

Strategies to cope up Stress at Workplace**Dr. Mahesh U. Daru****Associate Professor & HOD, Accountancy,****Smt. C.D.J. Rofel Arts & I.S.R.A.Rofel Commerce College, Vapi (Gujarat) India.****Abstract**

The nature of work is changing at whirlwind speed. Perhaps now more than ever before, job stress poses a threat to the health of workers and, in turn, to the health organizations. Stress is a common problem that affects almost all of us at some point in our lives. Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand. Stress is not itself an illness but it can cause serious illness if not tackled. It is important to recognize the symptoms of stress early. This will help to find out ways of coping stress and save from adopting unhealthy coping methods, such as drinking or smoking. Spotting the early signs of stress will also help prevent it worsening and potentially causing serious complications, such as high blood pressure, anxiety and depression.

A healthy job is likely to be one where the pressures on employees are appropriate in relation to their abilities and resources, to the amount of control they have over their work, and to the support they receive from people who matter to them. This paper is related about work place stress and preventive strategies to cope up.

Key Word: Stress, Work Place Stress preventive measures, Job health

Introduction

As health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but a positive state of complete physical, mental and social well-being (WHO, 1986), a healthy working environment is one in which there is not only an absence of harmful conditions but an abundance of health-promoting ones. According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition, work-related stress is 'the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope.' The WHO advises that 'stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but is often made worse when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues and where they have little control over work or how they can cope with its demands and pressures.' With various stressors imposed in a work environment, employees may respond positively or negatively. Whilst people are generally able to adjust to short-term stressors and are able to continue performing their normal work duties, stress that develops into a long-term issue may affect a person's psychological and physical health. The basis of this reaction comes from instinctive 'fight or flight' reactions to danger. The stress response is designed to be used in short bursts and then switched off. If it is activated for too long, or the period between stressful situations is too short, then the body has no time to repair itself, and fatigue and damage occurs. The stress hormones then literally begin to destroy the body so, over time, this affects physical and mental health and quality of life in just the same way as exposure to industrial toxins.

Job stress at Workplace

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. The concept of 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. Thus, challenge is an important ingredient for healthy and productive work. The importance of challenge in our work lives is probably what people are referring to when they say "a little bit of stress is good for you."

Job stress is 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 matters to our health and our work. When we feel stressed, our bodies respond by raising the concentration of stress hormones in

our blood. When our bodies continually respond to constant demands or threats, coping mechanisms stay in overdrive, which can be damaging to health over time. Research shows that excessive job stress can lead to many long-term health problems, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, weakened immune function, high blood pressure, musculoskeletal disorders, substance abuse, depression and anxiety. Stressful working conditions can also impact health indirectly by limiting our ability or motivation to participate in other health promoting behaviors such as eating well and exercising.

Stress is not always bad. Stress in the form of a challenge energizes us psychologically and physically, and it motivates us to learn new skills and master our work. When a challenge is met, we feel relaxed and satisfied. This is good stress or eustress. However, sometimes a challenge is turned into job demands that cannot be met. This is negative stress, or distress, which sets the stage for illness, injury, and job failure. If you work, it is likely that job stress will affect you at some point during your career. Whether you are an employee or an employer, it is important to recognize that stress in the workplace can contribute to poor health, which can lead to lower productivity, absenteeism, and higher healthcare costs. For example:

- Up to 44% of women and 36% of men want to quit their jobs because of workplace stress. This contributes to unhappiness as well as many negative health effects.
- Healthcare expenditures are nearly 50% greater for workers who report high levels of stress.
- Sixty percent of lost workdays each year can be attributed to stress.
- Job stress is more strongly associated with health complaints than financial or family problems.

Stress Management in the Workplace Identification and Coping Mechanisms

Solving stress problems at work is one of the challenges to ensuring a productive and healthy working life in both industrialized and industrializing countries. Work-related stress is one of the most important issues in many countries and in different kinds of workplaces. Stress has many negative impacts, including circulatory and gastrointestinal diseases, other physical problems, psychosomatic and psychosocial problems, and low productivity. Increasing emphasis is being placed on improving working conditions and work organization with respect to stress at work, and on practical measures to cope with stressful work situations. It is especially important to optimize workplace conditions and work organization to prevent stress-related problems in the workplace. There are a number of practical countermeasures to such problems, which include optimizing the outer loads (stressors) at work, at

home and in the community; increasing the coping ability of workers; and reinforcing support systems for workers.

1. Leadership and justice at work

Leadership and justice at work are important prerequisites for addressing stress prevention at work. It is generally important to take preventive measures based on a clear policy and strategies for ensuring decent work and improving working conditions and work organization. It is essential to establish concrete procedures to deal with stress-related interventions and create a workplace climate for solving workplace problems promptly. Leadership and joint effort by managers and workers are both indispensable.

The following are effective means of workplace action:

- communicating the policy and strategies for decent work;
- establishing procedures to prohibit discrimination;
- encouraging informal communication among managers and workers;
- protecting privacy; and addressing workplace problems promptly

With committed leadership and justice, a workplace culture can be developed in which workplace stress prevention can be addressed in a positive manner.

