

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF STRESS MANAGEMENT ON EXECUTIVES IN LUCKNOW CITY & NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR UNDERSTANDING STRESS IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

S. Athar Mahmood* & Gaurav Bisaria**

Abstract

The contingencies of modern life have changed the scenario for people today. New aspects have crept into life styles due to hectic work schedules and pressures. Stress is one such aspect that is receiving unprecedented attention from practitioners and academicians alike. Needless to say, stress is present in every one but shows up in some people more than others, the cause of which is a wide area of research. This paper aims to fill in the above mentioned information by investigating the causes of stress on executives. In the initial part of the paper, stress is discussed in detail and supported by information and facts. Some remedies to counter stress are also mentioned.

In second part, the research and its findings are described which was conducted on executives in Lucknow city. The results are shown through figures as well as described in detail. The main causes of stress are listed out as shown through the research. Based on this research, three new perspectives have been developed to understand stress in organizational context. The first approach is quantitative in nature and includes certain important variables like bad performance, inter personal relations, health problems and obsolescence. The second approach is qualitative in nature and depicts how stress aggravates in people.

The final approach describes a sort of tussle between stress and 'anti stress' measures and hence is termed as Counter Balance approach. Conclusions are drawn from the research as well as from the new proposed perspectives and include a complete picture of how stress is being tackled by executives themselves as well as from efforts by organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Modern life is full of problems of all kinds. These problems range from completely personal to those arising out of organizational issues. Whatsoever the nature of problems, it takes its toll on human beings and the direct result is what is termed as stress. STRESS is the word, which is becoming very popular these days among the corporate houses. There is increase in stress due to development of cities, coming up of big companies, more work and more production. It is being said that stress can kill one person a day. Stress is used in Engineering which means pressure of an object over another and was introduced in Social Sciences by HANS SELYE in 1936. Stress came in limelight around 1990's and accelerated in 2000. Stress is defined as the condition that results when person-environment transactions lead the individual to perceive a discrepancy, whether real or not, between the demands of a situation and the resources of the person's biological, psychological and social system. In simpler words, stress is the result of adverse situations that a person faces continuously, the most likely result of which is negative in nature.

*Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Integral University, Luck now.

**Lecturer, Department of Business Administration, Integral University, Luck now.

Stress can develop one into a on-performer. Studies suggest that 1 in 5 people suffer from stress. It is generally being said that one can fight very well with stress when he is in the age group of 18yrs. to 40 yrs. and after 40 yrs. the power of fighting with stress goes on decreasing. According to Prof. Hari Shanker Sharma of Neurobiology (at the Department of Surgical Sciences, University Hospital of Uppsala University Sweden) Indians have to face hardships as years are wasted for completing a simple task and till 40 yrs. they are just able to bring things on level and when time comes to show performance they might have crossed 40 yrs., which leads to low performance and hence stress. According to Corporate Persons, peoples are taking retirement at the age of 45 yrs. due to excessive stress and are moving to peaceful or religious place where they can have peace of mind or can forget the tensions by devoting themselves to God.

‘Stress’ means physical or mental over-exertion that disturbs natural physiological balance of the body. Stress is the "wear and tear" of our bodies’ experiences. Stress affects our health as well as our working performance. Job Stress can be due to environmental factors like political, economic and technological. There is no single level of stress that is optimal for all people, what is distressing to one may be a joy to another. One cannot know stress until and unless they have experienced it and when you feel it then some can take it while others cannot. It is difficult to relate stress with the nature of business i.e. there is more stress in I.T. Sectors or in Banking Sectors and not in others but this is not true as more things depend on organizational culture and the nature of bosses

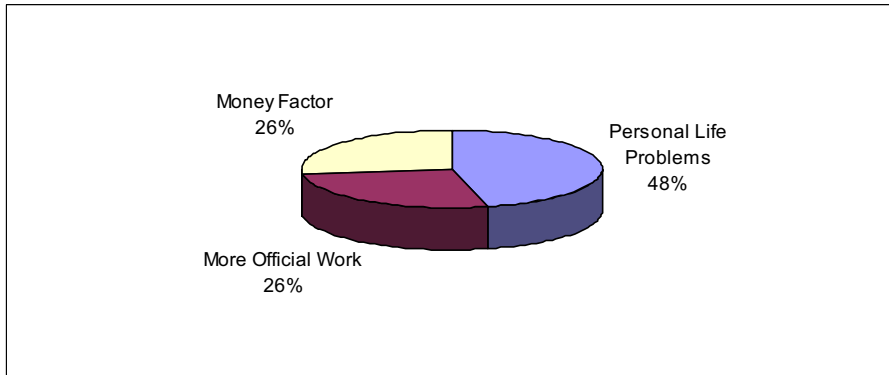
THEME:

- Research was conducted among working class, both males and females, to understand the reasons and impact of stress.

