A STUDY ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF EMPLOYEES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Dr. V. Antony Joe Raja
HOD, Department of Management, Sri Muthukumaran Institute of Technology, Near Mangadu, Kunrathur Rd, Chikkarayapuram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600069

ABSTRACT

Everyone deals with stress at some point in life, an IT administrators are no exception. The problems begin when our stress levels reach a point where it proves detrimental to our health, to our relationships and our general well-being. The medical community often calls it the 'silent killer'. A number of experts argue that technology has, in part, contributed to higher stress levels because, while easing the burden in so many areas, technology has made multi-tasking the norm we are expected to do more because technology allows us to do more. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how job related stress affecting the performance and job satisfaction of the IT employees. This paper is an attempt to find out the factors that are affecting the employees which affect their personal life because of job stress.

Key words: Job Stress, IT Sector and Stress Factors.

Cite this Article: Dr. Raja, V. A. J. A Study on occupational Stress of Employees in Information Technology. International Journal of Management, 6(7), 2015, pp. 11-17.

http://www.iaeme.com/IJM/issues.asp?JTypeIJM&VType=6&IType=7

1. INTRODUCTION

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. In the time of economical crises, high competition, continuous broadcastings of negative news from the whole world and appearance of new incurable and fast spreading illnesses, people run the risk of having stress more and more frequently. Stress nowadays is not something new, not anything unknown.

What is stress? [3] By definitions, stress is said to be a physical, mental, or emotional response to events that causes physical or mental tension. In simple words,
stress is an outer force that has a command over inner feelings. Stress is a self developed pain by thoughts. When a person expects more than what he actually deserves for his work, or when a person thinks it is beyond his actual capability, and still continues to do, he gets a mental illness. This illness could be stated as stress. There are chances for this stress to break a person, both internally and externally, and so, it is wise to adapt the ways to handle it, at the right time.

2. CLASSIFICATION OF STRESS
The two main classifications of stress are:

- Eustress
- Distress

Eustress is a positive stress. It is caused by continuous success and when expectations become higher. This develops the sense of urgency and alertness needed for survival when confronting threatening situations, and stresses to hold their position becomes more.

Distress is a negative stress [1]. It is caused due to disappointments, failures, threats, embarrassment and other negative experiences. This can result in distrust, rejection, anger and depression which eventually may turn out to go get headaches, stomach upsets, rashes, insomnia, ulcers, high blood pressures, etc., and this can have harmful effects over one’s physical, mental and spiritual health.

3. EMPLOYEE’S STRESS IN EMPLOYER’S PERSPECTIVE:

From the employer’s perspective, employees are categorized into two classes:

3.1. Class-I
Class – I employees is the one who joins in a job with so many dreams, ideas and enthusiasm on day one. Slowly getting settled down to the environment and becoming flexible to it would approximately take three months.

During his six months in the organization, he realizes the around in the organization.

At a year in office, his dreams are shattered. He understands there is no scope to realize his dreams. During year two, he gets frustrated and all types of compromises come on his way. Finally at year three, he realizes his time to leave the organization and resigns the job and gets into a new job with as many dreams.

3.2. CLASS – II
Class II employee, joins a job with stress, works through out with stress and retires with stress [2]. When he joins as a fresher/ trainee, he has a fear of loosing his job, if his performance is not as expected. He fears about his incapability and the unsure job. Once the training is over, and during his experience for less than a year, as an employee he gets into mental stress. He spends more time on mobile phones than at work. His ultimate aim is fun. So when he working hours is less, work load increases. Eventually he starts blaming that he is overloaded with works comparing with the skilled co-workers.

4. DIVISION OF STRESS
The most famous division of stress causes is wheel scheme. The analysis wheel can be useful in both recognizing the causes of stress and in planning how to address
them. Each perspective offers a different way of explaining the origins of stress. These perspectives do not necessarily provide 'either…or' explanations they can be complementary and provide different views of the same cause.

**Biological:** The biological make up and interaction of your body with the food you eat and environment you live in.

**Social/cultural:** Whole range of social and cultural pressures.

**Psychodynamic:** The term 'psychodynamic' refers to subconscious thoughts and feelings, which often arise from childhood experiences.

