Occupational Stress among the Employees in the Health Care Industry

Mrs. S.Kanthimathi
Head, Department of Business Administration
Sri Ramakrishna College of Arts and Science for Women,
Coimbatore - 641 045, Tamil Nadu, South India

ABSTRACT

Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, demand or resource related to what the individual desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. Stress is arousal of mind and body in response to demands made on them. Stress is ever-present, a universal feature of life. Stress cannot and should not be avoided. Rather, it is to be contained, managed, and directed. Stress is multifaceted nature. Although stress is typically discussed in a negative context, it also has a positive value. Many professional see the pressures of heavy workloads and deadlines as positive challenges that enhance the quality of their work and the satisfaction they get from their job. Researchers call it as challenge stressors which are quite different from hindrance stressors. Early evidence suggests that challenge stressors are less harmful than hindrance stressors. The present study analyses the nature of the stress and how the workers manage that stress in health care industry. The study also tries to seek support to relieve stress among the health care industry workers.

Key words: Stress, occupational stress, health care industry, coping strategies

INTRODUCTION TO THE HEALTH CARE SECTOR

In the Indian scene, the emergence of private health care system came into being due to the acute shortage and gross inefficiency and disfunctioning of the public sector health care delivery mechanism and the health care needs of the growing population. In the initial stages these health care facilities sprouted in various metropolitan cities whenever the demand was felt. Also the private health care facilities initially stated acting as a complementary mechanism to public health care facilities available in the country. Thereafter, because of the quality, efficiency and reliability, the private health care facilities started assuming preferences over the public health care system.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Stress is a part of day-to-day living of every individual. The college students may experience stress in meeting the academic demands, people on the job, business men may suffer stress to reach office in time and to complete the projects on time and even the house hold ladies may experience stress in managing the home affairs. The stress people experience should not be necessarily treated as harmful. An optimum amount of stress can always act as an energizer or motivator and propel people to apply the efforts and complete the work. But a high level of Stress can be a serious threat to the personality traits of the Individual and can cause physiological and social problems.

STRESS – AN OVERVIEW
We generally believe that the stress is caused by the external events and the dynamics of the environment. So, Stress is our reaction to external events and it can be positive or negative depending upon how we react. It is the general wear and tear of the body machine that takes place due to extra demands put on it.

We can define Stress as “body” non-specific response to any demand made on it”. Stress is not by definition synonymous with nervous tension or anxiety. On one side Stress provides the means to express talents and energies and pursue happiness on the other side it can also cause exhaustion and illness, either physical or psychological.

DEFINITIONS

• Hans Selye defined stress as the body’s nonspecific response to a demand placed on it.

• According to Pollock stress is something which is not naturally occurring but is a manufactured concept which has now become a social fact.

• Holmes & Rahe, (1967) defined stress as a stimulus event that presents unusual demands.

• It is defined by Ganster and Murphy (2000) as a form of ‘strain’ provoked in response to situational demands labeled ‘stressors’ which occur when jobs are simultaneously high in demands and low in control.

Job stress or Occupational stress

In today's work scenario, when the whole world is dealing with the problem of economic crisis, most employees have to handle too much work pressure in order to secure their jobs. In their effort of coping with the challenges that they have to face while working, there have been many people who are complaining about being stressed out. Though it is believed that a little bit of stress is necessary to make employees work and achieve their goals, too much of it actually leads to decrease in quality of work as well as employee productivity.

Stress at work is also said to be responsible for giving rise to physical as well as emotional problems. Moreover, if the person does not learn to handle the stress experienced at work, it starts taking a toll on his/her personal life, giving rise to a whole set of problems at the home front too. Hence, knowing about tips for handling stress in the workplace has become essential for the career growth as well as overall well being of the employees.

HOW TO REDUCE STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Positive job factions can play an important in keeping stress in check. Having supportive co-workers, managing time effectively, being active in social groups and not taking work home with you are effective ways to minimize stress.

Management can provide invaluable assistance to Manager and themselves by setting effective stress management techniques. Some of the vital ways to do this are:
1. Set realistic goals and priorities.
2. Encourage good time-management techniques.
3. Take short break after a particularly stressful event.
4. Rehearse and prepare; being prepared stress.
5. Don’t procrastinate.
6. Know your limits; be realistic about what you can accomplish.
7. Change your attitudes.
8. Learn to say No.
9. Schedule your stress- stagger known stressful activities and prepare for it.
10. Encourage Manager to treat their body right, eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly.
11. Give positive reinforcement.
12. Setup managers recognition programs.
13. Most important, Maintain a sense of humour. As a wise philosopher said “Don’t take life seriously it’s only a hobby.
14. Employee assistance programme viz., counselling services in all organizations may be constituted.
15. Participation in decision making would decrease the experience of role problems.
16. Aroma care therapy for stress ailments may be introduced as an alternative medicine within few years.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Udai Pareek (1999) In today's work scenario, when the whole world is dealing with the problem of economic crisis, most employees have to handle too much work pressure in order to secure their jobs. In their effort of coping with the challenges that they have to face while working, there have been many people who are complaining about being stressed out. Though it is believed that a little bit of stress is necessary to make employees work and achieve their goals, too much of it actually leads to decrease in quality of work as well as employee productivity. Managing stress and coping, D.M.Pestojee, Udai Pareek and K.Agawal(Eds); Studies in stress and its Management, Oxford & IBM, New Delhi.

