



STRESS MANAGEMENT: STRATEGIES TO COPE UP WITH JOB

STRESS

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ABSTRACT

Stress in the work place is a commonality throughout the world in every business. Managing that stress becomes vital in order to keep up job performance as well as relationship with co-workers and employers. For some workers, changing the work environment relieves work stress. While some workplace stress is normal, excessive stress can interfere with employees' productivity and impact employees' physical, emotional health. One's ability to deal with stress can mean the difference between success and failure. Making the environment less competitive between employees decreases some amounts of stress. However, each person is different and some people like the pressure to perform better. Emotional stress usually occurs in those situations which people consider difficult or challenging. People may feel stressed in different situations. Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress in life .It involve controlling and reducing the tension that occurs in stressful situations by making emotional and physical changes. The present study attempts to elaborate the different causes of stress at work place and stress management strategies. The main objective of this study is to understand the impact of stress management on employees' stress in retail sector of Meerut. The study confined to the sample size of 50 employees of five different retail cloth showrooms in the area of study. Views of respondents regarding job stressors and stress management strategies are presented in Likert scale. Relevant statistical tools are used in the present study to create relationship. The study is concluded with the suggestion to upper level management about employees' motivation through stress management strategies.

Key Words: Stress, Job Stress, Job Stressors, Stress Management Strategies.



INTRODUCTION

Stress in the workplace can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or desires of the worker. Workplace stress can lead to deprived health and even injury. It is an issue also for the employer if the employers cannot handle stress. High expectations from the employer might frustrate the employee, if stress is not handled effectively. Every fifth person considers changing his/her employing company. This can be avoided if employees learn to handle stress situations, their fears and the changes occurring around them.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the conceptual framework of stress at work.
2. To understand the main causes of stress.
3. To study the conceptual framework of stress management strategies.
4. To understand the effectiveness of stress management strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job stress can arise from different environment of work like organizational or situational stress it is from the characteristics of the workers themselves i.e. dispositional stress (Riggio, 2003). Stress is a natural lesson in the life and every employee even executives and managers are affected from this issue. According to a survey, about 100 million workdays are being affected due to stress problem among employees and nearly 50% - 75% due to disease cause stress (Bashir). Absence and loss of employment are major causes of job stress in the organization. The ratio increases day after day because of organization environment. They were the main hurdles of achieving goals and performance (Treven 2002).

Stress Management

People should not blame the external factors, but take on personal responsibility for their feelings and reactions. Stress Management is a system that is aimed to reduce stress and/or facilitate the person to cope with these instances. There are three major approaches that one can use to manage stress:



- Action-oriented stress management : In which one seek to confront the problem causing the stress, changing the environment or the situation;
- Emotionally-oriented stress management :In which one do not have the power to change the situation; and
- Acceptance-oriented stress management: Where something has happened over which one has no power and no emotional control.

CAUSES OF STRESS

Stress sets off an anxiety in the brain, which responds by preparing the body for self-protective action. The nervous system is aroused and hormones are on the rampage to sharpen the senses, quicken the pulse, deepen respiration, and tense the muscles. This response (sometimes called the fight or flight response) is important because it helps us in defending against threatening situations. The response is preprogrammed biologically. Everyone responds in much the same way, regardless of whether the stressful situation is at work or home.

A lot of things can cause stress. One may feel stress when one go on a job interview, take a test, or run a race. These kinds of short-term stress are normal. Long-term (chronic) stress is caused by stressful situations or events that last over a long period of time, like problems at work or conflicts in your family. Over time, chronic stress can lead to severe health problems.

Personal problems that cause stress include:

- Emotional problems: such as anger one can't express, depression, grief, guilt, or low self-esteem.
- Your relationship: such as having problems with your relationships or feeling a lack of friendships or support in your life
- Conflicts with your beliefs and values. For example, one may value family life, but one may not be able to spend as much time with his family as he wants.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary data was collected through questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on the Likert scales, showing the agreement level of the responses and the secondary data was collected online through internet. The collected data were analyzed and interpreted using simple statistical



techniques. The respondents involved in this study were sales person working in five different clothing showrooms at Meerut, (U.P.), namely Bindals, Ritu Wear, Manyavar Vedant Fashions, Planet Fashions and Reliance Trends. A non probability, convenience sampling technique was used to select the sample population. Simple statistical techniques were used to tabulate the results of this study. The primary data were analyzed using a percent of responses. Mean is calculated to ascertain the average agreement of respondents towards different given factors responsible for job stress and regarding remedies thereof. Finally researcher shows the relationship between the job stressor and the reason of employee retention.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the respondents

In human resource management research personal characteristics of respondents have very significant role to play in expressing and giving the responses about the problem, keeping this in mind, in this study a set of personal characteristics namely, age, gender, education and income of the 50 respondents have been examined and presented in this part of the study.

