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A STUDY ON JOB STRESS AMONG THE EMPLOYEES OF INSURANCE COMPANIES IN CHENNAI CITY

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ABSTRACT :

Stress is an inherent and inescapable part of any professional's life in general and at the work place in particular. A survey by health care consultancy IHC1 has highlighted that 13.4m days are lost each year due to stress, anxiety and depression.

Broadly the word stress means strain. It refers to physical, emotional or mental pressure experienced by an individual. A stressor is the agent that causes the stress. Stress is often perceived as a negative condition but a certain level of stress is necessary for effective functioning. High levels of stress for extended periods may have a detrimental effect on an individual's health and well-being.

The present study entitled "A Study on Job Stress among the employees of Insurance companies in Chennai City" brings an idea about contributing factors to stress among the insurance company employees and recommendations to overcome stress.

KEYWORDS : *Insurance, Inter-Role Distance, Role Erosion, Role Workload, Stress.*

INTRODUCTION

Stress may be termed as pressure or it is the tension that is created by pressure. It always gives an unpleasant feeling. Cannon (1929) was among the first who used the term stress. He suggested both physiological and psychological components of this term. In life Sciences Hans Selye first introduced the concept of stress in 1936.

The term stress has many definitions (Lazarusg Folk man, 1984). Stress may be defined as internal state, which can be caused by physical demands of the body, e.g., disease conditions, exercise and the lie or by environmental and social situation which are evaluated as potentially harmful, uncontrollable or exceeding our resources for coping. The physical, environmental and social causes of the stress state are termed as stressors. Once induced by stressors, the internal stress state can lead to various responses, while on the other, psychological responses such as anxiety hopelessness, depression, irritability and a general feeling of not being able to cope with the work can result from the stress state. Stress is a big problem in our society (Allen, 1983).

What is stressful to one person may be refreshing challenge to another depending upon individual's perception of the situation as well as his own ability to cope with that situation. Even though a situation is perceived as demand or threat, it may still not mobilize a stress response if the individual thinks that he is

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able to cope with it adequately either on his own or with the help of external resources or support from other people in his life.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO STRESS

- **Absence of autonomy:** A worker may not have control over the demands of work.
- **Poor physical work environment:** it may also contribute towards stress. Negative factors include cramped, hot or noisy working conditions.
- **Workload factors:** Workers can be under stimulated with too little challenge or overwhelmed with unrelentingly high workloads.
- **Respective or meaningless task:** Lack of stimulation or challenge can lead to boredom, de motivation and lack of interest.
- **Role ambiguity:** An absence of clarity regarding expectations about workers duties.
- **Work conflict:** A major cause of stress at work is unmediated conflict between a worker and their supervisor or colleagues.
- **Occupational mismatch:** There may not be sufficient fit between a worker and their organization. This may be in terms of communication, rewards/recognition or management style.
- **Work-home boundaries:**Taking work home regularly can create conflict with family members and blur the work-home boundaries.
- **Job Satisfaction & Expectations:** Job satisfaction, security and career proposal may not meet the expectations of some workers.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study has been restricted to the public and private life insurance companies in the Chennai city. Data is an important tool for the success of any survey/study. Moreover it reduces the uncertainty in decision-making process. In order to make meaningful research a suitable methodology has been adopted. Data collection is of two types i.e. Primary data and secondary data. The major part of the data is primary data in nature and has been collected through the use of questionnaire/scale. Secondary sources to gather information have been the various national/international journals, books, earlier related studies, reports and surveys of government and non-government agencies, newspapers, periodicals and also internet to explore various useful sites in relation to the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study titled, "A Study on Job Stress among the employees of Insurance companies in Chennai City" has also been initiated with the basic objectives of looking into the job stress i.e. stress at work place among the employees of insurance organizations and to see if there is any impact of this occupational stress on the performance of the employees.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the organizational and individual factors that causes stress.
- To study the stress levels of employees in the insurance companies.
- To study the effect of stress on the work efficiency of employees.
- To identify suitable techniques and coping mechanism used to reduce the stress among the employees.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Exploratory personal investigations involving original field interviews with the employees in insurance sector has helped to have a greater insight into all possible practical aspects of the research problem. The adaptation of the descriptive and diagnostic research design has been very effective in the later stage in the present study.

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SAMPLING DESIGN

Simple random sampling is adopted here.The sample size has been restricted to 500 employees (i.e. 250 from each public and private Life Insurance Companies) keeping in mind the research objectives and constraints.

PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data after collection are to be processed and analyzed in accordance with the requirement and purpose at the time of the development of the scale. It is essential for such a scientific study that only the relevant data should be used from the collection of such a voluminous data and processed through the proper statistical tools. Data were thoroughly evaluated before analysis. Data were analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Packages) and the MS-EXCEL tool.

STATISTICAL TOOLS USED

Measures of Central Tendency, Measures of Dispersion (Variability), Measures of Divergence, Coefficients of Correlation, Regression Analysis, "t"- test, andAnalysis of variance.

