

STRESS MANAGEMENT IN AN ORGANISATION

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INTRODUCTION:-

In today's changing and competitive work environment, stress level is increasing both in the workers as well as the managers. As a result of this work stress, more and more managers are showing signs of chronic fatigue and burnout. Research has concluded that stressed out managers are not good for their companies or shareholders. In most cases, stress leads to reduced efficiency in even the best of individuals, which in turn leads to reduced productivity. Stress is a problem in almost all the countries of the world, irrespective of whether the economy is strong or weak. We must know what is actually stress, what are the causes of stress, what are its consequences and then, what should be done to reduce it.

MEANING AND DEFINITION:- Considered from an individual's point of view, stress is our body's physical, mental and chemical reactions to circumstances that frighten, confuse, endanger or irritate us. If controlled, stress is a friend that strengthens us for the next encounter. If handled poorly, it becomes an enemy which can cause diseases like high blood pressure, ulcer, asthma and overactive thyroid. As per the medical explanation of the term "stress is the body's general response to environmental situations." It can lead to:

1. Physiological discomfort.
2. Some kind of emotional unhappiness.
3. Strained relationships with other people.

In very simple words, stress refers to an individual's reaction to a disturbing factor in the environment.

- "Stress is defined as an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological and/or behavioral deviations, for organizational participants."
- "Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important."

According to Beehr and Newman, "Job stress is a condition arising from the interaction of the people and their jobs, and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning."

SOURCES OF STRESS

The following summarises the sources of stress.

A. Extra Organisational Stressors Job stress is not limited to things that happen inside the organisation, during the working hours. Extra organisational factors also contribute to job stress. These stressors include the following factors:

1. Political Factors. Political factors are likely to cause stress in countries which suffer from political uncertainties as in Iran, for example. The obvious reason is that the countries have stable political system where change is typically implemented in an orderly manner.
2. Economic Factors. Changes in business cycles create economic uncertainties. When the economy contracts, people get worried about their own security. A very important example is the great depression

of 1930s. During this period, suicide rates touched the sky. Minor recessions also cause stress in the work force as downward swings in the economy are often accomplished by permanent reductions in the work force, temporary layoff or reduction in pay.

3. **Technological Factors.** Technological uncertainty is the third type of environmental factor that can cause stress. In today's era of technological development new innovations make an employee's skills and experience obsolete in a very short span of time. Computers, automation are other forms of technological innovations, which are threat to many people and cause them stress.

B. Organizational Stressors. The following factors have been shown to be particularly strong in inducing stress:

1. **Job Related Factors.** Job related factors or task demands are related to the job performed by an individual. These factors include the following :

- If a job is too routine, dull and boring.
- Some jobs also be hazardous by its nature.
- Some duties and responsibilities have inbuilt stress such as those of the fire fighter or the police squad which defuses bombs.
- The more interdependence between a person's tasks and the tasks of others, the more potential stress there is. Autonomy, on the other hand tends to reduce stress.
- Job Security

2. **Role Related Factors.** Role related factors relate to pressures placed on a person as a function of the particular role he or she plays in the organisation. Individuals can experience the following role related stresses:

1. **Role Conflict.** Role conflict occurs when two or more persons have different and sometimes opposing expectations of a given individual. For example, an advertising manager may be asked to produce a creative ad campaign while on the other hand, time constraint is put upon him, both roles being in conflict with each other.

2. **Role Ambiguity.** Stresses from job ambiguity arise when an employee does not know what is expected of him or her or how to go about doing the job. For example, if an employee who joins an organisation is left to him to figure out what he is supposed to be doing and nobody tells him what the expectations of him or his role are, the newcomer will face a high level of role ambiguity. Even an old employee can be given a responsibility without being given much information.

3. **Role Overload.** Role overload refers to the situation when an individual is expected to do too many things within a limited time as part of the daily routine.

3. **Inter Personal and Group Related Factors.** Interpersonal demands are pressures created by other employees. Group related stressors include factors like conflicts, poor communication, unpleasant relationship and fear of being ostracized from the group as a valued member.

4. **Organisational Structural Factors.** Organisational structure defines the level of differentiation, the degree of rules and regulations and where decisions are made. Excessive rules and lack of participation in decisions that affect an employee are examples of structural variables that might be potential stressors.

5. **Organisational Leadership Factors.** These factors represent the managerial style of the organization's senior managers. Some managers create a culture characterised by tension, fear and anxiety. They establish unrealistic pressures to perform in the short run, impose excessively tight controls and routinely fire employees who fail to turn up.

C. Group Cohesiveness. The famous Hawthorne studies had proved that group cohesiveness is very important to the employees, particularly at the lower levels of the organisation. Lack of cohesiveness can be very stress producing, especially for those persons who cannot thrive in isolation.

1. **Lack of Social Support.** Satisfaction, though, a state of mind is primarily influenced by the positive external factors. These factors include friendliness, respect from other members and self respect, support, opportunity to interact, achievement, protection against threats and a feeling of security. In this type of social support is lacking for an individual, it can be very stressful.

2. Conflicts. People who are working in the organisations are prone to interpersonal and intergroup conflicts. conflict has both functional and dysfunctional aspects. Whenever conflict has dysfunctional consequences, it will lead to stress in all the concerned parties.

3. Organisational Climate. Much of the group or interpersonal relationships depend upon the organisational climate. An overall organisational climate may have a relaxed style of working or it may be tense and crisis oriented. All the employees of such organisation will be continuously tense, if the climate in general is unfriendly, hostile or totally task oriented.

D. Individual Stressors

The typical individual works for about 8 to 10 hours a day. The problems and experiences which he has to face in the remaining 14 to 16 non-working hours can spill over to his work place. Our final category of stressors thus includes personal or individual stressors. Following are the main factors which can cause stress to individuals:

1. Job Concerns. One of the major job concern is lack of job security which can lead to concern, anxiety or frustration to the individual. The prospect of losing a job especially when you have a family and social obligations is always very stressful.

