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STRESS AMONG WOMEN EMPLOYEES IN RAILWAYS – A STUDY OF SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY SECUNDERABAD DIVISION

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ABSTRACT: -

Stress is a normal part of human life in the modern world. The effect of stress is a deviation from the existing physical and psychological damage of human life. Stress is unavoidable and can occur in all facets of life. Stress that is prolonged and managed poorly can result in negative physical, mental, and cognitive outcomes for humans. Other negative outcomes include anxiety, depression, weakened immune system, heart disease, obesity, and poor memory. In current work environment, occupational stress is experienced everywhere in all types of organizations. Globalization, technological advancement and complex nature of work have brought new challenges as well as new stressors to employees.

KEYWORDS: Railway women employees, working-conditions, stress, fatigue, health risks and job outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

The stress is burning issue in modern society. The effect of stress is a deviation from the existing physical and psychological condition of human life. The stress is regarded as an inevitable consequence of employee functionality. The occupational stress adversely affects the health and performance of the employees of an organization. One of the important functions of the modern management is to get things done through people. It has to bring employees in conduct with the organization in such a way that the objectives of both the groups are achieved. The most significant resource of an organization is often said to be its people. Hence human resources play a crucial role in the development process of modern management. There are many factors which affect the productivity and ability of a person. One among them is stress. Stress is an all pervading modern phenomenon

that takes a heavy toll on human life. Generally, it is a condition of pressure or tension on an individual that affects individual's health and performance at the workplace. Many organizations are facing day-to-day challenges to handle stress in a proper way. Out of all types of stress occupational stress of an employee is very important. Occupational stress is known to affect all professions and category of workers. It is of great concern to management, employees and other stakeholders of the organization. The nature and degree of occupational stress vary across the industry and also in business establishments within an industry. Occupational stress is the result of the interaction of an individual with the work environment and as every job has its own typical environment and every person is



different from another. The nature and effect of stress changes from job to job and persons to persons. Occupational stress is the nonspecific response of the body to any demand placed upon it. It is a mental and a physical condition which affects an individual's productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work.

Stress is an inevitable concomitant of organizational life. Its source in an organization is task or role related. An organization, being a network of roles performed in interconnected positions, is dynamic in nature. The complex and dynamic environment of organization adds to further stress at work. These environmental forces include: 1. Rapid technological advancements, 2. The demands made on employee skills, 3. Increased employee expectations about the quality of work – life and incongruence between these expectations and the perceived organizational outcomes, and 4. Changes in organizations like downsizing, mergers, etc. These factors influence employment security, social relations at work and upward mobility, which, in turn, will result in stress of the employees.

Stress has been on a rise in this era of High-technology speed global competition and consumerism. Stress in the 21st millennium is not something new, not anything unknown. Stress has been experienced since time immemorial but its toll is higher than ever before. Over the past few decades stress is emerging as an increasing problem in organisations. Stress is vigorous state in which a person is confronted with an opportunity, demand (or) resource related to what the individual wishes and for which the outcome is perceived to be both vague and vital, first introduced the idea of stress into life science. He defined stress as the force, pressure (or) tension subjected upon an individual who resists these forces and attempt to uphold its true state.

Today work place stress is becoming a major issue and a matter of concern for the employees and the organisations. It has become a part of life for the employees as life today has become so complex at home as well as outside. So, it is impossible to avoid stress. Stress exists in every organisation either big or small. The organisations have become so much complex due to which it exists, workplace stress has significant effects over the employees job performance.

Stress on the job can be stated as the outcome of an individual due to the working environment from which he feels unsecured. Stress at the work place manifests itself in the form of disease, burnout, and even precipitates death, if left untreated. This evidence makes a strong case for understanding and examining occupational stress. Research studies shows that conflicting demands cause confusion among employees and lead to the creation of stressful situations.

Role can be a source of stress when there is ambiguity about job responsibility and limits of authority, role set members have conflicting expectations on the way in which a role should be performed. Thus, role in terms of its normative, interpersonal and self congruence aspect can give rise to stress. Further the stress can affect either positively or negatively to employee performance. Positive qualities are those in which the individual may feel more excited and agitated and perceive the situation positively as a form of challenge. Stress is also described as posing threat to the quality of work life as well as physical and psychological well-being. A high level of role stress, not only detrimentally influence the quality, productivity and creativity of the employees but also employee's health, well being and morale. Thus role stress tends to decrease general job satisfaction.

Human Resource Management is normally insisting upon all activities undertaken by an enterprise to ensure the effective utilization of employees towards the attainment of individual, group and organizational goals. It has envisaged practices that help the organization to deal effectively with its people during the various phases of the employment cycle, including pre-hire, staffing and post-hire phase. The organization develops HRM practices for managing people effectively and help in their development. These practices have been designed to maximize the performance and satisfaction of employees by providing them with necessary knowledge and skills to perform their occupation and by creating conditions that would energize, direct and facilitate employee's effort towards meeting the organizational objectives.