2. Job demands

Job demands need to be assigned among workers in a balanced manner. Excessive job demands affecting particular workers must be avoided to prevent stress at work. Undue time pressure due to difficult-to-meet deadlines should be prevented. Good performance and well-being depends on the workload being adjusted to individual workers within a team. This requires close cooperation between managers and workers. Practical measures that can be taken to make improvements in this area may include:

- adjusting the total workload;
- preventing excessive demands per worker;
- planning achievable deadlines;
- clearly defining tasks and responsibilities;
- avoiding under-utilizing the capabilities of workers

3. Job control

When workers can control how they do their work, they will enjoy working and be more productive. Engaging workers in the decision-making process about their work organization is important in stress prevention at work. Work becomes more stressful when workers have no influence on the pace of work and working methods. Increasing workers' latitude and allowing them control over their work helps increase motivation and work quality and reduce stress. Effective measures include:

- engaging workers in decision-making about work organization;
- increasing workers' latitude and control over their work;
- organizing work so that new skills and knowledge are developed;
- encouraging the participation of workers in improving work;
- Organizing regular meetings to discuss workplace problems.

Workers who are able to decide how and when their work is done can better mobilize their skills and experience, and are more productive. Increased control over work thus results in more effective work organization

4. Social support

Extensive social support is essential in preventing stress at work. The use of both formal and informal social support should be considered to reduce the effects of workplace stressors. Social support provided by managers, supervisors and co-workers helps workers cope with the pressures and stress at work. Social support also improves coping skills. There are various means of enhancing social support in the workplace. The following types of support, among others, seem particularly useful:

- close management-worker relations;
- mutual help among workers;
- the use of external sources of assistance;
- organization of social activities;
- provision of direct help when needed.

Such measures can provide practical and timely social support in the workplace

5. Physical environment

The physical environment is a contributing factor to work stress. It is important to provide a safe, healthy and comfortable environment for workers. This can be achieved by assessing and controlling environmental risks with the active participation of workers. Practical measures can be taken based on site-specific assessment of environmental risks. The following are particularly important for preventing stress related to the physical environment:

- establish clear procedures for risk assessment and control;
- provide a comfortable working environment;
- eliminate or reduce hazards at their source;
- provide clean, refreshing rest facilities;
- establish emergency procedures and response plans

It is essential to build a safe, healthy and comfortable working environment conducive to preventing stress among workers, in line with developments in occupational safety and health management system

6. Work–life balance and working time

Work–life balance and working-time arrangements are important factors impacting on stress at work. Improvements to working-time arrangements and other measures may be necessary to better support work–life balance. Stress at work is particularly related to long working hours, irregular shift systems, and whether adequate holidays, paid leave and breaks are provided. Multifaceted support measures are needed to reduce fatigue, enhance safety and health, and support the maintenance of family responsibilities. Practical measures to improve working-time arrangements and work–life balance include:

- involving workers in the design of working hours;
- accommodating the needs of both the work and the workers;
- avoiding excessively long working hours;
- facilitating the maintenance of family responsibilities;
- adjusting breaks and rest time.

Taking multifaceted measures which reflect the needs and preferences of both the enterprise and workers is particularly important in maintaining work–life balance.

7. Recognition at work

Recognition at work is an important aspect of stress prevention at work. By properly recognizing good work performance and the positive contribution of workers, the enterprise can show its appreciation of good work which is also good for the enterprise. Such positive feedback fosters mutual respect and partnership within the enterprise. Practical measures which can be taken in this context include:

- praising good work by the workers;
- systematically informing workers of the consequences of their work;
- implementing a system for workers to express their opinions;
- treating women and men equally;
- providing good career prospects.

Acknowledging and respecting workers' efforts thus contributes to stress prevention in the workplace.

8. Protection from offensive behaviour

Offensive behaviour in the workplace, such as bullying, mobbing, sexual harassment, threats and violence, is very common. It has serious consequences for both victims and the climate of the workplace. It is important to establish firm policies and adequately deal with such behaviour. Comprehensive preventive and mitigating measures are necessary which involve the active cooperation of all people in the workplace. Effective measures against offensive behaviour at work include::

- establishing an organizational framework concerning offensive behaviour;
- organizing training and raising awareness;
- establishing procedures and action models;
- providing rapid intervention to help those involved;
- organizing working areas so as to protect workers from offensive behaviour

By establishing a good organizational framework for dealing with offensive behaviour, workers' commitment and mutual trust will be increased.

9. Job security

Job insecurity is an important factor leading to stress at work. Lack of guaranteed employment in the long term, precarious forms of contracts and fluctuating employment conditions are known to be factors increasing work stress. They make it difficult to maintain commitment to good work performance and good human relations, and affect the health and well-being of workers. Measures to increase job

security need to be taken within the context of improving employment conditions. Attention is drawn to the following measures, among others:

- increasing the possibility of stable employment;
- clear statement of employment conditions;
- regular wages and benefits;
- ensuring fair parental leave;
- protecting the rights of workers and their representatives

Clarity, in both employment conditions and measures to increase employment stability, is important for reducing stress at work.

Conclusion

No standardized approaches or simple “how to” manuals exist for developing a stress prevention program. Program design and appropriate solutions will be influenced by several factors— the size and complexity of the organization, available resources, and especially the unique types of stress problems faced by the organization. Although it is not possible to give a universal prescription for preventing stress at work, it is possible to offer guidelines on the process of stress prevention in organizations. In all situations, the process for stress prevention programs involves three distinct steps: problem identification, intervention, and evaluation. The job stress prevention process does not end with evaluation. Rather, job stress prevention should be seen as a continuous process that uses evaluation data to refine or redirect the intervention strategy.

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- Stress@Work website: www.uml.edu/centers/cph-new/job-stress/default.html
- The Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety, 4th Edition (ISBN 92–2–109203–8) contains a comprehensive summary of the latest scientific information about the causes and effects of job stress (see Vol. 1, Chapter 5, Mental Health; Vol. 2, Chapter 34, Psychosocial and Organizational Factors).