1 Age	
18-22 (%)	36.00
23-26 (%)	44.00
27-30(%)	20.00
2 Gender	
Male (%)	72.00
Female (%)	28.00
3 Education	
Intermediate (%)	24.00
Graduate (%)	48.00
Post Graduate (%)	28.00
4 Income	
12000-15000 (%)	30.00
15000-18000 (%)	36.00



18000-22000(%)	20.00
22000-26000(%)	14.00

Table 1 Profile of the respondents.

Interpretation: It is evident from the Table 1 that 44 percent of the respondents are of age between 23-26 years, 36 percent of the respondents are between the age group of 18-22 years and 20 percent respondents are between the age group of 27-28 years.

It is quite clear that out of the total respondents investigated for this study, overwhelming majority 72 percent of them are males whereas about 28 per cent are found to be females.

The above table also shows that about 24 percent respondents are educated up to higher secondary level. The number of respondents attaining Graduation is 48 percent. And only 28 percent of the respondents are educated up to the post graduates level.

It is also evident from the same table that the highest number of respondents i.e. 36 percent, are earning between Rs.15000 to Rs.18000 per month. Out of total respondents 30 percent are earning between Rs.12000 to Rs.15000 per month. The earning of 20 percent of respondents is belongs to the income group of Rs.18000 to Rs. 22000 and only 14 percent respondents are earning between Rs.22000 to Rs.26000.

Job Stressors

Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress can lead to poor health and even injury.

By reviewing the secondary data the following very common factors/reasons are identified by the researcher. The respondents are asked about these job stressor the answers of which are collected through questionnaire.

- 1. Quality of Work Life:** Heavy workload, infrequent rest breaks, long working hours and shift work; hectic and routine tasks that have little inherent meaning, not utilize workers skills and provide little sense of control.
- 2. Centralized Management Style:** Lack of participation by workers in decision making, poor communication in the organization, and lack of family-friendly policies.



3. **Interpersonal Relationships:** Poor social environment and lack of support or help from coworkers and supervisors.
4. **Work Roles:** Conflicting or unrealistic job expectations, too much responsibility, too many hats to wear.
5. **Career Concerns:** Lack of opportunity for growth, lack of training and development programme, rapid changes for which workers are unprepared.
6. **Environmental Conditions:** Unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions such as crowding, noise, air pollution, or ergonomic problems.
7. **Time Mismanagement:** Assigning the targets which are to be achieved in short period, Increasing pressure to accomplish the targets.

The below tables show the responses of respondents about the job stressors, which depicts selected different factors responsible for stress at job.

Sr. No	Job Stressors	No. of Respondents Answered	NEVER	SELDOM	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	ALWAYS	Total percentage
			<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
1	Quality of Work Life	48	6.25	10.42	33.33	35.42	14.58	100%
2	Centralized Management Style	46	2.17	4.35	17.39	30.43	45.65	100%
3	Interpersonal Relationships	45	31.11	26.67	20.00	15.56	6.67	100%
4	Work Roles	47	8.51	12.77	21.28	25.53	31.91	100%
5	Career Concerns	49	6.12	18.37	40.82	20.41	14.29	100%
6	Environmental Conditions	47	46.81	25.53	14.89	10.64	2.13	100%
7	Time Mismanagement	47	36.17	21.28	17.02	12.77	12.77	100%

Table 2 - Factors responsible for job stress.

Sr No	Job Stressors	Response	Mean
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			Rank
1	Quality of Work Life	7.12	3
2	Centralized Management Style	8.98	1
3	Interpersonal Relationships	5.33	5
4	Work Roles	7.65	2
5	Career Concerns	6.50	4
6	Environmental Conditions	4.16	7
7	Time Mismanagement	5.21	6

Table 3 - Aggregate level of agreement regarding the Job Stressors.

