



Stress management at workplace- A conceptual study of working women combating stress

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ABSTRACT

Today, with progress in all respects, women are facing new challenges in different fields where progress in turn creates new problems. Stress has been defined in different ways over the years. It is the psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressures of the situation. Thus, stress is more likely in some than others and in some individuals than others especially women. Stress can be injurious to the achievement of goals, both for individuals and for organizations. Lot of researchers have thrown light over the stress encountered by working women where they experience stress in different ways and for different reasons. The study is undertaken to have a conceptual view regarding stress at workplaces, identifying major stressors at work and effective strategies to deal with the same.

KEYWORDS : Stress, Employee, Organisation, Women, Workplace.

Introduction

Stress is what you feel when you have to handle more than you are used to. When you are stressed, your body responds as though you are in danger. A lot of research has been conducted into stress over the last hundred years. Some of the theories behind it are now settled and accepted; others are still being researched and debated. Stress is a fact in our daily life. When a person needs help, it means the person feels physically and emotionally disabled. Most people believe that their capacity and capabilities are so little to encounter high level of stress. People were living their own simple life over thousands of years, but an industrial revolution started to change their life in so many aspects. Most working women experience stress levels much higher than male population as they have lower capacities dealing with stressors

Today, with progress in all respects, women are facing new challenges in different fields where progress in turn creates new problems. Over a century, the nature of working has been changed widely, and still these changes are in progress. According to Dr. Audrey Livingston Booth, Director of the Stress Foundation, "Stress itself is a good and valuable human response to the challenge of change. It is an essential and useful part of a healthy life. But, if it is not harnessed or controlled it can drive us to disaster, as when we have been driving far too long with the accelerator hard down, the engine overheating and the bodywork shaking to bits. Stress can be identified in ourselves and in others, and any bad effects can be prevented or cured without drugs" (Livingston Booth, 1985).

Literature Review

Occupational stress is widely recognized as a major problem for both workers and the organizations that employ them. For workers, stress is frequently a factor contributing to accidents, job dissatisfaction, and illnesses such as coronary heart disease, alcoholism, and hypertension (Davidson & Cooper, 1981). For organizations, stress-related problems result in company medical expenses, absenteeism, and decreased productivity. It has been estimated that the national cost of stress to organizations is between 50 and 75 billion dollars each year (Wallis, 1983).

A recent review by Murphy (1984) of studies of worksite stress management programs indicates that stress intervention research is still in the early stages of development but that some progress has been made. If a woman is living with high levels of stress, she is putting her entire well-being at risk. Stress wreaks havoc on a women's emotional equilibrium, as well as her physical health. It narrows her ability to think clearly, function effectively, and enjoy her life. Effective stress management, on the other hand, helps her break the hold stress has on her life, so she can be happier, healthier, and more productive at work. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun—and the

resilience to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on. But stress management is not one-size-fits-all. That's why it's important to experiment and find out what works best for you. Many strategies that are put forward would work better for helping deal with stress.

(Kavitha 2012) focused on the organizational role stress for the employees in the IT sector. She found in her research that, women face more stress than men in the organization and she viewed to be more specific married women faces more stress than the unmarried women. (P.S.Swaminathan, & Rajkumar S. 2013) conducted a study that focused on the levels of stress among the age group, profession, different varieties of jobs, hours of work and the influence of work environment on the degree of stress faced by employees. Stress in an employees' individual in nature. According to (Satija S. & Khan W. 2013) Occupational Stress is as same as Job Stress that needs to be controlled at the workplace otherwise it will negatively affect on employee's work attitudes & behavior. (Viljoen and Rothmann, 2009) have investigated the relationship between occupational stress, ill health and organizational commitment. They found that organizational stressors contributed significantly to ill health and low organizational commitment. Stress about job security contributed to both physical and psychological ill health. Low individual commitment to the organization was predicted by five stressors, such as Work-life balance, Overload, Control, Job aspects and Pay.

Common workplace stressors

Certain factors tend to go hand-in-hand with work-related stress. Some common workplace stressors that women usually experience are:

- Lack of social support especially from families.
- Fear of being laid off.
- Family and other maternity issues.
- Low salaries.
- Conflicting demands or unclear performance expectations.
- Excessive workloads and more overtime due to staff cutbacks
- Pressure to perform to meet rising expectations but with no increase in job satisfaction.
- Pressure to work at optimum levels—all the time!
- Lack of control over how you do your work or not having enough control over job-related decisions.
- Few opportunities for growth or advancement.

Effective self-strategies for managing stress at work.

