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Management of Stress at Workplace

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Abstract- Stress is normally unavoidable part of everyone's life living in this world. It portrays a negative notion that can have an impact on one's mental and physical well-being. This paper is aimed at helping members to understand the signs of stress and to develop strategies to deal with it, as well as building up their own personal resilience. This study provides practical advice on how to deal with work stress. This paper implies Work-related stress occurs when there is a mismatch between the demands of the job and the resources and capabilities of the individual worker to meet those demands. Subjective and self reported evaluations of stress are just as valid as 'objective' data, such as statistics on accidents or absenteeism. It is intended that employers, managers and trade union representatives use this booklet as part of an initiative to educate on the management of work stress. Discussed are the nature of stress at work, the causes and effects of stress, as well as prevention strategies. Also discussed are the roles of the organizational culture in this process and the resources to be drawn upon for managing work stress.

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MANAGEMENTOFSTRESSATWORKPLACE

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Management of Stress at Workplace

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Abstract- Stress is normally unavoidable part of everyone's life living in this world. It portrays a negative notion that can have an impact on one's mental and physical well-being. This paper is aimed at helping members to understand the signs of stress and to develop strategies to deal with it, as well as building up their own personal resilience. This study provides practical advice on how to deal with work stress. This paper implies Work-related stress occurs when there is a mismatch between the demands of the job and the resources and capabilities of the individual worker to meet those demands. Subjective and self reported evaluations of stress are just as valid as 'objective' data, such as statistics on accidents or absenteeism. It is intended that employers, managers and trade union representatives use this booklet as part of an initiative to educate on the management of work stress. Discussed are the nature of stress at work, the causes and effects of stress, as well as prevention strategies. Also discussed are the roles of the organizational culture in this process and the resources to be drawn upon for managing work stress.

I. Introduction

"Successful employers and managers provide leadership in dealing with the challenge of work stress".

Stress is a state of mind or an illness. Stress is the way human beings react both physically and mentally to changes, events, and in their lives. Another word for stress is tension or anxiety. 'Stress occurs where demands made on individuals do not match the resources available or meet the individual's needs and motivation… stress will be the result if the workload is too large for the number of workers and time available. When someone experiences stress, there are many different symptoms and repercussion. Depending on the level and frequency of stress, some of these symptoms can become serious and cause a many of problems. Stress affects people both mentally and physically. The heart rate increases, headaches can develop, and often people become irritated much more easily. Individuals who work in high stress or dangerous jobs as well as those who are employed at a place where there is a high pressure environment are often prone to experiencing stress. Work environment, coworker relations, and customer pressures can all contribute to stress at work. Understanding how to manage, minimize, and deal with stress can help people feel more relaxed and react when stressful situations as they arise. People experience stress in different ways and for different reasons. The reaction is based on your perception of an event or situation. The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them. Workers who are stressed are also more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work. Their organizations are less likely to be successful in a competitive market. Employers cannot usually protect workers from stress arising outside of work, but they can protect them from stress that arises through work. Stress at work can be a real problem to the organization as well as for its workers. While you can't avoid stress, you can learn to manage it and develop skills to cope with the events or situations you find stressful. Good management and good work organization are the best forms of stress prevention [8]. If employees are already stressed, their managers should be aware of it and know how to help.

Organizational culture is one of the key factors in determining how successful an organization will be in managing work stress. Organizational culture is reflected in the attitudes of staff, their shared beliefs about the organization, their shared value systems and common and approved ways of behaving at work [2].

Organizational culture also concerns how problems are predictable and solved. It can affect what is experienced as stressful, how that experience translates into health difficulties, how both stress and health are reported and how the organization responds to such reports.

Employers, managers and trade union representatives must therefore become aware of the culture of an organization, and explore it in relation to the management of work stress. If necessary, these parties must engage in culture change activities as an important aspect of improving the management of stress at work.

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. 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.

II. Difference between Pressure & Tension

Pressure it what can puts you in stress but not all the time and mostly comes from external behaviors as having overload of tasks, Manager need you for alternative tasks, someone your supports and so on.

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Stress it can be pressure converted to stress and it's what you deal with internally that effects your feelings as dis motivation, no one care about your tasks, no one support you, no time management, be nervous, someone make you mad and so on.

