

The Causes and Management of Stress at Work



Management

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ABSTRACT

Stress in organisation is an extremely important phenomenon. It is generally associated with several vital individual physiological and behavioural symptoms. Stress has been defined in different ways over the years. Stress is not a medical diagnosis, but severe stress continues for long time leads to depression or anxiety, or more severe mental problems. Originally, it was conceived stress as pressure from the environment, then as strain within the person. In order to improve the healthy workforce in the organisation, individual stress levels should be identified and steps to be taken for reduce stress at work. The purpose of this paper is to reveal the main causes of stress, its adverse effect and effective way to manage them.

Introduction

Stress is a part of life and it occurs whenever there are significant changes in our lives, its positive or negative. Stress in the workplace is the major problem, where as employees face conditions like overwork, job insecurity, low levels of job satisfaction and lack of autonomy. Stress at workplace directly affect the health and well-being of employees, as well as it leads to negative impact on workplace productivity and profits.

The problems of stress

Signs of stress can be seen in people's behaviour, especially changes in behaviour. Situations that are likely to cause stress are those that are unpredictable or uncontrollable. The Problem may be in the areas of feelings, behaviours, thinking or physical symptoms. Sometimes leads to mental and physical ill health.

Causes of Stress

Workload is the most important factor linked to work-related stress. There is little change in the relative importance of any of the factors linked to work-related stress. The identified six main factors that leads to work related stress are shown in below Figure 1.



Figure 1 : Causes of Stress

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- Demand - Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs.
- Control - Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work.
- Support - Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors.
- Relationships - Employees indicate that they are not sub-

jected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work.

- Role - Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities.
- Change - Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change.

It is important to understand each of the six factors and how they are related to each other, as this can influence the amount of stress an individual experiences:

- A person can reduce the impact of high demands if they have high control over their work.
- The impact of high demands and low control can be reduced by having high levels of support, either from colleagues or from you as a manager.
- Relationships can be one of the biggest sources of stress, especially where there are problems like bullying and harassment.
- Problems with role are probably the easier problems to solve.
- Change does not have to be at an organisational level to have an impact on individuals or teams, for example, changes in team members, line managers or the type of work or technology used by the team can be just as stressful.

Poor work organisation is the way we design jobs and work systems, and the way we manage them can cause work stress. Research findings show that the most stressful type of work is that which values excessive demands and pressures that are not matched to workers knowledge and abilities. Most of the causes of work stress concern the way work is designed and the way in which organisations are managed. The workplace factors that have been found to be associated with stress and health risks can be categorised as those to do with the content of work and those to do with the social and organisational 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. Unclear work or conflicting roles and boundaries can cause stress, as can 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.

Adverse effect of stress:

The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it. Stress can be positive, keeping us alert and ready to avoid danger. Stress becomes negative when a person faces continuous challenges without relief or relaxation between challenges. As a result, the person becomes overworked and stress-related tension builds. The human body is designed to experience stress

and react to it. Stress can be positive, keeping us alert and ready to avoid danger. Stress becomes negative when a person faces continuous challenges without relief or relaxation between challenges. As a result, the person becomes overworked and stress-related tension builds. Stress that continues without relief can lead to a condition called distress, a negative stress reaction. Distress can lead to physical symptoms including headaches, upset stomach, blood pressure, chest pain and problems sleeping. Stress also becomes harmful when people use alcohol, tobacco or drugs to try to relieve their stress. Unfortunately, instead of relieving the stress and returning the body to a relaxed state, these substances tend to keep the body in a stressed state and cause more problems.

Techniques for managing stress.

Training helps to prevent stress through:

- Becoming aware of the signs of stress
- Can resolved in beginning early stage of stress.
- Analysing the situation and developing an active plan to minimise the stressors
- Developing a lifestyle that creates a buffer against stress
- Ensure the employees have to develop appropriate knowledge and ability to perform the job effectively.
- A wide variety of training courses may help to reduce the stress problem
- Closely controlled or restricted work can be avoided or limited.
- Working conditions should provide opportunities for personal and vocational development, as well as for self determination and professional responsibility.

Conclusion

Success in managing and preventing stress depend on the culture in the organisation. Stress should be seen as helpful information to guide action, not as weakness in individuals. A culture of openness and understanding, rather than of blame and criticism, is essential transactional process. Hence, the stress can be well managed and turn into positive reflection towards organisation.

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