

Psychological Symptoms of Work Stress and Stress Management Techniques

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ABSTRACT

Introduction:

Stress is not a new word even for a common man today. Each and every person, whether a student, businessman, employee or retired person irrespective of gender, all are experiencing some sorts of stress. Life has become so competitive that whether a person likes or not they have too many things which are against their beliefs or likings, especially for the employed person who experiences the work/job related situations causing stress.

Research Methodology:

This study tries to find out the impact of stress by reviewing through literature. The article focuses on the reviews related to the Psychological Stress, Stress Management Techniques and their effectiveness recorded in different papers. Two objectives have been framed to collect the review of literature:

- (i) To compile the reviews related to the psychological symptoms of work stress
- (ii) To compile the reviews related to the effectiveness of different stress management techniques. Text books, reference books, research articles published by different publishers of national and international repute are used to collect secondary data.

Conclusion:

Review of secondary data is used to arrive at conclusion. The present article will be helpful to the future investigators to refer the reviews in collective manner.

1. Introduction: An Overview of Stress

According to Hans Selye (1956)¹ stress can be any external event or any internal drive, that impends or disturbs an individual's Organismic equilibrium. Fred Luthans (1985)² defines stress as a response adopted by organizational participants against an external event resulting in the physical, psychological, and behavioral changes.

The term Stress was used in the field of Physics as well as Engineering, implying that when a significant force is applied to a structure or system, will either deform or restore the structure or system. Stress constitutes our response to the stressors or external situations. Stressors are the endless number of daily occurrences that drawn upon our resources to adapt. The resulting reaction or your response as you try to adjust is what is called as Stress. (Celine Payyappilly, Carol Huss, Renu Khanna, Mira Shiva, Chinu Shrinivasan, 1997)³.

"Stress" as a term was firstly used by a researcher W.B. Cannon as early as 1936. The famous article by him on Voodoo Death in which he described the case where the Tribal Headman told a healthy tribal person that he would die on a particular day. Surprisingly, the healthy tribal man, whose medical condition was monitored by hospital staff, suddenly and inexplicably succumbed to death on the given day. The article highlighted that there is a relation between the mind of a person and his body which needed to be explored. Cannon's research stimulated a whole lot of researchers to explore the ways in which stress affects the human body. In his 1976 study, Hans Selye employed the same stress from a biological

perspective for the first time. He referred to stress as a condition caused or stimulated by the stressor.

2. Reviews Related to the Psychological Symptoms of Stress:

Stress has a major impact on the general health of the employee. The consequences of stressful work create issues like anger (hot tempered), anxiety, apprehension, fear, humiliation and jealousy, depression or low feelings, mood swings, reduced self-esteem/self-worth, feeling out of control/helplessness, suicidal thoughts, paranoid thinking (imaginary fear), day dreaming and inability to concentrate. According to Luthans, Fred (2005) very less attention is given by the medical community to study the impact of stress on the mental health of a person, as compared to the study of relationship between stress and its impact on the physical health.

Peter Y. Chan & Paul E. Spector (1992)⁴, says that anger, anxiety, nervousness, irritability, depression, nervousness, irritability, tension, and boredom may be accompanied with stress. The finding of one study showed that stress had a strong impact on aggressive actions like complains, hostility towards others, interpersonal aggression and sabotage. J. E. McGrath (1976)⁵ stated that the psychological problems due to stress result in poor job performance and lowered self-esteem. He supported the symptoms found out by Peter and Spector, as mentioned in above reference.

Behr & Newman (1976)⁶ proposed that the symptoms like dissatisfaction of job, resentment of being supervised, lack of

concentration and difficulty in making decisions are also due to stress along with poor job performance and low self-esteem as mentioned by J.E.McGrath. The National Centre for Disease Control reported that stress related to psychology is the main source of many job related insurance claims as mentioned in Lincoln Journal, 1986.

Robert L. Brady (1995)⁷ said that court cases have also brought stress related problems steaming from employment, under the employer's workers compensation insurance. The costs for the insurance companies have risen to a very high level due to the settlement of claims stemming from stress related problems from employment. According to David S. Allen (1990) experts are predicting that, if the number of stress related workers compensation claims continues to grow at current rate, these claims will lead all other claims. In this era when health care benefits for psychological problem have plummeted due to economic situations (Management Review, November, 1999).

3. Reviews Related to the Stress Management Techniques:

3.1. Yoga/Meditation:

The aim of yoga practioner is to attain tranquility, leading to spiritual insight through meditation. In India, the meditation practices of Yoga are associated with various religions like Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. Growing body of evidences shows/demonstrates that now a day's people not only in India but globally using Yoga for attaining physical and mental health, as well as social wellbeing. Studies of Yoga have demonstrated that Yoga practice has the ability to reduce stress.

