

A Conceptual Study on Occupational Stress and its Impact on Employees

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Abstract

Occupational stress means stress arising from one's Job which directs towards job related nervousness and anxiety, affecting employees emotional and physical health. stress at work place can take place through various situations varying from the overload work, work Pressure, low career growth, poor interpersonal relations, peer pressure, working conditions, work Culture and so on. Work culture, Worker characteristics and working conditions has been considered much spoken primary cause of occupational stress. Job stress has been understood as a strong work hazard contributing to the series of physical and behavioral problems, found to be a multivariate phenomenon. It also emerges to be a pattern of emotional, cognitive, and physiological reactions to adverse and noxious aspects of work content, work organization and work environment. This objective of this research is to present an exploratory study on occupational stress, exploring various factors boosting such stress, its impact on employee's performance and health and various preventive measures that can be adopted to make employees overcome.

Key Words : Occupational Stress, Job Stress, Work Stress, Role Stress, Distress, Stress, Work Hazards.

Introduction :

various studies have stated that "occupational stress" has been variously termed as "job stress", "work place stress" and "organizational role stress". All these constructs looks more over similar with minor distinctiveness. Occupational stress, workplace-stress, job stress and role-stress stem from a wider phenomenon „stress“ which is a complex psychological construct that people may experience everyday " (Quick et al., 1997). Richard Carlson defines stress as —Stress is nothing more than a socially acceptable form of mental illness.

Work stress can be referred as a strain, depression, fretfulness, anxiety and so on which are reflected on one's face in his workplace when he is overloaded with copious demands and expectation Some of the job conditions which lead to stress are: (1) The Design of Tasks: Heavy workload, infrequent rest breaks, long work hours and shift work; hectic and routine tasks that have little inherent meaning, little control over work, underutilization of workers' skills, little room for flexibility, self-initiative, or rest. (2) Management Style: Lack of workers' participation in management decisions, poor organizational communication, lack of employee-friendly policies, insensitivity to employee family needs. (3) Interpersonal Relationships: Poor social environment, lack of support or help from co-workers and supervisors. (4) Work Roles: Conflicting or uncertain job expectations, too much responsibility.(5) Career Concerns: Job insecurity, lack of opportunity

for growth and advancement, rapid changes and unprepared workers. (6) Environmental Conditions: Unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions such as crowding, noise, air pollution, or ergonomic problems. And all these factors leads not only to the physical hazards but also to their emotional, cognitive, and physiological aspect of living.

Definition of Occupational / Job/ Work Stress given by various Authors

Comish R. & Swindle B. (1994) - Occupational stress, in particular, is the inability to cope with pressures in a job, because of a poor fit between someone's abilities and his/her work requirements and conditions. It is a mental and physical condition which affect an individual's productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work

European Commission, Directorate - General for Employment and Social Affairs (2000) Job stress refers to the emotional, cognitive, behavioural and physiological reaction to aversive and noxious aspects of work, work environments and work organisations. It is a state characterized by high levels of arousal and distress and often by feelings of not coping.

European Commission, DG, guidance on work-related stress (1999) - Work stress is the emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological reaction to aversive and noxious aspects of work, work environments and work organizations. It is a state characterized by high levels of arousal and distress often by feelings of not coping'.

Dollar et al., (2001) - Work stress is transitional arousal state between objective stressors and strain where strain is reaction to the condition of stress.

Malta, (2004) - Occupational stress is any discomfort which is felt and perceived at a personal level and triggered by instances, events or situations that are too intense and frequent in nature so as to exceed a person's coping capabilities and resources to handle them adequately.

Objectives

1. To study the various factors causing Job related stress to the employees
2. To study the impact of occupational stress on employees Performance and Health.
3. To provide the suggestions on the preventive measure for coping of the Occupational Stress

Methodology:

This study is completely descriptive based on secondary data which is being collected through the various magazine, journals and research papers.

Scope of the study :

Occupational stress, in particular, is the inability to cope with pressures in a job, because of a poor fit between someone's abilities and his/her work requirements and conditions. It is a mental and physical condition which

affect an individual's productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work. This study will make the employers and employees understand the various factors contributing to occupational stress along with its implications on their physical and mental health. Which will further help them working on various employee friendly remedial policies and actions. Study also has a wider scope to help future researcher /scholar or students understanding job stress and preventive measures.

