



ORGANISATIONAL STRESS MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Modern life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations, and demands. For many people, stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life. In the organization stress occurs when an employee perceives a situation to be too strenuous to handle, and therefore threatening to his or her well-being. However stress at the workplace is unavoidable due to the demands of the contemporary work environment. But Stress isn't always bad. In small doses, it can help employees perform under pressure and motivate them to do their best. It may even keep workers alert, able to work and learn, depending on the available resources and personal characteristics. But when one is constantly running in emergency mode, their mind and body pay the price. Stress can damage an employees' health and the business performance.

Employees can protect themselves by recognizing the signs and symptoms of stress and taking steps to reduce its harmful effects.

This paper on "ORGANISATIONAL STRESS MANAGEMENT" is a secondary research study to understand what causes organizational stress, its symptoms, its effects and finally how to cope up with organizational stress so as to have quality organizational life.

KEYWORDS: Stress, Organization, Physical, Disorders, Management

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a normal physical response to events that makes one feel threatened or upset one's balance in some way. When you sense danger—whether it's real or imagined—the body's defenses kick into high gear in a rapid, automatic process known as the "fight-or-flight-or-freeze" reaction, or the *stress response*. The stress response is the body's way of protecting you. When working properly, it helps you stay focused, energetic, and alert. In emergency situations, stress can save your life—giving you extra strength to defend yourself. The stress response also helps you rise to meet challenges. But beyond a certain point, stress stops being helpful and starts causing major damage to health, mood, productivity, relationships, and quality of life. Stress affects people both mentally and physically. Individuals who work in high stress or dangerous jobs as well as those who are employed at a place where there is a high pressure environment are often prone to experiencing stress. Work



environment, co-worker relations, and customer pressures can all contribute to stress at work. Understanding how to manage, minimize, and deal with stress can help people feel more relaxed and react when stressful situations as they arise

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a descriptive study based on secondary data collected from various books, magazines, journals and various websites of internet.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS

"Organizational stress" is the harmful physical and emotional responses that can happen when there is a conflict between job demands on the employee and the amount of control an employee has over meeting these demands. In general, the combination of high demands in a job and a low amount of control over the situation can lead to stress.

Fear of job redundancy, layoffs due to an uncertain economy, increased demands for overtime due to staff cutbacks act as negative stressors. Employees who start to feel the "pressure to perform" can get caught in a downward spiral of increasing effort to meet rising expectations with no increase in job satisfaction. The relentless requirement to work at optimum performance takes its toll in job dissatisfaction, employee turnover, reduced efficiency, illness and even death. Absenteeism, illness, alcoholism, "petty internal politics", bad or snap decisions, indifference and apathy, lack of motivation or creativity are all by-products of an over stressed workplace. The concept of job stress is often confused with challenge, but these concepts are not the same. Challenge energizes us psychologically and physically, and it motivates us to learn new skills and master our jobs. When a challenge is met, we feel relaxed and satisfied. Thus, challenge is an important ingredient for healthy and productive work. The importance of challenge in our work lives is probably what people are referring to when they say "a little bit of stress is good for you."

CAUSES OF ORGANISATIONAL STRESS

Four categories of stressors underline the different causal circumstances for stress in organizations:

TASK DEMANDS - This is the sense of not knowing where a job will lead you and whether the activities and tasks will change. This uncertainty causes stress that manifests itself in feelings of lack of control, concern about career progress, and time pressures.

ROLE DEMANDS - Role conflict happens when an employee is exposed to inconsistent or difficult expectations. Examples include: inter role conflict (when there are two or more





expectations or separate roles for one person), intra role conflict (varying expectations of one role), person-role conflict (ethics are challenged), and role ambiguity (confusion about their experiences in relation to the expectations of others).

INTERPERSONAL DEMANDS - Examples include: emotional issues (abrasive personalities, offensive co-workers), sexual harassment (directed mostly toward women), and poor leadership (lack of management experience, poor style, cannot handle having power).

PHYSICAL DEMANDS - Many types of work are physically demanding, including strenuous activity, extreme working conditions, travel, exposure to hazardous materials, and working in a tight, loud office.

Elaborating in organizations, stress can be the result of any number of situations.

