UNDERSTANDING OF WORK STRESS AND NEED FOR INTERVENTIONS IN EMPLOYEES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

[1] Oshin Dixit, [2] Pareksh Walia

[1]Assistant professor, Lloyd Business School, Oshindixit18@gmail.com

[2]Counsellor, Pragyanan Educational Institute, walia.pareksh@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In today's time of excessive workload, maladaptive ways to deal with day-to-day situations weather personal or professional, majority of people from all stands of life are victim of stress. This makes it important to understand the individual perception of stress in individual's life. Hence this study focuses on the perception of stress among the 3rd and 4th class employees and the readiness of employees for an intervention for stress management at workplace. The data was collected through a Semi structured interview on 30 participants. Thematic analysis was adopted for the analysis. On analyzing the data various codes were drawn. The themes were made through inductive analysis of the data. The themes were derived which were 'Nature of stressor, 'Reinforcement', 'Relationships', 'Active and Passive dealing', 'Personal and organizational'. It can be concluded that the effectiveness of the intervention is higher at the early stage of the working in comparison to the employees at a much later stage of. At the initial stage when you are more vulnerable and armature to deal with the situations you need the skills and training from the workshop. As it is seen with much researches that with time employees automatically learn the skills over time. The readiness of the employees found out to be the key factor behind the success or failure of any intervention.

Keywords: *Stress, stressor, Themes, Thematic analysis, Inductive analysis.*

1. Introduction

In today's time of excessive workload, maladaptive ways to deal with day-to-day situations weather personal or professional, majority of people from all the stands of life are the victim of stress. According to a recent American Psychological Association poll, a majority of adults reported experiencing moderate to high levels of stress (APA,2010). Broadly speaking 'Stress is an adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging to a person's well-being'(Mcshane,2010). It effects all aspects like bodily functions, emotions, behaviour and cognitive functioning. In the context of a workplace there is a need to look at the stress exclusively from the prism of the dynamics of workplace, the type of stressors playing a role in stress of the employee. To point out one of the factors prominent at workplace is division of work, time management, overload, which leads towards anxiety and stress. It is studied that the mindful performers out perform the work when compared with other colleagues Elizabeth R. Valentine et.al (1999). To deal with work stress the employees relied on listening to music of their choice, spending quality time with friends and family, playing outdoor sports, gyming and regular exercise, and being optimistic about future situations (Naik and Sankaranarayanan, 2014). As in the fast-moving world the mental health of employees become very important aspect. It is researched that yoga has an effect on the mental health and it considerably improve the levels in hypertension, concentration, and BMI levels (Campbell and Moore, 2004). It was discovered that the rate of depression and burnout was higher in the group that did not engage in physical activity, but it was quite low, to the point of being insignificant, in the group that did. In present study, the concern is on the efficiency of the employee in terms of psychological factors that play an important role in fulfilling the task in hand. Here, the factors such as emotional trauma, conflicts at workplace, interpersonal issues are focused and studied that to what extent they hinder or enhance the productivity of an individual at workplace. The key understanding required here is that the productivity is not a passive mechanism but an active procedure which is widely dependent on the mental faculties of the employee. Among the organized sector, the focus on health and productivity is growing in India, and employers expect that this will continue Towers Watson (2017).

The problem with the current scenario is that the employer's perspective towards productivity from an employee is no less than from that of a robot. There are unrealistic

expectations from the employees which creates an unavoidable and hazardous consequences, mental illness to be one of the prominent one. According to a study conducted by Towers Watson "close to half of the respondents (employees) in India reported excessive pressure at work. Around one-third of them pinned the blame on "overwhelming" productivity demands from employers. Some of the data reflects that the companies need to adopt health care interventions at workplaces to exclusively focus on its impact on the productivity which is degraded and ultimately making the organization suffer. Globally, companies with most effective health programs have 34% higher revenue per employee" Tower Watson (2015). The current study focuses upon the understating the interventions at are required for the better mental health of the employees.

1.1 The objectives of the present study are

- To understand the perception of stress in the employees at workplace.

- To assess the readiness of employees for an intervention for stress management at workplace.

2. Research Methodology

Sample of 30 participants were selected and interviewed. The participants were type 3 and type 4 employees. The employees are from the service and labor class. 24 participants did not have permanent job and are on contractual basis. 11 are female and 19 are male. The interview involved a set of self-prepared questions. There were 10 semi structured questions based upon the behavioral aspect personal and the professional lives. Questions were related to their understanding of stress and its coping style and the need of an intervention at their workplace. The responses were audio recorded and were later transcript. The analysis was done through Thematic Analysis.

