

**Stress at work places – An Overview****Dr. Ipseeta Satpathy, D.Litt****Professor ( OB & HR)****School of Management****KIIT University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha****&****Bonita Mitra****Research Scholar****School of Management****KIIT University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha****Abstract**

The present paper is an attempt to understand the various factors which contributes for the stress in working environment. It a conceptual paper and for this purpose various secondary sources are included and also to some extent core group discussions conducted to validate the concept. The objective of the paper is to undertake the in depth study the effectiveness of stress management in work places. Through this paper we tried to conceptualize the stress in general.

**Key words-** Stress, work place, environment and organization.

**Introduction**

Stress is a normal part of life. In small quantities, stress is good; it can motivate you and help you become more productive. However, too much stress, or a strong response to stress can be harmful. How we perceive a stress provoking event and how we react to it determines its impact on our health. Stress results from receiving some perceived threat to your well-being from a source—your job, relationships, health, finances, or unrealistic expectations. In the workplace of today is characterized by large amounts of stress on the part of employees. It is argued that much of this is due to rapid changes in the business world that have led to many economic, social, political, and family problems. Stress management techniques and perceptions of abilities to deal with stress played an important role in reducing stress. Therefore, it is common to find that individuals are often good at dealing with the stress.

Potentially harmful stressors surround all of human beings in work and personal life. Therefore, virtually everybody needs a program of stress management to stay well. Stress has begun to emerge, in recent years, as a relevant area for study. Increased research emphasis on this concept

Stress is a hot-button issue for a daily life. It is a key challenge for the organizations because organizations with stressed employees are more likely to be unsuccessful in the market. Probably, the employees belonging from IT sector are witnessing maximum stress. Stress is a complex fact in an individual's life with no easy answer. Generally, it is a condition of pressure or tension on an individual that affects individual's health and performance at workplace. Many organizations are facing day-to-day challenges to handle stress in a proper way. It is no-wonder that in today's fast paced society dealing with stress and adopting an effective stress management approach is a challenge for each and every organization. Individuals reflect a different behavior when they are stressed. The level of stress experienced by individuals differs from person to person, not because of their age or gender but it results out of variety of situations they come across. Stress among the employees is a great matter of concern both for the organizations as well as the working employees. It is influenced mainly by occupational position and the culture of the organization. Stress becomes more complicated and shows a more unfavorable result if left unhandled. The reasons that results stress are known as Stressors. Mostly, every human being reacts differently to the stressors. In present organizations, it has become a strong predictor of job satisfaction. It can be viewed from two directions:

- ❖ From Individual point of view- It can cause various physical and psychological imbalances leading to various diseases.
- ❖ From Organizational point of view-It can lead to ineffectiveness of organization, poor productivity, increase in employee turnover and absenteeism.

However, stress is not always bad or shows negative results. Some stress is also good and helpful in improving the performance of an individual. Hence, certain level of stress is always necessary to motivate us to and perform at a higher level. For example: When you are stressed for a given project you give your best efforts and dedication to finish the project within the stipulated time frame and perform best. But at times, stress beyond certain level may show opposite reactions or poor results. For example: When you are stressed because of the poor health of your kid you may not perform your best at the workplace as a result of which you show low productivity. Thus, stress can broadly be divided into two main types:

- ❖ **Eustress:** Stress that motivates a person to perform better and show positive results.
- ❖ **Distress:** Stress that hinders the performance and show negative results.

Whether a situation is stressful or not is always determined by the individual experiencing the situation. No two people perceive a given situation in the same way because persons differ with their coping skills. Situations are viewed differently by different persons. Hence, handling stress effectively is a skill that we should learn so that it will not harm our health as well as our performance. In the crude meaning, stress management can be defined as being aware of the stressors we are facing and their sources and learning how to respond these stressors in a positive way. People believe that they have inadequate skills to deal with the higher degree of stress which they are facing. Thus, eventually every individual needs a proper stress management program to stay fit.

