



## Managing Organizational Stress in Global Changing Environment

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### ABSTRACT

“Nobody in this world is stress free. Stress is a part of day-to-day life, which cannot be avoidable. Stress is the outcome reaction that will be shown out by anyone when faced by a different situation, which is apart from the normal ones. During the past decade, the private sector had undergone rapid and striking changes due to emergence of globalization, liberalization and increased competition. That is why the employees in the private sector are experiencing a high level of stress. The percentage of female stress is higher than the male workforce proved from the research. In the work place, everybody is facing the problem of stress. Stress is not always negative, sometimes positive also. Like in giant companies usually a Manager delegates certain responsibility to their subordinates, which in turn aid subordinate to upgrade their skills and improve efficiency (This is positive or Eustress). On the other hand, many times stress occurs due to excessive work load which hampers individual as well as Organization performance (This is called negative/distress). From the study, it is clear that stress directly affects job performance. Up to certain level stress is required to perform their best, such stage is known as Optimum level of stress and after that it has negative impact on the individual job performance. In addition to that, it also create labor related problems i.e a high rate of absenteeism , attrition, turnover, declining productivity, health problems and many more. The main causes of stress within the organization are:

1. Gender bias system.
2. Lack of management support.
3. Too much or too little work.
4. Conflicting demands.
5. Role conflict and ambiguity, overload.

Among all these, occupational stress is the major one. Specially, occupational stress is found higher among women employees. Such type of stress is the outcome of role ambiguity, role conflict and due to lack of senior level support. Hence its an hour of today, to formulate and redesign effective HR strategies which can overcome the problem of stress effectively.

**KEY WORDS:** Organizational stress, Job overload, Job performance, Eustress, Distress

### INTRODUCTION

**Research Problem:** Work related stress is recognized as a major challenge to worker’s health and happiness of the organization.

#### Research Objectives:

1. To study the impact of job stress on the overall organizational performance.
2. To explore the effective coping strategies to manage organizational stress.
3. To find the correlation between job stress and performance.

#### Research Hypothesis:

1. Stress can be effectively managed but not avoided due the demands of the contemporary working environment.
2. Stress has both negative and positive impact on the organizational performance.
3. Faulty selection, placement and poor working conditions are the major causes of workplace stress.

Stress at work can be real problem to the organization as well as for its workers. Good management and good organization are the best forms of stress prevention. If employees are already stressed, their manger should be aware of it and know how to help. Stress occurs in a wide range of a work circumstances. Work pressure can not be prevented.

Stress occurs generally when pressures become excessive & unmanageable. Stress can damage one's health and performance.

### **What is Job stress?**

Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress can lead to poor health and even injury. Job stress is often confused with challenge, but these concepts are not the same. Challenge energizes us psychologically and physically, and it motivates us to learn new skills and master our jobs. When a challenge is met, we feel relaxed and satisfied. But job stress is different - the challenge has turned into job demands that cannot be met, relaxation has turned to exhaustion, and a sense of satisfaction has turned into feelings of stress. In short, the stage is set for illness, injury, and job failure.

What causes job stress?

According to one school of thought, differences in individual characteristics such as personality and coping style are most important in predicting whether certain job conditions will result in stress-in other words, what is stressful for one person may not be a problem for someone else. This viewpoint leads to prevention strategies that focus on workers and ways to help them cope with demanding job conditions.

Although the importance of individual differences cannot be ignored, scientific evidence suggests that certain working conditions are stressful to most people. Excessive workload demands and conflicting expectations are good examples. Such evidence argues for a greater emphasis on working conditions as the key source of job stress, and for job redesign as a primary prevention strategy.

### **Job conditions that may lead to stress**

- 1. The design of tasks.** Heavy workload, infrequent rest breaks, long work hours, and shift work are stressful. So are hectic and routine tasks that have little inherent meaning, do not utilize workers' skills, and provide little sense of control.
- 2. Management style.** Lack of participation by workers in decision-making, poor communication in the organization, lack of family-friendly policies.
- 3. Interpersonal relationships.** Poor social environment and lack of support or help from coworkers and supervisors.
- 4. Work roles.** Conflicting or uncertain job expectations, too much responsibility, too many "hats to wear."
- 5. Career concerns.** Job insecurity and lack of opportunity for growth, advancement, or promotion; rapid changes for which workers are unprepared.
- 6. Environmental conditions.** Unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions such as crowding, noise, air pollution, or ergonomic problems.

