



STRESS MANAGEMENT: TECHNIQUES TO TACKLE STRESS AT WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT

In today's competitive, fast-moving, high-tech, and dynamic work environment, the stress level increases both at the top of an organization's lower level. As a result of work stress, more and more employees show signs of chronic fatigue, burnout, and imbalanced work-life. Nowadays, stress is a common problem in almost all countries globally, irrespective of whether the economy is strong or weak. Moreover, according to WHO report on stress in India: Stress levels seem to be high in India compared to other countries, both developed and emerging, says a survey conducted by Cigna TTK Health Insurance: About 89% of the population in India says that they are suffering from stress, as compared to the global average of 86%. (2018). As we know, no one can escape stress, but yes- one can learn to cope with it and can manage it. Thus, it becomes essential to manage "Work Stress" at the workplace.

Hence, the present chapter focuses on the widespread silent issue, i.e., "stress," and describes stress management's importance in the present era. Data is collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. Therefore, primary data is used to study the level of work-stress and its leading causes. Furthermore, an attempt has been made to know the various ways or techniques through which stress can be managed at the workplace. Subsequently, the techniques will help the organizations tackle stress at the workplace and improve their productivity.

KEYWORDS: Work stress, Human resource, Stress management, Workplace, Techniques

JEL CLASSIFICATION: M12, M51, M54

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations, and demands. For many people, stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life. Stress is not always bad. In small doses, stress can help one keep oneself on track and perform under pressure and motivate to do one's best and achieve life goals. However, when you are always running in emergency mode, your mind and body pay the price. Stress accounts for 80 percent of all illnesses, either directly or indirectly. Stress weakens the immunity system and has other severe effects on the brain and body such as cardiovascular problems, emotional imbalance, and mental illness such as chronic fatigue, depression. Stress is an unavoidable consequence of modern living and is becoming a part of every sector, whether talking about students' lives, homemakers, managers, financiers, administrators, government, professors, and workers. It can be both protective and harmful, and thus, managing stress with a proper blend is a great deal of the era. Stress up to a level will help an individual achieve their goals; on the other hand, excess stress may lead to "A Victim of Depression."

Moreover, stress management is the need of the present era. Today, stress management is essential in everyone's lives as it helps to balance one's life. Stress management involves understanding the psychology behind or causing stress and finding techniques to deal with, reduce, or eliminate the stress. Stress can result from viewing one's situation negatively or with insecurity. Stress reduction results from managing or positively viewing situations, taking action, organizing, planning, and finding solutions. (Jadoun, N, K., Kushwah A, S., Barodiya, P Dr. Holani U,(2012). By managing stress, one will also feel a sense of control; over the situation and life. Stress is ordinarily an unavoidable part of everyone's life living in this world. It portrays a harmful notion that can have an impact on one's mental and physical well-being.

This study provides practical advice on how to deal with work stress. This paper implies that Work-related stress occurs when there is a mismatch between the demands of the job and the individual worker's resources and capabilities to meet those demands. The present research work is an attempt to study the need and techniques of stress management. The present study is based upon the primary as well as secondary data. The population selected for this particular study consists of various employees or workers from different professions or organizations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the present research work is as follows-

1. To study the causes of stress at the workplace.
2. To highlight the various ways or techniques to tackle the stress.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study is based upon the primary as well as secondary data. The population selected for this particular study is individual employees from different sectors like banking, teaching, and medicine. The size of the sample is 80. The primary data has been collected through questionnaires. The secondary data has been collected from research publications, books, journals, and periodicals.



MEANING OF STRESS

Stress is a natural human response to its environment. It is generally an imaginable part of every person's life. Stress is like slow poison with which we humans react in our ways; there is a long list of commonly experienced effects of stress that ranges from mild to life-threatening.

“Stress is the body's nonspecific response to a demand placed on it.” (Hans Selye). Therefore, stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses. Therefore, common symptoms of stress are aches and pains, irritability or short temper, diarrhea or constipation, nausea, dizziness, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, inadequate sleeping, isolating oneself from others, using alcohol, or drugs to relax, nervous habits (e.g., nail biting, pacing, fast heart beating). Hence, $STRESS = PRESSURE > RESOURCES$, Stress occurs when the pressure is greater than the resources.

