

## Stress Management: Concept and Strategies

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### Abstract:

The innovation in technology which has a direct effect on the work environment creates new situations which need to be handled on a day to day basis thus leading to stress. Different individuals react to different situations in different ways and it is quite essential to actively tackle these situations before it affects the organization. There are various preventive measures to deal with stress and it is essential that the management adopts these measures. The present paper tries to explain the concept of stress and stress management

**Keywords:** stress, stress management, stressors

### Introduction

Stress has become an inevitable part of daily human life and is observed in various forms such as the students may experience stress of exams or academic curricula fulfilment, the employees may face stress due to increasing job expectations and increased targets set by the employers etc. the causes of stress and its reaction changes from individual to individual and it is not necessary that always stress is negative it can be taken positively also. Limited amount of stress acts as a booster and leads towards fulfilment of set targets and goals but a high amount of stress may lead towards serious physical and psychological problems. It is generally termed that stress is an outside agent which is felt due to unwanted changes but if closely observed it is an internal reaction towards the changes and it may be taken positively or negatively.

Stress is derived from Latin word 'Stringere' which means to draw tight. Stress is a condition which affects the physical and psychological health of human beings which in turn affects the overall productivity of any organization.

In the modern times globalization, privatization and the favourable policies of government has led to sudden rise in various industries which pose a problem of challenges on the staff. The rapidly changing technological innovations have put forth new changes in the existing work environment which leads to stress and thus stress has become an inevitable feature of human life. In the present

competitive world which is full of achievements stress has assumed a central point in life of every human being. The basic reason behind stress is the socio-cultural environment and changing lifestyle of people which is more demanding, highly competitive and uncertainty of future.

Stress has been defined as a situation which individuals perceive when they cannot cope up with a particular situation or there is a threat to their well being (Lazarus, R. S. 1966)

Stress is always considered in the negative aspect commonly termed as distress but the stress can be positive also and it is termed as Eustress. Most of the executives are constantly under pressure of achieving the set goals of the organization and fulfilling the targets. It is not possible for these executives to come out of this process successfully and equip themselves with the necessary and requisite skills to face the competition at global level. All these leads to stress and hence it is very important to see that the person does not get stressed out. Stress is usually termed as a negative term and is considered as dependent variable in terms of research methodology as stress is dependent on a particular situation. The tremendous technological changes and the capacity to cope up with these changes has led to a large amount of stress among the employees working at different levels in organization. Many companies are experimenting new ways of doing things which leads to increased productivity and this in turn puts stress on the employees which directly affects their performance.

## **Literature Review**

A research study conducted on employees in BPO industry by Srivastav, A. (2008) highlights various stressors observed in the BPO industry such as work life imbalance, role stagnation, role inadequacy etc. have a negative impact on these working professionals. In an article by Dhanalakshmi. M. (2011) the relation of stress on human body has been explained wherein it has been pointed that usually people think of stress in a negative way but the importance to balance stress in a positive way has been explained which may lead to a healthy human body. Shukla, H. and Garg. R. (2013) have conducted a study on stress management of bank employees working in nationalised banks and have found that the level of stress in these employees is more. It has been suggested that positives steps need to be taken at the higher managerial level to reduce the stress of these employees which will lead to enhanced work efficiency. Employees of the banks should be made free from not only fear of quality of performance also from other types of fear generating in their minds. Guidance and counselling, quality consciousness awareness programs, psychological support can be provided to employees. Mohite, P. D. and Pawar, S. D. (2014) in their unpublished research thesis have conducted a study on the inter relationship between stress level and productivity of the bus drivers and conductors. The study highlights various problems faced by the PMPML staff which includes poor working conditions and environment along with increasing number of accidents. The study concludes

with the issues of no job security, poor and unhygienic bus depots and other related factors which lead to stress and ultimately affects the productivity.

### Sources of stress:

Stress arises from a variety of situations and events and is dependent on various factors such as family, friends, co-employees or any other external sources. Different sources have been identified and categorized which have been listed below (Brown, 1984):

1. Customary events in life which include major changes such as marriage, divorce, retirement, children setting abroad etc.
2. Unexpected events include those events which have suddenly occurred in human life such as major accident, sudden lay off etc.
3. Progressive and accumulating situational events such as daily job responsibilities, co-workers pressures etc.

### Different types of Stress

Different types of stress have as identified in their article (V. Sumathi , R. Velmurugan, 2016) which have been mentioned below:

**Eustress:** Eustress is in the form of short-term positive stress which motivates and is perceived within individual coping capacities. It acts as a motivational force which helps to build energy. It helps to improve the overall performance on the activity in hand. Eg: stressor experienced by a gymnast before a competition, promotion at work etc.

**Distress:** Distress is a negative stress which occurs due to constant readjustments or alterations in routine life. It arouses a feeling of discomfort and unfamiliarity. There are two types of distress namely acute stress which is in the form of an intense stress that arrives and disappears quickly and chronic stress is a prolonged form of stress that may exist for a few weeks, months or even years. Eg: legal problems, conflict between peers etc.