**Rational:** The rational processes in our minds constantly interpret and evaluate the world around. Events can be interpreted in many ways, and the way in which this is done can influence the level of stress that is felt.

**Experiential:** The way in which each individual experiences each situation in time, even in very similar situations, is very different. One person may find a situation highly stressful, whilst another may find it stimulating or enjoyable – every reaction is unique.

**Spiritual:** The need for individual spiritual development has long been recognized by the religion. It is only during the last 30 years that psychology has acknowledged the existence of a spiritual side to the individual.

5. **CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS**

If we just try to imagine all the consequences of stress at work, [4–6] it will take almost whole day, however the most important outcome of our mental work will be the realization of negative impact on work and person himself/herself. Is workplace stress always negative? It was argued, that under common working conditions, personnel is able to discover the correct way to react on appearing troubles. Therefore stress is not necessarily damaging factor, it can be an exclusive motivational agent for future working developments and improvements.

Moreover not the presence of stress in men’s lives is abnormal, but absolute absence of stress is pathological. Too much or too little stimulation can be stressful; therefore certain level of stress could be even essential at work!

Of course if stress is continuous or extra emotional, and if a worker cannot cope with stress and nobody helps him/her to overcome any difficult working situation, stress can become very negative factor, which can lead to various problematic consequences [7]. All the stress consequences could be divided into 3 categories: effect on health, effect on personal characteristics, and finally effect on working efficiency [8–10].

It is considered as the most often appearing health problems caused by stress are high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol and blood hats, adult-onset diabetes or high blood sugar, obesity, poor fitness, inflammatory illness, low resistance, and such serious illnesses as cancer, kidney disease and stomach problems. Of course, after a person got ill, he cannot even think about any job tasks or accomplish them successfully. That is why it is wiser to prevent any stress at work and create Stress Management program, than spent money on workers’ treatment or their replacement. Some of the other consequences are:

- Unnecessary interpersonal conflicts
- Attachments to the current days for doing things and therefore resistance to change.
- Prevarications that cloud issues and confuse priorities
• Procrastination in decision making and implementation.
• Dullness in terms of creative problem solving
• Chaotic activity and disorganization
• Absenteeism
• Days off for genius sickness
• High staff turnover
• Lethargy and slow working
• Resentments
• Disloyalty
• Secrecy
• Hidden agendas
• Hostility or resentfulness in the organization
• Negativity or cynicism towards planning outcomes and management
• Poor judgment with respect to both working relationship
• Clumsiness and accidents
• Loss of focus absentmindedness
• High level of mistakes.

6. STEPS TO AVOID STRESS

• To avoid stress, employees at first should be aware of their capability. They should analyze there skill level.
• Every employee has to take up a SWOT analysis test to know his/her current level of capability.
• Taking up SWOT analysis test also helps to enhance the skills possessed in the current situation.
• Planning an effective time management surely helps through the stress. A well planned work is half done. Similarly, a very well managed time avoids most stress.

7. DO’S AND DON’TS TO COME OUT OF STRESS

7.1. Do’s:
  ➢ Yoga
  ➢ Relaxing Exercises
  ➢ Self distracting
  ➢ Alternative solutions
  ➢ Adopting problem solving techniques
  ➢ Listening to good music of favorite genre
  ➢ Spending more time with kids and pets
  ➢ Going for a long walk
  ➢ Light scented candles
  ➢ Curling up with a good book
  ➢ Having a conversation with old friends

7.2. Don’ts:
  ➢ Taking more sugar, chocolates and sweets
  ➢ Intake of excess caffeine (coffee), sodas, tea
8. NEW WAYS TO GET RID OF STRESS

These ways are newly adapted by people to overcome stress and one may find it to be silly too. First key is to laugh. Laughter releases endorphins, and endorphin relieves stress. To laugh, picking up a funny movie or a boring movie and enjoying over it by commenting would be best recommended. Since our body could not differentiate between a real laughter and a fake laughter, we could take advantage over it.

