

# Organizational behavior (work- related stress)

Psychology, Behaviorism



| Organizational Behavior| a) What are the major sources of work-related stress? b) Examine the role of gender in work-related stress| | | |

Adnan Malik - H00133313 Chris Andrew D'Silva - H00115516 Muhammad Mohsin - H00114888 Muhammad Hammad Malik - 091616937 Word Count:

2200 Date: 27/10/2012 | This essay aims to discuss major sources of work-related stress and provide an analysis of the reasons that cause stress among both males and females, and whether similarities exist between them. So, what is stress? Comprehensively, stress is a typical instinctive reaction to situations that make one feel pressured or agitated in any way.

For instance, when a person senses any sort of threat, he/she delivers an automatic stress response or the "fight or flight" reaction. Thus, this reaction is the body's means to protect themselves. Moreover, stress can help a person to remain attentive and focussed during their course of work, and aid them to complete tasks or meet deadlines. In case of an emergency, stress can also help one defend or protect their life. Beyond a particular level however, stress is no longer helpful and begins to cause damage to one's health, productivity and lifestyle (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2000).

Therefore, it is important to determine when one undergoes stress, the reasons for it as well as the many ways through which, they can cope with it. All this can improve their psychological and mental well-being significantly. As identified by The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) using Palmer Et Al and Cary Cooper's developments of the working models of work-related stress, there are six significant likely sources of stress or stressors at a work place in general.

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These are: work demands, work relationships, a person's control over work, an individual's role within an organization, career development and the interface between home and work. To begin with, work demands and physical demands consist of stressors that are constitutive to the job. These include working environments, workload (overload and underload), working hours and event technology to a certain extent. Working environments: It is obvious that undesirable working settings such as workplaces with high levels of noise, bad lightings or extreme temperature can stress workers and down their performances.

Furthermore, this can give rise to mental as well as physical illnesses or disorders. Workload: employees usually endure a surplus of workload (work overload) or a deficit of workload (work under load). The two are quantitative and qualitative by nature and may result in elevated stress levels. Quantitative overload relates to circumstances wherein workers are required to do a lot more work in a stipulated time period and qualitative overload refers to situations in which workers believe that they would be unable to perform required tasks because they lack the ability or expertise needed.

Likewise, quantitative and qualitative work under load also leads to stress, although, it may not be so evident. Quantitative under load occurs when workers tend to get bored as a result of having very little work with a lot of available time. Whereas qualitative under load relates to an employee's feeling of reduced motivation due to their dull or monotonous job routine. Working hours: working for long hours can lead to stress; diminishing a worker's productivity and consequently lead to mental or physical ill-health.

A recent study states that working for 11 hours a day can increase possibilities of a heart disease due to high stress levels. The study features at the same level to individuals who smoke; individuals who have high cholesterol levels and even individuals with high blood pressure. Technology: similarly, reports have revealed that excessive use certain information technology (IT) in companies by its employees can also cause negative physiological as well as psychological problems. Secondly, maintaining good, healthy relationships with superiors, subordinates and co-workers are very important at a work place.

Frequent conflicts, trust issues, aggravation and oppression are all factors expected to elevate stress levels. Besides this, in most cases, when individuals meet successes, they tend to abandon their ties with colleagues, friends and behaviour. This theory is called 'status incongruity'. Undergoing such a negative transformation could lead to damaging effects, psychologically as well as physically. Further to this, an individual's control over his/her work is another source of stress. Basically, it is a person's authority and way in which they perform given tasks.

High levels of stress are usually linked with low levels of one's control over their job and vice versa. Fourthly, the individual's role within an organisation: a prime cause of stress that is associated with the 'job role' of an individual along with the demands made upon him/her. There are a number of ways through which this source of stress is one most workers usually face. These are: Role Conflict: a form of social conflict initiated by a person being obliged to play discrete and mismatched roles.

Conflict of roles can arise at an individual level, wherein one person is required to take on separate roles for diverse groups, or in a workplace in which a person is needed to comply with several roles in one particular group. For example, an individual who undertakes the role of a worker as well as a supervisor endures role conflict. Role obscurity: this usually arises when a person lacks clarity about a job and is uncertain about the anticipated manner in which he/she should conduct themselves.

For example, people generally tend to be quite stressed on the first day of work because they are not fully certain of their responsibilities or the way the company operates. Both role obscurity and role conflict are highly related to increased stress levels and further lead to reduced levels of job satisfaction. Accountability for others and managerial stress: people who are accountable for other people in a workplace often suffer from increased stress compared to others. People responsible for this are usually managers or supervisors.

For example, some managers of companies are responsible for the actions of their subordinates. They have to look into motivating and satisfying them in order to safeguard the interests of the company. Apart from this they're personalities generally demand them to be very competitive, pressurized and contentious and such characteristics can prove damaging to their physical and mental state. Another potential stressor is the development of one's career: an imperative source of stress that talks about job insecurity, over-promotion and under-promotion, acquisitions and mergers and occupational locking-in.

Job insecurity: in most cases, an individual's risk of losing his/her job or being unemployed is directly linked with various illnesses and health problems.

Over-promotion & under-promotion: over-promotion refers to a situation in which an employee acquires responsibilities that surpass their abilities and skills and the latter refers to a situation, wherein an individual is not given enough responsibilities that meet his/her ability. Both such circumstances can lead to significant levels of stress and furthermore deteriorate a person's psychological state.