Pressure is being overloaded or having a time deadline accompanied with lots of work.

Stress is that negative energy that controls you and convinces you that you aren't going to achieve your work within that deadline you have.

The main causes of work related pressure and stress were

- Lack of management support
- Work related violence and harassment

III. Model of Work Stress

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as an [5] [10] 'adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them'. Work-related stress is thus understood to occur when there is a mismatch between the demands of the job and the resources and capabilities of the individual worker to meet those demands. This definition emphasizes the relationship between individuals and their working environment, and helps to explain why a situation that one person regards as a stimulating challenge causes another to experience a damaging degree of stress. A recent report by the National Association of Mental Health confirms that the individual worker's 'personality and coping strategy' can have direct, moderating or perceptual effects on stress outcomes. For example, an extroverted person might find a socially isolating job more stressful than an introverted person, who conversely, might find a job with greater levels of social interaction more difficult and stressful. Moreover, a worker's past experience, individual characteristics and personal resources appear to influence how she or he interprets and manages the specific conditions and demands of the job. The National Association of Mental Health report also draws an major distinction between stress and pressure. Pressure is defined as a subjective feeling of tension or arousal that is triggered by a potentially stressful situation. Because it stimulates mental alertness and motivation, pressure may have a positive impact on employee performance and satisfaction. However, when this pressure becomes extreme, persistent and unrelieved, it may lead to irritability, fear, frustration, aggression and stress, and may even contribute to a variety of short or long term physical and mental illnesses. When pressure exceeds an individual's ability to cope, the result is stress.

HSE has identified six categories of potential stressors mentioned in fig-1. It should be noted that in this model a further, seventh driver of stress is identified culture which is not identified as an explicit stressor by the HSE but which Palmer et al describe as 'the culture of the organization and how it approaches and manages work-related stress when it arises'.[4]

a) Demands

This includes factors intrinsic to the job such as working conditions (for example noise, temperature, lighting or ventilation), shift work, long or unsociable hours, workload.

b) Control

How much say and autonomy a person has over the way in which he carries out his job; low levels of job control are typically linked to high levels of stress.

c) Relationships

Relationships with superiors, subordinates and colleagues can all play a part in an individual's stress levels; low levels of trust and support are likely to increase stress. Also, conflict, harassment and bullying in the workplace are all linked to heightened stress.

d) Change

The way in which change is introduced, managed and communicated to staff can impact on levels of stress, as unnecessary or badly planned change results in excess pressure on workers.

e) Role

Stress may be triggered when an individual does not have a clear understanding of his role within the organization, when there is conflict between roles or ambiguity with regards to position and degree of responsibility over others.

f) Support

The amount of support and job training available, as well as encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by colleagues and management.

