**OCCUPATIONAL STRESS CHALLENGING TRENDS TO MANAGEMENT**

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***ABSTRACT***

The word “stress” has been derived from the Latin word, “Stringere” which suggests drawing tight. The term is employed to ask hardship, strain, adversity or affliction. Various terms have been synonymously used with stress as anxiety, frustration, conflict, pressure, and so on. Every human being has his/her own understating of stress because all demands of adaptability do evoke the stress phenomenon so much of psychologists summarized the nature of stress. Everybody knows what stress is and yet nobody knows what it’s. The term `stress` has been utilized in numerous different contexts that there's confusion regarding the precise meaning of the term. Hans Selye is usually considered the introducer of the term stress in studying human behavior within the 1960s or earlier some of the authors connected emotions and human behavior and described the “global adaptation syndrome”.

**Key Words: Occupational Stress, adaptability, syndrome, positive Stress, Negative stress.**

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**INTRODUCTION**

“Stress is defined as a non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it, which results in symptoms such as rise in the blood pressure, release of hormones, quickness of breath, tightening of muscles, perspiration and increased cardiac activity. Stress is not necessarily negative. Some stress keeps us motivated and alert, while too little stress can create problems. However, too much stress can trigger problems with mental and physical health, particularly over a prolonged period of time.” - Marzabadi E A, Tarkhorani H.

“Stress occurs when the perceived pressure exceeds your perceived ability to cope’ - Palmer, Cooper & Thomas.

“Stress implies the interaction of the individual with the environment” - Ivancevich and Matteson.

“Job stress is a condition wherein job-related factors interact with the worker to change (disrupt or enhance) his/her psychological or physiological condition such that the person (mind and/or body) is forced to deviate from normal functioning” - Beehr and Newman.

**STAGES OF WORK STRESS**

According to Pestonjee (1992) work stress progresses through a series of five stages:

**Honey Moon Stage:** The person’s appointment to a new job is excitement, enthusiasm, challenge and pride. Dysfunctional processes at this stage would include the depletion of energy reserves in coping and adapting to the new environment.

**Full Throttle Stage:** Gradually vague feelings of loss, fatigue and confusion may arise because of the rapid depletion of resources. Other symptoms include dissatisfaction, sleep disturbances and tendencies such as overeating, drinking or smoking.

**Chronic Symptom Stage:** Fuel shortage could gradually lead to the development of chronic and more pronounced physiological symptoms. Chronic exhaustion, physical illness, angers and depression may overpower the person.

**Crisis Stage:** As the symptom persists the person enters the crisis stage. He develops an escapist attitude and feels oppressed. Chronic backaches, headaches, high blood pressure, insomnia and even peptic ulcers and asthma develop.

**Hitting The Wall Stage:** No person can continue under train for too long, as one’s energy resources are not infinite. Under the pressure of constant stress coupled with the physical and mental effect, one may reach the end of one’s professional career. In other words, Burn Out Stress Syndrome (BOSS) may occur, at the other extreme i.e. under conditions of extreme hypo stress. This is most likely to occur when the gap between one’s capabilities and environmental commands become too wide.

**NATURE OF WORK RELATED STRESS**

**Relationship between Stress and Pressure**

Everyone experiences pressure at some time in his or her life. Pressure is not only inevitable but essential to help us feel stimulated and excited about achieving the goals that give us our sense of achievement and satisfaction. Problems arise only when pressure is excessive, prolonged or come from too many directions at the same time. This excessive pressure challenges our ability to cope by creating a feeling of being out of control. Most people can deal with high levels of pressure at times, but when additional pressures or crises arise it may become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to cope. To manage occupational stress, the importance of personal and domestic problems must be recognised. There are immediate and longer-term responses to excessive pressure. The acute reactions are related to arousal and involve feelings of anxiety, a racing pulse, flushing, sweating, a dry mouth and trembling. If the pressure goes on for a longer period of time the reactions can include headaches, inability to sleep, skin conditions, a sudden loss or gain in weight, aching muscles and depression. Long-term pressure can lead to physical and psychological illness or may make existing medical conditions, such as heart disease, worse.

