

Effect of Workplace Stress Management Strategies on Employees' Efficiency

Dr. Chandra Sekhar Patro¹, Dr. K. Sudesh Kumar²

¹Assistant Professor, ²Sr. Assistant Professor
Department of Management Studies,
Gayatri Vidya Parishad College of Engineering (A), Visakhapatnam, India

Abstract: In the present scenario, workplace stress has become a phenomenon experienced by many employees in organisations. The management needs to understand the mental status and physical ability before assigning work to the employees. The ever-changing demands of the operational world can increase the levels of stress, especially for those who are consistently working under pressure. Though pressure has a positive influence in raising performance, if such pressure becomes excessive it can lead to stress which may have a negative impact on the workforce. The study focuses on the espousal of stress management strategies by private enterprises and their influence on employees' efficiency. The results indicate that stress program interventions and training and development have a significant influence on employees' efficiency. This makes it imperative for private enterprises to invest necessary resources in developing strategies and interventions to reduce workplace stress. If can be achieved, there will be endless opportunities in terms of increased employee efficiency and overall organisational sustainability.

Keywords: Employees, Efficiency, Enterprises, Management, Strategies, Workplace Stress

I. INTRODUCTION

Workplace stress is a mounting problem in the organisations as it not only affects the employees work life but also impact on employees' family life as well. Work stress refers to the pressure or tension people feel in their life. It is considered as an important fact influencing the organisational wellbeing and health of its employees. It affects the behaviour of employees in organisations. It has a far-reaching impact on the motivation and satisfaction of employees. The productivity of employees and the overall productivity of the organisation is affected by levels of stress and motivation. Work stress causes various psychological problems like anger, depression, anxiety, irritability and tension. These reasons influence on motivating the employees to a significant degree.

Stress at the workplace is considered as one of the main factors affecting employees' performance and commitment (Paul, Elam, & Verhaut, 2007). It is a mental and physical condition that influences an individual's effectiveness, personal health and quality of work (Holmlund-Rytkönen & Strandvik, 2005). Work-related stress creates an imbalance between environmental demands and individual capabilities (Rees & Redfern, 2003). Stress is referred to as a state of tension experienced by individuals facing extraordinary strains, constraints, or opportunities (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006). The gradual increase in occupational stress-related problems among employees which have led to declining interest in their jobs, less commitment and growing impatience among the top managers (Pflanz & Ogle, 2006). This is mainly due to the competitive nature of the job environment, the shift in work demands and economic hardship owing to the economic recession. This is perhaps the general trend which indicates decreasing performance and efficiency.

Stress affects individuals psychologically, emotionally and behaviorally, and is inextricably linked to several health problems, especially coronary heart diseases. Any feeling, excessively pushed, pulled, squeezed or roused by external and internal factors needs to be recognized. The causes ought to be identified as to whether they are beneficial or destructive. Various methods and programs can help individuals cope with stress in personal life and work environment (Vinassa, 2003). Management of stress is a crucial issue for individuals and organisations. Managing stress is precisely about understanding that the individual is exposed to stressors. Stress becomes avoidable when organisations are receptive to employees' ideas, and when avenues are created to mentor employees and engage them in decision making. When employees are actively engaged in the decision making processes of the organisation, there is a tendency to exert greater efforts and perform better. Inequity raises dissatisfaction and disenchantment (Hicks & Caroline, 2007). When employees sense that they are being treated unfairly, they become less productive and sometimes counter-productive. So, effective stress management programs help an organisation improve the performance of the individual, group and in turn that of the organisation itself.

Stress is a common phenomenon and is present in every organisation irrespective of their nature and size. Organisations adopt their own stress management strategies that help employees feel calm and overcome the difficulties experienced during the work. The stress management programs are mostly practised in the private sector as this sector is highly prone to stressful activities. The present study focuses on the stress management strategies adopted by private sector organisations.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review on the earlier research on workplace stress among the employees is essential to be familiar with the areas covered and will help to find the uncovered areas to study them in-depth. Workplace stress is the response of employees to job demands and pressures that are not in line with their knowledge, interest, skills and abilities (Hicks & Caroline, 2007). Stress arises in wide-

ranging work situations but becomes worse when employees since they have little or no control over work processes. Workplace stress can be caused by poor work design, lack of recognition, rigid bureaucratic structure, office ergonomics, poor management style, unfavourable working conditions, pay inequality, and role conflict (Stecher & Rosse, 2007). Osibanjo, et al. (2016) investigated the implications of workplace stress on organisational performance. The results of the analyses indicate that role congruence, equity, recognition, and distance, have a significant influence on organisational performance. Brynien (2006) posits that stress has a positive effect on employees of any organization but up to a certain extent which an employee can cope with, in most cases if it exceeds the bearable limits it results in negative results on employees' performance.