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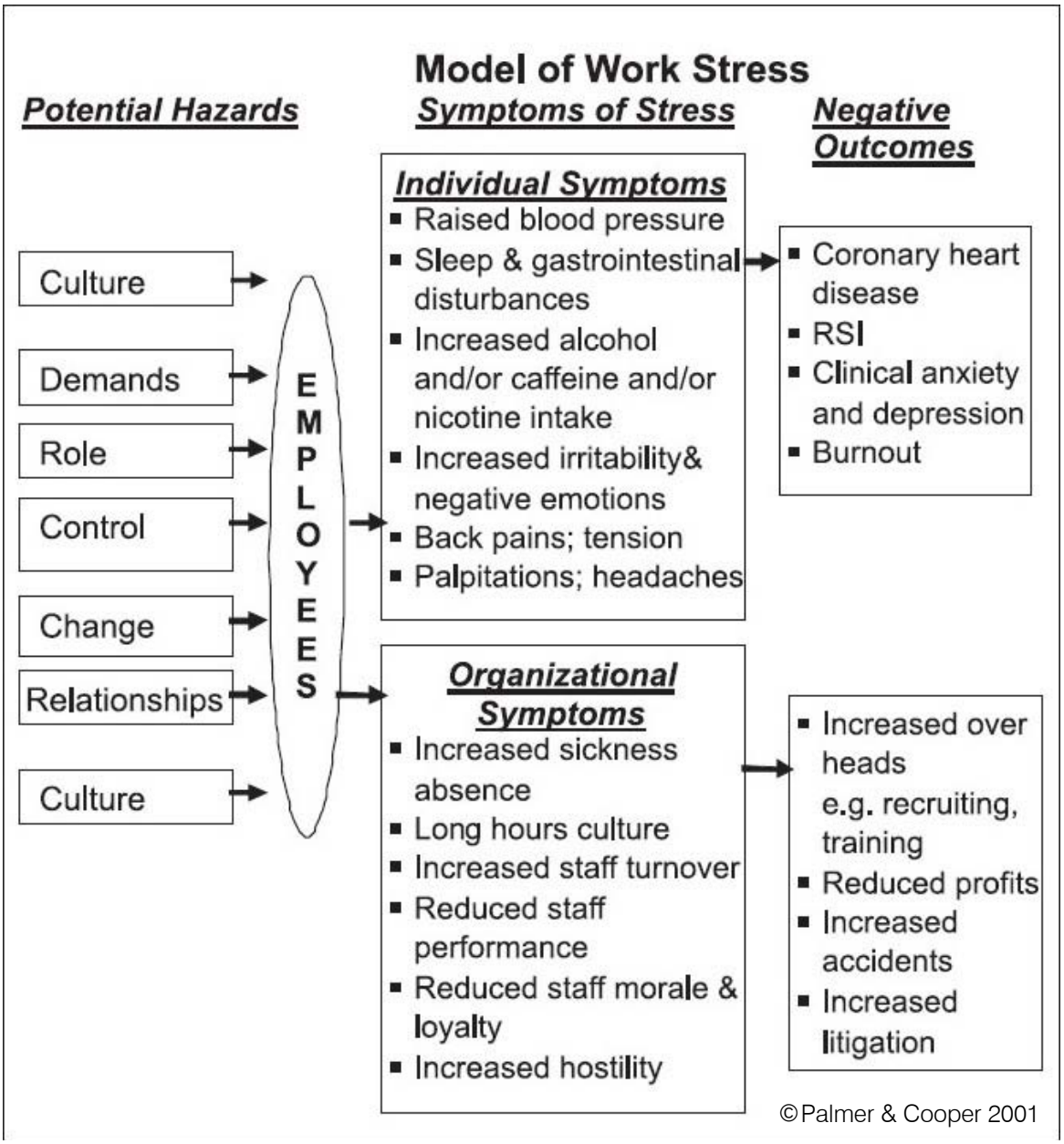


Fig.1 : [Model of Work Stress]

IV. Causes of Work Stress

Excessive and otherwise uncontrollable demands and pressures can be caused by poor work design, poor management and unsatisfactory working conditions. Similarly, these things can result in workers not receiving sufficient support from others or not having enough control over their work and its pressures. Most of the causes of work stress concern the way work is designed and the way in which organizations are managed. Because these aspects of work have the potential for causing harm, they are called 'stress-related hazards' [9]. The literature on stress generally recognizes nine categories of stress-related hazards and that are listed below:

a) *Job Content*

- Tedious, under-stimulating, meaningless tasks
- Lack of variety
- Unpleasant tasks

b) *Workload and Work Place*

- Having too much or too little to do
- Working under time pressures

c) *Working Hours*

- Strict and inflexible working schedules
- Long and unsocial hours
- Unpredictable working hours

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d) Participation and Control

- Lack of participation in decision making
- Lack of control (for example, over work methods, work pace, working hours and the work environment)

e) Career Development, Status and Pay

- Job insecurity
- Lack of promotion prospects
- Under-promotion or over-promotion
- Unclear or unfair performance evaluation systems
- Being over-skilled or under-skilled for the job

f) Role in the Organization

- Unclear role
- Conflicting roles within the same job
- Responsibility for people
- Continuously dealing with other people and their problems

g) Interpersonal Relationships

- Inadequate, inconsiderate or unsupportive supervision
- Poor relationships with co-workers
- Harassment and violence
- Isolated or solitary work
- No agreed procedures for dealing with problems or complaints

h) Organizational Culture

- Poor communication
- Poor leadership
- Lack of clarity about organizational objectives and structure

i) Home-Work Interface

- Conflicting demands of work and home
- Lack of support for domestic problems at work
- Lack of support for work problems at home

