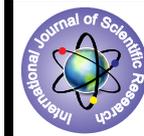


Stress And Its Personal Factors : An Overview



Management

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ABSTRACT

Stress is a condition of tension experienced by individuals when they are subjected to extraordinary physical or psychological demand. When these demands become overwhelming, employees engage in behaviors to reduce them. These relief actions may be conscious and voluntary, or not. A simple result of excessive tension might be seen in display of bad mood. While an extreme condition might erupt in an act of violence. Stress in the workplace today is a day problem for many organizations.

Introduction

In so many workplaces today, the buzzword is 'Stress'. It is included in most conversations, at every organizational level. It affects so many, in a variety of ways, and result in a broad range of sequences. Thus it is appropriate to examine stress, identify its causes, and review management actions to minimize its effects in today's dynamic health care environments.

Stress has been defined in a number of ways and the range of stress management techniques is even wider still. Essentially what most people understand by stress is a physiological or psychological response to external stressors that goes beyond what is accepted as normal.

Psychologists have defined stress as "demands of life". Technically these demands of life are called as "Stressors" and the actual wear and tear of our body for fulfillment of the same is stress. We experience that every one of us is playing different roles in our life at the same time. We are staff at the office, suppose at home, and some of us may be office bearers of some organizations also. All such activities of our roles make constant demands on us. These demands/challenges of life can come from people and events around us as well as from our inner struggles. When these (read "stressors"), increase people often feel that they are under "stress".

These stressors can be many and we can group them as under:

- Emotional stressors-such as fear and anxiety
- Family stressors-like our interaction with family members
- Social stressors-for example, war or riot, etc
- Change stressors-when we alter any important things in life
- Chemical stressors-any drug that a person takes. E.g. cigar, alcohol, etc
- Based on the above, we can classify stress into the following types:
- Personal stress: Related to any event, e.g. appearing for an interview, etc
- Family stress: certain events related to a particular family, e.g. shifting of household, divorce, death of a close relative like father or mother etc.

Social stress: Certain events that effect community at large. E.g. earthquake, bom blast, etc.

Stressors

How do we get stressed?

When we face a crisis or a challenge whether it be physical attack by an assailant or mental strain such as trying to remember someone's name, we all feel anxious. Historically, we have developed a mechanism to face the challenge which is, perhaps, a gift from our ancestors due to their co-habitation with the animal world in the sense, that it is observed in animals also. Any event generates certain amount of anxiety within us. This results in releasing certain hormones to prepare our body for facing the challenge.

The four basic variations in stress:

1. Over stress(hyper stress): uncontrolled, intolerance, inevitable, unbearable and excessive way of expiriciry stress (eg: during the time of fracture of a limb)
2. Under stress(hypo stress): very low level of stress eg: de-

pressive state

3. Good stress(eustress): productive oriented events called as good stress (eg. During the time of pregnancy for a mother, facing job interview, waiting for a loved me)
4. Bad stress(distress): events are unproductive and destructive in nature(loss of loved one, divorce).

Types of Stress

Stress can be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional or psychological strain. However, not all types of stress are harmful or even negative. The few different types of stress that we encounter are:

- **EUSTRESS**, a type of stress that is fun and exciting and keeps us vital.
- **ACUTE STRESS**, a very short-term type of stress that can either be positive (Eustress) or more distressing. This is the type of stress we often encounter in our day-to-day life.
- **EPISODIC ACUTE STRESS**, where acute stress seems to run rampant and be a way of life, creating a life of relative chaos. This is the type of stress that coined the terms 'drama queen' and 'absent-minded professor'.
- **CHRONIC STRESS**, the type of stress that seems never-ending and inescapable. This type of stress can lead to 'burn-out'. Burnout is a syndrome wherein person breaks down physically and emotionally due to continuous over work load over a long period of time.

SOURCES OF STRESS

The sources of stress are classified into two broad categories. They are:

ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS

The several potential stressors in organizations are job qualities, physical environment, roles in organization, relationship, career development and change.

- **Roles in organization** include role ambiguity, role conflict, too little management support and holding a middle management position.
- **Relationships** environment include the working conditions like temperature, noise, lighting, spatial arrangement, crowding, privacy, etc.
- **Physical environment** include the working conditions like temperature, noise, lighting, spatial arrangement, crowding, privacy, etc.
- **Job qualities** include quantitative, qualitative, time pressures, responsibility for things/people, work pace.
- **Organizational structure** lack of participation, no sense of belonging, poor communication, restrictions on behavior, lack of opportunity, inequity in pay and performance evaluation, hours of work.
- **Career development** include status incongruity, under-

promotion, over-promotion, mild-career and obsolescence.

- **Change** in organization and individual.

INDIVIDUAL STRESSORS - individual stressors, include personality, motivation, ability, experience, status, life style, beliefs and values, biographical variables, life stages, locus of control introversion.

FACTORS THAT CAUSE STRESS

- **Interpersonal demands** are pressures created by poor social environment and lack of support or help from co-workers and supervisors.
- **Task demands** are the factors related to the employee's job. They include the designs of a person's job (autonomy and task variety), working conditions and the physical layout.
- **Role demands relate** to the expectations that may be hard to reconcile or satisfy.
- **Organizational structure** can increase stress by excessive rules and employee's lack of opportunity to participate in decisions.
- **Organizational leadership** represents the supervisory of the organization's officials. Some officials create a culture characterized by tensions, fear and anxiety.
- **Individual factors** are the experiences and problems that the employee's encounter in the non-work hours. Primarily these factors are family issues, personal economic problems and inherent personality characteristics.
- **Career concerns** regarding job insecurity and lack of opportunity for growth, advancement or promotion; rapid changes for which workers are unprepared.
- **Environmental conditions** such as unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions such as crowding, noise, air pollution, or ergonomic problems.

CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS

The consequences of stress regarding the individual and the organization are:

ON THE INDIVIDUAL

- **Physical ailments** Head ache, indigestion, insomnia, heart trouble, tendency to sweat for no good reason, nail biting, high blood pressure, etc.
- **Mental** Anxiety, irritability, lack of clear thinking, inability to relax, frustration, helplessness, loneliness, expression of boredom, dissatisfaction, forgetfulness, inability to concentrate, inability to make decisions, etc.
- **Behavioral** Excessive smoking or drinking, withdrawn from relationships, speech disturbances, feeling unable to cope, lack of interest in life, changes in appearances such as dress, complexion, etc.

ON THE ORGANISATION

Low productivity, poor quality, higher costs, increased absenteeism, low job satisfaction, accident proneness, poor interpersonal communications.

Reviews:

In recent years, there has been a plethora of literature examined the job stress among entrepreneurs (Boyd and Gumpert, 1983; Allison, 1997; Akande, 1994; Johnson, 1995; Harris et al., 1999; Rauch et al., 2007). Several researchers found that entrepreneurs are more likely to experience higher levels of stress due to their heavy workload as well as the assumption of risk in their business activities and operations (Dewe and Guest, 1990; Akande, 1994; Harris et al., 1999). Many challenges in the current business environment, characterised by heightened competition, lack of time, lack of space, continuous techno-

logical development, conflicting demands from organisational stakeholders (Hall and Savery, 1986; Edwards, 1992), increased use of participatory management and computerisation (Murray and Forbes, 1986; Johnson, 1999), greater uncertainty and others factors have resulted in higher job stress. Furthermore, dealing and handling the entire business organisation, which entails managing the cash flow, recruiting and retraining staff, meeting the targets, dealing with the red tape and juggling the work or life balance leading to feelings of anxiety (Robertson, 2004; Rythonen and Strandvik, 2005). There are also numerous other factors that contribute to the generation of stress such as economic changes in the environmental factors and responsibility for others (Johnson, 1995). However, the stress phenomenon does not only exist among new entrepreneurs who just formed a start-up business but also affects those who own established firms that have been in business for up to 20 years operations (Robertson, 2004). According to Robertson (2004), the experience of stress among entrepreneurs is much higher compared with other job occupations. The empirical evidence from his study shows that approximately 70% of business owners and managers believed that it is far more stressful running one's own business activities compared to working for other people, while 19% of the survey shows that running one's own businesses is less stressful than working for others. The remaining 11% shows that the experience of stress is more or less the same in both cases. Indeed, much evidence has now accumulated in an attempt to explain the coping strategies in order to assist entrepreneurs in overcoming the problems (Akande, 1994; Johnson, 1995; Kivimaki and Lindstrom, 1995; Kirkcaldy and Furnham, 1999). In spite of the importance of understanding the entrepreneurial stress factors, most studies have been confined to entrepreneurs in developed economies. However, few studies have centred and compared the experience of stress as well as the coping mechanism amongst entrepreneurs in developing countries and Malaysia in particular. Therefore, this study demands to investigate this issue in greater details and seek to contribute to this inchoate literature. According to Hofstede (1996), theories are influenced by their cultural contexts and the universality of many theories is therefore doubtful.

Locus of Control

Originally developed within the framework of Rotter's (1954) social learning theory, the locus of control construct refers to the degree to which an individual believes the occurrence of reinforcements is contingent on his or her own behavior. The factors involved with reinforcement expectancy are labeled "external" and "internal" control. In short, internal locus of control refers to the perception of positive or negative events as being a consequence of one's own actions and thereby under one's own personal control. In contrast, external locus of control refers to the perception of positive or negative events as being unrelated to one's own behavior in certain situations and thereby beyond personal control. As a general principle, the locus of control variable may be thought of as affecting behavior as a function of expectancy and reinforcement within a specific situation (Carlise-Frank, 1991).

Locus of Control and Role Stress

Locus of control has a long history in serving the field of entrepreneurship. Szilagyi et al. (1976) described internal locus of control as a personality trait that causes individuals to view surrounding events as resulting from their own actions. People with an external locus of control, on the other hand, view surrounding events as the result of fate, luck, or powerful others. Organ and Greene (1974) found empirical support for locus of control as an antecedent to role stress. Although Keenan and McBain (1979) argued that there is a lack of conceptual support for this relationship, later researchers have proposed several explanations. For instance, Singh and Rhoads (1991) found that those with an internal locus of control experience less role ambiguity, since they tend to be better informed about their role and task environment. Similarly, Von Emster and Harrison (1998) argued that "internals" have a greater sense of control over situations and experience less role ambiguity as a result.

Conclusion

This extends to entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs who believe their

success or failure is an outcome of their own actions keep track of what to avoid and take greater care in planning, which will lead to reduced levels of role stress. Locus of control likely has an additional, more complicated role. When internal locus of control is low, high entrepreneur role stress reduces job satisfaction more than if the opposite. Support for locus of control as moderating the consequences of role stress has also been found. Grover (1993) argued that locus of control moderated the re-

lationship between role stress and its consequences (i.e., lying and ethical behavior). According to Keenan and McBain (1979), internals react more positively to increased complexities from a high level of role stress than externals. Their research should have particular bearing for the entrepreneurship context. These researchers argued that role stress would be associated with lower job satisfaction among the latter group.

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