According to a study by the British Medical Journal, the author found that greater levels of job stress did indeed increase people’s chances of developing metabolic syndrome. The higher the stress level, the greater the chance of developing metabolic syndrome, Workplace stress is on the rise and it’s costing corporate America a fortune. Some estimate that 80% of health care costs are stress related, and these expenses go right to the bottom line. Health Education Journal, Vol. 64, No. 3, 271-288 (2005)

The job stain model proposed by Ilarasek (1997) points that the greater risk to physical and mental health from stress occur to worker facing high psychological workload demand on pressures combined with low control. N. M. Agarwal, Application of Job characteristics in management of organizational stress.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To study the level of stress among the employees in health sector

To identify the factors inducing stress
To study the relationship demographic factors and the level of stress

To offer suggestions to manage the stress effectively

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. The research design used for the study is descriptive. Descriptive research studies are those which are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or group. The researcher has selected 110 respondents through convenient sampling method. The data was collected by using two methods. A) Primary data was collected directly from the employees by using the questionnaire. B) Secondary data which has been already collected by someone else. For the secondary data the information taken from the organization, brochures and books and websites and libraries. Mean and standard Deviation are used as statistical tools.

TABLE: 1
SHOWING MEAN VALUE OF THE RESPONSES FOR THE QUESTION RELATING TO STRESS FACTOR (work)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too much work to do in too little time</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>.888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous or tensed when things outside your control</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel overqualified for the work</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>1.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence to share your ideas</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training is different from yours for others</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsettled conflict</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean value for question relating to training is different from yours and others are 3.12. The mean value for question relating too much works to do in too little time is 2.96. The mean value for question relating to having Confidence to share your ideas with superior is 2.72. The mean value for question relating to feeling overqualified for the work is 2.49 respectively.
TABLE: 2
SHOWING MEAN VALUE OF THE RESPONSES FOR THE QUESTIONS RELATING TO STRESS FACTOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal support from co-workers</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend your time as “fighting fires”</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with others</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right amount of supervision</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to use your knowledge and skills</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improper communication with manager</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.914</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean value for question relating to spending time as “fighting fires” rather than working according to plan is 3.13. The mean value for question relating to being improper communication with manager is 2.99 the mean value for question relating to having right amount of interaction with others is 2.60 respectively.

TABLE: 3
SHOWING MEAN VALUE OF THE RESPONSES FOR THE QUESTIONS RELATING TO STRESS FACTOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>No. Of respondents</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You skip breakfast or</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The mean value for question relating to when job responsibilities are beyond their control is 3.06. The mean value for question relating to when employees are imposed some responsibility of other worker is 3.15. The mean value for question relating to when employees pressured to work over time is 2.79. The mean value for question relating to stress results in family problem is 2.45 respectively.

### RESEARCH RESULTS

- A high level of stress score was found among the respondents towards their opinion about too much works to do in too little time.
- A high level of stress score was found among the respondents towards their opinion about training.
- Unsettled conflict with co-workers are also having high level of stress score.
- Research could identify high level of stress score about spending time as “fighting fires” rather than working according to plan.
- More stress score in the opinion about improper communication with manager also.
- High degree of stress score was found among the respondents towards their opinion about when job responsibilities are beyond their control.
- Finally the researcher found high level of stress among the respondents towards their opinion about when employees are imposed some responsibility of other worker.
SUGGESTIONS

From the study conducted the following suggestions are made:

- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)** can be designed to deal with a wide range of stress-related problems, including behavioural and emotional difficulties, substance abuse, and family and marital discord and other personal problems.
- Individuals can adopt various relaxation techniques such as meditation, exercises and yoga.
- Individuals can expand their social support network through friends, family and colleagues thus sharing of issues reduce stress.
- Counselling sessions can be held for the employees showing the symptoms of stress.

CONCLUSION

Each and every individual in the work place, they will meet stress inevitable one. It may vary according to the intensity of work they perform. If the stress started dominating it would affect both at individual and the organization as a whole.

Stress is a disease of modern times. It afflicts all the people regardless of their station in life; rich or poor, literate or illiterate, men or women. Stress is more evident and is probably more widespread in technologically advanced countries and is common among highly qualified professionals. It is found from the study that the employees are satisfied with their job. The respondents sometimes face frustration and stress in their job.

Through the research, employees in health sector face moderate level of stress. Thus organization must know that reducing organizational stress is important as motivating employees. Stress management programs for the employees can be based on sharing different philosophical values and developing strategies through group learning.

REFERENCE

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