2. Career Changes. When an employee has to relocate geographically because of a transfer or promotion, it disrupts the routine of his daily life causing concern and stress. The relocation can lead to the following problems:

- The fear of working in a new location.
- Unpredictability about new work environment.
- Anxiety about creating new relationships.
- Uprooting of children from their schools and friends.
- If the employee has got a working spouse then the stress is greater.

3. Economic Problems. Some people are very poor money managers or they have wants and desires that always seem to exceed their earning capacity. When individuals overextend their financial resources, or in simple words, if they spend more than they earn, it will always cause stress and distract the employees from their work.

4. Changes in Life Structure. The life structure of a person changes as he grows older. As a person grows older, his responsibilities to himself as well as others change and increase. The higher the responsibility, the greater the stress.

5. The Pace of Life. As the responsibilities of a person increase, his capacity to execute them should also increase. A hectic pace of life when the person is always busy in business or otherwise can create more stress than a relaxed pace of life. Certain professions like teaching are less stressful than those of company executives, bankers or businessmen.

COPING OF STRESS

There are a number of ways by which a person can avoid stressful conditions, change them or learn to cope with them. Stress can be managed by an individual, which will enable him to regain control over his life. Some of the stress reducing strategies from individual's point of view are :

1. Knowledge about Stress. In the first stage, an individual should become knowledgeable about stress. He should know about the process and effects of stress. He must find out the major sources of his stress. He must anticipate stressful periods and plan accordingly in advance. He must be honest with himself and decide what he can cope with what he cannot.

2. Physiological Fitness. Exercise in any form can help people in coping with the stress. Non competitive physical exercise such as aerobics, walking, jogging, swimming, riding a bicycle, playing softball or tennis have been recommended by physicians as a way to deal with excessive stress levels.

3. Time Management. Most of the people are very poor in managing their time. They don't know that what must be done and when it would be desirable to do so. The result of poor time management is feeling of work overload, skipped schedules and tension. A well organized person can often accomplish twice as much as the person who is poorly organized.

4. Assertiveness. An individual should become assertive. He should not say 'Yes' when he wants to say 'No'. He should start saying No to people or managers who demand too much of his time. Being assertive is an important factor in reducing stress.

5. Social Support Network. Every person should have people to turn to, talk to and rely upon. Good friends become highly supportive during times of stress and crisis. Social net work includes friends, family or work colleagues. Expanding your social support system can be a means for tension reduction because friends are there when needed and provide support to get the person through stressful situations.

(B) ORGANIZATION COPING: - Individuals may design their own strategies to reduce stress, but it is a must for the organizations to develop programmes that will help the employees in reducing their stress. This will lead to less employee turnover, absenteeism and as a result productivity will improve. Some of the measures which organizations can take are :

1. Selection and Placement. Individuals differ in their response to stress situations. We know that 'Type A' individuals are more prone to stress. On the other hand, in the organizations there are certain jobs which are more stressful as compared to other jobs. While doing the selection and placement of the employees, these factors must be kept in mind. The individuals who are more prone to stress should not be put on jobs which are stressful. The individuals who are less prone to stress may adapt better to high stress jobs and perform those jobs more effectively.

2. Goal Setting. Goal setting can reduce stress as well as provide motivation. It will result in less employee frustration, role ambiguity and stress.

3. Improved Communication. Sometimes due to lack of effective communication from the superiors, the employees do not know what they have to do and how they have to do it. This result in role ambiguity. Similarly, when two or more persons have contradicting role demands from an employee, it leads to role conflict if there is lack of proper communication. Effective communication with employees reduces the uncertainty by lessening role ambiguity and role conflict.

4. Redesigning Jobs. Organizations should redesign the jobs in such a way as to give employees more responsibility, more meaningful work, more autonomy and increased feed back. This will help reduce the stress caused by monotony, routine work, work overload or under load and role ambiguity.

5. Participative Decision Making. The main reason of role stress is that employees feel uncertain about their goals, expectations and how they will be evaluated. These uncertainties can be reduced by the management by giving the employees a right to participate in the decision making.

6. Building Teamwork. The management should try to create such work environment in which there is no provision for interpersonal conflict or inter group conflict. Such conflicts are the causes of stress; such should be prevented from building or eliminated if they develop. Accordingly such team work should be developed that groups and the members are mutually supportive and productive. Members of the group should consider themselves as members of the same family and seek social support from each other.

7. Role related factors. Organization cal deal with the role related stressors in the following ways.

(i) Role conflict. In this process, the role is pruned in such a way that some expectations can be given up. However, this is a dysfunctional solution of the problem since the advantage of a large role is lost.

(ii) Role Ambiguity. To solve the problem of role ambiguity, the usual approach is no make the roles clearer by putting various things down on paper. The various expectation are thus, define more Clearly (Role prescription). Another approach is that the individual may remove the ambiguity by fitting into the role as described in various expectations (Role taking). Both role prescription and role taking are advance strategies.

(iii) Role Erosion. In role erosion, an individual feels stressed due to the fact that some important function that he would prefer to perform are being performed by other roles. Often the solution is that structure clarifications be made. However, this solution is not likely to be functional and helpful. Since the basic conflict is just avoided and not eliminated.

CONCLUSION

Stress is in every organization we cannot avoid stress fully but can take certain measures mentioned above to reduce stress among the employees of an organization by providing job security, providing

refreshments, organizing tour, having a get together, appreciating employees that is 'a word of appreciation', increasing salaries ,providing good environment for working will reduce stress in the organization and have good standard of living improves the efficiency of the employees of organization.

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