Categories of Job Stressors	Examples of Sources of Stress
Factors unique to the job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workload (overload and under load) • pace / variety / meaningfulness of work • autonomy (e.g., the ability to make your own decisions about our own job or about specific tasks) • shift work / hours of work • skills / abilities do not match job demands • lack of training and/or preparation (technical and social) • lack of appreciation • physical environment (noise, air quality, etc) • isolation at the workplace (emotional or working alone)
Role in the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • role conflict (conflicting job demands, multiple supervisors/managers) • role ambiguity (lack of clarity about responsibilities, expectations, etc) • level of responsibility
Career development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • under/over-promotion • job security (fear of redundancy either from economy, or a lack of tasks or work to do) • career development opportunities





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overall job satisfaction
Relationships at work (Interpersonal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supervisors (conflicts or lack of support) • co-workers (conflicts or lack of support) • subordinates • threat of violence, harassment, etc (threats to personal safety) • lack of trust • lack of systems in workplace available to report and deal with unacceptable behavior.
Organizational structure/climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation (or non-participation) in decision-making • management style • communication patterns (poor communication / information flow) • lack of systems in workplace available to respond to concerns • not engaging employees when undergoing organizational change • lack of perceived fairness (who gets what when, and the processes through which decisions are made). Feelings of unfairness magnify the effects of perceived stress on health.
Work-Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • role/responsibility conflicts • family exposed to work-related hazards

SYMPTOMS OR SIGNS OF STRESS IN INDIVIDUALS

There are many different signs and symptoms that can indicate when someone is having difficulty coping with the amount of stress they are experiencing: If one is suffering from some of the following symptoms it may indicate that he/she is feeling the effects of stress.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Fatigue
- Muscular tension





- Headache
- Allergies
- Heart palpitation
- Insomnia
- Gastrointestinal upsets
- Dermatological disorder
- Respiratory disorders

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

- Negative or depressive feeling
- Disappointment with yourself
- Increased emotional reactions - more tearful or sensitive or aggressive
- Loneliness, withdrawn
- Loss of motivation commitment and confidence
- Mood swings (not behavioral)

MENTAL

- Confusion, indecision
- Can't concentrate
- Poor memory

BEHAVIORAL

- Changes in eating habits
- Increased smoking, drinking or drug taking 'to cope'
- Mood swings effecting your behavior
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Twitchy, nervous behavior
- Conflicts
- Absenteeism
- Decreased productivity
- Decision to leave job
- Accident proneness
- Changes in attendance





SIGNS OF STRESS IN A GROUP

- Disputes and disaffection within the group
- Increase in staff turnover
- Increase in complaints and grievances
- Increased sickness absence
- Increased reports of stress
- Difficulty in attracting new staff
- Poor performance
- Customer dissatisfaction or complaints

EFFECTS OF STRESS

Stress can have an impact on your overall health. Our bodies are designed, pre-programmed if you wish, with a set of automatic responses to deal with stress. This system is very effective for the short term "fight or flight" responses we need when faced with an immediate danger. The problem is that our bodies deal with all types of stress in the same way. Experiencing stress for long periods of time (such as lower level but constant stressors at work) will activate this system, but it doesn't get the chance to "turn off".

- increased blood pressure
- increased metabolism (e.g., faster heartbeat, faster respiration)
- decrease in protein synthesis, intestinal movement (digestion), immune and allergic response systems
- increased cholesterol and fatty acids in blood for energy production systems
- localized inflammation (redness, swelling, heat and pain)
- faster blood clotting
- increased production of blood sugar for energy
- increased stomach acids

Stress can contribute to accidents/injuries by causing people to:

- sleep badly
- over-medicate themselves and/or drink excessively
- feel depressed





- feel anxious, jittery and nervous
- feel angry and reckless (often due to a sense of unfairness or injustice)

When people engage in these behaviors or are in these emotional states, they are more likely to:

- become momentarily (but dangerously) distracted
- make errors in judgment
- put their bodies under physical stress, increasing the potential for strains and sprains
- fail in normal activities that require hand-eye or foot-eye coordination.

In the short term, a stressful work environment can contribute to problems such as headache, stomachache, sleep disturbances, short temper and difficulty concentrating. Chronic stress can result in anxiety, insomnia, high blood pressure and a weakened immune system. It can also contribute to health conditions such as depression, obesity and heart disease. Compounding the problem, people who experience excessive stress often deal with it in unhealthy ways such as overeating, eating unhealthy foods, smoking cigarettes or abusing drugs and alcohol.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STRESS

Stress-related issues cost businesses billions of dollars per year in absenteeism, accidents, and lost productivity. As a result, managing employee stress is an important concern for organizations as well as individuals. Stress experienced by the employees in their job has negative impact on their health, performance and their behavior in the organization. Thus, stress needs to be managed effectively so as to set off these harmful consequences. The way the organization is managed or the leadership is perceived plays a large part in the stress felt by staff. Managers can prevent (or conversely cause) stress by the way they behave towards employees. However, it is in a manager's interest to keep stress levels in the workplace to a minimum. Those that manage individuals need to understand the causes and symptoms of stress and the strategies that can be employed to the benefit of the organization and that individual. However our emotions are contagious, and stress has an impact on the quality of our interactions with others. The better one is at managing one's own stress, the more one positively affect those around him, and the less other people's stress will negatively affect him





