Management of Stress in Young Workforce

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ABSTRACT
Managing stress at the work place has taken central stage in organizations. The workplace stress gets added to the stress that employees bring on their own home. There are innumerable reasons for stress creation. In a first generation of young population, working away from parents in far off cities triggers the stress. Housing, commuting, language, culture and a host of other factors combine to produce stress and anxiety. At the work place, the work load, work scheduling, supervision, and desire to excel add to the stress levels. Individuals have their own way of managing stress. Organizations are also helping the process in managing stress at the workplace.

Keywords-- Stress, stressors, individual, organization, workplace

I. INTRODUCTION
Statistics has revealed that India’s workforce is predominantly young in the age group of 25-35 years. According to labour ministry data, around 1 million people enter the workforce in India every month. India faces a serious challenge of finding jobs for a growing population over the next 35 years; its economy could absorb less than half the new entrants into the labour market between 1991 and 2013, the latest Asia-Pacific Human Development Report said. Already the young population has serious stress level in getting jobs.

A report released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has said that between 1991 and 2013, the size of the “working age” population increased by 300 million. Of this, the Indian economy could employ only 140 million, suggesting a limited capacity to generate jobs. The report estimated that by 2050, at least 280 million more people will enter the job market in India. Many others simply choose to study more. At any given point, around 30 million students are pursuing higher education in India.

UNDP said countries such as India, with large low-income populations, big agriculture sectors and high rural-to-urban migration, could focus on specific industries, particularly in manufacturing, to create jobs. Indeed, this is one of the driving forces behind the
government’s ‘Make in India’ campaign aimed at attracting foreign investment in manufacturing.

The young work force has aspirations that see no boundaries and limits. They want to achieve success at any cost as quickly as possible. Working in shifts, commuting long distances, sharing home with others, staying away from families has become the norm. Such factors add to stress from meeting deadlines, achieving targets, staying ahead of others, and getting approval from seniors.

Medical practitioners are talking of life style diseases in a young population. Hyper tension and sugar related problems are increasingly seen in younger people. Serious ailments related to heart, kidney, liver and lungs have become common in the younger age group.

Management of stress in organizations has become a serious subject needing long term interventions from the management. Most people think that they understand stress. Stress, however, is complex and to learn how stress works, it has to be defined and then to relate it to the individual in the workplace.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
Stress is caused by a stimulus that can be either physical or psychological. The individual then responds to stimulus in some way. Stress is defined as a person’s adaptive response to a stimulus that places excessive psychological or physical demands on him or her. Given the complexities of the definition, its components have to be examined carefully. First is the notion of adaptation. People adapt to stressful circumstances in several ways. Then comes the role of the stimulus. This stimulus is called a stressor and is anything that induces stress. The stressor can be either psychological or physical. The demands placed by the stressor on the individual must be excessive for stress to result. What is excessive for one person may be tolerable to another person. The point simply is that a person must perceive the demands as excessive or stress will not result.

III. STRESS AND THE INDIVIDUAL
Some of us can tolerate a great deal of stress whereas others much less. We all have a basic threshold at
which stress starts to affect us. Many things can cause stress. Two broad categories can be mentioned: Organizational stressors and Life stressors. Basic organizational stressors include:

- Task demands
- Role demands
- Interpersonal demands

Life stressors include:

- Life change
- Life trauma

The consequences of stress can be put in three categories: Individual consequences, Organizational consequences, and Burnout. Individual consequences of stress can be Behavioural, Psychological and Medical. Organizational consequences of stress can mean performance decline, withdrawal and unfavourable change in attitudes.

Burnout is a general feeling of exhaustion that develops when an individual simultaneously experiences too much pressure and too few sources of satisfaction.

IV. MANAGING STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

The fact that stress is widespread and potentially disruptive in organizations, strategies have been developed both at individual and organization level to deal with stress management.

Individual Coping Strategies:

Many strategies for helping individuals manage stress have been proposed. The most popular ones are:

- Exercise: People can manage stress by regular exercise. It has been seen that people who exercise regularly are known to feel less tension and stress, are more self-confident, and show greater optimism. Many work places have spaces for employees to use for exercise.
- Relaxation: Relaxation techniques have become very popular. Yoga breaks during work and paid holidays are very common relaxation techniques.
- Time Management: A popular time management method is to list everyday things to be done on that day. Then items are grouped into three categories: critical activities that must be performed, important activities that should be performed, and optional activities that can be delegated or postponed. Then items are done in the list in order of their importance.
- Role Management: Related to time management is role management in which an individual works to avoid overload, ambiguity and conflict. If it is not clear what is expected of you, then instead of sitting and worrying, seeking clarification from the superior is better. Saying ‘no’ is also an option. Instead of taking on additional responsibilities on committees etc. and not fulfilling your role, it is preferable to say no in the beginning.
- Support Groups: A support group can be a group of family members, friends or co-workers with whom a person can spend time with. Such groups can help people deal with normal stress on an ongoing basis. These groups become particularly useful during times of crisis like not getting a promotion or layoff.

Organizational Coping Strategies:

Organizations are realizing that it’s their work which is causing part of the stress experienced by an employee. Also having stressed out workers is not good for productivity and inter-personal relations. Two basic organizational strategies for helping employees manage stress are institutional programmes and collateral programmes.

Institutional Programmes: Institutional programmes for stress management are undertaken through established organizational mechanisms. Properly designed work and work schedules can greatly help reduce stress. Shift work disrupts sleep and relaxation patterns. Designing and scheduling of work needs to be given greater attention than it has received so far.

The organization’s culture can also help ease stress. In some organizations, taking time off and going on vacations are not encouraged. This does much damage in the long run. The culture of many organizations should be a healthy mix of work and non-work activities.

Finally, supervision can play a big role in managing stress. Supervisors allot workloads and by making them aware of their role in creating stress, they can do a better job of keeping workloads reasonable.

Collateral Programmes: Collateral stress programme is an organizational programme specifically created to help employees deal with stress. Organizations have started stress management programmes, health promotion programmes, and other kinds of programmes for this purpose. Police departments have started yoga programmes, fitness programmes and counseling sessions to cope with high levels of job stress. Organizations have invested resources for various health, nutrition, counseling and retreat programmes for its employees. They claim that such costs are worth their money.

The IT industry in India is going through turbulent times due to various reasons. The industry slowdown has meant lesser campus recruitment, lesser pay rise and even layoffs. Companies are in constant touch with their employees through e-mails to scotch rumours and provide accurate information on employment status.

V. CONCLUSION

Being stressed is an individual trait that cannot be easily handled. Yet workplace stress being created by working in an organization can be managed within limits by specific stress management programmes. Such programmes involve costs to the organizations. The costs of higher stress in the form of absenteeism, turnover, and burnouts are also very high. By balancing work and non-work activities organizations can play their part in stress management of their employees.
REFERENCES