### **Job stress and health**

Mood and sleep disturbances, upset stomach and headache, and disturbed relationships with family and friends are early signs of job stress. But the effects of job stress on chronic diseases are more difficult to see. Chronic diseases take a long time to develop and can be influenced by many factors other than stress. Some studies suggest a relationship between stressful working conditions and suicide, cancers, ulcers, and impaired immune function. Health care expenditures are nearly 50 percent greater for workers who report high levels of stress.

## **GENERAL CAUSES OF STRESS AT WORK**

Organizational problems

- insufficient back-up
- long or unsociable hours
- poor status, pay and promotion prospects
- unnecessary rituals and procedures
- uncertainty and insecurity

## **SPECIFIC CAUSES OF STRESS AT WORK**

1. Unclear role specifications
2. Role conflict
3. Unrealistically high self-expectations (perfectionism)
4. Inability to influence decision making (powerlessness)
5. Frequent clashes with superiors
6. Isolation from colleagues' support
7. Lack of variety
8. Poor communication

9. Inadequate leadership
10. Conflicts with colleagues
11. Inability to finish a job
12. Fighting unnecessary battles.

### **TASK-RELATED CAUSES OF STRESS AT WORK**

Difficult clients or subordinates, Insufficient training, emotional involvement with clients or subordinates, the responsibilities of the job and inability to help or act effectively .

### **EFFECTS OF TOO MUCH STRESS**

1. Changes take place in personality traits
2. Existing personality problems increase
3. Moral and emotional constraints weaken
4. Depression and helplessness appear
5. Interest Ms and enthusiasms diminish
6. Absenteeism increases
7. Drug abuse increases
8. Energy levels are low
9. Sleep patterns are disrupted
10. New information is ignored
11. Responsibilities are shifted onto others
12. Problems are 'solved' at an increasingly superficial level
13. Suicide threats may be made.

### **Stress prevention and job performance**

Some employers assume that companies must turn up the pressure on workers and set aside health concerns to remain productive and profitable in today's economy. But studies show that stressful working conditions are actually associated with increased absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover--all of which have a negative effect on the bottom line. Recent studies of so-called healthy organizations suggest that policies benefiting worker health also benefit the bottom line. A healthy organization is defined as one that has low rates of illness, injury, and disability in its workforce and is also competitive in the marketplace. In one study, the frequency of medication errors declined by 50 percent after prevention activities was implemented in a 700-bed hospital. In a second study, there was a 70 percent reduction in malpractice claims in 22 hospitals that implemented stress prevention activities.

### **What can be done about job stress?**

#### **1. Stress management**

Nearly one-half of large companies in the United States provide some type of stress management training for their workforce. Some have employee assistance programs (EAPs) to provide individual counseling for employees with both work and personal problems. Stress management training is inexpensive, easy to implement, and may rapidly reduce stress symptoms such as anxiety and sleep disturbances. However, the beneficial effects on stress symptoms are often short-lived. Such programs often ignore important root causes of stress because they focus on the worker and not the environment.

#### **2. Organizational change**

Bringing in a consultant to recommend ways to improve working conditions is the most direct way to reduce stress at work. It involves the identification of stressful aspects of work (e.g., excessive workload, conflicting expectations) and the design of strategies to reduce or eliminate the identified stressors. It deals directly with the root causes of stress at work. However, managers are sometimes uncomfortable with this approach because it can involve changes in work routines or production schedules, or changes in the organizational structure. As a general rule, actions to reduce job stress should give top priority to organizational change to improve working conditions. But even the most conscientious efforts to improve working conditions are unlikely to eliminate stress completely for all workers. For this reason, a combination of organizational change and stress management is often the most useful approach for preventing stress at work.

### **Strategies for preventing job stress**

1. Ensure that the workload is in line with workers' capabilities and resources.
  - Design jobs to provide meaning, stimulation, and opportunities for workers to use their skills.
  - Clearly define workers' roles and responsibilities.
  - Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs.