Stress Level among the employees in the Life Insurance Companies

ITEM NO	F14	F15	F17	F20	F27	F29	F37	F41	F42	F45	F46	F47	F49	F54	F55	F56	F58	F60	F63
AVERAGE	1.7	1.93	1.97	1.82	2.02	2.31	1.76	2.27	2.48	1.92	2.02	2.18	2.56	1.91	2.29	1.88	2.3	1.88	2.77
S.D	0.69	0.83	0.81	0.77	0.89	0.98	0.93	0.96	1.08	0.76	0.74	0.89	1.07	0.82	1.05	0.87	0.93	0.87	1.16
KURTOSIS	0.3	-0.2	0.16	-0.2	0.12	-0.7	1.09	-0.3	-0.7	-0.8	-0.7	-0.5	-0.7	1.47	-0.8	0.78	-0.8	0.78	-0.9
MEDIAN	2	2	2	2	2	2	1.5	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3
MODE	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3
Q1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1.75	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	2
Q3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	4
SKEWNESS	0.73	0.55	0.59	0.63	0.68	0.27	1.21	0.43	0.28	0.28	0.12	0.42	0.2	0.96	0.36	0.9	0.22	0.9	0.13
COVERAGE	40.8	13.2	41	42.4	43.8	42.5	52.8	42.2	43.5	39.6	36.5	40.9	41.7	42.8	45.7	46.2	40.3	46.2	42
VARIANCE	0.48	0.69	0.65	0.6	0.79	0.96	0.86	0.92	1.16	0.58	0.55	0.8	1.14	0.67	1.1	0.75	0.86	0.75	1.35

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Effect of Stress on the Efficiency of employees in theLife Insurance sector

ITEM NO	F23	F24	F25	F30	F35	F43	F48	F57	F61	F64
AVERAGE	1.77	1.76	1.63	1.92	1.64	2.29	1.91	2.85	2.18	2.84
S.D	0.78	0.71	0.71	0.84	0.76	1.02	0.82	1.15	0.9	1.16
KURTOSIS	-0.6	0.03	0.36	-0.6	-1	-0.8	0.64	-0.9	-0.6	-0.9
MEDIAN	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	3
MODE	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	3	2	3
Q1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Q3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	4	3	4
SKEWNESS	0.6	0.61	0.89	0.49	0.71	0.31	0.78	0.08	0.41	0.06
COVERAGE	44.1	40.2	43.3	43.5	46.5	44.4	43.1	40.3	41.1	40.9
VARIANCE	0.61	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.58	1.04	0.68	1.32	0.8	1.35

FINDINGS

- There are different hierarchical levels in the Life Insurance Companies. Among the different Hierarchical levels stress is found to be highest in case of Middle Level employees.
- Individual factors causing stress in Middle Level employees are lack of time for leisure activities, lack of time for family, work on weekends and holidays and working more than normal hours.
- In the private sector insurance organizations, stress is the highest in relative terms.
- Working conditions also have an impact on the level of stress found among employees.
- Stress is found to be highest among the employees below the age of 40 years. Younger employees due to late promotion to due to under or over utilization of their capacity feel more stressed.
- Of the many role stressors, the main stressor causing stress among the respondents in insurance sector is inter-Role Distance. This shows that they have to perform more than one role and there may be conflict between these roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are different types of role stressors which have been found to be causing stress. Inter-Role Distance is the main stressor causing stress among employees in insurance sector. The organizations should endeavor to give the specific roles to employees according to their jobs. Proper job specifications should be framed. There should not contradictory demands from the role played by employees.

Another stressor causing stress is found to be Role Erosion. It is experienced when there arises a feeling that some important functions of a role occupant have been given to others. The organizations should assign a specific job to each employee explaining his rights and responsibilities clearly. There should be challenging functions to be performed by employees in insurance sector, so that they do not feel that their job functions are shared by others.

In the insurance companies another major stressor causing stress among employees is role Stagnation. It is experienced when an individual feels that his roles are not changing and growing. The companies should adopt suitable promotion policy to remove stagnation. The jobs of employees in insurance sector should be challenging so that they become motivated to work. Promotions should be on time and there should be advancement in the roles performed by employees in this sector. There should be quick promotions.

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Other stressors causing stress mainly among respondents in insurance sector are Role Overload and Resource Inadequacy. They attend every kind of client complaint in any regard. They feel over burdened with work and lack of support required to perform their functions further adds to their problem. There should be a suitable arrangement to supply adequate assistance required by the employees in insurance sector.

It is also found that working more than normal hours and working on weekends and holidays are also causing stress among the employees. They do not get enough time for their families and leisure activities. The organizations should take immediate steps to reduce work overload or make extra payment for the time spent by the employees after normal hours of duty, so that they do not feel stressed.

The following individual and situational factors can help to reduce the effect of stressful working conditions.

"'A balance between work and family/personal life; A support network of friends and co-workers; and a relaxed and positive outlook".

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