, it is suggested in the present paper that extra prominence should be given on handling stress inside the workplace as individuals are border crossers who are constantly making behavioural and emotional transitions consciously or unconciously which positively or negatively impacts both realms of life. Thus, when incongruity of roles takes place, spill over experiences depict the magnitude of permeability in which the over-arching results of job stress stimulates the psychological patterns of behaviour. Additionally, Messersmith (2007, p. 430) indicated that work-life clash caused by job stress takes several types of invasiveness into family time, relaxation activities, or other inability to disengage from one's domain of work psychologically. Although stress can also be self-inflicted, it is the hypothesis of this paper that a attention to comprehensive management of stress at the work place might offer solutions to diminish the extent of its negative effects that alter individuals' non-working roles. The current review agrees with existent literature on occupational stress that suggests that analysis and interpretation of the efficiency of stress controlling practices in the organisations is the best way to take research ahead on job stress (Kelloway et al., 2008).

Stress Remedy
This last segment studies various discussions on stress controlling practices. Le Ferve et al.

(2006, p. 548) generally describe stress management interventions (SMIs) as "any focused action taken to decrease or relieve the stress experience by individuals in the implementation of their job activities". In developing the diverse frameworks of intervention, DeFrank & Cooper (1987) were amongst the chief researchers to theorized that most of the stress interventions generally concentrated to assist and benefit the individual, the organisation and then combining both individual-organisational edges. These several levels of interventions have been commonly conceptualised as primary, secondary and tertiary SMIs. Primary interventions are described as finest practices in the organization intended at decreasing, altering or eradicating strained job demands that weaken health and task performance (Lamontagne et al., 2007). Illustrations of these plans are job restruc-

turing which abolishes stress elements, labour elasticity practices and organisational culture that highlight and prefer worker's wellness. Secondary interventions are focused to support employees to handle job stress and instances here include wellness programs, scheduled social events, facility of recreational services, stress management training and development. However, Tertiary interventions are considered therapeutic in nature because their aim is to help and assist those workers who are already ill and performing poorly because of the adverse effect of job stress. Remedial measures like counseling, workers assistance programs, rehabilitation centres and disbursements on injury claims fall under this category. But, worries expressed by some SMIs reviewers are directed towards critiquing the degree to which secondary and tertiary interventions are the most commonly embraced stress reductionist methods by employers till now (Ackfeldt & Malhotra, 2013). The method was challenged by Cousin et al. (2004) in their opinions for broader primary interventions given significance and made intervention of 'first choice' by employers (Le Ferve et al., 2006). The apparent motive behind prioritizing proactive interventions is that health risk management that emphases on elimination or eradication of job stress is way more worthwhile than reducing or curing established health damage. Additionally, Biron (2012) stressed that the negative cost related with reduced performance, absenteeism, illness and turnovers are significantly greater when compared to investment cost in making workers present, fit and healthy by applying primary SMIs. That is the reason it is suggested in this review that organisations should initiate more focus mainly on stress prevention that possibly eradicates extreme stressors which always turn out to be counter-productive (Michie, 2002).

Conclusion and Discussion
As mentioned above, an assortment of managerial engagements that seek out to minimize job stressors have become vital for purposes of improving workers psychological capital and welfare. The integration of these proactive interventions within the organizational framework and the psychological frame of workers have also become necessary. Additionally, managerial stress consciousness training, workload amendments, risk identification, creation of social structures that moderate stress effects are considered as prime measures and some effective strategies like clarity of role are advised for better results in organisations. Another vital implication is that the adaptability of working conditions is directly related to the variances in individual's physical, psychological and circumstantial situations of life. Subsequently, organisations should give more consideration to the work-life balance (WLB) of their workers by implementing a several WLB practices and strategies like flexible timing, work sharing, part-time job, home teleworking, funded recreational and amusing activities along with some additional family-friendly policies. Next, a more strategic approach can be taken up to WLB which will promote improved worker performance, better emotional and physical health, job contentment and lower turnover (Kossek et al., 2012). Kellow et al. (2008, p. 56) concluded that the role played by countervailing interventions in serving to diminish job stress causes. The researchers (Kellow & others) also highlighted the countervailing interventions as practices concentrated "on aggregating the favourable experiences of work rather than diminishing the unfavourable aspects". For example, it has been advised that positive growth of the state of psychological resources of workers in the area of self-efficiency, hope, confidence, positivity and resiliency is crucial for health and constructive job behaviour which is necessary to authenticate competitive performances in the organisations in today's time.

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