Workplace Stress:
Implications for Employees and Organizations

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Abstract

Stressors are ubiquitous in today's society, impacting the personal and professional lives of most people on a daily basis. In terms of stress in organizational settings, employees must deal with an array of workplace stressors, including:

- Role conflict or ambiguity
- Task overload
- Difficult relationships with co-workers or supervisor
- Harsh environmental conditions
- Lack of clear communication or direction
- Insufficient resources needed to perform a job
- Inadequate pay and benefits
- Hostile work environment, including bullying or harassment
- Job instability or uncertainty of the organization's future

It is in the best interest of an organization to establish practices and programs to help reduce or eliminate stressors from the work environment. Employees who are able to perform their jobs with minimal stressors will demonstrate greater engagement, as well as productivity. This will enable an organization to sustain a high level of performance for achieving short and long-term objectives and overall success.

Literature Review

- Approximately 12.5 million working days are lost due to stress, anxiety or depression, with billions of dollars lost each year in absenteeism, lost productivity, and healthcare costs (Hinds, 2017).

- A research study that explored the lingering effects of workplace stress (Richman, J.A, 2006) examined how workplace stressors leave a remaining effect on individuals who enter retirement and how drinking patterns increased after employment. Researchers discovered a link between sexual harassment issues in the workplace with alcohol intake in retirement and found that those who were sexually harassed while employed showed a greater increase in alcohol intake, both male and females, into their retirement. The study showed that the effect of a stressful workplace situation may remain even if the individuals involved think they have moved on.

- Research has also shown that the workplace environment and contextual factors may have a significant impact on employees experiencing stress. The actual physical working environment and interpersonal relations can negatively affect employees, hindering them from accomplishing job tasks. According to an HR Magazine article, nearly a quarter (22%) of professionals surveyed stated that negative attitudes from their managers affect their ability to balance work and family (Bekett,2017). This imbalance may result in decreases in sales and customer loyalty

Conclusion

I/O Psychology studies the behaviors of humans in organizational settings, and the implications that different factors have on employee safety, productivity, job satisfaction, commitment, pride, and engagement. Workplace stress represents a very real struggle that many employees go through regularly, and there are a vast number of stress-inducing considerations that managers should examine. Organizational stakeholders should be cognizant of the fact that many employees not only have to contend with a variety of work-related stressors on a daily basis but they also may not feel comfortable discussing their issues or feel that they are vital or relevant enough to even bring up.

Managers should be trained to understand the different types of workplace stress and how they may manifest, as well as how to identify an employee or coworker who shows signs that they seem overwhelmed and stressed. Managers should be able to provide support and resources to employees for effectively coping with their stressors, whether they are work-related or even personal.

There are many approaches that can be implemented in an effort to remediate workplace stress, including time management coaching, wellness programs, employee assistance programs, and job design that ensures role clarity. Workplace stress should be taken seriously, due to its potentially unhealthy consequences to employees as well as disruption to the organization. Proactive efforts can result in cost savings and increased performance.

References

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