



JOB STRESS OF EXECUTIVE LEVEL EMPLOYEES: CASE OF APPAREL SECTOR IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, there has been a significant concentration on recognition and managing job stress as an important organizational problem. With this identification, organizations have enhanced their awareness towards this problem, as job stress contributes to a significant portion of health care cost, absenteeism, and turnover consequently reduces the employee performance and leads to productivity losses. The purpose of this study is to investigate the job stress level of executive employees. The data were collected from 88 employees of apparel sector manufacturing organizations in Sri Lanka. Data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire, which comprised of standard measures with five dimensions. They are working environment and communication, work/home conflict and social life, administration and goal achievement, problems with subordinates, and demands from subordinates and others. The level job stress of the respondents was measure by the measure developed by Rout, Cooper, and Rout, (1996 cited in Rout 1999). The results shows that the executive level employees experience stress in any given situation while they are performing their job. So that this paper emphasizes that, the management of the companies should develop strategies focusing on reducing the level of job stress to enhancing the performance of the employees.

KEY WORDS: Job Stress, Executives, Apparel Sector, Employee, Working Environment, Human Resource

INTRODUCTION

Job is one of the most important element in an individual's life which cause a great impact of stress in their normal life. As there is a competitive nature in the job environment, most of the people are spending their time in the job and job related work ignoring the stress which influences the work and their life. Usually those people who are worried about their job performance can affect the way they treat the others and also the way they communicate with their peers and customers. These individuals may frustrated and also burn out when they are having problems with peers and customers. This may leave a negative impact to the organization itself (Bhatti, Hashmi, Raza, Shaikh, & Shafiq, 2011).

Considering the apparel sector in Sri Lanka, is facing a huge competition and their survival is based on how well they are performed that its rivals. This emphasizes that the success of the organization depends on the competitive advantages that they have achieved. When achieving this competitive advantage human resource or the people in the organization received high priority as they are very unique from the other factors of production which are money, machines and processes. Hence organization's expects the maximum contribution from their workforce and to become successful in this competitive world. Over the past years, there has been growing recognition of job stress as a significant occupational health problem which experienced by the



employees. In industry it is highlighted that the job stress significantly impact on worker compensation claims, health care costs, disability, absenteeism, and productivity losses (Murphy, 1995). Also job related, individual, organizational and environmental factors influence employee's stress. The job includes duties, responsibilities, heavy workload variations in workload, role ambiguity and role conflict can be reasons for job stress for employees (McGowan, 2001; Michie and Williams, 2003; and Robinson et al., 2003 cited in Mosadeghrad, Mosadeghrad, Raitano, Kleiner, Idris, Dollard, & Winefield, 2014)

This emphasize that managing stress is very significant as that impact to individual employee outcome as well as the organizational outcome. When considering the selected sector (Apparel Sector in Sri Lanka) they also have experience the same scenario. When the people experience job stress impact on their work life balance and also for their health as well. Consequently, it affect reducing the quality of work, and productivity of employees at last reduced the overall organizational performance. As we all know the ultimate objective of an organization is to enhance its overall performance through the human resource available within the organization by effective and effective utilization.

So in this study the researcher's interest is to investigate the level of the job stress of the executive level employees in apparel sector in Sri Lanka.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress is defined as a situation where an individual is forced to deviate from the normal condition due to a change in her/his psychological and/or physiological condition, such that the individual is forced to deviate from the normal functioning (Beehr and Newman, 1978 cited in Bhatti et al., 2011). It shows that it is very important for an individual to identify the stresses that they are faced by their career.

Luthans (2000) has explained that stress is usually thought of in negative terms. It is thought to be caused by something bad. Stress harmfully impacts the human lives, including workers. A greater amount of research has been done on the antecedents and negative impacts of job related stress and the variables that moderate these adverse effects of job related stress on the psychological well-being of the individual, job satisfaction and job commitment (De Jonge & Dormann 2003). Matteson and Ivancevich (1987) found that when the job related stress last for long, it is associated with negative emotions, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism as well as turnover.

Role of the management is one of the aspects that affect the work related stress among workers (Alexandros-Stamatios et. al., 2003 cited in Bhatti et al., 2011). Because the employees of the organization can experience stress through the role given by the management as the role stress is that where organizational role produces negative consequences for the individual (Kahn and Quinn, 1970). Motivation is a key factor which affected by the job stress of the employees. Employees who are motivated feel happier and more willing to work with the organization. But job stress of the employees affect the intellectual and social abilities of them. Failure of providing healthy working environment leads to more problems specially in the employee's work performance (Bhatti et al., 2011).