Acquisitions and mergers: these affect both executives (managers, directors etc. and subordinates who are then required to conform to the rules, objectives and manners of the new establishment.

Occupational locking-in: this circumstance arises when a person is unable to shift from their current job.

Lastly, the work and home interface, also known as the balance between work and life is a major source of work related stress that comprises of events that take place external to the work place of an individual but embarks negative effects on his/her conduct at work. These events may be concerns associated to family, financial problems and opposing personal and company views.

Role of gender in work-related stress: According to Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, stress is what we feel when we have to respond to a demand on our energy. Stress is a natural part of life, and occurs whenever there are significant changes in our lives, whether positive or negative. There are many situations that cause stress such as financial worries, work overload, unemployment, relationships, parenting, balancing work and family, caregiving, health problems, losses, holidays,

competitiveness, peer pressure and lack of time (Canadian Mental Health Association, n. d. ).

Workplace stress according to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety is defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that can result from conflicts between job demands on the employee and the amount of control an employee has over meeting these demands (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and safety, 2000). Hoel, Zapf & Cooper have explained the reasons of workplace stress developing due to changing environments. They state that during the 1980's work environments were transformed by globalization, privatization, process re-engineering, mergers and acquisitions, strategic alliances and joint ventures.

With time a situation known as ' burnout' occurred. In the 1990's the workplace suddenly changed. Firms started to downsize, delay and flatten. As a result redundancy and organizational change occurred. Technology started shaping in which has increased the work pace and caused information overload. Consequently job intensification and work insecurity occurred (Hoel et al. , 2002). When it comes to gender, there are a number of wants both male and female desire. For males it is higher pay in order to increase their standard of living, and promotions to boost their status in society.

What is more they require recognition for their work and more leisure time to be able to fulfil household commitments. On the other hand, for females they want to have flexible work timings since they take care of children and perform house duties. Moreover, they desire to work in an environment where they are supported and taken care of. As a result of this, they remain loyal to

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their job. Also, they want to work in a decent reputable firm where their ideas are appreciated and implemented which in turn increases their job performance.

Lastly, they demand respect and trust from fellow subordinates. There are a number of reasons why individuals both male and female get work related stress. A detailed analysis of the factors that causes stress for both genders will be presented. For females, one factor that causes stress is balancing both life and work. This is difficult and tough to manage. The reason is due to being away from home and spending long hours at the office which causes them to miss their family and children. Another cause is procrastinating.

This refers to leaving the project or assignment to the last minute which results in high levels of anxiety, tension and worry. Also, over-committing is another reason. This means that one has to try and think how he/she will fulfil least important priorities before moving onto the top priority tasks. In addition to this not setting priorities can cause high levels of stress. This means that the individual would feel that he/she is overworking. Both mental and physical overload occurs. Poor relationships with co-workers and subordinates can also be a contributing reason of stress. Without good relationships, assignments will be difficult to complete, teamwork is limited and strained, and it will be difficult to get assistance when required. Poor communication is another cause of stress. This refers to information being misinterpreted, not understood; details omitted, which causes confusion, and re doing the work all over again. Lastly confusion on where certain documents are located is a factor for stress occurring. As a result of all these factors, women are more likely to report burnout, stress-related



illness, or a desire to leave their jobs (International Labour Organization, 2001).

In the case of males, job insecurity is one factor that causes stress. Due to economic changes and pressures the working environment is gradually decreasing over time. This is caused by reorganizations, mergers, takeovers; downsizing and other changes have become major players in creating stress. Moreover, higher demand of performance by chief operating officers is another factor. As employees get promoted there is a greater amount of workload, extremely long hours to work and high expectations all cause them to be both physically and mentally drained. Advanced technology is another reason.

Managers expect that all workers should increase productivity, speed and efficiency in completing their tasks. This is difficult for staff as they are under increased amounts of pressure. Adjusting to the new workplace can be a challenge to newer staff. This includes learning the proper styles of communication and getting to know co-workers, supervisors and bosses. This in turn causes stress. Lastly, personal problems are also another reason for stress. If there are difficulties at home, individuals tend to carry their issues to the workplace which leads them to being unfocused, depressed and having a lack of motivation to work.

On comparing the reasons of stress for both males and females it can be noted that men tend to show physical deterioration as a response to stressful situations whereas women generally exhibit psychological symptoms (Wichert, 2002). To prevent stress in the workplace, companies adopt some methods. One method is to provide fitness and wellbeing <https://assignbuster.com/organizational-behavior-work-related-stress/>

programs such as reduced gym membership rates, playing sports, team building exercises, and providing play areas for mothers' children. Also, by organizing company events, parties and social gatherings employees can enjoy themselves, have fun, and develop new relationships with new people. In conclusion, stress cannot be totally prevented at the workplace but can be significantly reduced if the firms decide to implement stress-reducing measures such as fitness programs and fun, social events and team building exercises. Regardless of gender, both men and women tend to have work related stress but the level of stress for females is relatively higher than males mainly due to domestic responsibilities. Bibliography: Aziz, S. and Cunningham, J. (2008). Workaholism, work stress, work-life imbalance: exploring gender's role.. *Gender in Management* [online]. 23, p. 553-566.

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