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Stress in the Health Sector and Effect of Optimism on the Job Satisfaction

ABSTRACT

Job is an indispensable part of life. All employees face stress. The health sector has many properties that may lead to stress stemming from its characteristic structure. Due to the fact that the slightest mistake may lead to loss of human life, satisfaction or dissatisfaction of employees has an importance not only in terms of individuals but also in terms of the society.

Optimism is a viewpoint. An optimistic person can cope with any difficulties of life and survive dangerous situations with the smallest loss. Controlling any stressful events is in direct proportion with the optimistic characteristics of an individual, and using the ways of coping with problems that are focused on solution. Job satisfaction occurs at the point where properties of the job and expectations and desires of the employee intersect each other. Therefore, establishing a relation between knowledge and skills of the employee and the properties of the job and leading to the job satisfaction are determinative in terms of ensuring individual and corporate success.

In today's service corporations the increasing importance of competition in the dimension of employees made agreement between employees and the job more important. Job satisfaction which means a contentment of employee with his/her job, ensures both spiritual and material satisfaction of employee in his/her job environment, and became a target of both the employee and the corporation in which the employee works.

It is a fact that the health institutions providing quality working environment for their employees will serve better to their patients.

Key words: *Stress, Optimism, Job Satisfaction, Health Employees.*

Introduction

Stress has existed from the past until today and has been the cause for the most dreadful diseases as well as many enterprises and achievements.

Today health of employees is under a threat of a stress stemming from the work life, because the time in which we live is the age of constant changes, developments and stress. These changes and tension affect organizations, managers and all employees either in positive or negative way. The work life has a quality that covers various areas beyond the work itself (Peker-Aytürk, 2002:257).

Stress, for employees, may lead to decrease in performance and motivation, employee turnover rate, absenteeism to work, etc. The job stress being at a higher level affects the job satisfaction in a negative way. Organizational stress must be managed well as it directly affects organizational productivity and efficiency (Gürüz Gürel, 2006:376).

Especially in developed countries many organizations, mostly the multinational companies, find different methods for stress management each day; apply them and make use of them in increasing efficiency. Today many stress management specialists give the same advice to managers and employees to change their classic ways of thinking: Just be more positive and optimistic; by doing this, you will be more successful and happier (Loehr, 1999:17). In fact, this viewpoint shows that stress management is very simple. In other words, people may cope with many problems led by stress by being more positive and optimistic than they used to be. The job satisfaction level of the employee who spends most of his/her time in his/her workplace is affected by his/her private life and health. For this reason, job satisfaction is a necessity not only for the workplace but also for the society.

1. Stress in Work-life, Optimism and Job Satisfaction

1.1. The Importance of Stress in Work-Life and its Management

In today's fast-changing world organizations, no matter which activity they are in, are in a fast and changing environment. This change leads to dangers and opportunities for the organizations. The success of organizations depends greatly on sensitivity, foresight and precautions about these dangers and opportunities (Tutar, 2000; 12).

Stress causes absenteeism at the workplace, decrease in the job quality, delay and similar problems such as death, disease and suicide. For this reason every manager needs to know reasons and results of stress, and must be able to take precautions to prevent it or to manage it. When the ever-increasing reason for stress, its effects, physiological, psychological and similar medical problems and the resulting economic losses are considered, it is understood that it is not possible for any manager to underestimate stress. Success or failure of organizations is directly related with success or failure of its employees. Success of its employees will take the organization to success. For this reason organizations must learn and define the stress sources for employees accurately, and take the necessary precautions to eliminate or to control them. As long as organizations perform these, they may overcome negative effects of stress and make use of its positive effects and achieve success.

1.2. The Importance of Optimism in Work- Life

Optimism has been defined as inclination to face positive instead of negative situations in the life of any individual with a relatively continuous and insistent manner independent from the situations and conditions in which she/he is living (Michael F. Scheier, Charles S. Carver).

Any individual must be in realistic expectations in terms of facing positive events. In order to solve the events with these expectations, any individual must make a logical planning, must have energy and power to act, and then cope with the negative situation. These explanations

bring the term 'optimism' to us as an individual characteristic which is learnable and developable. The level of success, achievements, and failures of any individual throughout his /her life affects the spiritual health of this individual in a positive or negative way. In addition, social relations, work life, adaptation and the level of acceptance of the present situation of any individual affect the job satisfaction. Generally, job satisfaction is one of the most important factors that affect spiritual health and social harmony.

