Leveraging Stress Level

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Abstract: Stress is a costly business expense that affects both employee health and company profits. At the backdrop of this, the present research study is an attempt to explore and analysis the findings of the research studies which have been concluded in resolving and managing conflict arising through variances in stress level at the organizational hierarchy.

Keywords: stress, strategy, management.

Stress Management: A Gender Perspective

Gyllensten and Palmer (2005) viewed in their study that women reported higher levels of stress compared to men. This is so because the stressors included, multiple roles, lack of career progress and discrimination and stereotyping. In considering the development of future conflict management training programs, recent developments are done in the field of cognitive and social psychology which suggest that self-control demands have an effect as a source of stress at work. Schmidt, et al. (2007) has pointed out that self-control demands are positively related to job strain. Studies reveal that self control (impulse control, resisting distractions, overcoming inner resistances) when investigated in
combination with role ambiguity acts as a well-established work stressor. In context to this a study conducted in (1989) indicated that stress management, stress prevention and stress reduction are all necessary in today’s high pressure corporate environment. According to the national institutes of health, 80-90 percent of all illnesses are caused by stress, either directly or indirectly. Clearly, something more than stress balls, stress tabs, morale boosters and even health clubs is needed.

Another important factor which gives rise to stress and conflict is due to the individual differences arising due to difference in gender which in turns gives rise to negative affectivity (NA). Eaton, et al. (2008) clearly predicted that, women rated the scenarios as more stressful than men and endorsed the use of emotion-focused coping strategies more than men, even when perceived stressfulness was controlled.

**Impact of Stress: Key area of Concern**

As stress has an impact on conflict similarly stress has an impact on personality and viceversa. As per the type of personality the levels of stress may increase or decrease. It is seen in the stress moderator’s approach which suggests that individuals with certain personality dispositions may have tendencies towards using particular coping strategies when stressed, and maladaptive coping styles are thought to lead to adverse physiological and behavioral consequences. The study further highlighted that health behaviors are not considered as a coping style in the stress-moderators model until stress is perceived (Krantz and Hedges, 1987). (Endler and Parker, 1990; Greenglass, 1988; Pittner, et al. 1983; Weidner and Matthews, 1978) in their study propounded that the “type A” behavior pattern is positively associated with emotion-focused coping), which is consistent with the aggressive and hostile characteristics of this behavior pattern. Other studies have identified that “type A” are also more likely to use avoidance-focused coping strategies.
(Endler and Parker, 1990) such as the suppression of aversive physical and emotional states. (Houston, 1981; Matthews and Brunson, 1979; Smith and Anderson, 1986) suggests that the suppressive coping strategies are used to allow the “type A” individual to remain in proximity to the stressor in order for them to achieve their competitive (or otherwise ambitious) goals; however, with the negative consequences for health due to prolonged contact with the stressor.

Watson and Hubbard (1996) also found that individuals with certain personality traits are more likely to adopt certain coping strategies to manage stressful or demanding situations; specifically associations were found between neuroticism and avoidant forms of coping; between conscientiousness and active, problem-focused coping; between extraversion and social support seeking and problem-focused coping; between openness and painful problem-solving that involve problem-solving that involved learning about the problem; and between agreeableness and positive appraisal problem-solving. The other studies have found introversion to be associated with less seeking of social support (Khan, et al. 1995).

Stress has a direct impact on health of a human being. In a study by Xie, et al. (2008) examined the influences of the relationships between job stressors and health. The results reveal that the positive relationship was seen between job control and health which was stronger among the less traditional workers, whereas the positive relationship between distributive justice and health was stronger among the more traditional workers. It further suggested that, in the relationship between job demands, psychological and physiological health, concern for equity is an important moderator for individuals with more traditional values, whereas perceived personal control is beneficial for health primarily among people with less traditional values which means that traditionally and none traditionally has an impact on stress and conflict.

Besides this, the role of negative work-home interference (WHI) is
also considered as a stressor-strain sequence. Peeters, et al. (2004) in their studies have shown that ‘work life balance’ is the most important want and demand of every employee—even higher in priority than salary. With the slowdown in economy followed by recession and the financial downturn, has increased the levels of conflict accompanied by stress. The stress of job loss is putting new pressures on employees who still have their jobs. They keep nervously looking over a shoulder. They work harder, for longer hours and feel greater stress in their extended efforts to ensure they keep their job and keep the business afloat. The problem has evolved into one of managing sustained excessive stress of work and personal life.

According to the recent report by ITO, et al. (2009) workers who tended to have higher levels of promotion stress and conflict were (a) less likely to have experienced career support from their supervisors; (b) less likely to perceive attractive opportunities; (c) more likely to have promotion aspirations; (d) more likely to perceive the existence of competition for positions; and (e) more likely to be dependent on their organization for employment (employment dependence). Moreover, such workers were less committed to their organization and were more likely to be looking for another job. Due to the affective commitment ameliorated the association between promotion stress and the intention to leave the organization increases. The management/organization should not only try means and ways to minimize stress and conflict but should also ensure that the reasons causing increase in stress should not be inculcating in the organization.

Conclusions

Stress can precipitate physiological changes in metabolism, increased heart rate, headaches and heart attacks although the precise nature of the relationship remains unclear (Savery and Luks, 2001).
Steffy and Jones (1990) note that job-related stress can cause job-related dissatisfaction, which is itself, the single most obvious psychological effect of stress such as tension, anxiety, depression, aggression, irritability, confusion, boredom and procrastination. Behavioral symptoms included changes in productivity in the form of reduced work performance, absence and turnover, volatility and changeability in eating and sleeping habits and other routines like increased smoking, increased drinking, or obsessive concern with trivial issues.

The need of the hour is for work life balance where the employee can maintain an optimum balance in work as well in his personal life. People want quality of life, in a sense a reversal of work/life balance-life/work balance, where life is the central focus and work is one (important) resource.

References