V. Effects of Work Stress on Individuals

a) Physical

- Sleep disturbances
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal upset
- Raised blood pressure/cardiovascular disease

b) Emotional

- Anxiety and irritability
- Depression

c) Intellectual

- Loss of concentration
- Lack of motivation
- Difficulty with thought process
- Loss of memory
- Poor decision-making

d) Behavioral

- Substance (including alcohol) misuse
- Decreased libido
- Inappropriate display of behavior
- Segregation
- Unpunctuality

VI. Effects of Work Stress on Organizations

Where the stress is not identified and dealt with promptly, it soon impacts on the organization and society. The organizational consequences of stress can have a massive negative impact on the organization, in a wide variety of areas. This post covers some of the more common organizational consequences of stress [6].

a) High Staff Turnover & Recruitment Costs

This is, perhaps, the most common of the organizational consequences of stress. Stressed employees do not tend to enjoy their working environment. While some may have the confidence to seek their employer's help in combating the stress, others may feel they have no option but to leave the organization and remove them from the stressful situation; sometimes as a result of medical advice. Also, employees who seek help may not receive the help they require and so choose to leave the organization. Unfortunately, many organizations make no attempt to ascertain the true reason for an employee's resignation and so never realize that their organization has an issue with stress.

b) High Absenteeism and Presenteeism Levels

Stressed individuals tend to experience more illness and so take more time off due to illness. Absenteeism can also be the result of staff feeling that they simply cannot cope with going into work so they attempt to escape the stressful situation by remaining in the safety of their own home. In many instances, these staff will make it into work but will be unable to contribute much. They are physically present but psychologically they are elsewhere. This is referred to as Presenteeism.

These factors are usually just attributed to poor discipline on the employee's part. Where organizations recognize absenteeism and presenteeism as organizational consequences of stress, they are able to take corrective action, to the benefit of both staff and the organization, before things escalate out of control.

c) Reduced Productivity Levels

As exposure to stress is prolonged and chronic fatigue kicks in, it becomes more difficult for the employee to work to an optimum level. As fatigue sets in, concentration and motivation levels drop. This leads to mistakes creeping in to their work. It also takes longer

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to complete tasks. The quantity and quality of the employee's work begins to suffer. This lowers the productivity levels of the company.

d) Increased Health and Safety Issues

This is more common in workplaces which are more manual in nature. Employees tend to take more risks and suffer poorer concentration when they are stressed. This combination is a recipe for increased accidents which in turn increase litigation, insurance and medical costs for the organization.

e) Litigation

Organizations have a legal obligation to provide a safe and healthy workplace for their employees. This can include adequate training, safe work practices, and a workplace free from favoritism and harassment. Where an employee experiences stress due to the organization failing to meet its legal obligations; the employee may seek a legal remedy. This may result in costly legal proceedings and damage to the organizations reputation. Of all the organizational consequences of stress, the one which best motivate organizations to take action is the threat of litigation.

f) Reputational Damage

The reputation of the organization is damaged by the culture of stress which can develop as a result of the failure to manage stress at both an organizational and individual level. It doesn't take long for a company to develop such a reputation; though it can take a long time to lose this reputation. With reduced productivity levels and the decreased performance of staff a culture of poor customer service can develop.

g) Increased Training Costs

As a result of higher staff turnover, more induction courses are required. The organization may also have to spend more on interpersonal skills, health and safety and stress management training.

VII. Prevention of Work Stress

There are a number of ways by which the risk of work stress can be reduced.[1]. These include:

a) Primary Prevention

- Ergonomics,
- Work and environmental design,
- Organizational and management development

b) Secondary Prevention

- Worker education and training

c) Tertiary Prevention

- Developing more sensitive and responsive management systems and enhanced occupational health provision.