STRESS AMONG INDIAN WOMEN

In the most buoyant, confident and optimistic part of the world, life isn't exactly happy and stress free for half its citizen. Indian companies and workplaces have become so 21st century with all the challenges and

opportunities it offers. The missing social support and infra structure are building a lot of stress, especially for the working women. Many of these women are the first generation in their families stepping out to work. And most strive to maintain continuity with the roles their mothers played at home like managing house, relationship, rearing children. They have added a lot of extra work and subtracted very little. It is this work overload creates stress for them. The biggest stress is felt among women 25-55 years of age, typically married where expectations from women have risen. Add to all this, the fact that women today have more expectations from themselves than ever did in the past. Performance at every level and even personal appearances-the number of things that they measure themselves against has simply multiplied.

The latest study reveals that Indian women are the most stressed in the world today. An overwhelming 87% of Indian women said they felt stressed most of the time, 82% had no time to relax. Indian women are pulled by demands from relatives as they attempt to conform to the paradigm of "ideal daughter," "ideal wife," and "ideal daughter-in-law. Women are critical contributors in finance, infotech, pharmaceutical research, and other industries that are driving the growth of India. Easing the stresses that prevent them from reaching their full potential at work is a smart way for companies to attract and retain key talent. Keeping women's careers on track may not guarantee ongoing economic success but not doing so will surely limit it. Research has been undertaken to establish the extent to which women in India experience stress due to dual roles. In a study carried out on women doctors, engineers, college teachers, clerks, nurses and peons it was found that not all women experience the same degree of role conflict or role over load. Women belonging to high status and high-educated groups experienced significantly fewer roles stress than their counterparts from low status and low educated groups. The explanation is that women from high status groups had access to a large number of facilities, which helped lessen some of the role overload and role conflict.

STAGES OF WORK STRESS

Honey moon stage: The person's appointment to a new job is excitement, enthusiasm, challenge and pride. Dysfunctional processes at this stage would include the depletion of energy reserves in coping and adapting to the new environment.

Full throttle stage: Gradually vague feelings of loss, fatigue and confusion may arise because of the rapid depletion of resources. Other symptoms include dissatisfaction, sleep disturbances and tendencies such as overeating, drinking or smoking.

Chronic symptom stage: Fuel shortage could gradually lead to the development of chronic and more pronounced physiological symptoms. Chronic exhaustion, physical illness, angers and depression may overpower the person.

Crisis stage: As the symptom persists the person enters the crisis stage. He develops an escapist attitude and feels oppressed. Chronic backaches, headaches, high blood pressure, insomnia and even peptic ulcers and asthma develop.

THE NATURE OF STRESS

The phenomenon of stress is highly individualistic in nature. Some people have high levels of tolerance for stress and thrive very well in the face of several stressors in the environment. On the other hand, there are some individuals who will not perform well, unless they are experienced. Their experience in turn activates and energizes them to put forth their best efforts. Yet, there are other low level people who have tolerance for stress with every day's problems. For every individual, there is an optimum level of stress under which he or she will perform to full capacity. If the stress experienced is below this optimum level, then the individual gets bored, the motivational level to work reaches a low point. On the other hand, when the stressors in an individual's environment are too many or too intense again the performance will be adverse, errors will increase; individual may experience insomnia, stomach problems and psychosomatic illnesses.

CAUSES OF STRESS

Conditions that tend to cause stress are called stressors although a single stressor may cause major stress. Usually stressors combine to pressure an employee in a variety of ways until stress develops. The major sources of employee stress are evenly divided between organisational factors and the non work environment. These dual causes are noted that individual differences among employees may cause some to respond to these stressors with positive stress (which stimulates them) while others experience negative stress (which distracts from their efforts). As a result, there may be either constructive or destructive consequences for both the organisation and the employee. These efforts may be short-term and diminish quickly or they may last a long time. Stress should be accepted as an inevitable part of life. Different situations and circumstances in our lives and our job produce stress. Work – related stressors include occupational demands, role conflict, role ambiguity, work overload, work under load, responsibility for others, and change. Lack of social support, lack of involvement in decisions, other sources like working conditions, relationship with co workers pay system, repetitive work, extreme temperature, swing shifts, flexible working hours, changes in working policy, reorganisation of internal structure and mergers.

NEED FOR THE STUDY:

Research on stress is of great relevance to modern society as it provides a new dimension to the understanding and dealing of social problems. The social psychological approach to the problem of stress has widened the scope of stress research as it calls for the study of social institutions and situations from which the stressor variables originate. A substantial number of studies have been reported about stress under normal as well as isolated work environment. The results of these studies have revealed that certain occupations are more stressful than others. A review of occupational stress research clearly reveals that most of the research in this area has concentrated only on industrial and commercial organizations especially under normal work environment. Stress is becoming a global phenomenon affecting all professions and all categories of employees. It is often assumed that employees of information technology because of their nature of work are more vulnerable than other professionals to the ravages of stress. Stress is one of the most debilitating personal and medical problems of modern complex organizations. Challenges posed by the changing business scenario are forcing information technology employees to perform their task under a very compelling situation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bhatia and Kumar [2005] studied occupational stress and burn out in industrial employees. The sample consisted of 100 employees belonging to supervisors and below supervisor level. Employees at supervisor rank and below supervisor rank belonging to higher age group experienced more occupational stress due to more responsibility and accountability.