Malik (2011) argued that stress is a universal element and individuals from almost every pace of life have to face stress. Stress can have negative impacts on both the employee and the organisation. The study identified that occupational stress is found higher among private sector employees compared to public sector employees. Among different occupational stress variables role overload, role authority, role conflict and lack of senior-level support contribute more to the occupational stress. The employees cannot afford the time to relax and wind down when they are faced with work variety, discrimination, favouritism, delegation and conflicting tasks. Shruti (2009) identified that employees at bank are too much stressed with their job with the heavy workload, so the employee's expect some refreshing events to add up in their workplace like entertainment, trips, tea breaks, intervals once in a while during lumps of work. Accordingly, the employees expect a hike in their salary from their worth performance. Jayashree (2010) initiate that stress is inevitable and unavoidable. A majority of the employees face severe stress-related ailments and a lot of psychological problems. Hence, the management must take several initiatives in helping their employees to overcome its disastrous effect. Since stress is mostly due to excess of work pressure and works life imbalance the organisation should support and encourage taking up roles that help them to balance work and family. Whittington et al. (2012) point out that improper behaviour on the part of the management and poor supervisory styles are the main causes of workplace stress. Other factors which contribute to workplace stress include poor communication styles, a lack of leadership and of clarity about the vision, mission and the objectives of the organisation as well as the very nature of the organisation itself.

Isabella (2009) proposed a model where stress is defined in terms of the imbalance between demands from the work environment and the ability of the individual to meet those demands. This imbalance can be caused either by too much work or too many responsibilities to assume or a combination of both. Mayer et al. (2012) point out that role ambiguity and role conflict are two big causes of stress. Role ambiguity occurs when employees are faced with uncertainties, lack of information about the role they are supposed to play in the workplace and ambiguities about the expectations and responsibilities of them. This creates conflicts which in turn manifest itself in physiological ailments, organisational dysfunction and lowered levels of productivity. Jones (2011) indicates that there are several aspects of job content which are found to be dangerous and contribute to stress. These include low value credited to the work assigned to an employee, reduced utilization of skills, repetitive nature of work, uncertainty, lack of opportunities for growth and development, high attention to details of the job, conflicts in demand and insufficient resources to do the job. Baumohl (2013) identified that work with high demands on the mind combined with an excessive quantity of both work and time pressures leads to work-related stress, depression and anxiety amongst the respondents considered. There is a high correlation between stress hazards like depression, physical ailments and obesity amongst workers with high work demands. Faphunda & Tinuke (2012) found that high psychological demands from the workplace combined with low levels of decision-making ability cause a higher level of stress amongst women as compared to men. Jalagat (2017) indicated that there exists a significant relationship between job stress and employee performance. The independent variables underutilization of skills and work overload significantly correlates to employee performance while there was no significant relationship between role ambiguity and employee performance.

According to Cameron (2012), a lack of clarity on the path ahead in terms of career growth has been considered to be the main source of work-related stress. This lack of clarity is manifested in the form of lack of training and development, poor promotion policies, insecurities in the job and lower levels of pay. Band & Tustin (2011) found that job control is essential to improving mental health and commitment and reducing absenteeism. A lack of control, combined with enhanced job demands results in an increase in the likelihood of early retirements. Cooper et al., (2012) found that an imbalance between personal efforts put into a particular job and the rewards obtained in terms of remuneration, promotion and career progression resulted in excessive heart disease. Here it was not so much the strain incurred in the job and the demands of the job but the correlation between high effort and low reward that resulted in work-related stresses manifested in the form of increased heartbeat and high blood pressure. Kowske et al., (2014) indicate nine types of changes in the workplace. These include slow change, new vision, new technology, reduction in individual authority, disputes, redundancy, changes due to external coercion, change as a starting point of new activity and changes due to new ideas. A lack of understanding of the dynamics of change and transformation increases the probability of work-related stresses. Stress reduces to the degree to which an individual is psychologically attached to an employing enterprise through feeling such as loyalty, affection, worth, belongingness, pleasure and so on. The study seeks to examine the effect of workplace stress management strategies on employees' efficiency in private enterprises. Specifically, the study seeks to establish the effect of stress program interventions and training and development on employees' efficiency.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary aim of the study is to examine the effectiveness of stress management strategies adopted by private enterprises and their effect on employees' efficiency.

IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses have been formulated to test the relationship between the stress management strategies adopted and employees' efficiency.

H1: There is no significant effect of stress program interventions on employees' efficiency.

H2: There is no significant effect of training and development on employees' efficiency.

V. METHODOLOGY

The study is analytical and descriptive in nature based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected from the sample employees by distributing a structured questionnaire. The secondary data were collected from books, periodicals, reports and the Internet. The employees working in private enterprises of Visakhapatnam district in Andhra Pradesh state constitute the universe of the study. A sample of 240 employees was taken for the intense study sample to know the perception of the effectiveness of stress management strategies. The questionnaire to know the effectiveness of stress management strategies covers the following variables namely, programs interventions, training and development and employees efficiency. The different items relating to both the dependent variable and the intervening variables are provided on a 5-point Likert scale. The five response categories together with the numerical values assigned to them for computations are strongly agreed (5) to strongly disagree (1). The Cronbach's alpha has been calculated ($0.88 > 0.70$) in the study to determine the internal consistency (reliability) of items in the questionnaire. Further, the validity test has also been made for the refinement of the scales. The data collected have been suitably classified and analyzed keeping in view the objectives of the study. For the purpose of analysis tools such as frequency, percentage, mean score, ANOVA and regression analysis have been employed.

VI. STATISTICAL DATA ANALYSIS

The study attempts to know the effect of adopting workplace stress management strategies on employees' efficiency. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in table-1.

Table-1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	96	40%
Male	144	60%
Age		
21 - 25 Years	49	20%
26 - 30 Years	74	31%
31 - 35 Years	57	24%
36 - 40 Years	36	15%
Above 40 Years	24	10%
Marital status		
Married	181	75%
Unmarried	59	25%
Education		
Graduate	137	57%
Postgraduate	103	43%
Experience		
Less than 1 Year	28	12%
1 - 2 Years	62	26%
3 - 4 Years	80	33%
5 - 6 Years	58	24%
7 Years and above	12	5%
Monthly salary		
Below Rs.25,000	52	22%
Rs.25,001 - Rs.35,000	81	34%
Rs.35,001 - Rs.45,000	62	26%
Above Rs.45,000	45	19%

The gender reveals that 60 per cent are male and 40 per cent of respondents are females. The age shows that 31 per cent is in the age group of 26-30 years. There is 24 per cent in the age group of 31-35 years, 20 per cent in the group of 21-25 years, 15 per cent between 36-40 years and 10 per cent are above 40 years. The marital status reveals that 75 per cent of the respondents are married and 25 per cent is unmarried. The education background of the respondents reveals that 57 per cent are graduates and 43 per cent are postgraduates. The results show that 33 per cent of respondents have 3-4 years of experience. Out of the total, 26 per cent have 1-2 years of experience, 24 per cent have 5-6 years of experience, 12 per cent have less than one year and only 5 per cent have 7 years and above experience. The monthly salary of 34 per cent of respondents is between Rs.25,001-Rs.35,000. 26 per cent of respondents monthly salary is between Rs.35,001-Rs.45,000, 22 per cent of respondents salary is below Rs.25,000, and 19 per cent of respondents monthly salary is above Rs.45,000.

Table-2. Reasons for attending Stress Management programs

Variables	Garrett Score	Rank
Reducing psychological and mental problems	54.97	1
Unable to manage work stress	53.37	3
Fear of experiencing health problems	51.21	4
Reducing the consequences of stress on work productivity	53.90	2
Improving job satisfaction	48.44	5

The reasons for attending stress management programs by the respondents are shown in table-2. For the purpose of ranking Garrett scores are used. The results reveal that reducing psychological and mental problems (54.97) secured the highest rank. The variables reducing consequences of stress on work productivity (53.90) and unable to manage work stress (53.37) got second and third highest ranks respectively. Fear of experiencing health problems (51.21) secured the fourth rank and improving job satisfaction (48.44) got the fifth rank.