Second key is friend. Choose one best friend of yours. You list out your stressors and ask your friend to do the same. Now, exchange the lists among yourselves. You tell him how you would sort out his stress if you were onto his shoes, and ask him to suggest you the same way. This will make our thinking wider and more solutions could be obtained from it. Next the third thing is self tuning up.

Practice yourself to wake up and get ready, not for work, but for your day. On the drive to work, listen to music, humor, instead of attending office calls over the phone. Take an alternate route to work, as the change in scenery will help you stay alert to the road and keep your mind off the job. Plan your work and work your plan. Devote every paid minute to your job. Deviate from your work plan only when absolutely necessary. Take your allotted breaks. Remember that the opposite of stress is relaxation. Don’t work through lunch or coffee breaks.

This also means don’t think or talk about work during your breaks. Instead of soft drinks, opt for water, juice, or electrolyte infused drinks as dehydration often is the cause of fatigue. Coffee and soft drinks that contain caffeine may seem to “keep you going”, but in reality they add to stress and don’t keep your body hydrated. Making out a stress journal can help in identifying the regular stressors in life. Taking a note of what caused your stress, how you felt physically and mentally, and how you responded to it can help you draft a way out of the stress.

9. STRESS RELIEF FROM LAUGHTER

A good sense of humor can't cure all ailments, but data are mounting about the positive things laughter can do.

Short-term benefits: A good laugh has great short-term effects. When you start to laugh, it doesn't just lighten your load mentally, it actually induces physical changes in your body. Laughter can:

- **Stimulate many organs.** Laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain.

- **Activate and relieve your stress response.** A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response and increases your heart rate and blood pressure. The result? A good, relaxed feeling.

- **Soothe tension.** Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.
**Long-term effects:** Laughter isn't just a quick pick-me-up, though. It's also good for you over the long haul. Laughter may:

- **Improve your immune system.** Negative thoughts manifest into chemical reactions that can affect your body by bringing more stress into your system and decreasing your immunity. In contrast, positive thoughts actually release neuropeptides that help fight stress and potentially more-serious illnesses.

- **Relieve pain.** Laughter may ease pain by causing the body to produce its own natural painkillers. Laughter may also break the pain-spasm cycle common to some muscle disorders.

- **Increase personal satisfaction.** Laughter can also make it easier to cope with difficult situations. It also helps you connect with other people.

- **Improve your mood.** Many people experience depression, sometimes due to chronic illnesses. Laughter can help lessen your depression and anxiety and make you feel happier.

10. **IMPROVE YOUR SENSE OF HUMOUR**

Are you afraid you have an underdeveloped — or nonexistent — funny bone? No problem. Humor can be learned. In fact, developing or refining your sense of humor may be easier than you think.

- **Put humor on your horizon.** Find a few simple items, such as photos or comic strips that make you chuckle. Then hang them up at home or in your office. Keep funny movies or comedy albums on hand for when you need an added humor boost.

- **Laugh and the world laughs with you.** Find a way to laugh about your own situations and watch your stress begin to fade away. Even if it feels forced at first, practice laughing. It does your body good.

- **Share a laugh.** Make it a habit to spend time with friends who make you laugh. And then return the favor by sharing funny stories or jokes with those around you.

- **Knock-knock.** Browse through your local bookstore or library's selection of joke books and get a few rib ticklers in your repertoire that you can share with friends.

- **Know what isn't funny.** Don't laugh at the expense of others. Some forms of humor aren't appropriate. Use your best judgment to discern a good joke from a bad, or hurtful, one.

11. **LAUGHTER IS A BEST MEDICINE**

Go ahead and give it a try. Turn the corners of your mouth up into a smile and then give a laugh, even if it feels a little forced. Once you've had your chuckle, take stock of how you're feeling. Are your muscles a little less tense? Do you feel more relaxed or buoyant? That's the natural wonder of laughing at work.

**REFERENCE**

[1] Crane, L. Psychology of Stress: From Distress to Eustress
A Study on occupational Stress of Employees in Information Technology