VIII. How to Manage Stress

a) Step 1 – Identify Potential Work-Related Stress Hazards

- Participate in processes to gather information about work related stress hazards.
- Report work related stress hazards to your employer and HSR (Health & Safety representative) & encourage your colleagues to do the same [10].

b) Step 2 – Assess The Work-Related Stress Risks

- Indicating when, how often and over what period of time work related stress risk occur.
- Describing how work related stress could affect or harm your health.

c) *Step 3 – Control The Work-Related Stress Hazards And Risks*

- Contribute ideas on ways to control work related stress hazards & risks in workplace
- With the help of discussion about how actions to control risks can be implemented in workplace [5].

d) Step 4 – Implement Continuous Improvement

- Report the effectiveness of those measures to the management & HSR (Health & Safety representative)
- Contribute ideas on how to improve effectiveness.
- Report any new risk that the workplace or work changes may be generated [7].

IX. Resources for Managing Work Stress

- Limit on-duty work hours to no more than 12 hours per day.
- Rotate work from high-stress to lower stress functions.
- Rotate work from the scene to routine assignments, as practicable.
- Use counseling assistance programs available through your agency.
- Drink plenty of water, and eat healthy snacks such as fresh fruit, whole grain breads, and other energy foods. Take frequent, brief breaks from the scene, as practicable.
- Talk about your emotions to process what you have seen and done.
- Stay in touch with your family and friends.
- Participate in memorials and rituals, and use of symbols as a way to express feelings.
- Pair up with another responder so that you may monitor one another's stress.

X. Coping with Work Stress in Today's Uncertain Climate

For workers everywhere, the economy may feel like an emotional roller coaster. "Layoffs" and "budget cuts" are common in the workplace, and the result is

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increased fear, uncertainty, and higher levels of stress [11]. In this difficult economy, we may find it harder than ever to cope with the challenges of the job. Both the stress we take with us when we go to work and the stress that awaits us in the workplace are now on the rise – and employers, managers, and workers are all feeling the added pressure.

The ability to manage stress in the workplace can make the difference between success and failure on the job. Our emotions are contagious, and stress has an impact on the quality of our interactions with others. The better we are at managing your own stress, the more we will positively affect those around us and the less other people's stress will negatively affect us.

When people feel overwhelmed, they lose confidence and become irritable or withdrawn, making them less productive and effective and their work less rewarding as well as impacting negatively on their personal relationships [12]. If the warning signs of work stress go unattended, they can lead to bigger problems. Beyond interfering with job performance and satisfaction, chronic or intense stress can also lead to physical and emotional health problems.

When stress is interfering with our ability to work, maintain self care, or manage our personal life, it's time to take action. Start by paying attention to our physical and emotional health. When our own needs are taken care of, we become stronger and more resilient to stress [11]. The better we feel, the better equipped we will be to manage our stress, and that of others, without becoming overwhelmed.

Your emotions are infectious, and stress has an impact on the quality of your interactions with others. The better you are at managing your own stress, the more you'll positively affect those around you, and the less other people's stress will negatively affect you [3].

There are a variety of steps you can take to reduce both your overall stress levels and the stress you find on the job and in the workplace. These include:

- Taking responsibility for improving your physical and emotional well-being.
- Avoiding pitfalls by identifying knee jerk habits and negative attitudes that add to the stress you experience at work.
- Learning better communication skills to ease and improve your relationships with management and coworkers.

XI. Some Examples of Stress Management

Managing time- Distinguish between urgent tasks (unplanned demands) and important tasks (those that give you the best return for the investment of your time).

Managing workload- Plan ahead, to better manage 'peaks' and 'troughs'.

Managing change- Be prepared – keep up to speed with what is happening, read around the subject and ask lots of questions before the change occurs.

Managing people & conflict- Avoid aggressive (fight) and submissive (flight) behavior which will add to your stress. Aim for 'win/win' agreements wherever possible. Managing yourself- Don't be afraid to talk to others and seek advice.

XII. Conclusion

Work stress is a real challenge for workers and their employing organizations. It is the intention of this report to educate on the damaging effects of workplace stress, and increase awareness of the pervasive nature of this problem. A culture of stress can soon develop with many damaging consequences for the organization. Where such a culture has developed there is no quick fix solution for the organization. The organizational consequences of stress are best avoided by adopting a stress management culture in the organization requiring the 'buy-in' of both management and staff. It is hoped that this knowledge will motivate organizations to explore the stressors that are present in their own work environments, and to take steps to reduce and/or prevent stress in the workplace, thereby working to maintain the health and wellbeing of employees. Organizational approaches coupled with individual strategies are the most effective way to address job stress.

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