Review of Literature

Colligan et.al. (2006), explain that various stressor causes and leads the body to have a physiological reaction. It strains a person physically as well as mentally. A variety of factors contribute to workplace stress such as overloaded work load, lack of autonomy, organisation culture, work environment, extensive working hours, difficult relationships among co-workers and management, management bullying, harassment and lack of opportunities or motivation to advancement in one's skill level.

Cooper and Marshall (1978), suggested classification of stress in terms of six different stressors. According to them sources of managerial stress can be categorized into six components - intrinsic to job, role in organization, career development, organizational structure and climate, relationship within organization and organizational interface and outside .

Colligan, Thomas W., Colligan MSW., and Higgins M. (2006). claim that often a stressor leads the body to have a physiological reaction which can strain a person physically as well as mentally. These authors further maintain that a variety of factors are found to contribute to workplace stress such as negative workload, isolation, lack of autonomy, extensive hours worked, toxic work environments, difficult relationships among co- workers and management, harassment, management bullying, and lack of opportunities or motivation to advancement in one's skill level. These authors maintain that there are five categories of occupational stress: Factors unique to the job, Role in the organization, Career development, Interpersonal work relationships, Organizational Structure/climate

Chandraiah et. al. (2003) in their study investigated the effect of age on occupational stress and job satisfaction among managers of different age groups. A sample of 105 industrial managers working in different large-scale organizations was selected for the study. The Occupational Stress Index (OSI) developed by Srivastava & Singh (1983) was used to assess the level of job stress of the sample. The study found negative correlation between age and occupational stress.

Alhajjar (2013) conducted a study to investigate into stress among hospital nurses. The study found a high prevalence of psychological distress, depression among nurses. The most severe occupational stressors identified were: 'not enough staff to adequately cover the unit', 'lack of drugs and equipment required for nursing care', 'unpredictable staffing and scheduling', respectively. Further, 'workload', and 'death and dying' were identified as the most frequent and severe occupational stressors.

Jagdish & Srivastava (1989) conducted a study to examine the relationship between perceived occupational stress stemming from various job dimensions and mental health or psychological well being of the first level supervisors. The perceived occupational stress was assessed with the help of Occupational Stress Index (OSI) developed and standardized by Srivastava & Singh (1981).

Sumangala et al. (2009) assessed the relationship between age and occupational stress among employees of Information Technology companies. A total of 600 respondents belonging to different age groups participated in the study. The study revealed that employees have moderate levels of stress. In addition, the study found significant difference in stress among employees of different age groups and role conflict; role ambiguity and poor peer relations are closely associated with employees' health.

Richa Burman and DR. Tulsee Giri. (2018). Stated that The negative effects of occupational stress may be realised in the form of reduced efficiency, decreases capacity to perform the job, dampened initiative and reduced interest in working, increased rigidity of thought, lack of concern for the organization and colleagues and a loss of responsibility and loyalty to the organization. Hence, the management of the organization need to take several initiatives to help their employees to overcome stress viz. organizing various stress in management programs, redesigning jobs, making role clearer so as to reduce role ambiguity, encouraging open channels of communication, improving working conditions etc.

Caplan (1985), reported the factors like supervisory climate, co-workers, and time pressures, pressures for conformity which affect the mental and physical health of employees. Low control over the work environment, decreased participation in decision making about conditions of work, unpredictability of events, both too little and too much complexity in work, role ambiguity, and excessive workload, responsibility for persons, role conflict, and lack of social support are found to affect the well-being of employees at the work place. With more exposure to these factors over a period of time, employees face more emotional and physiological trauma.

Sources Contributing to Job Stress

Stress at work place has been considered as a very serious matter and handling this issue on the floor have been a daunting task for the managers because in today's scenario where there is a cut through competition, everyone running behind the target, challenges of learning new things every day, pressure of coping up with the change, mounting stress becomes inevitable. So the question arises what to be done . its been understood that though the stress is inevitable in one hand, the other hand has to be well prepared and proactive to fight and overcome the stress and create a policy or working environment/structure which can gradually eradicate the stress or reduce it below the margin. But before any further steps are being taken in this process, its important to understand the various factors which is contributing to job/work or occupational stress. And this can be understood clearly with the help of below figure