Table-3. Benefits derived from the Stress Management Programs

Variables	Garrett Score	Rank
Improved awareness of stress management techniques	57.68	1
Improved self-confidence	56.51	3
Improved skills in managing psychological problems	54.44	4
Enhancing career development opportunities	56.95	2
Enhancing work productivity	51.68	5

The respondents' opinion towards the benefits derived from stress management programs is assessed in table-3. The Garrett scores reveal that improved awareness on stress management techniques (57.68) secured the highest rank followed by the variables enhancing career development opportunities (56.95), improved self-confidence (56.51), improved skills in managing psychological problems (54.44), and enhancing work productivity (51.68).

The respondents' opinion towards the stress management strategies are analysed with the help of dimensions such as stress program interventions, training and development, and employee efficiency.

Table-4. Stress program interventions

S.No.	Variables	Mean
1	Counselling programs are giving good inputs for managing stress	4.51
2	Counselling method is used in managing stress among various levels of employees	4.42
3	Stress management program needs are identified by a systematic procedure	4.31
4	The programs are designed after through interaction with employees	4.23
5	Employee opinions and ideas are considered in designing programs	3.99
6	Managers are executing stress relieving programs more effectively	3.92
7	Objectives of stress management programs are clearly explained to the employees	3.91
8	All the levels of employees are engaged in a mentoring program	3.82
9	Employees actively participate in leadership engagement programs	3.81
10	Multiple communication channels are encouraged by company policy	3.70
11	Continuous employee health check-up programs are initiated by management	3.67
Total		4.03

The stress program interventions are assessed based on the rating of the respondents on the referred eleven variables as shown in table-4. The descriptive statistics reveal that the total mean value is 4.03 which indicate that the respondents have a positive opinion towards stress program interventions. Among the referred variables counselling programs are giving good inputs for managing stress secured the highest rating with a mean value of 4.51. The variables counselling method is used in managing stress among various levels of employees (4.42), and stress management program needs are identified by the systematic procedure (4.31) scored second the third highest ratings. The variables, the programs are designed after through interaction with employees (4.23), employee opinions and ideas are considered in designing programs (3.99), managers are executing stress relieving programs more effectively (3.92), objectives of stress management programs are clearly explained to the employees (3.91), all the levels of employees are engaged in mentoring program (3.82), employees actively participate in leadership engagement programs (3.81), multiple communication channels are encouraged by company policy (3.70), and continuous employee health check-up programs are initiated by management (3.67) also show positive ratings from the respondents.

Table-5. Training and Development

S.No.	Variables	Mean
1	Training provides employees with the skills they need to perform effectively under high-stress conditions	4.22
2	Training help individuals to set job-related goals and implement behavioural strategies to accomplish goals	4.03
3	Training and development provide feedback and evaluation of the progress towards the goals	3.91
4	Training increases employees stress management abilities, improves work-life balance, and reduces psychological stress	3.89
5	Appropriate training increases staff involvement and improves communication between peers	3.81
6	Training and personal development helps to curtail levels of stress among the employees	3.72
Total		3.93

The training and development programs are assessed based on the respondents' opinion on the referred six variables as shown in table-5. The variable, training provides employees with the skills they need to perform effectively under high-stress conditions secured the highest rating with a mean value of 4.22. The second and third highest rated variables are training help individuals to set job-related goals and implement behavioural strategies to accomplish goals (4.03) and training and development provide feedback and evaluation of the progress towards the goals (3.91) respectively. The other variables, training increases employees stress management abilities, improves work-life balance, and reduces psychological stress (3.89), appropriate training increases staff involvement and improve communication between peers (3.81), and training and personal development helps to curtail levels of stress among the employees (3.72) also show positive ratings from the respondents. The overall mean value of 3.93 reveals that the respondents opine that training and development programs help in relieving workplace stress.

