

## **HR ROLE TO MANAGE WORK PLACE STRESS FOR EMPLOYEE WELL BEING**

**RATEKA SETH**

HR Consultant Ecomarc Organics, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

### **ABSTRACT**

Various factors that cause workplace stress on employees are discussed in this paper. HR policies enable to change the culture orientation of an organization, to reduce the stress levels of the employees and to improve the organizational commitment and productivity of the employees are also studied.

**KEYWORDS:** Workplace Stress, Employee Well-Being, Organization Culture, HR Support & HR Policies

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of the study is to understand:

- What does workplace stress mean?
- The causes and effects of stress on employee and organization.
- What is the role of HR department in managing the workplace stress for the well-being of the employees and for the growth of the organization.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Worker's health and the healthiness of their organizations (ILO 1986; 1992) is a major concern due to the impact of workplace stress. Stressed workers are more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive, less safe at work, and their organizations are less likely to be successful in a competitive market.

People when presented with work demands and pressures that do not match their knowledge and abilities are stressed up due to their work that challenge their ability to cope. Different work circumstances create stress, and the main reason is that employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues. We refer to a job as healthy when the pressure on employees are appropriate in relation to their abilities and resources, to the amount of control they have over their work and to the support they receive from people who matter to them.

A successful Organization is the one which is successful in managing work stress. Organization culture is one of the key factors for its success. Attitude of staff, their shared beliefs about the organization, their shared value systems, common and approved ways of behaving at work reflect the culture of an organization. Leaders play an important role in maintaining and cultivating an organization's culture. A deeply embedded and established culture illustrates how people should behave, which can help employees achieve their goals. When an employee feels a leader is helping him/her to complete a goal, he or she in turn ensures higher job satisfaction and less work-related stress (Tsai, 2011). From this perspective, organizational culture, leadership, and job satisfaction are all inextricably linked.

## CAUSES OF WORK STRESS

The way we design jobs & work systems and how we manage them can cause work stress. Research findings show that the most stressful type of work that values excessive demands & pressures are not matched to workers knowledge and abilities, where there is little support from others and when there is very little opportunity to exercise any control.

Few of the various causes for work-related stress are mentioned below:

- A sense of lack of respect from their peers or managers or when employees feel they are not being compensated can be one of the reasons for work-related stress.
- Employees may become stressful if they are overburdened with rules or a lack of opportunities for promotions or if they are not provided with an opportunity to air their views or concerns or if the management is consistently unclear in communication.
- Employees who are micro-managed and who are not empowered to make decisions frequently experience stress.
- Employees cannot be compelled to work to their potential when they get a feeling that they or their work is not valued. The outcome being that the business not achieving its financial or strategic goals.
- Employees don't get along with their co-workers due to differences.
- When employees feel that they don't have proper work-life balance can create stress.
- When they feel overburdened this becomes another reason for work-related stress.
- Stress can be due to a feeling of insecurity of losing their job.
- Commutation has also become a reason for work stress nowadays.
- Workplace bullying is also a major concern of work place stress and can have devastating consequences like anxiety, panic attacks, depression etc.

## EFFECTS OF WORK STRESS (By World Health Organization)

Work stress affects an individual and organization in different ways.

### On Individual

- Become increasingly distressed and irritable
- Unable to relax or concentrate
- Feel tired, depressed and anxious
- Have difficulty thinking logically and decision making
- Enjoy their work less and feel less committed to it
- Experience serious physical problems such as
  - a) Heart disease

- b) Lack of sleep
  - c) Disorders in the digestive system
  - d) Increase in blood pressure, headache
  - e) Muscular-skeletal disorders such as back pain, neck pain etc
- Engage in unhealthy activities such as smoking, drinking and abusing drugs.

### On Organization

- Increasing absenteeism
- Decreasing commitment to work
- Increasing staff turnover
- Impairing performance and productivity
- Increasing unsafe work practices and accident rates
- Increasing complaints from clients and customers
- Adversely affecting staff recruitment
- Increasing liability to legal claims and actions by stresses workers/employees
- Damaging the organization image, both among its workers and externally.

### HR SUPPORT TO TACKLE WORKPLACE STRESS

Effective measures are necessary to deal with stress in employees. This will not only improve the scope for organizational development but also benefit the stressed workers. For stress management at workplace, human resource management must adopt measures like diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation, the major causes of work stress. The company is responsible for the initiation of these programs/strategies through the human resource department. Few of them are discussed below:

- **Implementing Wellness Programs:** Few wellness programs like EAP's (Employee assistance programs), training/workshops for effective stress management, fitness subsidies, gym membership, pharmacies reimbursements etc. Such type of programs assists in managing employee's lives by eliminating stress at work.
- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** By permitting such flexible schedules, there will be less stressful environment at work. This will help the employees to maintain a work-life balance by offering flexible working hours, part-time schedules, job sharing.
- **Showing Empathy:** By showing empathy to the employees, we are indirectly taking care of the organization. By being considerate to employee's well-being personal/health issues makes them feel connected to the organization.
- **Review Irrelevant Policies:** Irrelevant policies or not revised policies in an organization might also have a negative impact on the employees, as a result the workers could be stressed. Human resource department has to

take necessary steps to review these policies and dictate the terms of implementing useful policies towards stress management in workplace.

- **Offer Childcare:** Childcare is a major source of both stress and absenteeism. Providing proper and safe child care facilities will reduce the stress levels. A space staffed with qualified childcare workers will help employees to minimize their stress and leads to better work efficiency and performance.
- **Encourage Vacations:** Many employees do not make use of their vacation time, either to appear hard working or due to the fear of being considered as undedicated. Manager may think vacation is a disadvantage that causes staff shortage and added workloads. Here HR department can play its role efficiently by circulating memos or sending emails emphasizing the value of vacation time, which will make employees more comfortable taking time off.
- **Improve Employee Engagement & Morale:** Here comes the role of the HR department, it must find ways to engage employees and boost their morale so that it encourages the employees to their part sincerely. For instance, monthly tea/coffee breaks within team to thank and appreciate all team members for their hard work.
- **Encourage Conversations:** HR department or managers should encourage conversations and promote open culture where employees feel they can talk to their line manager or HR about any concerns which are bothering them.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

Stress is a kind of motivation which helps us to perform and keep us going especially when we have deadlines to meet. That is why a certain amount of stress in the workplace is a good thing. People can cope with stress only for a short time. Long time stress can lead to anxiety and reduced performance. Stress can cause a negative impact on a person's physical health and also that it might have an adverse effect on their life both at professional and personal. There are various factors which creates stress, unless employee's/HR/managers do not talk openly the problem, the employees will become stressed which will lead to unproductivity. HR department needs to analyze the symptoms of stress and find ways to deal with employee stress and anxiety effectively.

Managing workplace stress is a vital issue, whether you are a manager or an employer, it not plays a role in people's health or organization but also for the welfare of the economy. Earlier discussions of this study have given few ways to deal with the workplace stress like encouraging open conversations, support employees, introducing flexible working hours, setting clear objectives for employees, bringing mindfulness into the workplace etc., will help in reducing workplace stress. Workplace if ignored may lead to devastating negative effects. Stress management at workplace could be improved by making a few changes for the benefit of both your business and more importantly employees' health.

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