1.3. The Importance of Job Satisfaction in Work-Life

Job satisfaction, which is one of the important factors of modern management concept, expresses the level of covering expectations of any employee in terms of physical, spiritual and social needs, and is accepted as an emotional response developed by any individual after evaluating his/her work and working environment.

The total value of positive or negative emotions of the individual in the workplace constitutes the attitude of the individual towards his/her job. For the above stated reasons it is necessary that the job satisfaction level of employees to be measured and followed regularly. Finding, selecting, placing, adapting the qualified employee, determining his/her salary, stemming benefits and incentives, determining the career plan to define promotions within the organization, providing trainings, measuring performance, establishing infrastructure and job processes needed for these activities, establishing the job processes, developing them in accordance with the changing situations and supporting these systems with a good communication and human resources management are important for the job satisfactions of employees (Güven et al., 2005:129). All the above-mentioned needs have made the measurement of job satisfaction necessary. The job satisfaction of any employee being higher has the following positive effects on employees and the job itself (Şenatarlar, 1978:300).

- The employee with a good job satisfaction level will fulfill his/her duties with enthusiasm and in an energetic manner.
- The employees will show extraordinary effort in difficult situations in the work place.
- The employees become more enthusiastic to work.
- The employees obey the regulations and orders, and a good discipline is ensured.
- The employees demand cooperation for the purposes of the workplace.
- The employees feel devotion for managers and the work place.
- Job satisfaction also effects on the work force transfer, absenteeism of employees and decreases, employees' turnover rates. Based on this, the costs are also reduced.

Job satisfaction is so important that it cannot be ignored, because it affects physical and mental health of employees, working environment and productivity of the organization, peace in the society, economic growth, savings and social waste concepts. According to the modern management concept, success of organizations and their performances are not only based on profitability, market share, taxes they are paying and on other similar financial variables, but on human factor, and it must be measured in the light of these factors. Above all, the job satisfaction must be a social responsibility and an ethical requirement for the organizations (Erdoğan, 1994:378).

2. Stress in Health Organizations, Optimism and Job Satisfaction

2.1. Major Sources of Stress in Health Organizations

While the health employee is performing his/her duty, she/he meets many patients and patient relatives with health problems at various levels. These situations in which health of any individual is under threat and there is a stress due to unknown and indefinite situations affect the employees as well as the patients (Tel, et al., 2003/2, P. 13). In addition, the following factors are also among the sources of stress for the employees:

- The unit in which she/he is working is not relevant to his/her field of work
- The orientation training failed to have place or being insufficient
- There are more patients, and excessive work load
- The pressure in terms of time is not sufficient for the job
- The time for relaxing being insufficient
- Unjust and arbitrary performance evaluation
- The patient profile served
- Being forced to do jobs other than the vocational duty and responsibilities
- Working in shifts and on duty, and the working hours being long
- Insomnia
- Negative attitudes of the patient's relatives
- The work load being excessive, and its affecting health of the employees
- Inability to provide a safe working environment for employees
- Vocational in-service trainings being insufficient
- Problems in vocational relations and conflicts
- Insufficient materials and resources
- The number of personnel being insufficient
- The wages being low, having an additional job, imbalance of wages
- Inability to cover needs of patients due to financial, bureaucratic and administrative reasons
- Insufficiency of managers and audits
- Insufficient specialist training and guidance
- Lacking support and social relations among employees. (Mutlu, 2011, 4-5)

2.2. Stress Management in Health Organizations

Stress and stress management have a much more complicated structure in health organizations when compared with other organizations. The negative feelings created by patient develop in a mutual structure which is based on the empathy level of employees. Despite the factors that cause stress in health organizations, the individuals who can manage stress well develop themselves more. This situation guides an individual to behave according to a certain idea or action in order to protect himself/herself from stress. When employees of the health sector reflect the role conflict among themselves to the social life, they can cope with the individual stress in a stronger manner. This leads

to vocational and social exhaustion of the individual. The fact that employees of the health sector are in a constant struggle for development in terms of changing technology and individual proficiencies within the homogenous structure may carry the employee into the very center of a stressful situation she/he cannot cope with. The individual who feels that she/he has to develop himself/herself constantly may wish to carry it to a further different level. This situation leads to a tense structure in the working place, and the reactions will become more negative.

No doubt the managers are influential in coping with organizational stress and continue organizational commitment. Efficient managers want productivity not only in the short term. They know that healthy employees with a high job satisfaction are important and beneficial for the long term benefits of the organization.