Interpretation: Table 2 is showing collected percentage of the responses of respondents regarding the job stressors. While table 3 is depicting aggregate agreement level of the responses and mean rank. Centralized Management System is found one of the main Job Stressor. Aggregate agreement level for this is 8.98, which is most high among all. Aggregate agreement level of Work Roles and Quality of Work Life are 7.65 and 7.12 respectively, which occupy in second and third mean rank. Whereas Career Concerns shows 6.50 level of aggregate agreement. Interpersonal Relationships, Time Mismanagement and Environmental Conditions are prove low factors responsible for job stress with 5.33, 5.21 and 4.16 respectively level of aggregate agreement.

STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Here are some strategies, identified by the researcher, how to minimize job stress so that one can be more efficient and productive in the workplace:

- 1. Provide a Fun Working Environment:** Sense of humor and laughter is the key.
- 2. Give Employees Freedom:** Open Communication, welcoming suggestions from employees.
- 3. Promote Team Work:** Encourage the employees to work with team spirit. Provide group recognition. Implement the technique of conflict management.
- 4. Defined Employee Responsibility:** More often than not we wear "too many hats". Employees work roles need to be clear, understandable, and shouldn't be conflicting or



unrealistic. Management need to motivate employees to take responsibility for their own job and for their contribution to the success of the company so that they won't be bogged down with too many responsibilities.

5. **Career Growth:** Provide regular session for Training and Development for the up gradation of knowledge and personality of the employee, Career counseling.
6. **Hygienic Working Conditions:** Provide healthy, hygienic, pollution free environment.
7. **Manage Time Effectively:** A good time management tool will help you stay organized, plan and prepare, schedule in advance, and keeping good records helps get things accomplished on time, and thus reduces stress.

The below tables show the responses of respondents about the stress management strategies, which depicts the effective of the strategies.

Stress management Strategies	No. of Respondents Answered	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	Total percentage
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
Provide a Fun Working Environment	46	10.87	19.57	36.96	21.74	10.87	100%
Give Employees Freedom	47	19.15	23.40	29.79	14.89	12.77	100%
Promote Team Work	46	15.22	21.74	23.91	21.74	17.39	100%
Defined Employee Responsibility	47	19.15	17.02	25.53	23.40	14.89	100%
Career Growth	45	28.89	17.78	22.22	20.00	11.11	100%
Hygienic Working Conditions	48	8.33	12.50	27.08	31.25	20.83	100%
Manage Time Effectively	48	14.58	16.67	25.00	25.00	18.75	100%

Table 4 - Stress Management Strategies.

Sr No	Stress management Strategies	Response	Mean rank
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1	Provide a Fun Working Environment	6.57	4
2	Give Employees Freedom	5.73	6
3	Promote Team Work	6.62	2
4	Defined Employee Responsibility	6.34	5
5	Career Growth	5.93	7
6	Hygienic Working Conditions	7.16	1
7	Manage Time Effectively	6.60	3

Table 5 - Aggregate level of agreement regarding the Stress Management Strategies.

Interpretation: Table 4 and table 5 show responses regarding the strategies of Stress Management. Table 4 shows the collective percentage of the responses. Whereas aggregate agreement level of the responses are shown in table 5. It is very clear from the above table that the respondents are most highly agreed with the effectiveness of Hygienic Working Condition at their work place. Strategies regarding Promoting Team Work, Management time effectively, Fun Working Environment and Defined Employee Responsibility show almost same level of aggregate agreement, which are as – 6.62, 6.60, 6.57 and 6.34 respectively. Career Growth gains 5.73 level of aggregate agreement and Freedom to employees gains 5.73 level of aggregate agreement as the strategy of stress management.

Effectiveness of Stress Management Strategies

The effectiveness of stress management can be measure by determining the impact of stress management strategies on factors of job stress. An attempt is made by the researcher to create a successful relationship between stress management strategies and job stressor. Here stress management strategies are assumed as independent variable and job stressor are assumed as dependent variable.



	Stress Management Strategies	Job Stressors
	Independent (X)	Dependent (Y)
	6.57	7.12
	5.73	8.98
	6.62	5.33
	6.34	7.65
	5.93	6.5
	7.16	4.16
	6.60	5.21
<i>Mean</i>	$(Mean x) = 6.42$	$(Mean y) = 6.42$
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	$\sigma_x = 0.48$	$\sigma_y = 1.65$
<i>Correlation</i>	$r = -0.83$	
<i>Regression Equation</i>	$x - mean x = r \frac{\sigma_x}{\sigma_y} (y - mean y)$	
	$x - 6.42 = -0.83 \frac{0.48}{1.65} (y - 6.42)$	

Table 6 – Relationship between Stress Management Strategies and Job Stressors.