As mentioned in various studies, Yoga reduces the cortisol levels, as per the finding documented in the research journal "Annals of Behavioral Science"(October 2004). A research study from the "Journal of Clinical Psychology"(June 2004), it was observed by the people taking care of patients suffering from dementia, that patients, after yoga practice, could improve their emotional and physical functioning. Another study published in "Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine" (February and August 2005) studied the breathing techniques of a specific Yoga practice, 'Sudarshanyogakriya', which the authors claim can lead to reduction in stress, even in disorders related to post - traumatic stress.

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program (MBSR), made popular by Jon Kabat-Zinn and the University of Massachusetts, Medical School, is another program based on Yoga is taught and studied widely for reduction of stress. The MBSR program uses yoga and gentle stretching, guided instruction for mindfulness meditation practices, inquiry exercises to enhance awareness, individual instruction, group dialogue and home assignments. All over the world, various scientific studies are conducted on the effectiveness of the MBSR program. In the published studies, low stress levels were found among people who participated in the program. It was also found by Kabat-Zinn and Colleagues, that with the use of Meditation tapes during treatment, the patients getting treatment for psoriasis, a type of skin disorder, healed faster as compared to people who did not listen to the meditation tapes.

Meditation belongs to a family of various types or forms of practices. The aim of meditation practitioner is to train his mind or stimulate a consciousness mode to achieve some benefit. Traditionally this technique is used to attained highest level of conscious development i.e. *state of Samadhi*. In today's competitive, world it is hard to achieve the state of '*samadhi*', but people are using meditation techniques for attaining mental peace.

PranavPandy (2004)⁹ discussed that 'meditation is thoughtless condition of the mind. Such as, magnet attracts all the pieces of iron spreader over all directions. So the meditation link cosmic energy and subdue all the worldly craving'. John W. Santocle (1991)¹⁰ stated that the result reveal that meditation affects positively on stress, because in the state of stress a heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure and metabolism speed is up and need extra oxygen to maintain the peaceful mind, but in the state of meditation a heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure and metabolism goes down, so it releases or loose extra oxygen, which reduce the level of stress. Meditation is the system of thoughts that integrates different forms of exercises in order to attain control of the body(physical) or of the mind, for the overall well-being as well as enlightenment. Davidson, Richard (2003) suggested that it works on our nervous system and gives a perfect immune system, which provide us low quantity peaceful and tensionless mind.

Awasthi S. & Dwivedi S.K. (2008)¹⁰ got their study 'meditation effects on pituitary gland and decrease the quantity of adrenaline and cortisol hormones and maintain the level of CRF (cortisol releasing factor), which makes stress-less mind. The effect can be felt in just one session. Bowen S., Witkiewatz K., Dillworth T.M., & Chawla N. (2006)¹¹ found in his study that meditation improves immune system, by the help of perfect immune system we can perform or endure the stressful conditions. Seligmen, M.E.P. (1995) Supported above results.

Most people find it difficult, however, to not think of anything, or, in the words of Smith (2001), maintain a passive simple focus. Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar, India, have developed a powerful technique called Yoga Nidra, which is simple to follow. It is a technique of guided relaxation. Instructions which are recorded on audio CDs are to be followed by the practitioner. The aim of Yoga Nidra is to access and utilise the power of the unconscious mind, through a process similar to self-hypnosis. Through a process of deep muscle relaxation and awareness of breath, the conscious mind is put to sleep. A resolve, i.e. a short or concise positive mental statement, is planted in the unconscious mind, while it is highly receptive. Yoga Nidra has proven to be immensely promising in reducing stress (Deuskar, 2010)¹². This technique has also been used profitably to reduce the levels of examination stress in high school students (Deuskar, 2007)¹³.

3.2. Dance & Music Therapy:

Pratt R.R. (1985)¹⁴ proposed that Music and medicine has been partners from the beginning of western medical practice. Pythagoras believed the soul to be a harmony within itself, and that the essence of life was order, proportion and measure.

Apollo, the God of both medicine and music, was responsible for cleansing man of disease, guilt and evil and restoring harmony to the body and soul. Plato and Aristotle continued to develop their thoughts on this balance and harmony, as the basis of human health. Trauger-Querry B., & Haghghi, K.R. (1999)¹⁵ also suggested that pain modulation in terminally ill patients in a hospice (*ashram*) setting occurred by using the Art therapy and Music therapy intermediation for shifting the patient's focus from pain. Nayak S, Wheeler B.L., et al. (2000)¹⁶ pointed out that music therapy may help to improve mood and attitude as well as lead to healthy social interaction among patients who suffered stroke and severe traumatic brain injury.

