"Managing Stress: The tool to enhance productivity"

Shruti Srivastava | Asst. Professor Mangalmay Institute of Management & Technology Campus: 8 & 9, Knowledge park-II, Greater Noida (U.P.)

ABSTRACT A healthy organization is defined as, "One that has low rates of illness, injury, and disability in its workforce and is also competitive in the marketplace." Prewitt, Ron (2004). But due to globalization of the economy, use of new information and communications technology, growing diversity in the workplace and an increased mental workload, the workplace has changed dramatically.

The organizational characteristics like company size, hierarchical structure and job description leads to stressors, such as role conflict or role overload. These stressors may further lead to stress reaction or strains. Finally, strains can lead to problems like poor job performance, high levels of absenteeism, discontentment among the workforce, high turnover of labor with the loss of good employees, number of ill-health outcome such as cardiovascular diseases, blood pressure, mood and sleep disturbances, upset stomachs and headaches, and disturbed relationships with family and friends etc.

So we can see the potential outcomes of stress at work are rather diverse and do not only pertain to health but also to actual participation in the workforce.

Thus the focus of this paper is on the specific relevance of workplace risk assessments to help, educate and inform all personnel, especially managers, human resources, health, safety and welfare professionals. The paper includes a model of organizational stress highlighting the relationship between potential work-related stress hazards, individual and organizational symptoms of stress and negative outcomes. This will help to understand work-related stress seriously and actively work to improve and maintain employee's health and wellbeing.

KEYWORDS : Job stress, work stress model, stability zone, stress management techniques.

Introduction

Generally, for a company, it was believed that employees were their key assets, but now a day's companies have realized that employees are their most important assets. This is because in a world where technologies, processes, and products are quickly duplicated by competitors, and the pace of change and level of competition are constantly increasing, people are considered to be the most reliable source as their creativity and innovation keeps the company one step ahead. But this has also increased the stress at work.

A study by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations found that India's rapid economic expansion has boosted corporate profits and employee incomes but has also sparked a surge in work-related stress and lifestyle diseases.

Thus it's essential to understand the causes, symptoms and outcomes of work related stress and take necessary measures to remove them.The companies now days take this as a challenge and have evolved various qualitative and quantitative methods to overcome this major issue.

Definitions of stress

There are many definitions of stress.

- **Beehr and Newman-** "Job stress is a condition arising from the interaction of the people and their job and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning".
- **Ivancevich and Matterson-** "Stress is the interaction of the individual with the environment. It is an adaptive response, mediated by individual differences and/or psychological process; that is a consequence of any external (environmental) action, situation or event that places excessive psychological and/or physical demands upon a person".
- **Job Stress:** "The harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker."

Stephen Palmer (Director of the Centre for Stress Management and Centre for Coaching, London)developed a simple model of stress that could be used to explain the relationship between the main stress-related hazards, the organizational and individual symptoms, and the outcomes.

He addressed seven major hazards that can cause stress for employees. One of the hazards, culture has since been subsumed into the other six hazards. However, as employees can relate to different aspects of

culture such as the long-hours culture, bullying culture and so on, we have retained this in the model. Thus culture is seen to influence or be a part of the six main hazards.

Model of work stress:
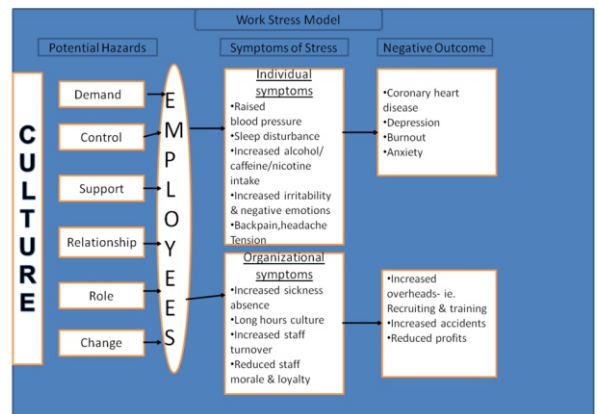
## The six hazards are:

1. Demands: includes exposure to issues such as workload, work patterns and work environment (for example volume and complexity of work, shift work, unrealistic deadlines)
2. Control: how much hold and involvement the person has in the way they do their work (for example control balanced against demands, lack of autonomy, too much supervision)
3. Support: includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organization, line management and colleagues (for example training for core functions of job, catering for individual differences)
4. Relationships: includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behavior (for example bullying and harassment, conflicts)
5. Role: refers to whether people understand their role within the organization and whether the organization ensures that they do not have conflicting roles (for example conflicting roles avoided, vague job descriptions)
6. Change: how the organizational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organization (for example staff understanding why change is necessary, little or no communication to staff, redundancy fears)

These aspects should be worked out as a part of their ongoing process to reduce work related stress.

