

Stress in the workplace reasons and consequences management essay

[Business](#), [Management](#)



Abstract

This paper aims to examine the previous literature in the area of work-related stress. The paper examined the impacts of work-related stress on organizational performance, job satisfaction, service delivery and health problems faced by employees. The paper also analyzed the present working conditions of UAE market by giving the newspaper articles. The study first defined work-related stress and then presented its reasons and consequences. Meanwhile, some of the ways to avoid stress among employees are also presented. Key words: Work-related stress, Job Satisfaction, Health, Service delivery, UAE

1. Introduction

The work related stress has now been recognized as world-wide challenge for workers as well as for the organizations. This can seriously cause the workers' health and can also cause the organizations to face losses. The employees who face the problems of work-related stress can be more prone towards the low motivation, unhealthiness, less productiveness, lower satisfaction levels and less safety at workplace. This issue of work-related stress can also disturb the work-life balance and can assert the pressure on work as well as on their family life. In this case their organizations are least likely to gain required output from their workforce and consequently these organizations are less likely to be successful. It is true that the management of the company cannot protect their employees from the stress arising from outside of work but can surely safeguard from the work-related stress. Most of the successful organizations and managements keen to make their work

environment healthier and safer for their employees so that the issues of work-related stress could be avoided. The management of any company must be aware of its employees that either they are stressed or not and meanwhile they must have proper planning and strategies to handle these situations. In most of the countries, there are set labor laws for the health and safety of workforce. These laws also define the responsibilities of the organizations to ensure such an environment so that the stress related hazards would be avoided. SO, the employees are also advised to be familiarized by these labor laws for their own rights and safety. This study will answer the following questions: What is work-related stress and is not What are the reasons of work-related stress What would be the consequences of work-related stress What could be the techniques to prevent the work-related stress This paper is concerned with finding the reasons of work-related stress and what kind of consequences an organization has to face if its employees are stressed. The first part of the paper will define that what basically work-related stress is. Then the subsequent phase of this paper defines the risk management approach to work stress. Then the next section elaborates that how the work-related stress is dangerous to the health of the employees. Then coming section describes the approaches to reduce the work-related stress in the organization. Then the next section answers that how to provide support for those people who are suffering from stress. In the last section of this paper, the prevalence of work-related stress is observed in the gulf and particularly in United Arab Emirates (UAE). Previously, the issue of work-related stress can rarely be found in the academic literature or research studies in regions like UAE. This study is

aimed to highlight this issue and to urge the researchers to do research in this area for the regions like UAE where this issue is hurting the workforce very immensely.

2. Work-related Stress

Work-related stress is defined as the emotional and harmful physical responses which occur when the employee's capabilities, expertise, needs and resources won't match with the job requirements. Under these circumstances, the worker would face the work-related stress (NIOSH, 1999). This can occur under various circumstances but the conditions can become more difficult to handle for management when the employees have the thought that they have little concern of management of company or from their immediate supervisors. The employees can also face the work-related stress when they have least control over their work and coping up the work pressures and demands. Sometimes, the issue of stress is misconceptualized with challenges or pressures whereas the issue of stress is entirely different from pressure. Workplace pressure cannot be avoided because of modern workplace environment. The issue of pressure is not observed as harmful or dangerous for workforce. It rather makes the employees more alert. Pressure is not seen as unacceptable by any employee or individual. The pressure also keeps the employees more motivated and by this the employees are able to learn more about the job requirements. But it is true to say that when the pressure becomes excessive and very hard to achieve then it can lead towards work-related stress. So, there is clear relationship between work-pressure and work-related stress. Consequently, stress can hurt the health of

the employees and the performance of the organization. But meanwhile, it is very important to understand the difference between pressure and stress. Now the question arises that what is actually the stress is. It is basically results from the situation of mismatch between abilities, knowledge, expertise and capacities with respect to the demands and pressures on the individual. The stress can also occur when the abilities of the employees are not effectively utilized. This may also because of the bad management of the organization. The perfect work environment is likely to be one where the job demands and work related pressures are appropriately in line to the abilities, capacities and resources available to the employees. The stress at work can affect the health of the employee. On the other hand, the health is not only any sort of disease but also includes the disturbance in the social life and mental condition of the employees (Edwards, Guppy, & Cockerton, 2007). Any particular working environment is said to be healthy where must not only be the harmful conditions for the workforce but also where the management is keen to promote the healthy working conditions. The management must assess the working conditions from time to time to avoid the risks to health. Meanwhile, there must be proper training to employees on health related issues and at the same time the management must ensure the availability of information and support practices to its employees (Pretrus & Kleiner, 2003).