**Organizational Culture and Stress**

Organizations can create situations that put people under undue pressure. Sometimes this is unavoidable, but often with a little thought the worst situations can be avoided. What is required is an openness of approach to the work and recognition that there may be more than one way to achieve a business objective. Organisational cultures that reward managers for behaviour that puts excessive pressure on their teams to achieve goals, or the workaholic manager who expects his or her team to work long hours are particularly damaging. It is important that managers consider their roles in this and see what messages their behaviours are giving with respect to the mental health and well-being of other employees.

**Organisational Change and Stress**

During periods of rapid change, or at a time of crisis, organisations are especially prone to putting their employees under excessive pressure. While it may be difficult or unwelcome to get the organisation to stop and take stock of what is happening to the employee, it is time well spent, as taking care of employees at these critical times protects the organisation from the cost of low performance. It is essential to ensure that measures for identifying and tackling undue pressure during such times are built into and resourced within the project plan at the design stage.

**Factors That Can Lead To Excessive Pressure And Stress**

There is a wide range of factors that can cause undue pressure and stress to employees. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has identified seven broad risk factors: culture, demands, control, relationships, and change, role and support, training and individual factors.

**Some of the factors that can have an impact on employee well-being are listed below:**

* Unsympathetic organisational culture
* Poor communication between managers and employees
* Lack of involvement in decision-making
* Excessive workload
* Lack of training and development
* Continual or sudden change
* Insufficient resources
* Conflicting priorities

**Common workplace stressors**

Examples of possible causes of stress are as follows.

**Threats**

* Risk of harm caused by working in unsafe conditions
* Possibility of dismissal
* Rate of change
* Uncertainty of change
* Poor interpersonal relationships with supervisors or co-workers
* Harassment from others
* Discrimination.

**Pressure**

Pressure to

* Meet unreasonable deadlines
* Adopt new technology
* Adapt to certain management styles
* Accept new goals and targets
* Comply with unreasonable proposals
* Accept and act upon performance feedback

**Frustration**

Frustration from

* Poor workplace communication and consultation
* Lack of acknowledgment in the workplace that a stressor exists
* Lack of acknowledgment of the individual’s achievements
* Not being suited for, or properly trained for a job.

**Major stress**

Major stress can be caused by

* Personal loss, such as the death of a loved one or the end of a relationship
* Threat of physical danger
* A major industrial accident
* Loss of job.

**The individual’s response to workplace stress**

What may be significant in one person’s mind may not be in another. It is often difficult for an employee to choose a rational response and they may internalise the stress. This could result in physiological, emotional and/or behavioural responses that are recognised as symptoms of stress. Examples of these include:

**Physiological change**

* Increased blood pressure
* Tiredness
* Stomach ulcers
* Digestive disorders such as indigestion, constipation or diarrhoea
* Weight loss or gain
* Headaches

**Emotional Change**

* Increased tension
* Anxiety
* Depression
* Frustration
* Feelings of emptiness

**Behavioural change**

* Over/under eating
* Misuse of alcohol and other drugs
* Interpersonal difficulties
* Difficulty in sleeping
* Aggressive or passive behaviour
* Workplace conflict
* Absenteeism

**SOURCES OF DATA**

Primary data is collected from officer’s cadre employees by using a standard format Questionnaire.

**SAMPLING**

The researcher collected data from 110 officers (out of 124) by using purposive / convenience sampling method.

**Instrument for data gathering:**

ORS scale was developed by Udai Pareek(1982). The ORS scale contains five items for each role stress ( a total of 50 statements); it uses a point scale. (0- 'If you never or rarely feel that way', 1- 'If you occasionally feel that way', 2-'If you sometimes feel that way', 3 -'If you frequently feel that way', and 4 -'If you always feel that way', respectively) “People have different feelings about their roles. Statements describing some of them are given below. Use the answer sheet to write your responses. Read each statement and indicate, in the space against the corresponding number in the answer sheet, how often you have the feeling expressed in the statement in relation to your role in the organisation. Use the numbers given below to indicate your own feelings. If you find that the category to be used in answering does not adequately indicate your own feelings, use the one which is closest to the way you feel. Do not leave any item unanswered.” Total score of ORS ranges between 0 - 200 and on each role stress ranges from 0 to 20. A simple summation of the scores of the subject o each role stress would indicate the scores on that dimension. Pareek (1982) has identified the following ten stressors based on organisational roles.