Stress can be defined as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure and demands placed upon them.” (International Labour Organisation). Therefore, stress is a normal physical response to changes or events that make one feel threatened or upset his/her cognitive balance somehow. When you sense danger – whether it is real or just imagined – the body's defenses kick into high gear in a rapid, automatic process known as the –fight-or-flight reaction, or the stress response.

UNDERSTANDING WORK-RELATED STRESS

The nature of work is changing at a whirlwind speed. Perhaps more than ever before, work-related stress poses a threat to workers' health and the organization's survival and, ultimately, the prosperity and growth of a nation. Work-related stress is now generally acknowledged as a global issue in all professions, sectors, and countries. It is also widely acknowledged that it has a high cost of human distress and impaired productivity. Stress is the first indication of a problem that can significantly exacerbate acute or chronic damage to the body systems and organs, significantly if the body cannot rest and recover. (Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training, Work-Related Stress Guidelines, 2016)

Work stress results from an unresolved mismatch between the perceived load and the worker's capacity to cope. The rapid evolution in the field of work brought about by technological progress is imposing more demands on the worker's physiological and psychological capacity. Therefore, work-related stress is the harmful physiological and emotional responses that occur when the jobs' requirements do not match the capabilities or needs of the worker. Work stress can lead to poor health.

In modern times, when job demands cannot meet, the sense of satisfaction turns into feelings of stress. In a nutshell, the stage is set for illness, injury, depression, chronic fatigue, imbalanced work-life, and job failure. Although it is not possible to give a universal prescription for preventing stress at work, it is possible to offer some guidelines or techniques on stress prevention and management to assist employers and employees. Thus, in this paper, an attempt has been made to showcase the various techniques that can be used to manage one's stress at an organizational and individual level.



CAUSES OF WORK STRESS

Excessive and otherwise uncontrollable demands and pressures can be caused by poor work design, poor management, improper planning, inefficient communication channels, rigid rules, and unsatisfactory working conditions. Such aspects of work have the potential of causing harm; they are called 'stress-related hazards' and have the potential of causing harm to the individual worker and ultimately to the organization. Therefore, some typical job stressors encountered at the workplace include: -

1. Job Content such as Monotonous tasks; Unpleasant tasks, under-stimulating, meaningless task, Unpleasant tasks, workload, and work pace, e.g., Having too much or too little to do; Working under time pressures, time limitations – the inability to meet deadlines at work, working hours such as Strict and rigid working schedules; Long and unsocial working hours; Unplanned working hours; unorganized job structures, badly-designed shift systems.
2. Participation and Control such as lack of participation and acceptance in decision making; Lack of acceptance of views or ideas, Lack of control (such as no decision over work methods, work pace, working hours, and the work environment (including safety and health aspects)).
3. Career developments, status, and pay such as Job insecurity; Promotional issues (e.g., lack/ unfair); Piece rate payments schemes; Unclear, and unfair performance evaluation systems; No retirement benefits.
4. Interpersonal relationships such as Inadequate, Unsupportive supervision; Unhealthy relationship with co-workers; Bullying, harassment, and violence; Isolated or solitary work; Unclear procedures for dealing with problems or complaints.
5. Organizational Culture such as Poor leadership, lack of recognition and motivation, inadequate achievement opportunities, rigid rules and regulations, Poor communication; Lack of clarity about the organizational objectives, aims, vision, and structure.
6. Home-Work interface such as Conflicting demands of work/home; Lack of support for personal issues or problems at work; Lack of support for work problems at work/ at home.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Level of Stress among the respondents

Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
High	41	51.25%
Moderate	33	41.25%
Low	6	7.5%
Total	80	100%

Source: Field Survey (Primary Data)

Interpretation: Table 1 clearly indicates that the majority of the respondents were highly stressed.