Table-6. Employees' Efficiency

S.No.	Variables	Mean
1	Employees returning from the program are given adequate free time to reflect and plan improvements in the organisation	4.43
2	Stress management programs conducted by the organisation enable the employees to implement various changes in work performance	4.27
3	The organisation conducts an evaluation of faculty and resource person to access long term impact on work productivity	4.17
4	After stress management program employees are able to assess the values and benefits of the programme	4.15
5	Stress management interventions have been quite successful in improving the overall employee performance	3.95
6	The organisation measures value from stress management programs	3.87
7	The results of stress management programs are monitored from time to time	3.67
8	Stress management programs are intended to improve the psychological and mental health of employees	3.62
9	Managers provide the right kind of opportunities to implement new ideas and methods acquired by participating in programs	3.55
Total		3.96

The opinion on employees' efficiency after the adoption of stress management strategies are shown in table-6. The descriptive statistics reveal that the total mean value is 3.96 which indicate that the respondents have a positive opinion on employees' efficiency. Among the referred nine variables, employees returning from the program are given adequate free time to reflect and plan improvements in the organisation secured the highest rating with a mean value of 4.43. The second and third highest rated variables are stress management programs conducted by the organisation enable the employees to implement various changes in work performance (4.27) and organisation conducts an evaluation of faculty and resource person to access long term impact on work productivity (4.17) respectively. The variables, after stress management program employees are able to assess the values and benefits of the programme (4.15), stress management interventions have been quite successful in improving the overall employee performance (3.95), the organisation measures value from stress management programs (3.87), the results of stress management programs are monitored from time to time (3.67), stress management programs are intended to improve psychological and mental health of employees (3.62), and managers provide the right kind of opportunities to implement new ideas and methods acquired by participating in programs (3.55) also show positive ratings from the respondents.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The influence of workplace stress management strategies such as stress program interventions, training and development on employees' efficiency is analysed and discussed.

Table-7.Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.442 ^a	.224	.128	.45787

^a. Predictors: (Constant), stress program interventions, training and development

The model summary table-7 reveals that the linear regression coefficient (R=0.442) indicates that there is a minimum correlation between the dependent and independent variables. In terms of variability R-Square (0.224) shows that the independent variables (stress program interventions, training and development) can predict 25 per cent of the variance in the factor employees' efficiency.

Table-8.ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	13.887	5	2.777	10.526	.016 ^b
Residual	80.165	354	.226		
Total	94.053	359			

^a. Dependent Variable: Employees' efficiency

^b. Predictors: (Constant), stress program interventions, training and development

The results of the ANOVA test shown in table-8 indicates that the dependent variable employees' efficiency (F=10.526, p=0.016 < 0.05) show a significant relationship with the independent variables stress program interventions, training and development.

Table-9.Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.502	.240		9.104	.000
Stress program interventions	.097	.059	.154	1.316	.013
Training and development	.104	.041	.210	2.150	.022

^a. Dependent Variable: Employees' efficiency

The coefficients values shown in table-9 reveals that the independent variable stress program interventions (t=1.306, p=0.013 < 0.05), and training and development (t=2.150, p=0.022 < 0.05) show a significant positive relationship with dependent variable employees' efficiency. It can be observed that all the independent variables show a significant relationship with employees' efficiency. Thus, the regression analysis results provide strong support for the rejection of the hypothesis relating to the relationships between independent variables stress program interventions and training and development with the dependent variable employees' efficiency.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The principal objective of the study is to identify the relationship between workplace stress and employees' efficiency of private enterprises. It is evident that workplace stress management strategies affect employees' efficiency. Therefore, the study provides insights into the effect of workplace stress, taking into consideration variables such as stress program interventions, and training and development on employees' efficiency. The implication for decision makers is that stress management tends to influence employees performance in private enterprises and there is a need to critically examine the effects of the studied variables on organizations' performance and provide interventions. The managers need to pay more attention to stress management strategies, as these have positive and significant effects on employees' efficiency.

The stress management practices such as stress management training, seminars on job burnouts, supportive organisational climate, yoga and meditation, the close association of co-workers, celebrations are practised periodically at the executive level. But, celebration, stress management training and yoga and meditation are the most preferred practices. High executive participation is also reported in these practices. These practices also could make a positive effect on productivity, inter-personal relations, absenteeism, labour turnover and physical and mental health among employees. As this study was conducted within a particular geographical region, it is suggested that future studies may explore the relationships amongst the studied variables in a wider context.

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