

Exploring Organizational Stress and Effective Stress Coping Mechanisms

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Abstract

In this modern ever changing and fast world, life has become full of stress. Individuals face stress in day to day life due to their personal factors and also their organizational activities. The stress that employees face can become a costly business expense that would affect both employee health and company profits if not treated early. Hence it becomes essential to understand stress, its genesis and causes, the impact of stress on employees and organization, and adopt strategies for minimizing that impact. This article describes the result of a small study to examine the stress levels of the employees in a Heavy Engineering Company at Ranoli, Vadodara [Gujarat]. Empirical data was collected from the respective organization and analyzed to check the stress level of employees. Along with the discussions on the results of the study, the article also provides the mechanisms of coping with stress at individual and organizational level.

Keywords: Organizational Stress, Stressors, Stress Coping Mechanisms, Individual Stress Coping Strategies, Organization Stress Coping Strategies

1. Introduction

Modern life is full of stress. Individuals face stress in day to day life due to their personal factors and also their organizational activities. People need to participate, interact, transact, and plan a lot in the ever changing environment of today and hence it becomes challenging. In today's fast world, the stress that employees face on day to day basis can become a costly business expense that would affect both employee health and company profits if not treated early. Hence it becomes essential to understand stress, its genesis and causes, the impact of stress on employees and organization, and adopt strategies for minimizing that impact.

Stress is basically impact of one object on the other. From physical sciences, the term stress came to medical sciences and finally to social sciences.

“Stress is an adaptive response, mediated by individual characteristics and / or psychological processes, that is, a consequence of any external action, situation, or event that places special physical and / or psychological demands upon a person.”(Matteson, 1983)

In context of work, work stress can be defined as “Work stress is a condition arising from the interaction of people and their work and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning.” (Gupta, 2009)

According to the current World Health Organization's (WHO) definition, occupational or work-related stress "is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope."(WHO - Occupational Health, 2007)

1.1 Causes of Stress

The conditions that make an employee stressful are called stressors. A single stressor may also cause major stress, like death of a family member. But most of the times, several stressors combine and they together press an individual in a variety of ways until stress develops. The various stressors can be grouped into four categories: individual, group, organizational, and extra organizational. Within each category, there may be several stressors. All stressors

eventually get down to the individual level and put stress on individuals.

Individual Stressors

- Life and Career Changes
- Personality Type
- Role Characteristics

Organizational Stressors

- Organizational Policies
- Organizational Structure
- Organizational Processes
- Physical Conditions

Extra Organizational Stressors

- Social Changes
- Technological Changes
- Community Conditions
- Economic Conditions

Group Stressors

- Group Cohesiveness
- Social Support
- Conflict

Thus one can understand how stress can have adverse effects on an individual and organization. Hence the researcher conducted a research to study the organizational stress and understand the stress coping mechanisms in a Heavy Engineering Company at Ranoli, Vadodara [Gujarat].

2. Methodology

2.1 Setting of the Study

Heavy Engineering Company at Ranoli, Vadodara [Gujarat].

2.2 Research Design

Research Design of the study is descriptive as the researcher is trying to describe the stress level of the employees of the organization.

2.3 Universe

Universe of the study is the employees of a Heavy Engineering Company at Ranoli, Vadodara [Gujarat].

2.4 Sample

Random sampling method was used to sample 200 employees from the organization.

2.5 Instrument

Data was collected from the employees using well-structured Standard Questionnaire given in the book "Human Resource Management" by C B Gupta (2009). In the close ended questionnaire, the employees were required to give their answers in confirmation or non-confirmation to the given statements. Then the scoring for each employee was done by giving one mark to each "Yes" answer.

3. Major Findings & Discussions

Majority, 68% of respondents, [136 respondents] scored in between 01 – 05. These employees were a sad victim of stress. They felt tensed and stressed out most of the time. They find themselves unable to concentrate. They are preoccupied by worries and felt they are losing out on things. Once they get a personal grip on stress, they can deal with it more

effectively. They need to choose the best relaxer to unwind.

24% of the respondents, [48 respondents] scored in between 06 – 10. These employees took stress rather calmly and in their stride. Their realistic attitude towards stress often enabled them to deal with it quiet well. They were usually not overcome by feelings of powerlessness even in very difficult situations. Most of the time, their psychological hardness empowered them to maintain a reasonable control over themselves and stressful situations at hand.