**Inter-Role Distance (IRD)**

IRD refers to the conflict between the organisational role and other roles. When an individual occupies more than one role there are bound to be conflicts between the different roles that he occupies. (Item nos 1, 11, 21, 31, and 41).

**Role Stagnation (RS)**

RS takes place when an individual feels there are few opportunities for learning and growth in the role. In organisation which are fast expanding and which do not have any systematic strategy of manpower development , managers are likely to experience this stress (Item nos 2, 12, 22, 32, and 42).

**Role-Expectation Conflict (REC)**

REC means conflicting demands made on the role by different persons in the organisation. One may receive conflicting expectations from the boss, subordinates, peers or clients. (Item nos 3, 13, 23, 33, and 43).

**Role Erosion (RE)**

RE is a feeling that some important functions a role occupant would like to perform are being performed by some other person. This happens when organisations are redefining their structure, wherein it may lead to elimination of some roles and creation of new ones. This may prompt managers to feel that new role is less important than the previous role. (Item nos 4, 14, 24, 34, and 44)

**Role Overload (RO)**

Role overload is the result of large variations between the expected output and actual output. When role overload is high neither the delegation process non-assistance, is useful towards role performance. (Item nos 5, 15, 25, 35, and 45)

**Role Isolation (RIs)**

RI emanates due to lack of linkages between one’s role with other roles in the organisation. In a role set, a role occupant feels that certain roles are psychologically closer to him due to frequency and ease of interaction. When linkages are strong, the role isolation will be low and in the absence of it, role isolation is felt high. Therefore role isolation can be measured in terms of the existing and the desired linkages. (Item nos 6, 16, 26, 36, and 46)

**Personal Inadequacy (PI)**

When a role occupant feels that he is not prepared to undertake the role effectively, he may experience this stress. The role occupant may feel that he has not had enough time to prepare for the assigned role. Persons who are assigned new roles without enough preparation or orientation are likely to experience this type of stress. (Item nos 7, 17, 27, 37, and 47)

**Self Role Distance (SRD)**

This stress arises out of the conflict between the self concept and the expectations of the role, as perceived by the role occupant. (Item nos 8, 18, 28, 38, and 48)

**Role Ambiguity (RA)**

When an individual is not clear about the various expectations that people have from his role, he experiences this type of conflict. It may be due to lack of information or feedback to the role occupant. Role ambiguity may be in relation to the activities, responsibilities, priorities, norms or general expectations. Sometimes role ambiguity may emanate out of occupying roles which are newly created in an organisation. (Item nos 9, 19, 29, 39, and 49)

**Resource Inadequacy (RIn)**

This stress is experienced due to non-availability of resources needed for effective role performance. These may be information, people, material, finance or facilities. (Item nos 10, 20, 30, 40 and 50)

