MANAGING STRESS AT WORK.

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Highlights

• Introduction
• Definition of terms
• Stress model
• Stressors
• Individual Differences
• Stress management strategies
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Introduction

• Everyone needs to manage stress. Unfortunately many of us deny the stress until it is too late. This avoidance strategy creates a vicious cycle because the failure to cope with stress becomes another stressor on top of the one that created the stress in the first place.

• **Learning Objectives**
  • To explore how stress is costly to individual and organization
  • To explore how stress can be managed in the work place to minimize its dysfunctional impact on individual and organization
  • To achieve organizational goals and objectives through individual conduct and reactions
  • To improve efficiency, effectiveness and enhance productivity.
Stress

• What is stress?
  Stress is an adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to the person’s well-being.
• Stress is the person’s reaction to a situation and not the situation itself
• We experience stress when we believe that something will interfere with our need fulfillment.
• Stress has both psychological and physiological dimensions. Psychologically, people perceive a situation and interpret it as challenging or threatening. This cognitive appraisal leads to a set of physiological responses. Such as faster heart beat, headache, higher Blood pressure, sweaty hands and so on.
Definition of terms

- **Psychology**
  - Is the scientific study of the mind and how it influences behaviour. It is a kind of mind that make people think or behave in a particular way.
  - It is how the mind influences behaviour in a particular way.

- **Physiology**
  - It is the scientific study of the normal functions of living thing. It is the way in which a particular living thing functions.

- **Distress**
  - Is the negative consequence of modern living. People are stressed from overwork, job insecurity, information overload, family affairs and the increasing pace of life. It is the degree of physiological psychological and behavioural deviation from healthy functioning.

- **Eustress**
  - It is the positive side of stress. It refers to the healthy, positive constructive outcome of stressful events and the stress response.
  - Eustress is the stress experience in moderation, enough to activate and motivate people so that they can achieve goals, change their environments and succeed in life’s challenges.
STRESS MODEL

- **Sely’s General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)**
  - Is a model of the stress experience, consisting of three stages:
  - Stage 1: Alarm Reaction
  - Stage 2: Resistance
  - Stage 3: Exhaustion
  - **Alarm Reaction**: Is the perception of a threatening or challenging situation.
  - When an individual’s defence mechanism becomes active, resulting in increase respiration rate, blood pressure, muscle tension and other physiological responses.
  - **Resistance**: The person’s ability to cope with the environmental demand rises above the normal stage during the resistance stage.
  - In this stage there is still more energy to overcome or remove the source of stress.
  - **Exhaustion**: When one adaptive mechanism collapse. There is risk of long term physiological and psychological damage.
STRESSORS

• Stressors (causes of stress).
• These are the causes of stress and these include any environmental condition, physical or emotional demand on the person.
• There are numerous stressors in organizational settings and they are referred to as **Work-Related Stressors**.
• This work related stressors are:
• **Physical environment stressors**
• **Role- related stressors**
• **Interpersonal stressors**
• **organizational stressors**
• **Physical environment stressor:** are excessive noise, poor lighting, and safety hazards e.t.c
• **Role- related stressor:** Negative reactions to role responsibilities e.g team work, special assignment, increase or higher responsibilities.
• **Interpersonal stressor:** Sexual harassment, work place violence and aggression, physical violence and aggression, experiencing verbal aggression from boss, coworkers or clients i.e. auditees
• **Organizational stressors:** are in many forms e.g downsizing, re-structuring, privatization, mergers and other forms of organizational stressors.
  It can be seen as stressor to those who loose their job and stressors to survivors as they experience higher workloads and new forms of interpersonal conflict.
NON WORK STRESSORS

These are stressors outside organisational settings i.e. other life activities such as:

• relationship problems
• financial difficulties
• loss of a loved one
• new responsibilities e.g. marriage, birth of a child e.t.c.
CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS

Work related stressors

• Physical environment stressors
• Role related stressors
• Interpersonal stressors
• Organisational stressors

Individual Differences

Stress

Consequences of Distress
(Negative outcome of stress)

Physiological
• Heart disease
• Ulcers
• High blood pressure
• Headaches
• Sleep disturbances
• Move illness

Psychological
• Job dissatisfaction
• Depression
• Exhaustion
• Moodiness
• Burnout

Behavioural
• Lower job performance
• Errors and mistakes
• Faulty decisions
• Higher absenteeism
• Work place aggression
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Individual differences moderates the extent to which different people experience stress to exhibit a specific stress outcome in a given situation.