- **Track your stressors.** Identify situations that create the most stress and how you respond to them. Recording your thoughts, feelings and information about the environment, including the people and circumstances involved the physical setting and how you reacted can help you find patterns among your

stressors and your reactions to them.

- **Develop healthy responses.** Do your best to make healthy choices when you feel the tension rise. Exercise is a great stress-buster. Make sure to set aside time for the things that bring you pleasure. Getting enough good-quality sleep is also important for effective stress management. Build healthy sleep habits by limiting your caffeine intake late in the day and minimizing stimulating activities, such as computer and television use, at night.
- **Establish boundaries.** Establish some work-life boundaries for yourself. Although people have different preferences when it comes to how much they blend their work and home life, creating some clear boundaries between these realms can reduce the potential for work-life conflict and the stress that goes with it.
- **Take time to recharge.** To avoid the negative effects of chronic stress and burnout, we need time to replenish and return to our pre-stress level of functioning. This recovery process requires "switching off" from work by having periods of time when you are neither engaging in work-related activities, nor thinking about work. That's why it's critical that you disconnect from time to time, in a way that fits your needs and preferences. Don't let your vacation days go to waste. When possible, take time off to relax and unwind, so you come back to work feeling reinvigorated and ready to perform at your best.
- **Learn how to relax.** Techniques such as meditation, deep breathing exercises and mindfulness (a state in which you actively observe present experiences and thoughts without judging them) can help melt away stress. Start by taking a few minutes each day to focus on a simple activity like breathing, walking or enjoying a meal. The skill of being able to focus purposefully on a single activity without distraction will get stronger with practice and you'll find that you can apply it to many different aspects of your life.
- **Talk to your supervisor.** Healthy employees are typically more productive, so your boss has an incentive to create a work environment that promotes employee well-being. Start by having an open conversation with your supervisor. The purpose of this isn't to lay out a list of complaints, but rather to come up with an effective plan for managing the stressors you've identified, so you can perform at your best on the job. While some parts of the plan may be designed to help you improve your skills in areas such as time management, other elements might include identifying employer-sponsored wellness resources you can tap into, clarifying what's expected of you, getting necessary resources or support from colleagues, enriching your job to include more challenging or meaningful tasks, or making changes to your physical workspace to make it more comfortable and reduce strain.
- **Get some support.** Accepting help from trusted friends and family members can improve your ability to manage stress. Your employer may also have stress management resources available through an employee assistance program (EAP), including online information, available counselling and referral to mental health professionals, if needed. If you continue to feel overwhelmed by work stress, you may want to talk to a psychologist, who can help you better manage stress and change unhealthy behaviour.

Strategies of employers for assisting women employees in coping with stressful situations in the workplace

- During any stressful events, a positive mindset should be constructed in handling the stressful situation rather than passively retreating and avoiding the situation.
- Confront and explain any stressful perception between

involved persons so that it will show clearer picture on the specific situation.

- Change the way of thinking from stressful to favourable event and imagine how it will turn up if the event has been handled in different way. These three strategies are very closely related and very similar in approach in order to build one's sense of commitment.
- Improve the environment by lightening and brightening up the surrounding with flowers and pictures at the workspace. Search for philosophical and/or spiritual approach in dealing with stressful experience.
- Seek more information about stressful situation. This can be done by reading relevant materials or consult with a knowledgeable person.
- Divert the attention in order to reduce stress by expressing feelings to an uninvolved person or taking part in physical exercise such as walking, running, swimming or biking (Lambert et al., 2003).

Conclusion

The important aspect of every organization is, Stress. Stress has become the most common cause of employee dissatisfaction and lesser productivity, in all the industries. Stress can make an individual productive and constructive when it is identified and well managed at a particular time. Our job is complex, but so is everyone's job. If we have good personal stress management techniques in the workplace, we are more likely to be able to transfer the knowledge and techniques necessary for stress management in the workplace to our clients especially women. Obviously every job is different and needs to be assessed in detail to see what the particular stresses are. Just as every person is different, each individual will use different methods to cope with stress. However, by identifying common factors, good management techniques, and 'best practice', we can avoid and alleviate much of the stress within the workplace. Positive attitude and meditation will be helpful for coping the stress. There are other ways where relaxing, tracking stressors, giving time to oneself, getting support from others and consultation with supervisors can also play a great deal in minimising stress and be efficient at work. Thinking in a broader perspective of life will definitely change stress. The effects of stress ultimately turn to absenteeism, less turnover, anxiety, depression, aggressiveness and so on. The stress, if managed effectively by appropriate strategies from self and others, can be helpful in developing a healthy lifestyle as well as a change in organizational well being.

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