There are a variety of steps one can take to reduce both overall stress levels and the stress one finds in the organization. These include:

Tip 1: Recognize warning signs of excessive stress at work

When you feel overwhelmed at work, you lose confidence and may become irritable or withdrawn. This can make you less productive and less effective in your job, and make the work seem less rewarding. If you ignore the warning signs of work stress, they can lead to bigger problems. Beyond interfering with job performance and satisfaction.

Track your stressors. Keep a journal for a week or two to identify which situations create the most stress and how you respond to them. Record your thoughts, feelings and information about the environment, including the people and circumstances involved, the physical setting and how you reacted. Taking notes can help you find patterns among your stressors and your reactions to them.

Tip 2: Reduce job stress by taking care of yourself

When stress at work interferes with your ability to perform in your job, manage your personal life, or adversely impacts your health, it's time to take action. Start by paying attention to your physical and emotional health. When your own needs are taken care of, you're stronger and more resilient to stress. The better you feel, the better equipped you'll be to manage work stress without becoming overwhelmed. Taking care of yourself doesn't require a total lifestyle overhaul. Even small things can lift your mood, increase your energy, and make you feel like you're back in the driver's seat. Take things one step at a time, and as you make more positive lifestyle choices, you'll soon notice a reduction in your stress levels, both at home and at work.

Get moving Regular exercise is a powerful stress reliever—even though it may be the last thing you feel like doing. Aerobic exercise—activity that raises your heart rate and makes you sweat—is a hugely effective way to lift your mood, increase energy, sharpen focus, and relax both the mind and body. Try walking, dancing, swimming, or playing ping pong with your kids—but as you move, instead of continuing to focus on your thoughts, focus on your body and how it feels as you're exercising. As well as maximizing stress relief, adding this mindfulness element can help your nervous system become “unstuck” if you've experienced trauma.

If it's easier to fit into your schedule, break up the activity into two or three shorter segments. Instead of attempting to fight stress with fast food or alcohol, do your best to make





healthy choices when you feel the tension rise. Yoga can be an excellent choice, . Also make time for hobbies and favorite activities. Whether it's reading a novel, going to concerts or playing games with your family, make sure to set aside time for the things that bring you pleasure. Getting enough good-quality sleep is also important for effective stress management. Build healthy sleep habits by limiting your caffeine intake late in the day and minimizing stimulating activities, such as computer and television use, at night.

•**Take time to recharge.** To avoid the negative effects of chronic stress and burnout, we need time to replenish and return to our pre-stress level of functioning. This recovery process requires “switching off” from work by having periods of time when you are neither engaging in work-related activities, nor thinking about work. That's why it's critical that you disconnect from time to time, in a way that fits your needs and preferences. Don't let your vacation days go to waste.

When possible, take time off to relax and unwind, so you come back to work feeling reinvigorated and ready to perform at your best. When you're not able to take time off, get a quick boost by turning off your Smartphone and focusing your attention on non-work activities for a while.

•**Talk to your supervisor.** Healthy employees are typically more productive, so your boss has an incentive to create a work environment that promotes employee well-being. Start by having an open conversation with your supervisor. The purpose of this isn't to lay out a list of complaints, but rather to come up with an effective plan for managing the stressors you've identified, so you can perform at your best on the job. While some parts of the plan may be designed to help you improve your skills in areas such as time management, other elements might include identifying employer-sponsored wellness resources you can tap into, clarifying what's expected of you, getting necessary resources or support from colleagues, enriching your job to include more challenging or meaningful tasks, or making changes to your physical workspace to make it more comfortable and reduce strain.

•**Get some support.** Accepting help from trusted friends and family members can improve your ability to manage stress. Your employer may also have stress management resources available through an employee assistance program (EAP), including online information, available counselling and referral to mental health professionals, if needed. If you continue to feel overwhelmed by work stress, you may want to talk to a psychologist, who can help you better manage stress and change unhealthy behavior. Talk to an attentive listener Since the



face and heart are wired together in the brain, talking face to face with a relaxed and balanced listener can help calm your nervous system and relieve stress. The other person doesn't have to "fix" your problems; he or she just has to be a good listener. Simply sharing your feelings with a trusted friend or family member can be very cathartic, even if there's nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation. A strong network of supportive friends and family members can be an enormous buffer against stress at work and in other aspects of your life. On the flip side, the more lonely and isolated you are, the greater your vulnerability to stress.