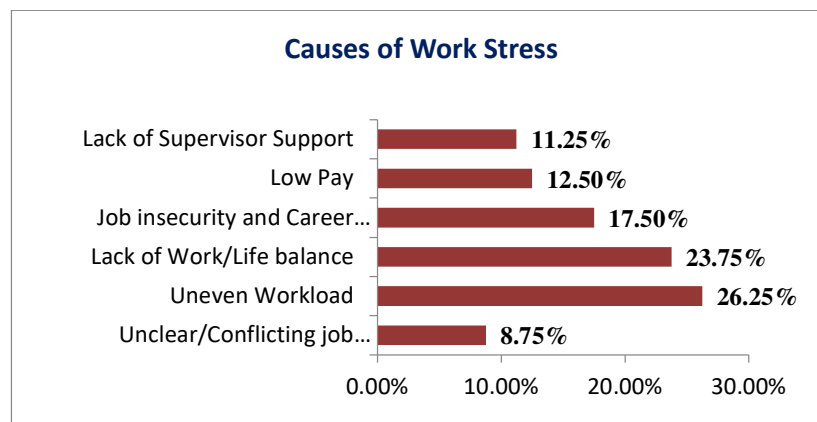


Table 2: Leading Causes of Work Stress

Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Unclear/conflicting job expectations	7	8.75%
Uneven workload	21	26.25%
Lack of work/life balance	19	23.75%
Job Insecurity, Inadequate Career development	14	17.5%
Low pay	10	12.5%
Lack of supervisor support	9	11.25%

Source: Field Survey (Primary Data)

Chart 1: Leading causes of work stress



Source: Author compilation

Interpretation: Chart 1 shows that most of the respondents were stressed due to the Uneven workload (26.25 percent) followed by a lack of balance between work and life.

TECHNIQUES TO TACKLE STRESS AT WORKPLACE

Managing stress is all about taking charge: taking charge of one's thoughts, values, emotions, schedule, environment, and the way a person deals with his/her problems. Stress management's ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, time for relationships, time for relaxation, and fun – plus the resilience or art to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head-on. (Jadoun, N.K., Kushwah A.S., Barodiya, P Dr. Holani U, (2012). However, stressors, if not escapable, are relatively manageable with the help of the following techniques:

EMPLOYEES/INDIVIDUAL ORIENTED STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH STRESS

Many effective ways help an individual to combat stress and live a happy and healthy life. These techniques include:



- **Enter in physical activities:** Physical activities boost the mind and body and help regain the confidence lost due to stress.
- **Relaxation techniques:** Activities such as painting, dance, music, or any other artistic work/activity may help people to get more creative and relieves stress.
- **Time management:** allows efficient usage of precious time. Moreover, it helps individuals to organize his/her activities. Furthermore, time management helps to maintain a daily course of activities, and it reduces stress.
- **Say 'NO' to additional unimportant requests:** taking additional, unimportant, irrelevant requests which are not even necessary increases the workload and causes additional stress. So, try to avoid such situations.
- **Take adequate rest if you are ill:** Taking adequate rest helps people regain energy and improve mood.
- **Plan a Vacation with friends or family:** Going for a vacation and spending some time with nature and family/friends will help heal.
- **Avoid unnecessary stress:** Not all stress can be avoided, and it is not healthy to avoid a situation that needs to be addressed.
- **Alter the stressed situation:** If a person cannot avoid a stressful situation, he may try to alter it. Figure out what can do to change things, so the problem does not present itself in the future.
- **Adapt to the stressor:** If a person cannot change the stressor or the cause, change yourself. You can adapt or adjust according to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.
- **Accept the things you cannot change:** Some sources of stress are unavoidable. We cannot prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a severe illness, or a national recession. Acceptance may be difficult, but it is easier or much better than railing against a situation you cannot change in the long run.
- **Healthy ways to relax and recharge:** Go for a walk; spend time in nature; call a good friend; sweat out tension with a good workout; write in your journal; take a long bath; light a scented candle; savor a warm cup of coffee or tea; play with a pet; work in your garden; get a massage; curl up with a good book; listen to music; watch a comedy.
- **Connect with others:** Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A healthy support system will buffer you from the adverse effects of stress. Share your feelings.
- **Keep your sense of humor alive:** This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in several ways.
- **Exercise regularly:** Physical activity plays a crucial role in reducing and preventing the chances and effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise daily. Nothing beats aerobic exercise for releasing pent-up stress and tension.