3. Causes of Work-related Stress

There are many factors which make an organization to be called unsecured work organization such as the inappropriate job design, poor management

and ill-structured work systems. When the management of the organization puts excessive work pressure and unmanageable targets or deadlines to the employees then by this the employees face huge amount of stress over them. Under these conditions, the employees also face lack of control over their tasks and lack of cooperation from their colleagues and supervisors. This can worsen the working conditions. Most of the previous researches (Edwards et al., 2007; James, 1999; Pretrus & Kleiner, 2003) have proved that the type of job which is said to be most stressful is that which asserts more pressure on employees and at the same time the pressures and demands don't match with the bearing capacity of the employees. The more is the match between workers abilities and job requirements then the less stress will be faced by the employees. The lack of support from higher management, supervisors and colleagues also causes stress among the employees. If the employees would have control over work and duties then in this case the level of stress can be declined. There must be designated authority to the employees to manage their work and they should also have the authority to participate in the decisions related to their work. One of the major causes of work-related stress is that the work is designed in a way that would not be manageable by the employees. The previous literature (Schabracq & Cooper, 2000) on work-related stress has found many hazards which can cause higher level of stress among employees such as the meaningless and unpleasant tasks, Lack of variety in work, Strict and inflexible working schedules, Long and unsocial hours, Badly designed shift systems and many more. These hazards are more country specific. In some

regions or countries these are not said to be hazards and in some others these are.

4. Consequences of Work-related Stress

If the consequences of work-related stress are observed then it is found that there are two types of consequences. One is the effect on individuals or employees and the other is the effect on organizations. If we analyze the effects on employees then it can be said that stress affects the different individuals in various different ways. This can cause the individuals with poor mental and physical health. The employees affected by work-related stress are also seen to have unusual behavior. If the stress persists for a longer period of time then in this way the employees can also have psychological problems. They can also face with the mental disorder which would consequently become the reason of absenteeism from the workplace. It is also expected that they can become disabled to work ever again in their life. Some of the studies (Denny, Wells, & Cunningham, 2011; Kirkcaldy, Trimpop, & Williams, 2002) have also suggested that the work-related stress can cause the employees to engage in unhealthy activities such as smoking and drinking alcohol. The people facing the work-related stress feel difficulty in making logical decisions during the work and they constantly feel tired and anxious. On the other hand, stress has its effects on the organization too. If in some organization, the employees are facing the higher level of work-related stress then in this case the productivity and performance of the organization will be severely affected. In this case, the organization will be unable to get the best from the employees. So, this will not only be harmful

for the sustaining the performance but will also be dangerous for the survival of the organization. The work-related stress can increase the absenteeism among the workforce. This can also raise the employee turnover and decrease the employees' commitment to work. It is proved in the previous researches (Varca, 1999) that work-related stress can also cause the accident rates in the production areas. It is also proved that the stress can increase the customer complaints. So, all of these can affect the organization repute not only among the workers but also in external market.

4. 1 Work-related Stress and Employees' Health:

It is proved by various previous studies (Kirkcaldy et al., 2002; Manshor, Fontaine, & Choy, 2003) that work-related stress can cause many health related problems to the employees at all levels either from top, middle or lower levels. Kirkcaldy et al. (2002) conducted a research on managers from Britain and Germany and concluded in their research that there are some reasons behind getting stressed at work which include inappropriate guidance and backup from immediate supervisors, lack of proper communication among employees, lack of encouragement from supervisors, feeling of isolation, favoritism and discrimination from higher management and inappropriate training and development from organizations. All of these reasons can cause higher level of stress among the employees which in return harm the individual health. Another study conducted by Manshor et al. (2003) among 440 managers in Malaysia highlighted the fact that the relationships among the employees and management is the major contributor of stress. If these relationships are not much stronger then the

level of stress among employees can raise eventually. Manshor et al. (2003) also exerted the importance of giving proper training to employees for handling the tense situations and surviving in the pressure situations. They also highlighted that the working conditions have changed over the period of time and the employees are needed to perform multiple tasks at one time so for this they must be well equipped with all of the required resources.

4. 2 Work-related Stress and Customer Service Delivery:

The relationship between working environment or a good place to work and firm performance has been previously proved by previous studies. Varca (1999) conducted a research in which he proved that there is strong relationship between organizational service quality to its customers and the level of stress among the employees. If the employees are stressed then the level of output they will give to the customers will be badly affected.

Organizational performance and success is strongly associated to the good place to work for employees. If the working environment of the organization is good for employees then this will positively affect the organizational performance. Varca (1999) suggested the same by making the relationship between service quality and working conditions. The findings of this study clearly mentioned that there is strong relationship among perceived stressors (i. e. workload) and service delivery. In this study he proved that under-performed employees have significantly higher levels of job stressors. The management must appoint such employees for the customer services who are highly motivated and are not stressed. Organizations must find highly skilled and people with innovative ideas to serve the customers.