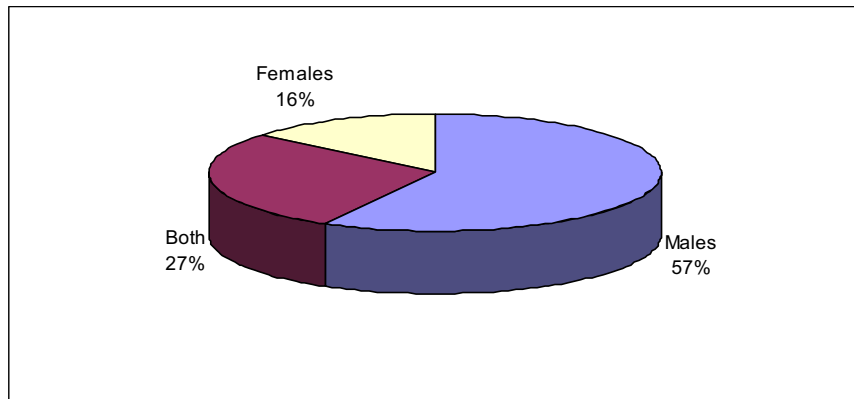
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample Size: 200, Population: 100 Males & 100 Females, Data Collection Instrument: Questionnaire, Demographic: Executive Male & Females and Geographic Location: Luck now, UP. Where possible, information was collected through informal interviews.

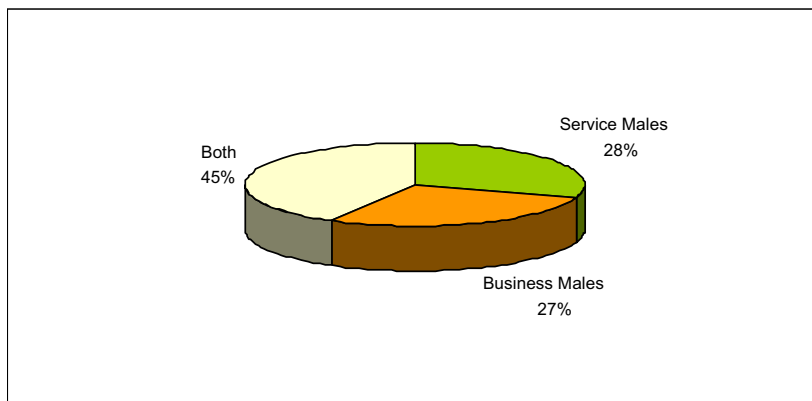
REASONS OF APPEARANCE OF STRESS



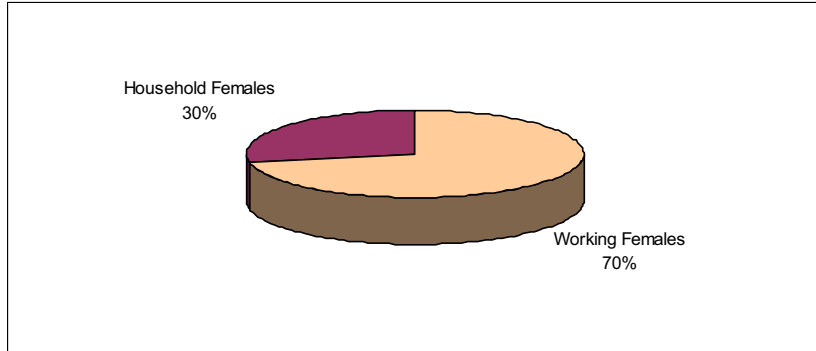
KNOWING THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON MALES AND FEMALES