Knox, R. & Jutai, J. (1996)¹⁷ also viewed that music may also be the ideal domain for exploring the brain's ability to perform complex cognitive tasks. An article published in the Annual Review of Nursing Research by Snyder and Chlan's (1999)¹⁸ gives 98 references in relation to patient pain and stress reduction with music therapy.

3.3. Exercise (Games/Gymnasium):

Regular exercise also may work synergistically to help control a host of other independent risk factors for coronary heart disease, including obesity, stress, high blood pressure, and high levels of blood lipids, including cholesterol and triglycerides. It helps in reducing stress, which is a major independent risk factor for coronary heart disease.

Research in epidemiology reveals that a physically active lifestyle yields numerous health benefits (Blair¹⁹ et al., 1989, 1993; Powell and Blair²⁰, 1994). There is enough evidence which shows that any physical activity or exercise leads to the positive mental well-being of a person (Biddle²¹ 1995; Biddle²² et al., [2000]; Biddle and Mutrie²³, 2001; Brown²⁴ et al., 2000) and reduces response towards cognitive stress (Norris et al.²⁵, 1990, 1992²⁶; Stein and Boutcher, 1992²⁷). Chronic and acute exercises provide positive psychological benefits in dealing with anxiety (Berger and Motl, 2000²⁸; Fontaine, 2000²⁹; Biddle and Mutrie, 2001; O'Connor et al., 2000³⁰; Paluska and Schwenk, 2000³¹; Raglin, 1990³²; Scully et al., 1998³³). Exercise also leads to immediate improvements in health and helps to deal with the challenges of today's competitive life, and also counters the negative effects of sitting desk-jobs and inactive life-style.

3.4 Employee Development Programme & Counselling:

The Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA), USA defines an Employees Assistance Program (EAP) as a work site focused program to assist in finding and resolving of employee issues and concerns, which affects or may affect their performance. Work issues may include the working relationship, impartiality at work, harassment, stress, bullying, workloads and work life balance. Usually it also addresses the personal matters, like health cover, financial and legal matters, personal relationship, alcohol and drugs dependency and anxiety. According to EAPA, the EAP's aim to offer counselling system, and other support, advice and continuous and uniform to the employees, and to recognize standards (1989).

Thomson (2002)³⁴, Cox, Griffiths & Riel Gonzales (2000)³⁵ stated that it is necessary to provide timely support and remedy for the employee's problems due to the complicated nature of stress. It is also suggested that support and solutions will be more beneficial if they are targeted at the individual as well as organizational level. The literature review conducted by McLeod (2001)³⁶ showed that 90 percent of clients were satisfied and happy with the counselling they received under EAPs proving, them equally effective as compared to other interventions. According to Cuthell (2004)³⁷ the EAPs are successful as they provide various types of support without any cost to the employees and also maintaining their confidentiality. Cuper & Sadri in 1991, assessed the post office workplace counselling and found improvements in the mental wellbeing and reductions in sickness absence compared to a control group.

3.5. Social Groups:

Social groups help the person in relieving his stress. Person can open his mind and express himself to his colleagues and friends on and off the job. The social groups on the job helps a person in his stress, as he can express himself openly with his colleagues, who are also experiencing similar problem. Moreover, social groups like church groups or Art of Living, help a person in stress reduction by the various activities conducted by these groups, during free hours or break in the company.

3.6. Smoking Zone:

There is no empirical evidence that smoking reduces stress, although a smoker may get temporary relief by smoking. On the contrary, studies have found smokers having high stress levels in comparison to people who don't smoke. (Warburton, Revell & Thomson, 1991)³⁸; Jones & Parrott, 1997³⁹; West, 1992⁴⁰). Studies among adults have shown that, smokers experienced increased stress levels between the intervals of smoking cigarettes. In fact smoking only normalizes their stress level (Schachter, 1978⁴¹; Hughes, Higgins, & Hatsukami, 1990⁴²; Parrott, Garnham, Wesnes, & Pincock, 1996⁴³; U.S. Surgeon General office, 1988). After smoking, they need another cigarette to maintain their stress level to normal. They experience stress nicotine withdrawal, if they don't smoke. In-fact, research shows that smoking contributes to stress instead of relieving it. (Parrott, et al., 1999).

From the above literature review we can say that stress impacts on the psychology of workers, affecting them and the industry as well, in a negative way. There is a need for both the organisations and the employees to utilize the available stress management techniques for the better future of the industry.

4. Conclusion

In the light of above discussion, the investigator draws following conclusions:

- (i) The findings of the research references reveal that the significant amount of stress observed among employees.
- (ii) The findings of the research references reveals that significant amount of anger, aggressions, depression, threat, strain are observed as a psychological symptoms.

(iii) Yoga, Meditation, Dance & Musictherapy, Exercise, Employee Development Programme and Social Groups were served as a significantly effective and sustainable stress management techniques.

(iv) Smoking is observed as a stress management technique in some places.

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