Pathardikar and Mishra [2008] studied the level, reasons, significance and difference in stress and the relationship between various occupational stress variables and demographic variable among the executives in PSU's. This study was focused on manufacturing Public sector undertakings of India. The sample consists of 104 respondents. Both technical and non-technical s Executives from different departments are included in the study. Finding indicates that executives of various PSUs experiences low level of stress and suggested that PSU's should conduct continuous training and development programs for stress management.

Lakshminarayanan [2010] has presented a comprehensive overview on strategic planning to combat occupational stress in the present Indian context based on literature survey and investigated the stress levels in private and public sectors and presented their comparative analysis.

G. Indhumathi and M. Thirumakkal [2015] have conducted a study to investigate the Impact of Stress on Productivity of Employees at the Pothys Boutique, A Textile Showroom. This was a descriptive study and the

main goal was to find the impact of stress on productivity in the organization. Thus the study helped to elucidate descriptive information on the impact of stress on employees at the Pothys Boutique. The sampling used for this study is stratified random sampling. 80 employees of the boutique were the respondents. Questionnaires were distributed to all the employees. The result showed that there were many stress factors which affected their productivity negatively. The important fact was that majority of employees feel that the organization did not care about them. This was a huge reflection of dissatisfaction that undoubtedly lowered productivity.

S. Kumar [2016] has made an attempt to study about the „Occupational stress among BPO workers “. The main objectives of this study were to know the level of occupational stress among BPO workers and to know the difference in occupational stress among male and female BPO workers. The hypotheses were made and a sample of 50 BPO workers was randomly selected from different BPO workers station in Gulbarga City. The study revealed that BPO workers have moderate occupational stress and there is no significant difference in occupational stress among male and female BPO workers.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

1. To find out the level of stress among the women employees of different age groups.
2. To identify the factors causing stress among the women employees.
3. To study about the coping strategies to manage stress.
4. To identify the effective dimension of stress among women employees in south central railway.

METHODOLOGY

The present study based on secondary data for this study was collected from the south central railway records, south central railway secunderabad reports, magazines, and websites and published articles.

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY SECUNDERABAD

IR is the largest employer in the country with 13,31,433 employees of which 94,909 are women employees as on March 31, 2016. Due emphasis is laid on staff welfare by the Railways. Although, majority of the Railways' staff welfare schemes and activities benefit both male and female employees, various initiatives are aimed at women employees and also women members of the employees' families. Various privileges available to other women government servants are also available to women Railway employees which include provision for grant of maternity leave, child care leave and special leave for promoting family welfare. Women with disabilities are eligible for grant of special allowance for child care.

On the organizational level, consequences of occupational stress can be grouped into two major subgroups:

a) Organizational symptoms – such as discontent and poor morale among the workforce, performance/productivity losses, low quality products and services, poorer relationships with clients, suppliers, partners and regulatory authorities, losing customers, bad publicity, damage to the corporate image and reputation, missed opportunities, disruption to production, high accident and mistakes rates, high labor turnover, loss of valuable staff, increased sick-leave, permanent vacancies, premature retirement, diminished cooperation, poor internal communications, more internal conflicts, and dysfunctional workplace climate.

b) Organizational costs – such as costs of reduced performance/productivity (lack of added value to product and/or service), high replacement costs in connection with labor turnover (increase in recruitment, training and retraining costs), increased sick pay, increased health-care costs and disability payments, higher grievance and litigation/compensation costs, and costs of equipment damage.

RAILWAY WOMEN EMPLOYEES STRESS

The work of Indian railways " women's is considered as extremely stressful. It is working in an

environment over which they have no control whatsoever and is an atmosphere that wrecks their schedules, disrupts their home life, makes social activities and regular breaks very hard to plan. The work of the railway women employees is demanding and full of responsibility. a job which requires a high level of concentration and alertness. The extremely irregular working hours constitute an added workload for the railway women employees. The physical work environment can also give rise to workload; this includes, for eg; noise (or distressful noise levels), vibrations or an uncomfortable cab conditions (too hot, too cold, draughty). The railway women employees is also exposed to a demanding psychosocial work environment, which includes solitary work, limited opportunities for social contact and a heavy responsibility for operating the train (in terms of both safety and adhering to the timetable).

CONCLUSION

Most of the employees in the railway organization get stress due to their working conditions, management policies, irrational promotional policies, work load and disproportionate salary and favoritism. Every organization is comprised of people. Maximum productivity can be attained only when the employees are relieved from the stressful situations. The study revealed that most of the employees face stress situation because of the work environment in the organization and overtime work. They consider hypertension and tiredness as the major symptoms of stress. The employees use various techniques like yoga, meditation, spending quality time with family and friends to lower their stress. But still, the management should take reasonable measures to reduce their stress because the employees are the asset of any organization.

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