2.3. Job satisfaction in Health Organizations:

The health sector has become one of the most important sectors in today's world. A desire for quality life has given rise to the demand for quality health services. The increasing numbers of private hospitals, hospitals becoming separated in terms of different branches, automation systems being applied to health services to ensure that they are more efficient and fast are all the examples of this situation.

Due to the reasons such as urbanization, population increase, industrialization, expansion of the scope of social security and with the increase in awareness of individuals the health organizations have become more important than ever. The basic factor of hospitals for providing quality services is the human factor.

It is considered that hospital employees, from doctors to personnel, are accepted as successful at the level in which they can satisfy the patients.

Performance and working results in the health organizations depends on the job satisfaction of employees working in that organization, because the health sector is an effort-dense working area. For this reason the service quality, efficiency and productivity are completely related with the job being done well by the employee. The policy makers and appliers must ensure the job satisfaction and take the necessary precautions in order to achieve sectorial and organizational purposes.

2.4. The Effect of Optimism on Job Satisfaction in the Health System:

Optimism is a viewpoint. An optimistic person may cope with any difficulties of life and survive any challenges with the least damage. In addition, it is also known that optimistic people prefer the problem-focused coping methods and prefer planned actions when under stress. Positive relations are observed among behaviors such as controlling of stressful events, optimistic properties of individuals and the problem-focused coping methods.

Optimistic people will protect their motivations in the long run by being in an optimistic viewpoint for the future and making the life worth to live. For this reason, it is important that employees of the health sectors being questioned not only in terms of diplomas but also in terms of personal characteristics and optimism. In order for the job satisfaction being obtained in the health sector, it is crucial that attitudes and results of employees for their jobs must cover the expectations. Happy and satisfied employees will work in harmony. By so-doing, there will appear a union of forces for a better service.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Living a healthy life is a necessity for every human being, and the health organizations play an important role in this. The basic element for the hospitals to give a good service is the human factor.

The health sector includes many characteristics that may cause stress in its very nature. It is a widely-known fact that in order to motivate employees and increase productivity various incentives are necessary in the work life. In order to be healthy, a spiritual health is also necessary. Stress is a risk factor for spiritual health, and affects formation of many diseases. Teaching the employees how to protect themselves from stress and how to manage it will bring success, and the society will also benefit from this situation.

In case a balance is established between stress at the workplace and the outside life, it is expected that there will be positive changes in the job satisfaction of the employee.

Those who define and apply the policies of the health sector must care for the job satisfaction, and take the necessary precautions in the organization. Increase in the job satisfaction is in direct proportion with optimism. Optimistic people have a positive vision for the future, and make life worth to live, and therefore will obtain the job satisfaction, and in the long run, the life satisfaction. Happy and productive employees are the key to the society.

The employees in the health sector are under a heavy work load. They are under stress in terms of time, and they cannot spare necessary time for their families and social lives. The human relations must be programmed well in accordance with the employment and the work load.

Employees in the health sector are mentally and physically exhausted due to reasons like standing on their feet while serving patients, making calculations for medications, communication with patients and their relatives or having to empathize with patients and their relatives. Physical conditions must be improved with regulations in the working areas.

The work must be managed by considering excessive or extremely lower workloads and by using proper methods.

Awareness for stress must be increased, and informative meetings must be organized on stress and coping with stress for all employees in the organization and in-service training programs must be included in the annual activities. In addition, a stress counselor and/or a social psychologist must be employed for employees.

As the level of education increases, people will cope with stress in an easier manner. Employees must be encouraged to increase their education levels. In order to decrease role conflicts and role indefiniteness to the least level, role expectations must be clear and coherent. In addition, wages must be managed in a fair manner, and this issue must be improved by rewarding people with incentives.

As far as possible, each employee must be provided with the opportunity to express himself/herself for the long term job satisfaction as well as the short term job satisfaction, and flexibility must be at the highest level for employees. A sufficiently enough environment must be organized in organization thus increasing the job satisfaction.

Employees must constantly be encouraged and supported by covering their needs. The group work between employees must be encouraged as well, and the commitment to the group must be established.

There must be a good balance between the change and continuity factors in the organization.

An organizational synergy must be ensured and increased. This will eliminate lots of stress factors and increase the performance.

Employees will work in a more productive manner in a working environment where they feel themselves precious, effective and safe.

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