**RELATIONSHIP AMONG ROLE STRESS DIMENSIONS**

**LEVEL OF STRESS WITH ALL VARIABLES**

**25**

**15**

**2**

**8**

**16**

**29**

**25**

**13**

**21**

**29**

**70**

**69**

**91**

**89**

**70**

**69**

**68**

**78**

**61**

**59**

**15**

**26**

**17**

**13**

**24**

**12**

**17**

**19**

**28**

**22**

**0**

**10**

**20**

**30**

**40**

**50**

**60**

**70**

**80**

**90**

**100**

**110**

**120**

**IRD**

**RS**

**REC**

**RE**

**RO**

**RI**

**PI**

**SRD**

**RA**

**RIN**

**Low**

**Medium**

**High**

The following table depicts the relationship among various dimensions of Role Stress:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **IRD** | **RS** | **REC** | **RE** | **RO** | **RI** | **PI** | **SRD** | **RA** | **RIN** |
| **IRD** | - | .777 | .421 | .495 | .207 | .633 | .489 | .453 | .394 | .453 |
| **RS** | .777 | - | .691 | .512 | .458 | .635 | .792 | .645 | .679 | .651 |
| **REC** | .421 | .691 | - | .396 | .735 | .671 | .824 | .547 | .584 | .781 |
| **RE** | .495 | .512 | .396 | - | .518 | .779 | .420 | .429 | .611 | .451 |
| **RO** | .207 | .458 | .735 | .518 | - | .641 | .594 | .487 | .519 | .691 |
| **RI** | .633 | .635 | .671 | .779 | .641 | - | .682 | .430 | .557 | .589 |
| **PI** | .489 | .792 | .824 | .420 | .594 | .682 | - | .589 | .548 | .791 |
| **SRD** | .453 | .645 | .547 | .429 | .487 | .430 | .589 | - | .506 | .784 |
| **RA** | .394 | .679 | .584 | .611 | .519 | .557 | .548 | .506 | - | .560 |
| **RIN** | .453 | .651 | .781 | .451 | .691 | .589 | .791 | .784 | .560 | - |

Considering the relationship of IRD with other dimensions of role stress, it is observed that the correlation with RS and RI are high with r value 0.777 and 0.633 respectively. It is concluded that RS and RI are the dimensions which are very highly correlated with IRD.

RS is the role stress dimension that is highly correlated with PI, IRD, REC, RA, RIN, SRD and RI with the corresponding correlation 0792, 0.777, 0.691, 0.679, 0.651, 0.645 and 0.635.

REC is highly correlated with PI (0.824), RIN (0.781), RO (0.735), RS (0.691) and RI (0.671). It has high correlation with PI, RIN, and RS. RE is the dimension which is highly correlated with RO 0.779 and RA0.611. RO is the role stress dimension that is highly correlated with REC with r value 0.735, RIN with the r value 0.691 and RI with its r value 0.641. PI and SRD are highly correlated with RIN with its correlation value of 0.791 and 0.784 respectively. The correlation between RA and RIN is also found around 60 %( r = 0.56). Maximum Correlation is observed between REC and PI with r value 0.824. Followed by the correlation between PI and RS (r = 0.792) and PI and RIN (r = 0.791). Personal inadequacy is responsible mainly for REC, RS and RIN.

**Friedman's Test**

The following table shows the most contributing variable among Organisational role stressors:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sl.#** | **Variables** | **Points** | **Result(rank)** | **New group and rank** |
| **01** | IRD | 6.38 | 3 | **1 (4-RE, 2-RS)** |
| **02** | RS | 6.84 | 2 | **2 (1 IRD)** |
| **03** | REC | 4.18 | 9 | **3 ( 7 PI, 8- SRD)** |
| **04** | RE | 7.19 | 1 | **4 ( 6- RI, 10- RIN)** |
| **05** | RO | 4.49 | 8 | **5 ( 5-RO)** |
| **06** | RI | 5.12 | 6 | **6 (3 – REC)** |
| **07** | PI | 5.98 | 4 | **7 ( 9- RA)** |
| **08** | SRD | 5.78 | 5 |  |
| **09** | RA | 3.90 | 10 |
| **10** | RIN | 5.12 | **7** |

From the above table we came to know that RE and RS are the most contributing variables of organisational role stressors , RA and REC variables are the least contributing variables for organisational stress. Other variables like RI, RIN and RO place in middle.



**FINDINGS RELATED TO FRIEDMAN TEST**

From Friedman test we came to know that Role Erosion (RE) and Role Stagnation (RS) are the most contributing variables of organisational role stressors. Role Ambiguity (RA) and Role-Expectation Conflict (REC) variables are the least contributing variables for organisational stress.

**CONCLUSION**

Since the organization tends to benefit from a stress-free workplace, employers must take the initiative to arrest stress in every conceivable manner. Facilities and programmes aimed at arresting stress in the workplace must be considered as investments and not as expenses. When there is little or no stress that results from the interaction between and among people in the organization, the organization increases its chances of success. On the other hand, every employee must be responsible for his/her own well-being and must do everything to combat stress. A stressed individual will be ineffective not only as an employee but also as a person. A stressful working experience can adversely affect the other facets of one’s life. Ultimately, therefore, every individual must be responsible for not allowing stress to enter into his/her life. A stress free life is a happy life.

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