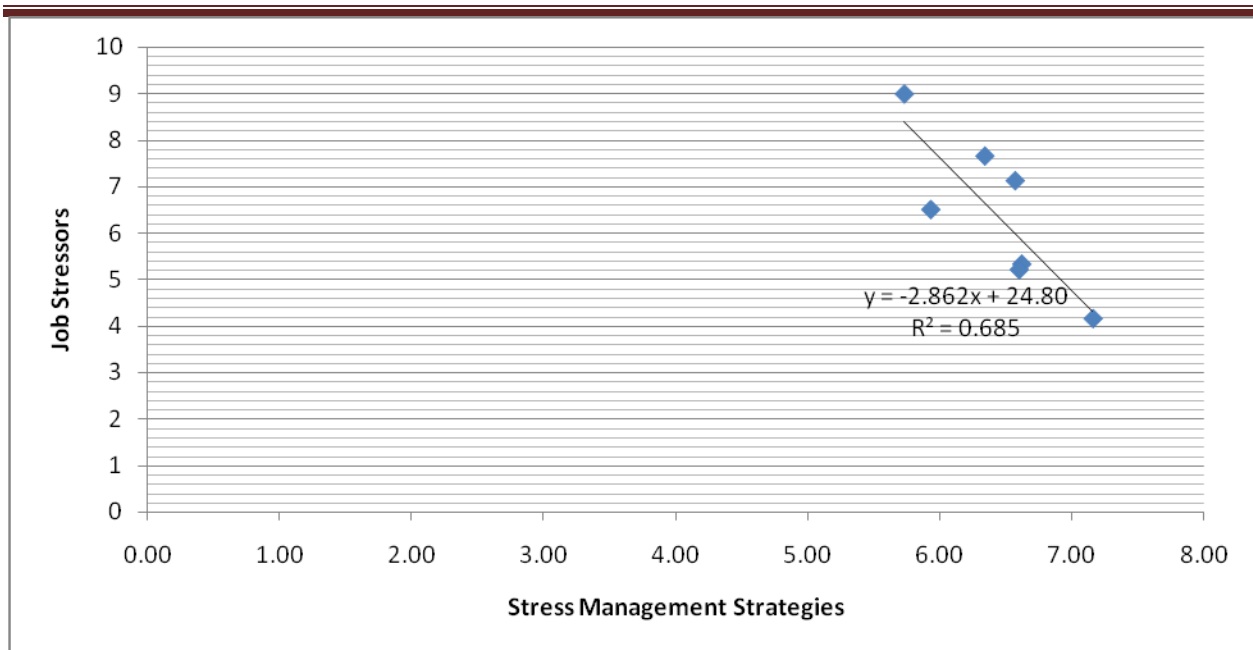


Figure 1 - Relationship between Stress Management Strategies and Job Stressors.

Interpretation: From the above table and figure it can be understood easily that there is a negative relation between stress management strategies and job stressor. The correlation between strategies and job stressor is found -0.83, signifying that if strategies are operated efficiently the stress on job can be reduced. Regression equation between two variables is created and shown through the figure 1.

SUGGESTIONS & CONCLUSION

Employees found Centralized Management Style as one of the main reasons for stress at job. And Environmental conditions at work are the most favorable factor at job. Hygienic Working Conditions are working effectively as a strategy of stress management. Results depict that job stressors and stress management strategies are negatively related with each other. With the increase in job stress employee turnover intentions increase. If organizations are willing to retain their intellectual capital they must reduce the job stressors and ultimately this leads to the employee effectiveness. If the top and middle level management implement the strategies efficiently the stress of sales person on selected showroom will be reduced and the employees will be able to work more efficiently. It can also be concluded that there is a high scope of employees'



motivation through stress management strategies. The result can be applied as a starting point for further studies or can be emulated in similar organizations which really require a cost effective way of retention. Limitation of the study is that it has not gone in details to analyze the impact of each factor of job stress separately, instead had a holistic approach. As such the future studies can be conducted in the directions: one to find the impact of non-financial drivers on the job stressor and employees' retention.

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