Fig :1

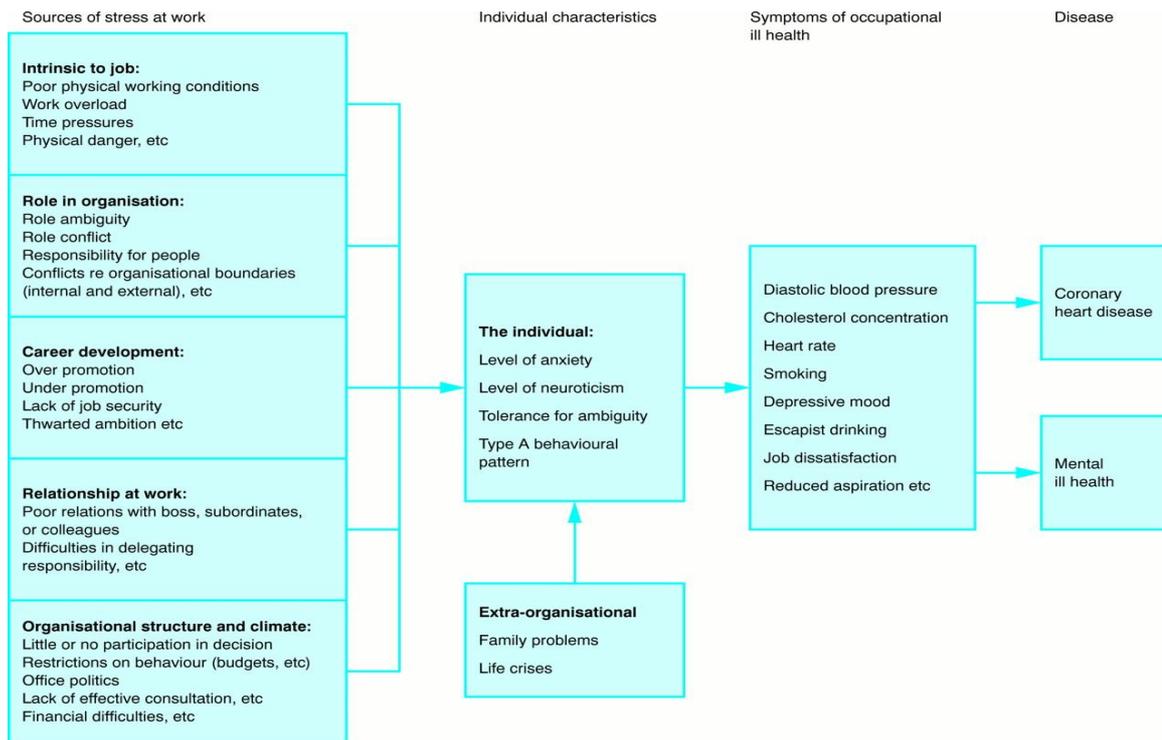
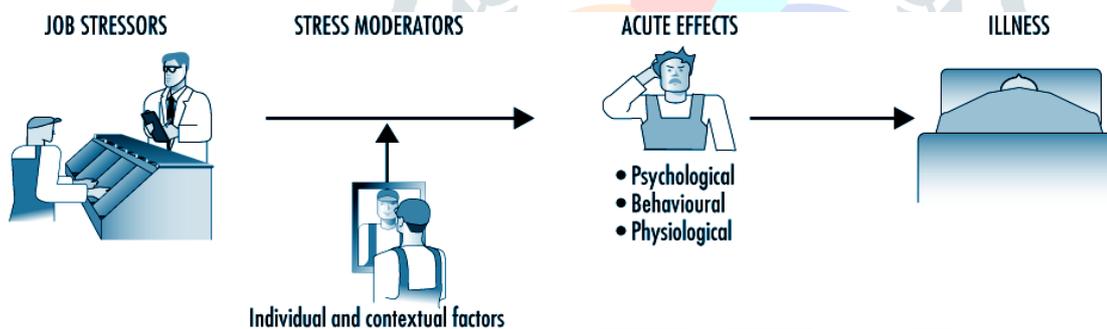


Fig : 2



Job Stress Model of National Institute for occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

Its been clearly understood how intrinsic to the job, Role in organisation, Career development, Relationship to the work and organisation structure and culture contributes to the employees level of stress which gets accumulated in their mind and soul affecting their overall persona and behaviour which further leads to health hazards followed by poor performance and serious illness like depression, heart disease, hyper tension, blood pressure, diabetic, kidney disease and many more. According to National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), an individual’s own nature, behaviour and various contextual factors like any family issues going on, unhealthy lifestyle, any personal life crisis works as a moderator in creating or sustaining the stress.