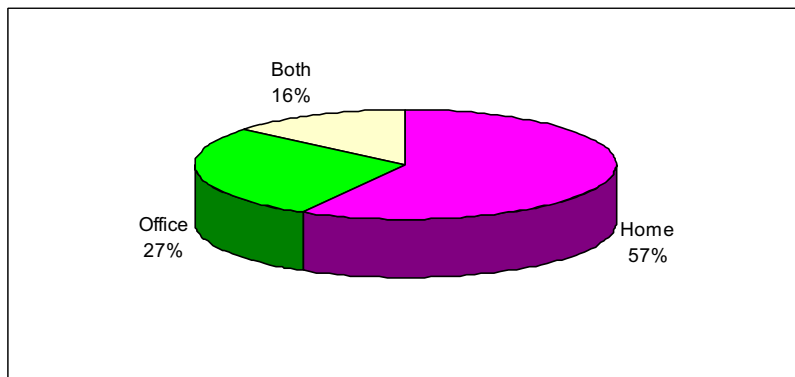
KNOWING THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON SERVICE MALES OR BUSINESS MALES



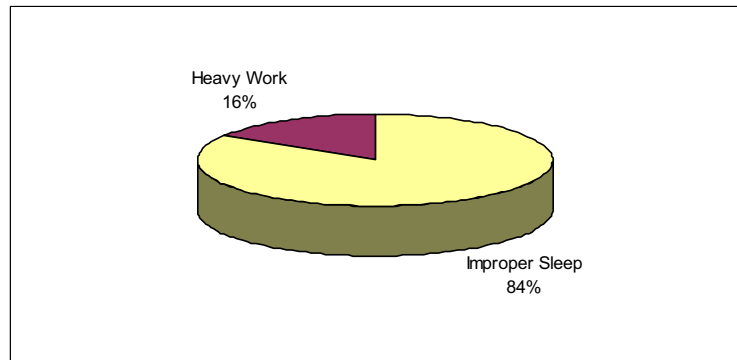
KNOWING THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON WORKING FEMALES & HOUSEHOLD FEMALES



SHOWING LINKAGE OF STRESS WITH HOME OR OFFICE



KNOWING THE IMPACT OF HEAVY WORK OR IMPROPER SLEEP ON PRODUCTIVITY



Note: This is the data according to the research conducted among executives of Luck now City as described in Research Methodology above.

FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

(a) According to research conducted, 48% of the sampled executives of Lucknow City say that the reasons for appearance of stress is Personal life problems while according to 26% the reason is money factor and according to 26% more official work.

(b) 57% say that the impact of stress is on males while according to 16% the impact is on females and according to 27% the impact is on both equally.

(c) 28% say that the impact of stress is on service males while according to 27% the impact is on business males and according to 45% the impact is on both equally.

(d) 70% say that the impact of stress is on working females while according to 30% the impact is on household females.

(e) 57% say that there is linkage of stress with home while according to 27% the linkage is with office and according to 16% the linkage is with both.

(f) 84% say that productivity is affected by improper sleep while according to 16% say heavy work affects productivity.

Therefore the main causes of stress are:

- Due to work-place
- Due to change in job
- Rare promotions
- Improper infra-structure
- Insufficient no. of employees for performing tasks
- Women competing the men
- Overwork
- Culture dominance
- Reduced packages
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of communication between different management levels
- Conflict between different management levels
- Training is not proper
- Tools or machines are not proper
- Performance standards are not proper
- Single person is doing lot of jobs
- Person is doing lot of overtime
- Caffeine i.e. starting a bike or scooter
- Pollution
- Improper food
- Lack of fresh air and natural light
- Radiations of mobile phones and computers

So, stress, in organizational context, can be understood from three new perspectives that are proposed below:

- 1) Mathematical Approach
- 2) Signal Approach
- 3) Counterbalance Approach

1) In the **Mathematical approach**, stress can be described by assessing its level for an individual at workplace. This level can be denoted by the equation

$$\text{Level of Stress} = \text{Burnout} - \text{Current state of Individual}$$

The two variables on the right side of the equation would determine the actual level of stress. The more important of these is burnout, which happens to be the last stage before an individual gives in to stress completely. This Burnout situation is a result of:-

- a) Consistently Bad performance which can be described in terms of both quality and quantity. (The individual may have received several warnings for the same).
- b) Poor Interpersonal relations which includes those with boss, peers, subordinates and relations with friends and family.
- c) Depreciation in skills/value and a feeling of obsolescence which convinces an individual of his worthlessness and lack of contribution.
- d) Serious Health hazards and other problems related to personal health.