**Hyper stress:** Hyper stress occurs when an individual is pushed beyond the capacity what he or she can handle which can also be described as overloaded or overworked. When someone is hyper stressed, even little things can trigger a strong emotional response. Eg: work-life balance, compromising situations between house and work etc.

**Hypo stress:** Hypo stress is exactly opposite to hyper stress. This situation occurs when a person is bored in life and nothing is left in his life which can stimulate him. It can also occur if an employee is doing the same type of job with no challenges and achievements to be counted.

**Stress Management: concept and overview**

One of the most leading authorities on the concept of stress namely, Dr. Hans Selye has described stress as the rate of all wear and tear caused by life (Gero, J.). There are various physical and psychological sources of stress namely work overload, unfavourable working environment, lack of autonomy, monotonous job, responsibility without appropriate authority etc. It must be carefully observed that what may be stressful for someone may not be the same condition for another person. A few business schools from Harvard have included the meditation techniques in their executive MBA programs to enable the students to cope up with the stressful situations arising in their life.

The concept of stress management covers an individual taking overall control of stress which may be in the form of thoughts, emotions or other similar factors to deal with a particular situation which has been encountered. Another way of managing stress when individual faces an unwanted stressful situation is either change the situation or change the reaction towards the particular situation. As every individual responds differently to situation in hand there is no specific solution to manage it.

Stress can be explained as an unexpected strain on human body which is experienced by an individual when coping with some environmental factor.

Stress is one of a major cause of absenteeism and declined turnover in any organization. An employee who is stressed can affect the safety and security of the co-workers and also society at large.

A stressor is an event of set of conditions which causes a response to stress. It is defined as an environmental demand that causes people to feel stress. Stressors are common situations where individuals are confronted by circumstances in which their usual behaviours are inappropriate and result in negative consequences. (Creto, S. and Treviserto.S. 2019). There are different levels of stress found in various organisations and the goal of stress management is to keep the level of stress at an optimal range and not to totally eliminate it. Various stress management techniques have been applied by various organization based on research conducted and these include physical exercises, social interactions, meditation and relaxation, adequate sleep, employment boosters etc. For eg: LG has adopted a reward system wherein the employees are offered very high amount of performance bonuses which puts them under stress to perform well. (Koonts, H. et.al.2007).

**Stress Management interventions:**

The concept of stress management interventions refers to a series of activities which are employed in an organization in order to remove stress of the employee and increase their well being. These techniques include the activities which are performed in which various causes of stress are addressed or the impact of stress on individual is reduced (Holman, D. et. al. 2018).

The interventions of stress management have been classified as primary, secondary and tertiary. The primary interventions include a process wherein the sources of stress are removed and thus the causes of well-being are enhanced. In the secondary intervention the severity of stress is reduced and thereby the level of stress becoming problematic to an individual is automatically reduced. In the tertiary interventions steps are taken to rehabilitate and maximize the functioning habits of those people who are already suffering from high level of psychological problems.

### **Stress management: Current scenario**

A survey conducted by Research and Markets (2020) has found that workplace stress is a biggest threat to the health of employees in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and may lead to serious public health problems. The present situation of COVID- 19 has brought immense change in the work environment and this has affected all the aspects of life. The online tasks assigned by the Companies have increased the workload of the employees due to mismatch between the resources available and skills possessed by them. The pandemic situation has resulted into closure of many companies and resulted in huge job losses which have put the employees in constant fear and stress. All this has increased the need for Corporate Awareness programs covering various programs such as health advocacy, employee assistance, professional stress management coaches, mindfulness training activities and formation of stress management teams etc.

### **Strategies to reduce stress at workplace:**

Various strategies can be adopted to reduce stress at work which may include:

**Two way communication:** Effective and open two way communication must be encouraged between the top management and the employees which helps to create healthy relations and increase productivity.

**Meaningfulness in work:** The work done by an employee may be looked upon as benefits he provides to others and the same perspective can be adopted when talking to co-workers about the importance of the work they are doing.

**Healthy relationships:** Establishing relations with people who are encouraging and supportive. The training or workshops on effective stress management can also be attended.

**Maintain a positive antidote:** Keep a positive attitude while performing various tasks.

## Conclusion

In the end it can be concluded that a certain amount of stress among the employees is considered to be advantageous as it tends to increase production but if the stress level of employees is very high or very low it is dangerous for the organization as it tends to decrease the production.

Thus it can be seen that various forms of stress are encountered by individuals in their daily routines. The stress related to work environment has a dual impact on the health of individual leading to various psychological and health issues. Stress is seen in various forms and at different individual levels which need to be identified and dealt with beforehand. But vice versa stress can also make an individual productive if it is managed well in hand and with a positive attitude. If the organizations create a positive, conducive and stress free atmosphere for the employees it would lead to increased performance level and ultimately reflect in the form of long term commitment from the employees to the organization.

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