09% of the respondents, [18 respondents] scored in between 11 – 17. These employees had a knack of managing stress rather successfully and enjoyed better physical and mental health than the rest. They had chosen to alter their lifestyle or modified their environment intelligently and had succeeded in combating day to day stressful situations. They were wise enough to handle a stressful situation as a challenge and evoked the best in themselves leading to their personal growth.

4. Suggestions

Organizations and its employees cannot remain in stress for a long duration of time. Hence management of stress is required to enable an individual is to cope with the ever changing and demanding environment. The remedies required to deal with the stress have to be taken at individual level as well as organizational level.

4.1 Individual Coping Strategies

Individual coping strategies help an employee deal with stress that has already occurred. It means these strategies tend to be reactive in nature. Some of the major individual coping strategies are discussed as under:

▪ **Physical Exercise**

Physical exercises such as walking, jogging, swimming, playing etc. are good methods of overcoming stress. The role and importance of Yoga has been recognized the world over. The employees of the organization should be encouraged to indulge in such physical activities. Special Yoga workshops can also be arranged on regular intervals. This would provide the employees with relaxation, enhanced self-esteem, and simply getting their mind off work for a while.

▪ **Relaxation**

The relaxation can be simple one or some specific techniques of relaxation, such as bio feedback and meditation. Special Meditation workshop can be arranged for employees so that they can eliminate the immediately stressful situation or manage a prolonged stressful situation more effectively.

▪ **Work Home Transition**

In this technique, a person may attend to less pressure inducing type or routine work during the last 30 or 60 minutes of work time. For instance, the employees can review the day's activities; list the priorities of the activities that need to be attended to the next day. Thus he can finish his day's work and go home in

relaxed manner. Employees of the organization can be trained to use this technique.

▪ **Cognitive Therapy**

In these techniques, lectures and interactive discussions are arranged by the psychologists to help participants to:

- a. Recognize events at work and what cognitions they elicit
- b. Become aware of the effects of such cognitions on their physiological and emotional responses
- c. Systematically evaluate the objective consequences of events at work
- d. Replace self-defeating cognitions that unnecessarily arouse strain.

▪ **Networking**

Employees in the organization should be encouraged to form close associations with trusted, empathetic co-workers and colleagues who are good listeners and confidence builders. Such persons provide mental support to get the employee through stressful situation.

4.2 Organizational Coping Strategies

Organizational coping strategies are more of proactive in nature, that is, they attempt at removing existing or potential stressors and prevent the onset of stress of employees.

▪ **Supportive Organizational Climate**

The organization should focus on involvement of employees in decision making process. Such a climate will develop belongingness among people and help them reduce stress. Supportive organizational climate will also control the faulty processes and practices that produce stress.

▪ **Job Enrichment**

The organization can think about improving factors, such as responsibility, recognition, opportunity for achievement and advancement, as these may lead to motivation, and feeling sense of responsibility amongst the employees.

▪ **Organizational Role Clarity**

In the organization, role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload can be minimized, consequently leading to reduced stress through defining the roles more clearly.

▪ **Career Planning and Counselling**

Various career planning and counselling programmes can be adopted by the company that would satisfy the employees and help them in reducing the stress.

▪ **Stress Control Workshop and Employee Assistance Programmes**

The company should hold periodic workshops for control and reduction of stress. Such workshops may help employees to learn the dynamics of stress and methods of overcoming its ill effects. Similarly, the company can make arrangements for assisting individuals in overcoming their personal and family problems. This arrangement may include managing

personal finance, dealing with other personal and family stresses.

5. Summary

Organizational Stress can have a profound impact on the employees' health. It can also lessen the motivation of employees which may lead to job dissatisfaction. Negative impacts include poor job performance, high staff turnover rates, mistrust of organizational leaders, profit-loss strained relationship, and employee burnout. The overall workplace efficiency suffers if the organizational stress is not controlled in a short run. As seen in the study, the majority of employees in the Heavy Engineering Company are stressed. A planned intervention is necessary to reduce the stress of the employees. The stress coping mechanisms suggested in the study can guide the organization to implement strong policies which would reduce the stress among the employees and make them more efficient. Employees would feel valued, respected and emotionally balanced and would continue working for the organization for a long time.

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