The individual's current state needs to be measured and understood which has to be compared with the burnout situation. The difference between the two denotes the level of stress. Needless to say the more the difference, the lesser stress level of the individual and vice versa.

2) The **Signal Approach** can be described as a qualitative approach but the main variables remain the same as in Mathematical Approach. Diagrammatically, this model can be described thus:



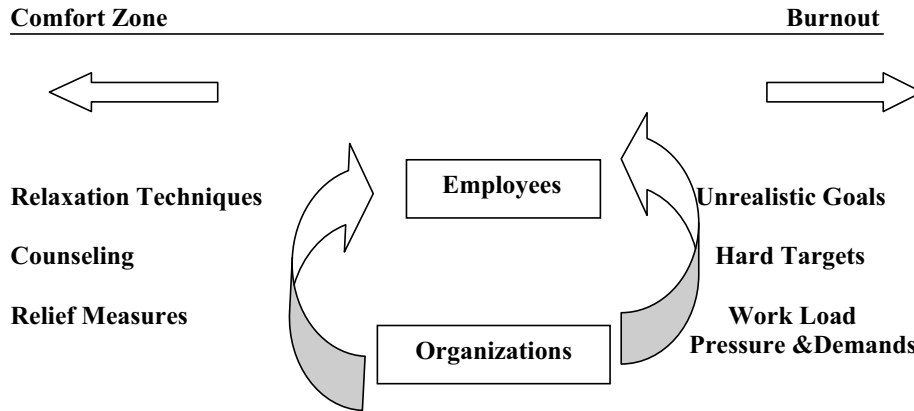
An individual remains a 'normal person' when he has little work pressure and can be said to be in the Comfort Zone. This situation is most desirable and has been depicted on the extreme left side of the diagram. As workload and work pressure increases, the individual moves over into the Green zone. This is also a safe region but stress begins to mount up from here only.

When the individual comes across hurdles in this increased work and the result is interpersonal conflicts and bad work environment, he crosses over into the Yellow Zone. This an Intermediate region from where an individual starts feeling the effects of stress and as he moves deeper into the yellow area, he moves more and more away from the comfort zone.

Finally, the situation turns alarming when personal issues also show up. The adverse circumstances take the individual into the Red zone which can also be termed as the Danger Zone. Stress levels are quite high and as stress compounds, the person starts moving towards the Burnout region (denoted in black colour and at the tip of the arrow).

This approach does not measure stress but can help understand where a person stands in terms of his stress level.

3) The Counterbalance Approach can be understood in terms of employer and organizational efforts to help employee counter stress. It can be represented thus:



The organizations provide stress on one hand through unrealistic goals, hard targets, increased workload and work pressure. On the other hand, they provide counseling, relaxation techniques and other relief measures to help employees counter and reduce stress. Since both are result of organization's efforts, they act in different ways on the employees:

a) If the counter measures succeed, the employee moves towards the Comfort Zone despite stress. Richard Lazarus described stress as functioning in two ways- the positive side which he termed as eustress and the negative side called distress. While the former may motivate individuals to in the form of challenges, it is the latter that is more important from the academic viewpoint. In organizations, stress is mostly taken in the negative sense and steps are taken to counter the same. This can also be termed as the Eustress as propagated by Lazarus.

b) If the counter measures are weaker in comparison, the employee faces more and more stress moving towards the Burnout stage. In such cases, organizations need to review their HR policies.

These three approaches can be used for explaining and analyzing stress on individuals in organizational context.

CONCLUSION

Many people are of view that by doing yoga and meditation during or before office hours can increase one's capacity of doing work and can make him energetic completely for 24 hours. They must be made mandatory in offices. Prayers of any religion in morning, afternoon, evening or in night i.e. before, during or after working hours can help overcome stress.

B-Schools are also taking the lead from corporates. They are having compulsory yoga modules, as their brochures show. They are also trying to have compulsory mediation modules. In schools or in colleges the exercise and prayers are already in use. They are rooting the foundation early, and hopefully, minimizing the stress the candidates may face in their careers during studying or later in life.

Mind is the master sense of human beings. Its fitness and efficiency is highly important in rating the performance of a person. Heart is the centre for the functioning of the complete body. There should be proper balance between mind and heart. Our mind and heart must be kept in proper form by handling negative feelings, emotions and strain. This can lead to STRESS FREE LIVING which can further lead to INCREASE IN PRODUCTIVITY.

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