Improve communications and reduce uncertainty about career development and future employment prospects.  
Provide opportunities for social interaction among workers.  
Establish work schedules that are compatible with demands and responsibilities outside the workplace.  
How to tell if you are stressed - Your body will tell you when you are under too much stress. Here are some of the signals it sends out. How many have you experienced?

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Migraine           | <input type="checkbox"/> Irritability       |
| Headaches          | <input type="checkbox"/> Upset stomach      |
| Loss of appetite   | <input type="checkbox"/> Aggression         |
|                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of sex drive  |
| Fatigue            | <input type="checkbox"/> Stuttering         |
| Heart palpitations | <input type="checkbox"/> compulsive talking |
| Depression         | <input type="checkbox"/> Passiveness        |
| Increased drinking | <input type="checkbox"/> frequent illnesses |

**There are many things that you can do to cope with stress, reduce its effects and make yourself stress resistant. Here are a few of them.**

**1. Maintain a good sense of humor.** Learn to laugh at yourself. Adults don't laugh enough. Children laugh 700 times a day on average, but adults laugh only 35 times. Laughter releases endorphins. These are natural painkillers and analgesics. If you can't find anything to laugh at, go out and rent a funny video.

**2. Set realistic goals for yourself.** We are often our own worst enemies and set impossible goals and then castigate ourselves when we fail to reach them.

**3. Get control of your time.** Our society suffers from "hurry up sickness". We drive ourselves crazy with schedules and the clock. Stop setting impossible deadlines and take a "who cares" attitude whenever and wherever you can. If you are late for a meeting you chair, relax. It won't start without you.

**4. Learn some relaxation skills.** Yoga, massage, meditation, a hot bath or going to bed with a good book can work wonders.

**5. Get enough sleep.** No one functions well when exhausted.

**6. Inoculate yourself against events.** If you know that something stressful is about to happen, prepare for it. Anticipate what is likely to happen. Think about how you will likely feel and then plan to cope with these feelings.

**7. Become more flexible.** This isn't a perfect world and things don't always turn out the way you want.

Your job and our times may be because you stress, but it is your responsibility to deal with it and cope. There are lots of other things you can do, but this will get you started. The main thing is to understand what stress does to you, recognize when your body tells you that you are under too much stress and then decide what to do about it.

### **How Stress Overload Can Affect Your Organization?**

Some positive stress is essential to reach a peak performance level of high energy, confidence and morale, where productivity is at a maximum. However in most organizations today, stress levels have moved into overload. Positive stress is turning to distress and burnout. Absenteeism and Short Term Disability rates are up. Morale is declining. Performance and productivity are critically affected. And the effects of stress overload are showing up on the bottom line.

### **How Stress Affects the Bottom Line?**

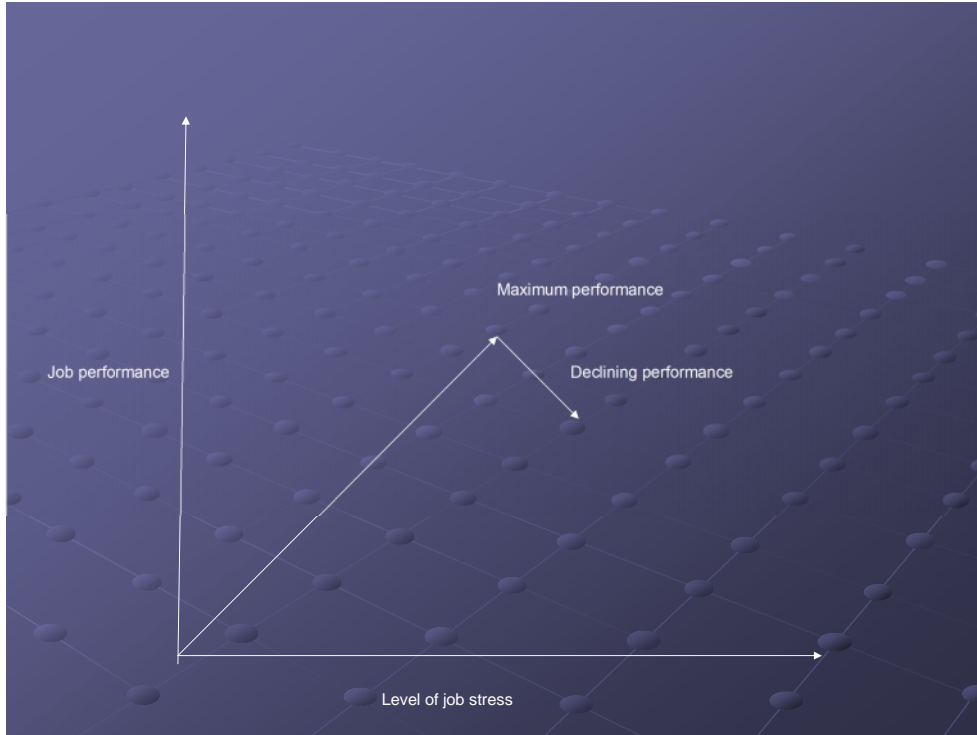
- Research has established a direct link between employee stress and worksite injuries, short and long term disability, and incidental absenteeism.
- Stress is not only identified as the primary cause of most workplace accidents, absenteeism and turnover, but is also beginning to account for the majority of LTD cases as well.
- Benefit savings due to the preventive effects of proactive stress management can range from 5% in Year 1 to as high as 15% by Year 5.

