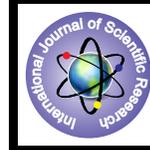


## Organizational Role Stress in CSR



## Management

**KEYWORDS :** Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Work related stress, Stress Management, Role Stress in CSR

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### ABSTRACT

*Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis. It is a culture that promotes a responsible external social behaviour as well as their internal responsibility towards their workforce. Their major role is to satisfy the management on one side and the community on the other side and family on an all together another side. People involved in CSR are left between the deep sea and the devil.*

*Anything which is pertaining to human beings is always very tough to deal with and CSR revolves only around community people making things very stressful. Work related stress refers to those risks that have potential for harming psychosocial or physical harms. Health itself is seen as a primary business and hence people tend to forget that the health of the employees often strongly influence business. Given this attitude and the lack of concern to overcome the work related stress (Stress Management) among the employees take them to a difficult situation and find it very hard to come back. Values and ethical dilemmas related to work and psycho social issues can easily be integrated into CSR approaches. And this cannot be achieved by individual and collective learning process. Therefore, the authors have made an attempt to highlight the present scenario of Role Stress in CSR.*

### INTRODUCTION

The controversies surrounding the process of globalization have raised concerns that multinational companies (MNCs) might be pursuing profit at the expense of vulnerable workforces, environmental degradation and so on. In response to such concerns, MNCs have increasingly taken steps aimed at demonstrating their social responsibility as business organisations. One prominent development has been the elaboration and adoption of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The term "corporate social responsibility" came into common use in the late 1960s and early 1970s after many multinational corporations formed the term stakeholder, meaning those on whom an organization's activities have an impact. It was used to describe corporate owners beyond shareholders as a result of an influential book by R. Edward Freeman, Strategic management: a stakeholder approach in 1984.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR, also called corporate conscience, corporate citizenship, social performance, or sustainable responsible business/ Responsible Business) is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model. And ISO 26000 is the recognized international standard for CSR. Thus, there is no denying fact that CSR has become a part and parcel of an organization and its staff to the extent that it has become a separate wing / department headed and staffed mostly by personnel with Social Work background, who cares for the society and most importantly who can act as a bridge between the management and the community. In spite of CSR having grown to such an extent, the critics argue it as "having no teeth" and doing little to affect, for what it is really meant for. This argument is right from various perspectives and one among them that it has somehow given rise to organizational role stress for the practitioners.

Managers in an organization face A to Z problems while dealing with their own role and staff and now due to the rise of CSR, the managers of men are put in a tight corner by forcing them to deal with the most unpredictable community at large. Role stress arises from the difficulties encountered in role performance. Therefore, it would be very apt to say that today; people in CSR live in the age of stress. The reason is because performing in an organizational role (CSR) invariably needs interaction with a set of connected roles within and outside the organization. As a consequence, Role Stress has also become a part of human existence.

### ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE STRESS – SOURCES.

The degree of stress experienced depends on the functioning of two protective physiological mechanisms:

**"Alarm reaction"** - When confronted with a threat to our safety, our first response is physiological arousal: our muscles tense and breathing and heart rate become more rapid. This serves us well when the threat is the proverbial bull in the field rushing towards us. We either fight or flee. Present day threats tend to be more psychological—for example, unjustified verbal attack by a superior at work. It is usually not socially acceptable to act by "fight or flight", and an alternative means of expressing the resultant emotional and physical energy is required. This falls in the arena of assertive communication.

**"Adaptation"** - The second adaptive mechanism allows us to cease responding when we learn that stimuli in the environment are no longer a threat to our safety. For example, when we first spend time in a house near a railway line, our response to trains hurtling past is to be startled, as described above. Over time, our response dwindles. If this process did not function, we would eventually collapse from physical wear and tear, and mental exhaustion.