•**Establish boundaries.** In today's digital world, it's easy to feel pressure to be available 24 hours a day. Establish some work-life boundaries for yourself. That might mean making a rule not to check email from home in the evening, or not answering the phone during dinner. Although people have different preferences when it comes to how much they blend their work and home life, creating some clear boundaries between these realms can reduce the potential for work-life conflict and the stress that goes with it.

Make food choices that keep you going

Low blood sugar can make you feel anxious and irritable, while eating too much can make you lethargic. Healthy eating can help you get through stressful work days. By eating small but frequent meals, you can help your body maintain an even level of blood sugar, keep your energy up, stay focused, and avoid mood swings.

Get enough sleep

Not only can stress and worry can cause insomnia, but a lack of sleep can leave you vulnerable to even more stress. When you're well-rested, it's much easier to keep your emotional balance, a key factor in coping with job and workplace stress. Try to improve the quality of your sleep by keeping a sleep schedule and aiming for 8 hours a night.

Tip 3: Reduce job stress by prioritizing and organizing

When job and workplace stress threatens to overwhelm you, there are simple steps you can take to regain control over yourself and the situation. Your newfound ability to maintain a sense of self-control in stressful situations will often be well-received by coworkers, managers, and subordinates alike, which can lead to better relationships at work. Here are some suggestions for reducing job stress by prioritizing and organizing your responsibilities.





Time management tips for reducing job stress

- Create a balanced schedule.** Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. All work and no play is a recipe for burnout. Try to find a balance between work and family life, social activities and solitary pursuits, daily responsibilities and downtime.
- Don't over-commit yourself.** Avoid scheduling things back-to-back or trying to fit too much into one day. All too often, we underestimate how long things will take. If you've got too much on your plate, distinguish between the "shoulds" and the "musts." Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.
- Try to leave earlier in the morning.** Even 10-15 minutes can make the difference between frantically rushing to your desk and having time to ease into your day. Don't add to your stress levels by running late.
- Plan regular breaks.** Make sure to take short breaks throughout the day to take a walk or sit back and clear your mind. Also try to get away from your desk or work station for lunch. Stepping away from work to briefly relax and recharge will help you be more, not less, productive.

Task management tips for reducing job stress

- Prioritize tasks.** Make a list of tasks you have to do, and tackle them in order of importance. Do the high-priority items first. If you have something particularly unpleasant to do, get it over with early. The rest of your day will be more pleasant as a result.
- Break projects into small steps.** If a large project seems overwhelming, make a step-by-step plan. Focus on one manageable step at a time, rather than taking on everything at once.
- Delegate responsibility.** You don't have to do it all yourself. If other people can take care of the task, why not let them? Let go of the desire to control or oversee every little step. You'll be letting go of unnecessary stress in the process.
- Be willing to compromise.** When you ask someone to contribute differently to a task, revise a deadline, or change their behavior at work, be willing to do the same. Sometimes, if you can both bend a little, you'll be able to find a happy middle ground that reduces the stress levels for everyone.

Tip 4: Reduce job stress by improving emotional intelligence

Even if you're in a job where the environment has grown increasingly stressful, you can retain a large measure of self-control and self-confidence by understanding and practicing emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to manage and use your emotions



in positive and constructive ways. When it comes to satisfaction and success at work, emotional intelligence matters just as much as intellectual ability. Emotional intelligence is about communicating with others in ways that draw people to you, overcome differences, repair wounded feelings, and defuse tension and stress.

Emotional intelligence in the workplace

Emotional intelligence in the workplace has four major components:

- Self-awareness** – The ability to recognize your emotions and their impact while using gut feelings to guide your decisions.
- Self-management** – The ability to control your emotions and behavior and adapt to changing circumstances.
- Social awareness** – The ability to sense, understand, and react to other's emotions and feel comfortable socially.
- Relationship management** – The ability to inspire, influence, and connect to others and manage conflict.

The five key skills of emotional intelligence

There are five key skills that you need to master in order to raise your emotional intelligence and manage stress at work.

