

Work-related stress amongst employees



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In the main, business managers are failing to deal with the problem of work-related stress amongst employees.

Work-related stress is a common problem of modern lifestyle which has spread all over the world and touched almost all vocations (Life, nd, p. 1). “ Job stress is a chronic disease caused by condition in the workplace that negatively affects an individual’s performance and/or overall well-being of his body and mind (Life, nd, p. 1)”. Sources of work-related stress include high demand of performance, family pressure, poor interpersonal relationships and career concerns. The consequence of the stress will lead to less self-confidence, worse performance and even suicide. As the stress which detrimental to people’s health has become more and more severely, how to cope with the situation is attracting increasing people’s attention. This essay focuses on problems of athletes’ stress and submits some solutions to the problems for sports managers.

The natures of the stress can be split into two parts: physical symptoms and behavioral symptoms (speaking book, 2008). The physical symptoms include: “ tiredness, nausea, headaches, muscle tension, nervous twitches and altered sleep patterns. Aggression, anxiety, poor decision-making, inability to prioritize, mood changes, difficulty in concentrating, feelings of failure and isolation are belonging to behavioral symptoms (speaking book, 2008, p. 95)”. All of these symptoms can reflect the athletes’ work-related stress.

The causes of the athletes’ job stress are intricate and complex. They can be mostly divided into 4 parts-environmental issues, personal issues, leadership issues and team issues respectively. Firstly, environmental issues, which

include selection, finance, and training environment, is a factor that contributes to the stress (Tim & Lew, 2001). Selection is consisted of late selection, a lengthy selection process and unfair selection system. Some athletes illustrate that they feel nervous and tense if they do not know whether they will be chosen for competition. They fear that they will not have enough time to prepare the competition which lead to the stress. And some unfair selection also causes the stress of athletes as they can not obtain the chance of equal competition (Tim & Lew, 2001). Finances play an important role in stress. It includes not having enough funding money and differential financial support. Athletes spend most of time on training so that they do not have extra time for earning money. Therefore, they have to obtain the funding from sport organization, sponsorship or family. If the financial support is not enough or is poorly managed, athletes will feel depressive and anxiety (Tim & Lew, 2001). Training environment may be being able to lead to the athletes' stress if athletes exist in the two opposite environments at the same time. The incompatible environment will make athletes feel uncomfortable.

The second part which is the most important one is personal issues. Personal issues contain nutrition, career concern, interpersonal relationship, injury and external distractions (Tom, et al 2000; Tim & Lew, 2001). Poor provision of food and disorder eating habit will lead to innutrition or obesity which will influence the athletes' performance (Tim & Lew, 2001). A female athlete says that diet is her worst puzzle, which will lead to stress (Tim & Lew, 2001). A study shows that external distractions (23%) and career concern (19%) are the two major causes for stress (Pensgaard, 1998). Roberston &

Cooper(1983) believe that career stagnation, high expectation from other people and unrealistic goals, which are the main components of career concern, may give rise to stress if athletes fail to achieve the expectation and goals (Tom, et al 2000). At the same time, external influence also brings stress to athletes. The press, media, spectators and family make athletes distract from their work which consequently influence their performance (Pensgaard, 1998). For example, David Beckham, who is a talented football player, fell out with his coach because the coach thought that David paid more attention on entertainment area than on training. Such action had impeded his development of football skill. At that time, David also had to face a big stress from his wife, who was his manager for planning the commercial activities.

Poor interpersonal relationships in a team are another factor of stress. There are three important sets of relationships-relationships with sports managers, with coaches and with teammates. Low interpersonal support from sports managers, coaches and teammates will be linked with high anxiety, tension and low performance satisfaction which increase the risk of obtaining pressure (Tom, et al 2000). In addition, injury, which is the worst thing for athletes, often results in pressure. Most of the athletes who get hurt will worry about their career as they fear that they can not get opportunities to go to the competition or they will lag behind because of less training (Tim & Lew, 2001).

The third part of the cause is leadership issues which focus on the aspect of coach. Coach's differential treatment of athletes, overbearing coach, coach very demanding and coach-athlete tension are the reasons of athletes'

pressure (Tim & Lew, 2001). Coach's attitude influences athletes deeply because he plays a vital role in a team and has the right to decide which athlete will be chosen for competition. Most of athletes fear that they will be ignored by their coach and some athletes feel stress as they can not bear the workload (Tim & Lew, 2001). Moreover, coaching style is another cause of athletes' stress. Some athletes can not adapt to different coaching styles which may deter their development. The poor performance of an athlete results in a rise of the pressure (Tim & Lew, 2001).

Team issues, as the last part of the cause, can not be ignored. It main includes: team atmosphere, communication and support (Tim & Lew, 2001). Team atmosphere is a main issue which relates to the tension between the athletes. A new team member, injured athletes and separate groups within team may lead to the poor team atmospheres which engender a tense situation in the team. The supports from teammates, coaches and sports managers are the mental underpinning of athletes' which make them get rid of the negative mood. Without support, athletes may feel helpless and even stress (Tim & Lew, 2001).

Persistent stress may result in long term consequences which may alter the way the athletes feel, thinks and behaves, and may also change their physiological function (Stansfeld et al, 1999; SanterMrphy, 1995; Cincirpini et al, 1984; Stainbrak &Green, 1983, cited in Tom, et al 2000). Effects of athletes' stress may work on individuals and teams respectively. For individuals, effects of stress may include: " sleep disturbances, headaches, gastrointestinal upset, cardiovascular disease, anxiety and depression, labile emotions, less of concentration, lack of motivation, substance misuse and

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poor performance (University of Cambridge, 2008)". While for team, consequences of stress may mean low morale, increased athletes' complaints, increased accidents, high absenteeism and poor performance which will influence the development of the team (University of Cambridge, 2008).

Because of the high dangers of the athletes' stress, how to tackle the problem has become the focus of sports managers. There are some solutions can be used to help sports managers cope with the stress of athletes. First of all, sports managers have to take responsibility for athletes' diets and ensure athletes maintain good nutrition (Dean, 2007). Secondly, sports managers should prevent athletes from working overload. Therefore, they should give athletes manageable training schedule so that they will not feel too tired. Keep good relationship with athletes and manage the relationship between athletes are both important for sports managers. The supports from teammates, coaches and sports managers are the mental underpinning of athletes which can help them release from stress (Tim & Lew, 2001).

To athletes, stress is a persistent problem which often influences their performance and life. Although sports managers are trying to deal with the situation and some of them have been taken some solutions, athletes continue to be affected by stress problem (Pensgaard, 1998). The solution taken by sports managers, such as effective time management, health diet and keeping good relationship, are useful at the certain extent. However, some accidents which can not be predicted by sports managers would also result the stress. So, while deal with the existing stress is important,

detecting the possible sources of stress for athletes may be is a more effective way to avoid the happening of pressure (Pensgaard, 1998).

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