### Empirical review

A systematic review of the evidence for work factors associated with psychological ill health and associated absenteeism (Michie and Williams 2001, unpublished data) found the key factors to be:

- **Long hours worked, work overload and pressure**  
People working with the community cannot fix a particular time to work with them. In any sort of consultation or decision making process, the community leaders or at times the whole community need to be involved. And this could be done not at all the time, but with a prior meeting time fixed which may be odd hours for the CSR personnel could lead in the resulting of role stress.
- **The effects of these on personal lives**  
Any normal person is likely to carry the impact of role stress to his home. The situation is even worse for those whose inner strengths have weakened and find it difficult in overcoming his / her role stress. They tend to make a mess of whole issues in hand.
- **Lack of control over work and lack of participation in decision making**  
The nature of work in CSR is as such there cannot be any control over the work because it mainly revolves around the community needs and its dynamism. The most distressing feature is that the CSR personnel do not have the final say in decision making. It is the top management or at times the community decides. The staff of CSR just remains a mere spectator.

### ➤ Poor social support

The attitude of the community in need is that as long as they do not get anything in hand (cash or kind), or even when the benefit is for the society as a whole they tend to show less interest and support. So, when the personnel in charge of CSR come across such community attitude, they become fed up, resulting in role stress.

### ➤ Unclear management and work role and poor management style.

There are only a few success CSR stories here and there. Though, many organizations have undertaken CSR activities, just for the sake of and hence they are not able to succeed in their role. Lack of training for the staff, work role ambiguity and above all poor management style of the CSR activities, finally leave the professionals involved in CSR with role stress and it is they who feel the brunt.

### WORKPLACE FACTORS CAUSING STRESS

The workplace is an important source of both demands and pressures causing stress, and structural and social resources to counteract stress. The workplace factors that have been found to be associated with stress and health risks can be categorized as those to do with the content of work and those to do with the social and organizational context of work. Those that are intrinsic to the job include long hours, work overload, time pressure, difficult or complex tasks, lack of breaks, lack of variety, and poor physical work conditions (for example, space, temperature, light).

Unclear work or conflicting roles and boundaries can cause stress, as having responsibility for people. The possibilities for job development are important buffers against current stress, with under promotion, lack of training, and job insecurity being stressful. There are two other sources of stress, or buffers against stress: relationships at work, and the organizational culture. Managers who are critical, demanding, unsupportive or bullying create stress, whereas a positive social dimension of work and good team working reduces it.

An organizational culture of unpaid overtime or "presenteeism" causes stress. On the other hand, a culture of involving people in decisions, keeping them informed about what is happening in the organization, and providing good amenities and recreation facilities reduce stress. Organizational change, especially when consultation has been inadequate, is a huge source of stress. Such changes include mergers, relocation, restructuring or "downsizing", individual contracts, and redundancies within the organization which again is a great source of role stress for the managers.

### Some of the symptoms of stress in CSR are as follows-

- Absenteeism, escaping from work responsibilities, arriving late, leaving early, etc.
- Deterioration in work performance, more of error prone work, memory loss, etc.
- Cribbing, over-reacting, arguing, getting irritated, anxiety, etc.
- Deteriorating health, more of accidents, etc.
- Improper eating habits (over-eating or under-eating), excessive smoking and drinking, sleeplessness, etc.

It is thus very essential to have effective stress management strategies in an organization so that the detrimental repercussions of stress on the employees as well as their performance can be reduced and controlled.

The factors leading to stress among individual are called as stressors. Some of the factors/stressors acting on employees are -

1. **Organizational factors-** With the growth in organizational stress and complexity, there is increase in organizational factors also which cause stress among employees of CSR.

### Some of such factors are-

- a. Discrimination in pay/salary structure
- b. Strict rules and regulations

- c. Ineffective communication
- d. Peer pressure
- e. Goals conflicts/goals ambiguity
- f. More of centralized and formal organization structure
- g. Less promotional opportunities
- h. Lack of employees participation in decision-making
- i. Excessive control over the employees by the managers

Now it is high time to consider CSR activities as a vital part and parcel of the management because till recently, CSR was considered as a supplementary activity of the business houses. CSR has been very badly hit and need a total revamp with committed and motivated employees strongly backed by the management.

In nutshell, the impact of such an unpredicted event is that it is the community at large is the ultimate sufferer. So, role stress in CSR should not be viewed as an individual issue, instead it (tackling of role stress) should be taken at a broader arena.