- Realize when you're stressed, recognize your particular fight-or-flight stress response, and become familiar with techniques that can rapidly calm and energize you. The best way to reduce stress quickly is through the senses—sight, sound, smell, taste, touch—and through movement. Each person responds differently to sensory input, so it's important to experiment to find the things that work best for you.
- Stay connected to your internal emotional experience so you can appropriately manage your own emotions. Your moment-to-moment emotions influence your thoughts and actions, so pay attention to your feelings and factor them into your decision making at work. If you ignore your emotions you won't be able to fully understand your own motivations and needs, or to communicate effectively with others.
- Recognize and effectively use nonverbal cues and body language. In many cases, what we say is less important than how we say it or the other nonverbal signals we send out, such as eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, posture, gesture and touch. Your nonverbal messages can either produce a sense of interest, trust, and desire for connection—or they can





generate confusion, distrust, and stress. You also need to be able to accurately read and respond to the nonverbal cues that other people send you at work.

- Develop the capacity to meet challenges with humor. There is no better stress buster than a hearty laugh and nothing reduces stress quicker in the workplace than mutually shared humor. But, if the laugh is at someone else's expense, you may end up with more rather than less stress.

- Resolve conflict positively. Resolving conflict in healthy, constructive ways can strengthen trust between people and relieve workplace stress and tension. When handling emotionally-charged situations, stay focused in the present by disregarding old hurts and resentments, connect with your emotions, and hear both the words and the nonverbal cues being used. If a conflict can't be resolved, choose to end the argument, even if you still disagree.

Tip 5: Reduce job stress by breaking bad habits

Many of us make job stress worse with negative thoughts and behavior. If you can turn around these self-defeating habits, you'll find employer-imposed stress easier to handle.

- Resist perfectionism.** No project, situation, or decision is ever perfect, so trying to attain perfection on everything will simply add unnecessary stress to your day. When you set unrealistic goals for yourself or try to do too much, you're setting yourself up to fall short. Aim to do your best, no one can ask for more than that.

- Clean up your act.** If you're always running late, set your clocks and watches fast and give yourself extra time. If your desk is a mess, file and throw away the clutter; just knowing where everything is saves time and cuts stress. Make to-do lists and cross off items as you accomplish them. Plan your day and stick to the schedule—you'll feel less overwhelmed.

- Flip your negative thinking.** If you see the downside of every situation and interaction, you'll find yourself drained of energy and motivation. Try to think positively about your work, avoid negative-thinking co-workers, and pat yourself on the back about small accomplishments, even if no one else does.

- Don't try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things at work are beyond our control—particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to people.

- Connect with others at work.** Developing friendships with some of your co-workers can help buffer you from the negative effects of stress. Remember to listen to them and offer support when they are in need as well.



•**Look for humor in the situation.** When used appropriately, humor is a great way to relieve stress in the workplace. When you or those around you start taking things too seriously, find a way to lighten the mood by sharing a joke or funny story.

Tip 6: Learn how managers or employers can reduce job stress

It's in a manager's best interest to keep stress levels in the workplace to a minimum. Managers can act as positive role models, especially in times of high stress. If a respected manager can remain calm in stressful work situations, it is much easier for his or her employees to also remain calm.

Additionally, there are a number of organizational changes that managers and employers can make to reduce workplace stress. These include:

Improve communication

Communicating effectively at work can help improve teamwork, decision making, and problem solving. One of the best ways to improve communication is by learning to listen attentively to an employee. That means not just understanding the words or the information being communicated, but also understanding the emotions the speaker is trying to communicate. When you're engaged with what's being said, you'll hear the subtle intonations in someone's voice that tell you how that person is really feeling. You'll also make that person feel heard. By communicating in this way, you'll also experience a process that lowers stress for both you and your employee. If the person you're talking to is agitated, you can help calm them by listening in an attentive way and making the person feel understood.

- Share information with employees to reduce uncertainty about their jobs and futures.
- Clearly define employees' roles and responsibilities.
- Make communication friendly and efficient, not mean-spirited or petty.

Consult your employees

- Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their jobs.
- Consult employees about scheduling and work rules.
- Be sure the workload is suitable to employees' abilities and resources; avoid unrealistic deadlines.
- Show that individual workers are valued.





- Offer rewards and incentives.
- Praise good work performance, both verbally and officially, through schemes such as Employee of the Month.
- Provide opportunities for career development.
- Promote an “entrepreneurial” work climate that gives employees more control over their work.

Cultivate a friendly social climate

- Provide opportunities for social interaction among employees.
- Establish a zero-tolerance policy for harassment.
- Make management actions consistent with organizational values.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that an important goal for those under stress is the management of life stresses .Elimination of stress is unrealistic, since stress is a part of normal life. It's impossible to completely eliminate stress, and it would not be advisable to do so. Instead, we can learn relaxation techniques and other methods to manage stress so that we have control over our stress and its effects on our physical and mental health.

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