3. Result and Discussion

The themes were driven and viewed as essential in determining the understandings of all the participants. These categories have been labeled as "Nature of stressor", "Reinforcement","Relationships", "Active and Passive dealing" and "Nature of solution". All these themes should be better viewed as interrelated or overlapping to each other rather seen as isolated and exclusiveto each other.

In the given Table 1.1 the codes, sub themes and themes which were finally categorized.

Table 1.1

Codes, subthemes and themes extracted after the analysis

<u>Codes</u>	<u>Sub-theme</u>	<u>Theme</u>
Trouble, workload, fairly, tough, tiring, exhaust, overtime, less people, shortage of staff, temporaryjob, underpay, physically demanding, unstructured, fatigue, time bound, frustration, leaving job.	Permanent and Temporary	**Nature of stressor**
Appraisal, learning, skill, newtalent, bonus, reward, medals,feedback, motivation, support, praised, salary.	Appreciation and Growth	**Reinforcement**
Interaction, friends, together,close bonding, teammates, biased, judgmental, responsible.	Interpersonal and Professional connection.	**Relationships**
Talk, cooperate, ignore, WatchTV, create tension, cannot handle, old songs, videos, more busy, rejuvenates, favorite food, manage my tasks, deteriorated, headaches, start crying, overwhelmed, sleep, hug.		**Active and Passive dealing**
Permanent job, dance, playingmusic, team building, time management, building healthyrelationship, enhancing leadership quality, meditation,exercises, interactive sessions,computer course, software skills.		**Personal and organizational intervention**

4. Discussion

On analyzing the data various codes were drawn. The themes were made through inductive analysis of the data. In total five themes were extracted. All the themes are discussed as following.

4.1 Nature of stressor

The first theme stated is the nature of stressors. This theme is extracted on the basis of the very nature of the problems employees suffers during or related to their work. On the basis of the responses from participants this theme is made from two sub themes 'permanent' and 'temporary'. Permanent and temporary are the types of stressors reported by the participants. At workplace, employees face number of problems on regular basis. But the participants reported the problems which are either under their control or out of control. Control problems are relatively temporary and are situational based. Mostly they are the by product or consequence of the permanent ones. These problems can be and have to be dealt by the employees on their own. Whereas workplace harassment was reported as a major cause of stress. which is seen to be a permanent stressor. Even Temporary stress turned into a permanent stressor when an authoritative figure is involved.

4.2 Reinforcement

Two major sub-themes which are compiled from the responses of the participants are "appreciation" and "growth inclination". Two major kind of reinforces which were brought up bythe participants. These are based on the responses on the question which asked them to report the instances happened at workplace which made them happy. The participants are reinforced to work when either they are appraised by the authorities or they reported 'growth 'in their careers . Employees felt unhappy when they fell that their growth is stagnant. According to Stranks. J (2015), the employees who perceive lack of praise for the work and receives insufficient and inappropriate rewards are seem to develop a sense of devaluation within which eventually contributes to the work stress. These shows the importance of role of management and their support in the motivation of employees and increasing their productivity.

4.3 Relationships

Having or building relationships has turned out to be the central theme of interview responses. 'Relationships' is marked as a major theme. The kind of relationships employees share with their subordinates and employers determined how they work better at workplace. Some employees wanted to change the relationship dynamics of the organization they are working at. The same participant reported this while telling the way to deal with stress. This points out the importance of building and maintaining the relationships exclusively with the colleagues at workplace. If the relations are not established well enough among the subordinates it feels suffocating, according to (Sias, 2009), workplace friendship is an inevitable aspect of communication in most of the organizations and a facet in employee satisfaction and open communication.

4.4 Active and Passive dealing

Another theme came out from their perception of stress and the ways of how the participants deal with the stressful situation. Broadly, there were seen two styles in which people handle a stressful situation which is active and passive. Active dealing with stress involves the way in which people are not dependent or not directed by the consequences of the stress. It is a style of dealing when one deal with the situation head on and takes a solution focused approach. These are the styles of approaches which make you grow and to learn something new every time. Spector and colleagues (Chen & Spector, 1992; Fox & Spector, 1999; Spector 1975, 1978; Storms & Spector, 1987) have portrayed CWB as an emotion-based response to stressful organizational conditions. Greenberg and colleagues (e.g., Greenberg, 1990) and Skarlicki, Folger and colleagues (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Skarlicki, Folger, & Tesluk, 1999) have taken an organizational justice perspective, viewing CWB as a cognition-based response to experienced injustice. These two perspectives are not incompatible, and in fact Spector (1978) noted links with the equity (justice) concept, and Greenberg (1990) noted links with frustration theory. The prominent themes 'Active and Passive' came out from the analysis go in line with these studies and the concept of CWB. People who adopt an active approach in dealing with the stress at workplace somewhere function with their cognitive faculties. While people who deal at the workplace passively deal with the situations more emotionally. And hence, employees