4.3 Work-related Stress and Job Satisfaction:

There are many research studies both from western countries as well as from Asia which suggested that work-related stress and the level of job satisfaction have strong relationships. Ismail et. al (2009) conducted a research in Malaysia to analyze the relationship between work-related stress and the level of job satisfaction. The results of his study highlighted that if the physiological and psychological stresses in performing a job are handled tactfully then the capability of employees to perform a job will also be increased and eventually this will also help to improve the performance of the organization on the long run.

5. Risk Assessment for Work-related Stress

The issue of work-related stress is a great challenge for the health and safety of the employees as well as for the performance of organization. To better handle this issue, the management must have the better policy for ensuring the health and safety of its employees in the context of stress. For this the management must implement better arrangements such as risk assessment, training and sharing useful resources. The management should have strategies for both existing stress among employees and also reduce the chances of any type of stress among employees in future. For this, the employers can have risk management approaches which would be able to assess any existing stress and will also have monitoring scheme for any possible hazard which would harm the employees. The reasons which cause the stress among employees are because of the flaws in the design or structure of the organization's working environment. For a better risk

assessment approach, the management must find the answers to some of the critical questions such as: 1) is there any problem in the system, 2) how to solve the stress related problems, 3) is the system is well monitored. These questions can identify imbalances in the system (Bridson, 1995). On the other hand, the techniques such as employee-relations which can bridge gap between employer and employees and in this way employee can communicate their issues with the management from time to time. There are also some other approaches to explore the existing risks such as; Sickness absence, staff turnover, performance levels, accidents and mistakes should be continuously monitored because these can indicate the level of stress among the employees. The figure 1 defines the process of risk management. At the first stage of the process exert there is a need of an analysis of the situation and an extensive and keen assessment of the risk existed in the system. At the second stage, the management must have to design the action plan to reduce the chances of work-related stress in the organization. At the further stages, the management must ensure the successful implementation of the action plan. Once the action plan is implemented then the stage of evaluation comes. This is to check that either the plan is implemented successfully or not. It is also very important to analyze that what are the outcomes of implementing the plans. Problems associated to the proposed action plan are assessed and then further actions based on the evaluation are then applied.

Figure 1: Steps in Risk Management

Source: It is very important that during this whole process the workers must be consulted. The suggestions from employees must be considered and should make changes accordingly. According to previous researches (Johnson et al., 2005; Schabracq & Cooper, 2000), there are many ways by which the organization can prevent the chances of facing work-related stress by employees such as defining job description in a better way so that it would be able to convey the knowledge and skills which are required for a particular job. At the same time, the management must have better communication system with its employees. There must be appropriate training, selecting and development of the staff. It is very important to hire right person for right job. Meanwhile, the management must maintain a reasonable level of socializing in the organization and the teamwork should be promoted. This can help in achieving targets and creating harmony among employees. All of these factors are very important for reducing the risk of stress in the working environment. These factors also help in reducing the gap between the demands of work and pressures. The management must adopt such a culture in the organization which would be healthy and safe for the workers to prevent not only the physical injuries but also the mental and psychological problems.

6. Work-related Stress and Conditions in UAE

The market of UAE was once said to be the dream place to work where the salaries paid by employers were higher than the other regions. This market was once the job-seeking market with bundle of opportunities for people

coming from around the globe. But the working conditions have now been changed from last few years. The global financial crisis of 2008 hit Dubai market severely and the golden era of 2006-07 has now gone. There are a lot of issues regarding the labor/workforce in the market. The working hours have now been increased and employees are never paid for the extra hours of their work. There is huge element of job-insecurity in every sector of Dubai market. The wage rate has drastically been decreased and people are not satisfied with the employers. Lots of people have lost their jobs and the remaining have this fear that they can be fired at any time. There are rarely any steps taken by the legislative authorities for the safety of the employees. The issue of discrimination can be seen easily in the organizations. According to the latest Towers Watson's Global Workforce Study (GWS), 42 percent of the employees feel excessive pressure from their job and 56 percent of the employees feel insecurity. This shows that the situation in UAE is at alarming stage and there is an immense need of attention from legislative authorities in UAE to take some serious actions in resolving this situation (Maceda, 2012).

7. Conclusion

The issue of work-related stress is not new and lot of research has previously been conducted in this field but there are lots of countries in which this issue is not been given deserving attention. UAE is one of those countries. Work-related stress is harmful for both employees and organization. This issue of work-related stress can easily be resolved by proper action plans and attention from the management. A good place to work is proved to be the

successful among its competitors whereas the survival of organizations with poor working conditions is questionable. There is lots of research is still needed in this area in the countries like UAE. This study is blend of results from previous studies which is also one of the limitations of this study. Extensive empirical research studies are needed with proper responses from employees of the region of UAE where is the conditions of work environment are getting worst day by day.