Two people may be exposed to the same stress such as verbal aggression from boss, co workers or clients, yet they experience different stress levels or different stress symptoms because of the following:

• Each of us perceives the same situation differently
• Different thresholds of resistance to a stressor
• Using different coping strategies.
**TYPE A/TYPE B BEHAVIOUR PATTERN**

- **Type A Behaviour Pattern**
  - Talks rapidly (extrovert)
  - Hard driving competitive individuals
  - Devote to work
  - highly competitive with others
  - struggles to perform several tasks
  - strong sense of time urgency
  - Impatient with idleness
  - Easily loses temper
  - interrupts others

- **Type B behaviour pattern**
  - Talk less (introvert)
  - Related approach to life
  - contemplate issues carefully
  - less competitive with others
  - work at a steady pace
  - less concern about time limitations
  - Handle details patiently
  - Not easily angered
  - Doesn’t feel guilty about relaxing
STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

There are several different strategies to manage stress, which include:

• Remove the stressor
• Withdraw the stressor
• Change stressor perception
• Control stress consequences
• Receive social support.
Remove the Stressor

Stress can be effectively managed by removing the stressors that cause unnecessary tension and job burnout. E.g.

- Task related stressors minimized through more effective selection and placement of staff or delegation of duties
- Noise and safety risks condition can be improved to minimize stress
- Workplace aggression and violence in clients and to workers can be minimized by developing interpersonal skills and establishing procedures e.g. CODE OF CONDUCT
- Introducing teleworking or telecommuting in performing work at home e.g. use of laptop, handset etc.
- Use of personal leave programs to attend to pressing needs/ issues
- Using child care facilities to allow full concentration at work e.g. crèche
Withdrawning from the Stressor

Removing the stressor may be ideal solution but it is often not feasible.

• Another strategy is to permanently or temporarily withdraw employee from the stressor.

• e.g To transfer employee to another place or job for which they are better suited
Change stress perception

- Redesign the task
- Redesign the work environment
- Encourage participative management
- Include employee in career development
- Analyse work roles and establish goals
- Build cohesive teams e.g. team work
- Establish fair employment policies
- Share the rewards
Control stress consequences

The consequences of stress can be controlled through:

• meditation and relaxation techniques, to offset the strategies of work, pent up tensions and make you calm and clear headed.

• Health promotion activities and employee assistance programme e.g health talk on wellness, life style and health habits.
Receiving social support reduces stress in three ways.

(a) Helps employees to improve their perception that they are valued and worthy.

   This in turn increases employees self esteem and perceived ability to cope with the stresses.
   e.g ‘I can handle this crisis because my colleagues have confidence in me”.

(b) Provides information to help employees, interpret, comprehend and possibly remove the stressor

   e.g reducing a new employee’s stress because co workers describe ways to handle difficult job or clients.

(c) Emotional support from others can directly help to buffer the stress experience of threatening situations. Therefore;
   
   - people are advised to maintain friendship
   - management or organization can facilitate this by providing opportunities for social interactions;
   - Practice supportive leadership style when employees work under stressful conditions and need social support.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, different stressors are likely to suggest different organisational solutions. It is important that individual is able to ‘tune-in’ to the problem and recognize their own stress early.

• i.e being aware and accept that a stress exists,
• identify the stressor and attempting first to eliminate or change it
• If the stressor cannot be changed then find ways of coping with the stressor
• Monitoring and reviewing the outcome.