are more prone to adopt counterproductive work behavior as they fail to constructively deal with the stress and instead of being productive and growing through their problems, they suffer due to the problems. Recent years have seen an explosion of interest among organizational researchers in counterproductive work behaviors (CWB), such as aggression, interpersonal conflict, sabotage, and theft. Although most of this work has been directed toward validating integrity tests with the objective of devising ways to identify counterproductive employees so that companies can avoid hiring them, two streams of research have focused on ascertaining the causes of these behaviors.

4.5 Nature of Solution

This theme of type of change refers to the kind of change they want in their organization as a workshop. Most of them reported of adopting a passive approach in some way or the other.

When asked on the need of any workshop, change or intervention to be conducted the responses were varied. Most of the respondents needed a change which could only be decided and implemented by the authorities and no external agencies. These are the kind of change the participants reported such as reduction of workload, making their jobs permanent are the changes which includes the involvement of the higher authorities. There are evidences of almost half of the responses were like this. There is another kind of response which emphasis the need to training or learning of an extra skill exclusively to the participants without an involvement of any authority or the employer. The skills varied from the soft skills like team building, time management, interactive sessions or the technical skills like a computer course which enhances the chances of getting a better job. According to (Gardner B et.al,2005) with regard to individual approaches, these were mainly psychological interventions. Although there is much research that has documented the effectiveness of psychological interventions, these are usually provided at the secondary or tertiary level rather than for primary prevention.

5. Future implications and limitations

One of the main things which can be concluded from the results and discussion is that the effectiveness of the intervention is higher at the early stage of the working in

comparison to the employees at a much later stage. At the initial stage when you are more vulnerable and armature to deal with the situations you need the skills and training from the workshop. As it is seen with much researches that with time employees automatically learn the skills over time. Hence, they prefer the organizational intervention more than the personal intervention.

Also, the readiness of the employees states the key factor behind the success or failure of any intervention. This emphasize us to focus on the very first and one of the most important steps which is 'need analysis'. It is important to match the requirements of the employees at every level and design the intervention to exclusively cater their needs.

Keeping the results in mind we can say that they can be implemented effectively among the employees who have contractual job, low salary, and excessive workload. And this would cater not just the service class but also the private sector, NGOs and new ventures.

One important practice to be included in the intervention is to involve the employers actively and increase their participation in the intervention course. Doing so would increase the communication between them and can resolve one of the major cause of stress which is the gap between authority and the employees

5.1 Limitations

From the point of view of further research purposes *active* approach can further be analyzed into two categories, constructive, is when people learn out of something new and confirms growth and static, is when employees just talk to their subordinates and vent out their emotional responses. This distinction cannot be made on the basis of the results from the present study. The reason is the insufficient sample on which the analysis is done to make this distinction exclusive. The sample size is also a restriction to generalize the results on the general population.

Results from this study is analyzed from the data collected exclusively from the Type 3and Type 4 employees. Hence, we cannot implement these results on the higher-level employees, employers or the higher authorities.

References

1. Anderson. L., et al. (1999), The effects of meditation on teacher perceived occupational stress, state and trait anxiety, and burnout, School Psychology Quarterly; Spring 1999; 14, 1; ProQuest Direct Complete pg3

2. Bacas,C. Daniel &Cebolla, et al, (2015). Meditation and happiness: Mindfulness and self- compassion may mediate the meditation–happiness relationship. Personality and Individual Differences. 93. . 10.1016/j.paid.2015.08.040.

3. Bakker, Arnold. (2005). Flow among music teachers and their students: The crossover of peak experiences. Journal of Vocational Behavior. 66. 26-44. 10.1016/j.jvb.2003.11.001

4. Campbell, D., & Moore, K.A. (2004) Yoga as a Preventive and Treatment for Depression, Anxiety and Stress, The International Journal of Yoga Therapy, 14, 53-58, International Association of Yoga Therapists, United States

5. Elizabeth R. Valentine & Philip L. G. Sweet (1999) Meditation and attention:A comparison of the effects of concentrative and mindfulness meditation on sustained attention,Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 2:1, 59-70, DOI: 10.1080/13674679908406332