### Why is stress a workplace issue? TRENDS & CAUSES

There is emerging evidence that effectively implemented; CSR can have significant impact in motivating, developing and retaining staff. Novo Nordisk, a high-value CSR pharmaceutical company in Denmark, for example, after launching their Values in Action program, which aligns their business objectives with sustainable development principles, saw a 5% drop in staff turnover. A landmark international CSR study of human resource practitioners conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in 2006 reveals that CSR practices are seen as important to employee morale (50%), loyalty (41%), retention (29%), recruitment of top employees (25%) and productivity (12%). And these factors are very much related to causing stress.

Today's world economy embroiled in economic downturn and is very likely to hit the intention of CSR's commitment integrating their CSR beliefs within the financial business model in order to survive the economic turmoil. So again, given this situation, employees are forced to engage in building up CSR which is a very tedious task to do. It is a situation where they have little / nothing to give to the community as a part of CSR, but they have to pose as if they have everything. This precarious situation causes role stress.

All employees within an organization can be vulnerable to stress depending on the pressure they are under at any given time.

Stress can be caused by work as well as by personal issues and problems outside the workplace (e.g. financial or domestic worries). Whatever the cause, stress can leave employees feeling unable to cope with the pressures of work with the result that performance at work suffers.

### A recent study has indicated that:

- Work related mental health problems, including stress, accounted for 9.8 million working days lost.
- It is estimated that the total cost of mental health related sickness absence in Scotland amounted to around £690 million.
- Employees in large workplaces lost on average 0.57 days per worker due to work related stress, in medium sized organizations 0.54 days per worker and in small workplaces, 0.3 days per worker.
- On average every person suffering from work related stress took 27 days off work.

### Research has also shown that work related stress can have adverse effects for organizations in terms of:

- Employee commitment to work
- Staff performance and productivity
- Staff turnover and intention to leave
- Attendance levels
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Customer satisfaction
- Organisational image and reputation
- Potential litigation.

For example, losing just one colleague for an extended period with a stress related illness can have a dramatic impact on the workload and morale of the rest of the team. There is now convincing evidence that prolonged periods of stress, including work related stress, have an adverse effect on physical and mental health and well-being. Stress can also lead to behaviours that are harmful to health, such as skipping meals, drinking too much caffeine or alcohol, or smoking. By taking action to tackle the causes of stress at the workplace, one can prevent or reduce the impact of these problems in the organization.

Successful programmes of workplace stress management have seen a marked reduction in sickness absence and staff turnover – good news for employer and employee alike. Staff morale improves, people feel valued and the overall result is a healthier and safer working environment.

#### CSR & ITS PROBLEMS:

Maintaining a strong sense of social responsibility is difficult for corporations for a number of reasons. The corporation's primary goal of increasing returns to its shareholders often conflicts with providing value to the community. When such objectives clash, crucial problems arise relative to maintaining corporate and social responsibility internationally. Since, all the acts related to CSR are performed by the staff; naturally they are bound to have role stress.

#### Therefore CSR is all about building the following trusts.

- Trust in the brand
- Trust in performance of the product
- Trust in the company to "do the right thing"
- Trust in you as a partner.

As a consequence to building up these trusts one has to encounter role stress given the task in hand. The most distressing feature in CSR is that the role stress is not only within the organization but also at the community in which he/she works.

In addition to understanding the risks and rewards of being a practitioner of CSR, the business leaders identified the following nine challenges to responsible business:

- Establishing best practices for **sustainable sourcing**.
- Understanding how **individuals make decisions** about environmental and social issues.
- **Attracting and inventing employees** who will drive sustainability programs.
- Identifying what **metrics** (such as energy consumption, Carbon dioxide output, water usage, etc.) most accurately reflect a firm's sustainability activities.
- Understanding which **government policies** most effectively address sustainability issues (e.g. if a policy on waste management conflicts with a policy on energy consumption, which one produces the greatest net gain to society?).
- Incorporating sustainability into the **financial business case** – placing a dollar value on the benefits of responsible business, such as brand name and customer loyalty.
- Determining the **materiality** of sustainability – knowing which projects matter most to internal and external stakeholders and which have the greatest impact on the company.
- Identifying the **organizational attributes** that affect a company's credibility when making claims of environmental or social responsibility.
- Understanding the **aboriginal perspective** on sustainable business and how best to engage aboriginal groups.