Impact / Effect of Occupational Stress:

NIOSH has further classified the effect of stress in three categories that is Physiological, Psychological and Behaviour leading to illness that can be either long term or short term depending upon the amount and level

of stress. In today's competitive era, stress is inevitable and hence it comes, sustains, effect a person and leaves several set of consequences. Various studies have found that the impact or consequences of stress can be classified in four different and broader categories such as

- **Cognitive Consequences:** Mental illness, Concentration problem, Poor judgment, Constant nervous etc diminished mental ability, and may include such effects as impaired judgment, rash decisions, forgetfulness and/or hypersensitivity to criticism.
- **Behavioural Consequences** Sleeping disorder, Poor eating habits, Use of drugs and alcohols, Neglect the responsibilities etc outlandish or argumentative behaviour, laughter out of context, very excitable moods, and/or eating or drinking to excess.
- **Emotional Consequences** Short temper, Restless, Impatient, Depression, Sense of isolation etc
- **Physical Consequences** Back and neck pains, Heart problems, Blood pressure, Nausea, Anxiety etc.

The AFT's Health & Safety Program, NW Washington, DC (2000), also discussed about the various stress occurring at job place classifying in short and long term. Further explained the implications of short term and long term stress on physical and psychological aspects.

1. Psycho-physiological impacts of Short Term stress

Physical impact of short term stress were stated as Headaches, Back pain, Muscles pain, skin rashes, over/under eating, sleeping disorder wherein *psychological impact* were stated as Hyper Tension, Forgetfulness, Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Low feeling, irritation and so on. To sum up, it can be understand that Stress is nothing but a body's response to a regular stressor . so its not only important but also high alarming condition wherein employer and employees must work on to eliminate various stressor so that body returns to its normal healthy state at the earliest and remain healthy

2. Psycho-physiological impacts of Long Term stress

when the stressor continues to haunt the mind and the body of an individual for the long term, it leads to the dangerous and life threatening stage from where its difficult to come back to normalcy or some time becomes impossible. The AFT's Health & Safety Program, NW Washington, DC (2000) stated the *Physical impact* of long term stress as High Blood Pressure, Asthama, Diabetic, Heart Diseases, Tissues break down, Nervous system issues where as *Psychological impact* of long term stress were stated as Burnout, temptation to Suicide, Alcoholism, Domestic Violence, serious Depression and so on .

How an organisation can help employees cope up with the stress

- Yoga and Meditation programme must be arranged frequently which will help gaining lots of health benefits like normalizing blood pressure, reduce chronic pain, good sleep, healthy heart, balanced cholesterol and many more.
- Rejuvenation or recreational activities can be planned to keep them fresh and active.

- Indoor or outdoor sports or Management games can be planned and executed in specific intervals to avoid the sense of isolation, sleeping disorder, Monotonous life style etc.
- Restructuring organisation culture, workplace environment, various policies which can be more employees friendly.
- Job description must be clearly defined.
- Work schedule must be compatible and flexible.
- Training and development must be reformed and enhanced to give the maximum benefit.
- Organization should conduct a stress management workshop on a regular basis.
- Stress management counselling session must be organize on frequent basis to guide, assist and mentor which will further help overcome various physical and psychological problems
- Must have effective communication channel and system.
- To sum up, organisation must work on to build up an effective mechanism to identify and eradicate stress going to its root cause.

Conclusion

Richard Carlson defines stress as Stress is nothing more than a socially acceptable form of mental illness. Today's employees living a stressful times struggling with two or more jobs, fighting to meet the best performance parameters resulting in higher stress levels which further leads to Work stress strain, depression, fretfulness, anxiety, burnout etc. The literature review has provided the concept that the too much stress at work place will have toxic effect whereas too little stress may result in boredom and apathy and low performance. Job stress and job satisfaction are inversely (negatively) correlated. The studies shows that impact of work stress not only affect the physical and psychological state but also affect the employee's job performance and productivity. Its been also found that Work stress had an adverse impact on employee's health and they suffer from different disease such as coronary heart disease, blood pressure, depression, anxiety, nervousness etc. hence organisation must keep job stress harnessed and create a healthy and employee friendly approach and policies with the punch of stress removal strategies, workshop, counselling and rejuvenation activities.

The study focused on the field of work stress providing the concept and basic understanding about the work stress through the literature review. The paper also provides the in-depth knowledge about the research conducted in work stress in different countries as well as different sectors. The study has brought up the various factors causing stress along with its impact on employees health. Future research can be focused on designing an organizational framework which should be in accord with the developmental aspects and should provide encouraging environment to the employees in turn reducing the stress. Research suggest that stress management workshops should be conducted on regular basis which can educate workers about the source of stress and its harmful consequences on their health and

how they can reduce stress effectively. It should be backed by practical stress reduction techniques that workers can use on and be benefited.

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