Use of the model of work stress:

It is important that managers, HR personnel, safety officers and welfare staff have a clear understanding of the main issues involved with workplace stress prevention and management. When stress management consultants and practitioners introduce the concept of stress prevention programs into an organization, the model of stress described in this article enables them during presentations to explain the hazards that need to be assessed, the impact upon the individual and organization.

Techniques of Stress Management
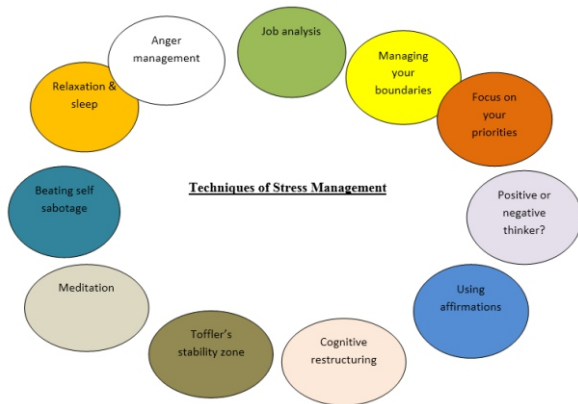
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1. **Job analysis:** Job Analysis is a key technique for managing job overload. It is a useful technique for getting a firm grip on what really is important in your job so that you are able to perform them excellently. It helps you to cut through clutter and distraction to get to the heart of what you need to do.

2. **Managing Your Boundaries:** It's an assertive and responsible way to make sure others respect your needs, while you respect theirs. In the workplace, setting boundaries helps establish a productive work environment. You and everyone you work with have different values, needs, and beliefs about what's right. These differences can lead to conflict, resentment, anger, anxiety, and stress and therefore time should be spent to understand the fences made by him and others.

3. **Focus on your priorities:** Minimizing stress also means looking at our life through a holistic lens: Addressing our needs in each area, whether it is physical, emotional, intellectual, psychological or social. This helps us to focus on priorities and achieve them through our potential act.

4. **Are You a Positive or Negative Thinker?** Positive thinking is often associated with positive actions and outcomes. The optimist is differentiated from pessimist on the grounds of how they think about and interpret the events in their life. Optimistic people are happier and healthier, and enjoy more success than those who think negatively.

5. **Using Affirmations:** Affirmations are positive, specific statements that help you to overcome self-sabotaging, negative thoughts. They help you visualize, and believe in, what you're affirming to yourself, helping you to make positive changes to your life and career. The use of positive affirmations can successfully treat people with low self-esteem, depression, and other mental health conditions.

6. **Cognitive Restructuring:** The Cognitive Restructuring tool is based on the approach to Cognitive Therapy. It focuses on managing "normal" negative thinking. It is now one of the main techniques used to manage anxiety and depression, among others.

7. **Toffler's Stability Zones:** Our world seems to change faster every day. Managing this change we feel stressed and overwhelmed. By creating Stability Zones in the workplace we can renew their mental energy and it may give them the ability to cope better with stress and change. It can be done by doing the following:

a. Make sure that your team members take reasonable lunch breaks.
b. Encourage your team NOT to spend their nights and weekends working.
c. Consider offering workshops on positive thinking, leadership, or delegation.
d. Consider offering incentives for your team to participate in physical exercise.

8. **Meditation for Stress Management:** The techniques and ideas we discuss in this article can help you manage short term stress. However, if you find you're stressed a lot of the time, speak with your family doctor or general practitioner (GP) for advice. Long term stress can cause serious health problems, so it's important to get help if you need it.

9. **Beating Self-Sabotage:** Negative self-talk is something we have all probably engaged in at some time. We attribute our lack of success to inadequacy. This, in turn, strengthens the negative messages we feed ourselves and we get caught in a self-sabotaging cycle that can be very difficult to break.

10. **Relaxation and Sleep:** A key facet of long-term stress is the way that people can sustain intense levels of stress for a while, but then burn out. If this is short-lived, then negative effects will be minimal and success will often be spectacular. If this hard work is sustained for a long time without relief, these people increasingly risk burnout therefore all these things should be monitored to maintain the efficiency and productivity of people though proper rest, sleep and relaxation

11. **Anger Management:** The goal of anger management is not to eliminate anger completely. Rather its objective is to control and direct our anger so that it doesn't control us or damage an important relationship or situation.

Future study:

By referring to the model of stress, it is possible for managers and health or welfare professionals to identify and manage potential work-stress factors. The main emphasis should be on reducing or eliminating hazards and not solely on stress management courses or training.

Realistically, in a comprehensive wellbeing or stress prevention programme; employee counseling, coaching and stress management training have very important roles to play.

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