- **Eat a healthy diet:** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start a day right with breakfast filled with all the essential nutrients, to keep your body active and energetic, and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.
- **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs:** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Do not avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head-on and with a clear mind.
- **Yoga & meditation:** These help in overcoming stress. Thus, make time for Yoga and meditation.
- **Get enough sleep:** Sleep provides proper rest to the body and helps combat stress.

ORGANIZATIONAL ORIENTED STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH STRESS

- **Flexible time:** Allowing workers to start or end the workday earlier or later can reduce work/life stress, especially for working parents. Flextime can also reduce the stress of commuting in rush hour traffic.
- **Job sharing:** It allows at least two people trained to perform each job, enabling each employee to time off without losing productivity.
- **Work from home:** Working from home can result in higher morale and job satisfaction and lower employee stress and turnover. The prime reason for this is that working at home provides employees more control over how they do their work. Working at home also helps workers better manage work/family demands.
- **Longer lunch hours:** Extending the lunch hour may help discourage snacking and fast food. Adequate time may also encourage time for calming or other stress-reduction activities such as walking.
- **Healthcare advocacy:** Offering an expert who can personally address healthcare issues, such as resolving medical bills and interacting with insurance and providers, can help employees reduce worry and stay focused on their job.
- **EAPs (Employee Assistance Programs):** EAPs are typically offered by the HR department as part of the employer's health insurance plan to assess and address personal issues that affect employee performance and productivity. Issues can range from substance abuse to family problems, and EAPs often include counseling benefits. EAPs for substance abuse can reduce workers' compensation claims, employer healthcare costs, and absenteeism.
- **Stress management programs:** Conducting stress management programs at the organizational level to create awareness about stress and make employees learn stress management techniques.
- **Physical activities planned in job design:** The body can release stress better through physical exertion. As physicians suggest, indulging in any physical activity is recommended during job design.



- **Teaching Employees to do Work-Life balance:** Required training needs to be given to employees to maintain the work-life balance.
- **Use of Technology:** Organizations should use the available technology and provide specialized training courses on any topic required for work advancement.
- **Communication:** Organizations should encourage communication and always asks for feedback, where the HR manager should always be directly accessible to any employee to listen. The organization always tries to follow up with all corporate and business news and new studies published regarding work stress, how to spot it, and solve it.
- **Security Fears:** Organizations should make employees and people feel safe by applying laws for security checks, checking identities of visitors to the firm, and not allowing unauthorized people to enter.
- **Inclusion of Retirement Plan:** Applying the Social Security system and pension funds is excellent insurance and relief for employees not to worry about their retirement anymore.
- **Workplace Diversity:** The firms should hire all kinds of experiences from all ages, genders, and all levels of educations.

CONCLUSION

In a globalized world characterized by intense competition, one cannot ignore the impacts of work-related stress on the employees and the productive organizational capacity. Work stress is a real challenge for workers and their employing organizations. A culture of stress can soon develop with many damaging consequences for the organization, such as physical problems, mental disturbances, emotional imbalance, lifestyle disturbances, and other behavioral problems that lead to a disturbing organization's climate. These issues create interpersonal conflicts, decreased productivity, low organizational commitment, increased absenteeism, and more attrition. Therefore, due consideration must be given to stress management to promote a healthy workforce, culminating in a healthy and prosperous nation. After all, human resources are the main assets of every organization.

Therefore, Stress management is the need of the era. By facilitating the employees with adequate training, the management can provide them with a platform to solve their stress-related problems. Yoga, meditation, exercise, and recreational activities can provide a better environment to control stress. These simple but useful techniques can pave the way for improved employees' efficiency and increased productivity of the organization. It will help individuals balance their work/life efficiently.



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