#### ORGANISATIONAL ROLE STRESS MANAGEMENT

The prevention and management of workplace stress requires organizational level interventions, because it is the organization that creates the stress. An approach that is limited to helping those already experiencing stress is analogous to administering sticking plaster on wounds, rather than dealing with the causes of the damage. An alternative analogy is trying to run up an es-

calator that's going down! Organizational interventions can be of many types, ranging from structural (for example, staffing levels, work schedules, physical environment) to psychological (for example, social support, control over work, participation).

No single strategy is right for everyone. Each person must take an honest look at him or herself and decide what makes the most sense. The most important factor in determining the success of a stress management program is not the type of technique that is used, but rather the commitment that each person makes to change.

It is difficult for people to change long-standing habits even when those habits create discomfort, unhappiness and stress. Change is possible, however, and the most difficult changes often provide the greatest benefit. Working to reduce stress can enhance happiness and health for many years. It does make a difference!

#### Tip 1: Recognize warning signs of excessive stress at work

When you feel overwhelmed at work, you lose confidence and may become irritable or withdrawn. This can make you less productive and less effective in your job, and make the work seem less rewarding. If you ignore the warning signs of work stress, they can lead to bigger problems. Beyond interfering with job performance and satisfaction, chronic or intense stress can also lead to physical and emotional health problems.

#### Tip 2: Reduce job stress by taking care of yourself

When stress at work interferes with your ability to perform in your job, manage your personal life, or adversely impacts your health, it's time to take action. Start by paying attention to your physical and emotional health. When your own needs are taken care of, you're stronger and more resilient to stress. The better you feel, the better equipped you'll be to manage work stress without becoming overwhelmed.

Taking care of you doesn't require a total lifestyle overhaul. Even small things can lift your mood, increase your energy, and make you feel like you're back in the driver's seat. Take things one step at a time, and as you make more positive lifestyle choices, you'll soon notice a reduction in your stress levels, both at home and at work.

#### Tip 3: Reduce job stress by prioritizing and organizing

When job and workplace stress threatens to overwhelm you, there are simple steps you can take to regain control over yourself and the situation. Your newfound ability to maintain a sense of self-control in stressful situations will often be well-received by co-workers, managers, and subordinates alike, which can lead to better relationships at work.

#### Tip 4: Reduce job stress by improving emotional intelligence

Even if you're in a job where the environment has grown increasingly stressful, you can retain a large measure of self-control and self-confidence by understanding and practicing emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage and use your emotions in positive and constructive ways. When it comes to satisfaction and success at work, emotional intelligence matters just as much as intellectual ability. Emotional intelligence is about communicating with others in ways that draw people to you, overcome differences, repair wounded feelings, and defuse tension and stress.

#### Tip 5: Reduce job stress by breaking bad habits

As you learn to manage your job stress and improve your work relationships, you'll have more control over your ability to think clearly and act appropriately. You will be able to break habits that add to your stress at work – and you'll even be able to change negative ways of thinking about things that only add to your stress.

#### Tip 6: Learn how managers or employers can reduce job stress

It's in a manager's best interest to keep stress levels in the work-

place to a minimum. Managers can act as positive role models, especially in times of high stress, by following the tips outlined in this article. If a respected manager can remain calm in stressful work situations, it is much easier for his or her employees to also remain calm.

#### **Cultivate a friendly social climate**

- Provide opportunities for social interaction among employees.
- Establish a zero-tolerance policy for harassment.
- Make management actions consistent with organizational values.

#### **CONCLUSIONS:**

Our society is in transition and as a result new demands have been placed on business. There's no doubt that the Government should withdraw from many of its traditional roles. So, a critical issue has come up is regarding the interface between the government and the society. Hence, it is to be seen that how these changes are handled by the players in the coming days. But based on the current research and findings CSR remains a promise for the future.

We should not forget and even try to neglect the part that employees involved in CSR do most often face role stress. Given the magnitude of the people they meet and the responsibility of brand building in the community which is again very dynamic in nature makes their work filled with stress. There is no second thought that there is stress in all types of work but CSR is such an area where the staff cannot escape stress, given the multi dimensional expectations from the management, community, family and their own self. A person given the responsibility of brand building and bridging the gap between the organization and the community is after all a normal human being. But he cannot be neglected or taken care of like other normal person. He should be given a special care not only by the management but also by the community in which, for which, he works for.

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