#### **Sources of Stress:**

Basically there are four main areas from where people experience stress:

**Atmosphere:** The change in the tangible environment or atmosphere again and again over a period of time is a reason of stress. Example- Over crowded traffic, natural calamities, unsafe roads and housing and criminal offense in your society

**Societal:** We experience a variety of stress because of the demands of the various roles we play in the society like neighbourer, family relations, caretaker and employee to an organization. Example- workplace tensions that includes assignments, projects, presentations, achieving targets, unemployment or job search, bad marriage, death of a family member.

**Health issues:** Situations or conditions that affect the smooth functioning of our body are the reasons of stress. Example-Improper growth, insufficient sleep, lack of rest, inadequate food, aging, frequent sickness and accidents.

**Cognitive issues:** It is our opinion or belief or the mind that perceives a particular situation is stressful or not. If we consider a situation a normal circumstance arising out in our life then we may not feel threaten for the situation and can deal with it more effectively and properly.

**Job-Related factors leading to Stress:**

The policy of the organization i.e. the rules, regulations, process and procedures and the control of employees on their job are also the determinants of occupational stress. The occupational factors that cause stress are:

**Autonomy-** It refers to the freedom or authority or independence of an employee to take job related decisions and determine the procedures and his course of action for attainment of goals and objectives. Hence, it can be assumed that lower job autonomy leads to higher degree of stress among the employees.

**Role Conflict-**It is a situation that arises when an employee have more than one boss or supervisors with different sets of expectations which is difficult to fulfill. This conflicting prospect from a particular employee leads to a stressful situation for the employee.

**Role Ambiguity-** It happens when the tasks and responsibilities assigned to an employee are confusing or lack clarity. High degree of role ambiguity leads to higher level of stress.

**Role Overload-** It refers to a situation when an individual is not having adequate ability and skill to perform the tasks that the job demands. This also creates a stressful situation for an employee.

**Job Appreciation-** Work related stress can arise when one is not praised or appreciated for his good performance or satisfied outcomes. The lack of appreciation discourages the person to give his best efforts at workplace and further gives tension and pressure on him.

Virtually, to endure and excel in the competitive market management need to adopt some stress management programs or techniques to help their employees stay well. In addition, it not only affects the health of the employees but also shows an adverse effect on the quality of work life (QWL) that

further leads to regular absenteeism and high rate of attrition. The most stressful situations arises when the demands of the job exceeds the abilities and skills of the employee to perform that job. Organization's culture is a major challenge that determines whether its employees are stressed or not. Accordingly, organizations should implement good policies and practices that will promote the culture of the organization and will provide a better working environment for the organizations. Few such practices that can help organizations to improve their workplace and reduce stress are: Flexible time policy, Support from the management, opinion of employees in decision making, work from home policy, workshops on stress management, recreational activities and counseling. Subsequently, we can also follow step-to-step guidelines and actions to cut down stress:

Step-1: Identifying you are stressed or not

Step-2: Identifying the sources of stress or the stressors.

Step-3: Identifying the actual cause of the stressors

Step-4: Selecting and implementing a strategy for managing the stressors

Step-5: Evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy

Absolute elimination of stress is neither pleasing nor feasible. Hence, we can prevent stress to affect unfavorably on the health and work of the individuals. Stress prevention can be done by three ways:

- **Primary Methods of Prevention-** It includes reducing the effect of factors causing stress, methods like work or job design, workers participation in management and flexi work time can reduce stress
- **Secondary Methods of Prevention-** It includes changing the response and reaction to stressful situation. This can be done by doing regular exercises, giving proper education and adequate training to workers.
- **Tertiary Methods of Prevention-** When primary or secondary prevention methods are ignored or their implementation is neglected then tertiary methods should be adopted for coping with stress. It involves various interventions programmes and promoting health provisions.

Stress management is a continuous process that should be monitored frequently. Reducing the negative effects and consequences of stress is more important than mere identifying the reasons of stress. Stressors can work wonderfully and prove to be good opportunities if managed well. Stress works as a stimulus to motivate and stimulate employees to perform their best. At times, stress may be overwhelming resulting in harmful consequences. Thus, to have a productive workplace and healthy living, organizations must adopt some effective stress management approaches that would reduce stress.

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