6. G. Dhriti., et al., (2016), Occupational Stress in Relationship with Resilience and its Difference with respect to Yoga Practice Among Professionals, International Journal of Advanced Research in Social Sciences, Volume 1, Issue 1, 2016, pp.026-032

7. Goksel, Ali &Caz, Çağdaş&Yazıcı, Ömer& Can Ikizler, Huseyin. (2017). Examination of the Relationship between Organizational Stress and Employee Performance: A Research on

8. Greenberg. J.,(2013), Behavior in Organizations, 10th ed., Pearson Education, Inc.

9. Gupta,N. Khera,S. Vempati,R.P. Sharma,R. Bijlani,R.L. (2005). Indian J PhysiolPharmacol 2006; 50 (1) : 41–47

10. Hafenbrack, Andrew. (2017). Mindfulness Meditation as an On-The-Spot Workplace Intervention. Journal of Business Research. 75. . 10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.01.017

11. Hansen. A.S., et al (2010), Physical activity, job demand–control, perceived stress–energy,and salivary cortisol in white-collar workers, International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health, ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

12. Hartfiel, Ned & Burton, Christopher & Rycroft-Malone, Jo & Clarke, Graham & Havenhand, Jon & Khalsa, Sat Bir & T Edwards, R. (2012). Yoga for reducing perceived stress and back pain at work. Occupational medicine (Oxford, England). 62. . 10.1093/occmed/ kqs168.

13. Hartfiel. N et.al., (2011), The Effectiveness of Yoga for Improvement of Well Being and Resilience to Stress in The Work Place, Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 70-76

14. Hartfiel. N et.al., (2011), The Effectiveness of Yoga for Improvement of Well Being and Resilience to Stress in The Work Place, Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health Vol. 37, No. 1, pp. 70-76

15. Kaley-Isley, Lisa & Peterson, John & Fischer, Colleen & Peterson, Emily. (2010). Yoga as a complementary therapy for children and adolescents:A guide for clinicians. Psychiatry (Edgmont (Pa. : Township)). 7. 20-32.

16. Khalfa, S., Bella, S. D., Roy, M., Peretz, I. and Lupien, S. J. (2003), Effects of Relaxing Music on Salivary Cortisol Level after Psychological Stress. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 999: 374–376.

17. Khurmi. M., et al., Therapeutic effects of Yoga on Mental Health and Stress,

18. Kumar. S. & Rooprai. K.Y. (2009), Role of Emotional Intelligence in Managing Stress and Anxiety at workplace, ASBBS Annual Conference: Las Vegas, Volume 16 Number 1

19. Luthans. F., Organisational Behaviour, 12th ed pg 299, McGraw-Hill

20. Michie, S. (2002). Causes and management of stress at work.,Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 59 (1), 67-72. doi:10.1136/oem.59.1.67

21. Newberg, Andrew &Serruya, Mijail& Wintering, Nancy & Moss, Aleeze&Reibel, Diane &AMonti, Daniel. (2013). Meditation and neurodegenerative diseases. Annals

of the New York Academy of Sciences. 1307. . 10.1111/nyas.12187

22. Ramamoorthy.A., et al.,(2015) Utility of Yoga as an Alternative Therapy for Occupational Hazards Among Dental Practitioners, J Nat Sci Biol Med. 2015 Jan-Jun; 6(1): 149–152.

23. Shukla. H, & Garg. R (2013), A Study on Stress Management Among the Employees of Nationalised Banks, Voice of Research Vol. 2, Issue 3

24. Solaja, Mayowa&Idowu, Elijah & James, Ekundayo. (2016). Exploring the relationship between leadership communication style, personality trait and organizational productivity. Serbian Journal of Management. 11. 99-117. 10.5937/sjm11-8480.

25. Staff Working on Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports. Journal of Education and Learning. 6. 322. 10.5539/jel.v6n1p322.

26. Theerthamalai, S., &Rejandiran, K. R., (2015). "Managerial Stress Reduction Techniques and its Effect on Managerial Performance Bank Employee in Chidambaram Town". International Journal of Advanced Scientific Research & Development (IJASRD), 02 (02/ II), [Special Issue – Aug' 2015], pp. 412 – 416.

27. Toker, S., & Biron, M. (2012). Job burnout and depression: Unraveling their temporal relationship and considering the role of physical activity. Journal of Applied Psychology, 97(3), 699-710.

28. Vempati. R.P. & Telles. S.,(2014), Baseline Occupational Stress Levels and Physiological Responses to a Two Day Stress Management Program, [Original source: https://studycrumb.com/alphabetizer].