### **Why Most Stress Programs Don't Work?**

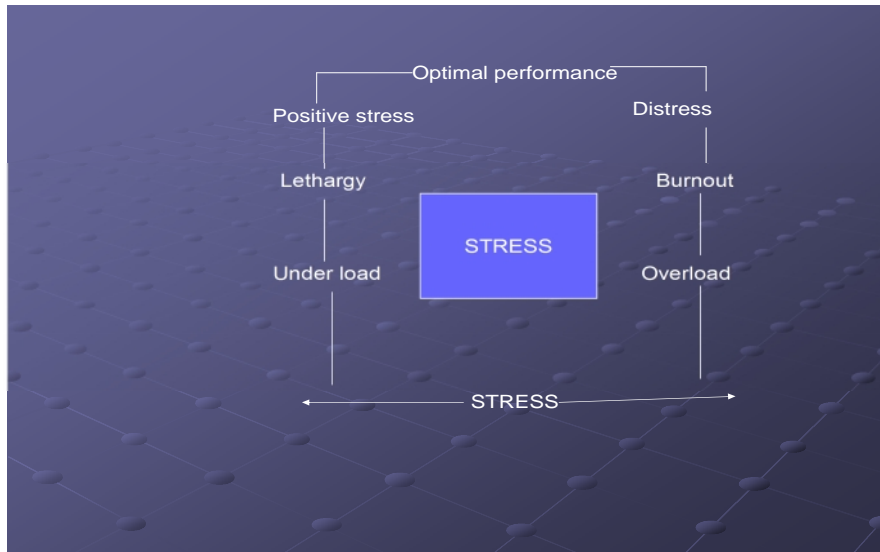
- Place responsibility solely on the individual.
- Do not pinpoint organizational stressors.
- Focus on the traditional approach of fitness, nutrition, and relaxation and weight control.
- Do not teach the key coping skills to deal with stress.
- Don't recognize that even healthy individuals burn out when they return to the same high levels of on-the-job distress.
- Do not understand that different groups experience and cope with stress in very different ways.
- Assume that the same interventions work equally well for different organizations.

**Data analysis & Interpretation**

The Fig. 1 and 2 shows that stress has both negative and positive outcomes. Stress is must up to certain level for better performance of both individual and organization. Stress is said to be optimum when the performance reaches to peak stage. After that performance starts declining with more stress.



**Fig. 1.**



**Fig. 2. Risk Management cycle.**

**Findings:**

1. From research second hypothesis found to be wrong because stress can be prevented by organization Redesigning, excellent work culture, effective communication etc.
2. Job stress negatively affects the organizational performance.
3. Good management and organization are the important tools for managing stress.
4. Stress affects all the levels of management say bottom, middle and top level.
5. Organizational change and good interpersonal relationship help in coping with job related stress.
6. The percentage of stress is more among young employees than experienced person.
7. Women stress is more as compare to male stress.

**CONCLUSION**

Work stress is a real challenge for a worker and their employing organization. As organization and working environment transform than employees faces many stress problems. It is important that your workplace is continuously being monitored for stress problems. Further not it is only important to identify stress problems and to deal with them but to promote healthy work and reduce harmful aspects of work.

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