Stress can be defined as an adaptive response to any external situation that may result in psychological, physical and behavioural deviations for organizational participants (Luthans, 2000). On the organizational level, occupational stress is linked to employee performance (Abu Al Rub, 2004). Stress decreases attention, concentration and decision-making and judgment skills (Shapiro, Astin, Bishop, & Cordova, 2005). A strong inverse relationship was found between occupational stress and employees' quality of working life (Mosadeghrad, Ferlie, & Rosenberg, 2011), motivation (Houkes, Janssen, de Jonge, & Nijhuis, 2001), job satisfaction (Flanagan and Flanagan, 2002; Grunfeld, Whelan, Zitzelsberger, Willan, Montesanto, Evans, 2000; Redfern, Hannan, Norman, & Martin, 2002) organizational commitment (Khatibi, Asadi, & Hamidi, 2009; and Lambert and Paoline, 2008). Occupational stress also may lead to increased burnout and physical, mental and emotional exhaustion (Spickard, Gabbe, & Christensen, 2002), absenteeism (Eriksen, Bruusgaard, & Knardahl, 2003) and intention to leave workplace (Mosadeghrad, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

This study engages in identifying the level of stress of the executive employees in the apparel sector in Sri Lanka and the study was used the survey method where the data was collected in natural environment where the normal work proceeds. The data was collected from individuals of the five leading apparel companies within one week time where the study was cross sectional.

A self-administered questionnaire was distributed among the employees to collect data. The questionnaire was a standard questionnaire was developed on the basis of in-depth interviews with practice managers by Rout, (1996) and from a previous questionnaire used in a study of general practitioners

(Rout et al., 1996 cited in Rout , 1999). Each was scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = no stress at all, 5 = sources of extreme stress). This instrument for measuring stress has strong internal reliability. Hundred (100) questionnaires

were distributed and the eighty eight (88) questionnaire returned, where the response rate was 88%. The data was analyzed by using the Microsoft Excel software package.

FINDINGS

Table 01 – Mean values of the dimensions

Variable	Dimension	Mean Value	Interpretation
Job Stress	Working environment and communication	4.67	Stressed
	Work/Home conflict and social life	2.54	Somewhat stressed
	Administration and goal achievement	2.49	Somewhat stressed
	Problems with Subordinates	1.79	Slightly stressed
	Demands from subordinates and peers	2.22	Slightly stressed

According to the Table 01, executives of the apparel companies experience stress (mean = 4.67) due to their working environment and communication where somewhat stress (mean = 2.54) is generated from work/home conflict and social life and administration and goal achievement (mean = 2.49). People experience slightly stressed situation from the stressors generated from problems with subordinates and demands from subordinates and peers. Apart from that, mean value of overall stress level of the 88 respondents is 2.75 which reflects somewhat stress level. It clearly shows that each and every executive who works at apparel sector in Sri Lanka is stressed in any given situation.

DISCUSSION

Stress is a widespread element experienced by employees around the globe. Stress has become major problem for employer particularly in developing nations where the employer doesn't realize the impact of stress on employee performance. According to the above analysis major reasons behind the stress can be found as; Conflict with others at work,

Lack of communication and consultation with supervisors, Lack of communication and consultation with staff, No appreciation of your work by people at work, No co-operation as a team, Lack of support by people at work, Being undervalued, Working environment, Staff problems, Coping with new technology, Inadequate backup from supervisors, Too much or too little variety in your job, Unclear job description and also demands of the job on social life, dividing time between home and work, demands of your job on family life, taking work home, having to work unsocial hours, having too much work to do, attending meetings, opportunity for career development and sexual harassment from the subordinates where this finding has

been supported from previous researchers (Sarantakos, 1996 ; Bhatti et al., 2011; Bhatti, Hashmi, Raza, Shaikh, & Shafiq, 2011; Mosadeghrad et al., 2014)

Stress is not always negative. It may also bring out the best in individuals at times. It may induce an individual to discover innovative and smarter way of doing things. This positive dimension of stress is called as eustress. But usually, the term stress has a negative implication and this negative aspect of stress is termed as distress. There are some symptoms of stress at workplace such as absenteeism, arguing, leaving early, deteriorating health and sleeplessness etc.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is conducted only in apparel sector using five leading companies, applying the findings for those other companies is questionable. Another limitation of the study was that, this study was a cross sectional study, the data was collected only one time. Also the sample was small, where it collected from only the five leading companies, there is less representation of the whole apparel industry.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

This study investigated the job stress level of executive employees of apparel sector. Further researches can be carried out by using more independent and mediating variables. Also this can be carried out in other sectors as well and also a comparative analysis between industries using the same variables also can be carried out.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The management of the companies can organize foreign tours, parties, team gatherings and various special occasions in order to reduce the stress level of the executives of the organization. This will be helpful in many

ways to release stress of the employees. Apart from that, building social support is also important. They have close connections with trustworthy peers who can listen to their problems and boost their confidence level. This social network will help the employees to overcome stress. The new trend of the companies where they encourage a healthy lifestyle as having plenty of water, having healthy eating habits where the companies can organize health camps in educating the employees. The best part of that is promoting relaxation techniques such as yoga, listening music and meditation. This will support employees to reduce their stress level and to maintain a good working environment.

CONCLUSION

According to the survey on stress level of the executives in apparel sector in Sri Lanka, it can be concluded that every executive in the company confronts some kind of stress in any given situation. The main reason for the job stress is, they are working in the apparel sector which has more work pressure than the other industries. Dealing with the foreign/local customers and suppliers will cause them stressful environment. This study gives the message to the management of the companies to develop strategies to reduce the stress level of the employees where it consequently enhances the organizational performance.

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