Stress Management at Workplace

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Introduction

Stress Management has become need of hour in corporate world since it can have negative impact on employee's health and performance. Stress is an experience that creates psychological and physiological imbalance within a person. Employees can experience stress both from their personal life and work life. In simple words "Stress is a state of mind that reflects certain biochemical reactions in the human body and is projected by a sense of anxiety, tension and depression". Stress is a natural and unavoidable feature of human life. Whenever there is change in external environment, such as pollution, humidity, temperature and work conditions, it will lead to stress. Thus management of stress has become a major area of concern for the modern organizations. Stress is normally considered negative phenomena. Companies have been constantly implementing stress management techniques now a days in order to reduce impact of stress and keep employees stress free and comfortable. This paper will discuss causes of stress and stress management techniques.

Potential Sources or Causes of Stress

- **Task Demand**: Task demands are stressors linked with the specific job a person performs. Some jobs are more stressful by default. Beyond specific task related pressures, other aspects of job may cause physical threats to person's health. For example, security is task demand that can cause stress. Stress normally increases during period of layoffs or after merger with another firm.

- **Role Demand**: The sources of stress in organizational role include role ambiguity, role conflict, responsibility towards people and things and other stressors. It includes lack of clarity about the work objectives, expectations of employees related to

responsibilities and scope of the job. Role conflict occurs when an employee is asked to perform duties which he does not want to. When right person is not placed on right job, stress increases automatically due to lack of job satisfaction. Besides, there should be role clarity about duties and responsibilities to be discharged otherwise employee will feel stressed.

- **Works Overload**: Whenever standards of performance for employees are set beyond the ability of an employee, it will result in work overload. Fear of non-performance will result in stress. Now-a-days managers set very high performance standards which is not justifiable and employees start feeling uncomfortable.

- **Interpersonal Relationships at Work**: It has been observed that if relations of an employee with his superior and subordinates are not healthy, then it leads to stress. Stress is generated by lack of trust and social support from colleagues at different point of time. In such case, employees will feel alone and not share problems with each other. Existence of two way communication system is required to maintain sound human relations.

- **Group Pressure**: Group pressure includes following norms and regulations of group and meeting standards set for performance in stipulated time period. Sometimes, employees start taking more stress due to skill and performance comparison with other group members. Moreover, fixing very strict standards of performance also leads to stress among group members. For instance, it is quite common for a work group to arrive at an informal agreement about how much each member will produce.

- **Organizational Leadership**: Leadership style also leads to stress. Employees need moral support and guidance from their leader but leader is not concerned about employee needs. Therefore, employee will feel stressed. Lack of two way communication and rigid attitude on behalf of leader will result into poor relations among leader and employees. Leader should never be autocratic and listen to problems and ideas of their subordinates to make them comfortable.

- **Life Change**: A life change is a major change in an individual's life or work situation that changes his or her emotions, behavior or attitude. Halmes and Rahe reasoned that major changes in person's life can lead to stress and eventually to disease. For example, a divorce, fired from work and health problems leads to stress.

Management of Stress

Stress is unavoidable in human life. There is no way but to employ strategies to fight it out. Management of Stress is a challenging task. Various strategies to manage stress are discussed as under:

- **Organizational Role Clarity**: Employees experience stress when they are not clear about what they are expected to perform in the organization. Role conflict or role ambiguity leads to stress. Therefore, role clarity must be there to ensure that employees are clear about duties, responsibilities, authority and standards of performance. Role analysis technique helps in analyzing what the job entails and what the expectations are. Breaking down the job in various components will ensure role of job incumbent from entire system.

- **Job Redesign**: Job may be a source of stress to many individuals. Properly designed jobs and work schedules can help ease stress sin the individuals and the organization. Work schedules should be designed in such a manner to ensure that employees never feel stressed and may get enough time at periodical intervals to rest and relax. This will surely enhance their productivity and keep them stress free as well.

- **Stress Reduction and Stress Management Programmes**: Companies should conduct stress management programmes from time and time and invite experts from outside to have an interactive session with employees. It will pave a platform for employee to share their problems with experts and sought solution pertaining to problem so that impact of stress may be reduced. Stress reduction programmes aim to identify relevant organizational stressors and thus to reduce their impact by redesigning, reallocating workloads. Stress management schemes emphasize on training individual employees to manage stress symptoms in effective manner.

- **Collateral Programmes**: "A collateral stress programme is an organizational programme specifically created for the well being of the employees. Organizations have adopted stress management programmes, health promotion programmes, career development programmes counseling and other kinds of programmes for this purpose."

- **Counseling**: Counseling is discussion of a problem by a counsellor with an employee with a view to help the employee cope with it better. Counselling seeks to improve employee's mental health by the release of emotional tension which is also known an emotional catharsis. Counselor may be an internal or external employee. Employees

feel more comfortable when they find someone with whom they can freely share their problems and ask for remedy as well. So companies should constantly implement this strategy to keep employees stress free.

- **Relaxation:** Coping with stress requires adaptation. Proper relaxation is an effective way to adapt. Relaxation can take many forms. One way to relax is to take regular vacations. It has been observed that people's attitudes toward a variety of workplace characteristics improve significantly following a vacation. People can also relax while on the job.

- **Time Management**: Time management is an effective strategy for managing stress. The idea is that many daily pressures can be eased if a person manages time effectively by preparing daily work chart. One popular approach to time management is to make a list every morning of the things to be done that day.

- **Meditation**: Meditation plays a crucial role in reducing impact of stress. "Meditation involves quiet, concentrated inner thought in order to rest the body physically and emotionally. It helps remove a person from stressful world temporarily".

- **Support Group**: It is group of friends or family members with whom a person can share his feelings. Supportive family and friends can help people cope with routine stress on ongoing basis.

In nutshell, companies must realize significance of stress management and employ innovative stress management techniques to reduce stress or manage stress effectively so that employees may relax and feel comfortable resulting in enhancing their work productivity.

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